

The Official Student Newspaper
of the
Abraham Joshua Heschel
High School



"We stand for what we utter..."

- Rabbi Heschel

Israeli Journalist Lee Yaron Speaks at Heschel's Oct. 7 Memorial

By Hannah Wurzbarger '26, Editor-in-Chief

Because Oct. 7 overlapped with the first day of Sukkot when school was closed, the Programming Council alongside the administration held a meaningful memorial on Oct. 16, the Hebrew date of the Oct. 7 attacks.

As students and faculty entered the atrium in the morning, they were met with a table draped in an Israeli flag, a *yahrzeit* candle, and an artistic banner commemorating the victims of the massacre.

Junior Alex White, who spearheaded the banner's creation, said, "We decided to write names of people who were murdered and taken hostage on Oct. 7 inside the mourners' kaddish."

As the high school gathered in the gym, images from Oct. 7 cycled on the screen and Heschel Harmonizers Eden Litt, Eloise Vaynshtock, and Eli Lebowohl performed "Nachamu, Nachamu," a song about hope, comfort, and resilience. After observing a moment of silence, Co-Vice Presidents of the Programming Council, seniors Maddie Friedland and Liam Bahar, delivered opening speeches and introduced established Israeli journalist Lee Yaron.

Yaron, a writer for Haaretz, spoke during the second half of the ceremony. She talked

about her new book, *10/7: 100 Human Stories*, an account of Oct. 7, 2023, published roughly a year later. Yaron spent the year following Oct. 7 meeting with the families of hostages and conducting hundreds of interviews to gain

rather than solely their victimhood.

Guided by Rabbi Jonathan's questions, Yaron described the process and impact of writing such an account; as a journalist, she is used to not getting personally involved in her

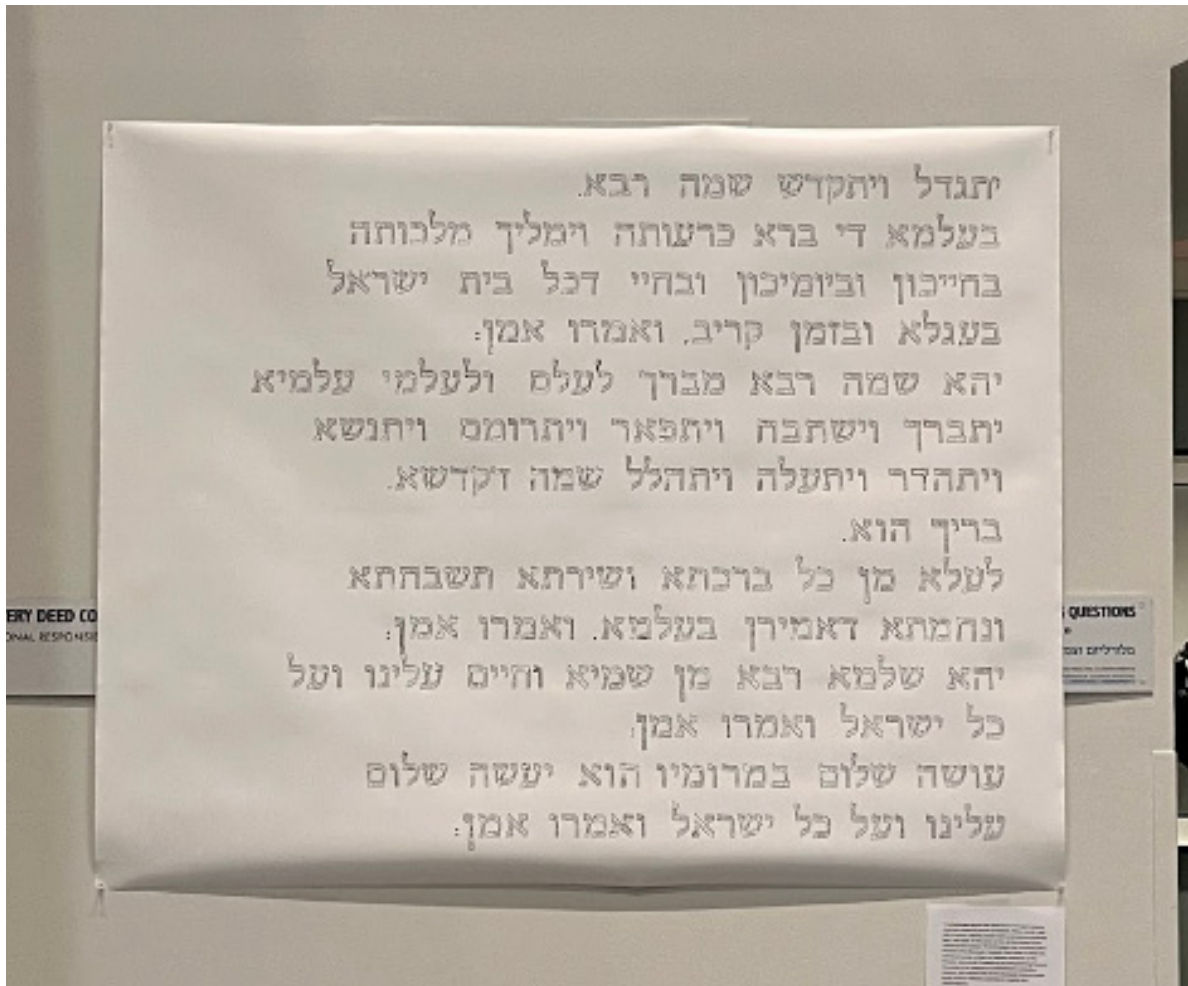
reporting. But a topic like this, she explained, took a heavy emotional toll.

When compiling the book, she decided to report on a diverse array of communities hurt by Hamas' terrorism (Arab-Israelies, Palestinian-Israelies, Ukrainian refugees, etc.) that aren't always showcased in the media. She explained that for some less-connected bereaved families, she "was the first journalist to ask [them any questions]."

Senior Zachary Altman said, "I thought the program was meaningful, and I liked hearing from the perspective of a journalist."

Rabbi Dahlia ended the program by leading the room in Hatikva, the Israeli national anthem, and then students made their way to class.

Photography by Liam Barlev '26, Photography Editor



an understanding of their lives – sometimes going back three generations to the time when their families first came to Israel. She studied and explored their many relationships: familial, professional, and even doctor-patient. The book commemorates communities impacted by Hamas' attacks; it uniquely and importantly focuses on the hostages' lives and family histories

Seniors Celebrate ED Deadline With Central Park Sunrise

By Gila Lehon '26, Opinion Editor

At 7 a.m. on Friday, Oct. 31, the senior class of 2026 gathered at Central Park's reservoir to watch the sunrise and pose for pictures. This senior tradition, known as Senior Sunrise, marked the passing of Nov. 1 college deadlines.

"The sunrise was beautiful," said senior Hannah Wurzbarger. "I'm not a morning person, but this was definitely worth waking up for!"

After Rabbi Noam led *shakharit*, teachers distributed donuts, and dismissed students.

Seniors made their way to school on their own on time for first period at 8:50 a.m.

"I was a little concerned it would be

we could stay in our pajamas, and the donuts were a nice bonus."

"It was really beautiful to see the whole

grade come together for something so special," said senior grade representative Agam Back. "I think it's a really important tradition because it's such an intimate and special experience that you'll really only do once as seniors in high school. It ends the early application round in a beautiful and wholesome way that makes everyone feel proud and accomplished of all the work they've done until this point."

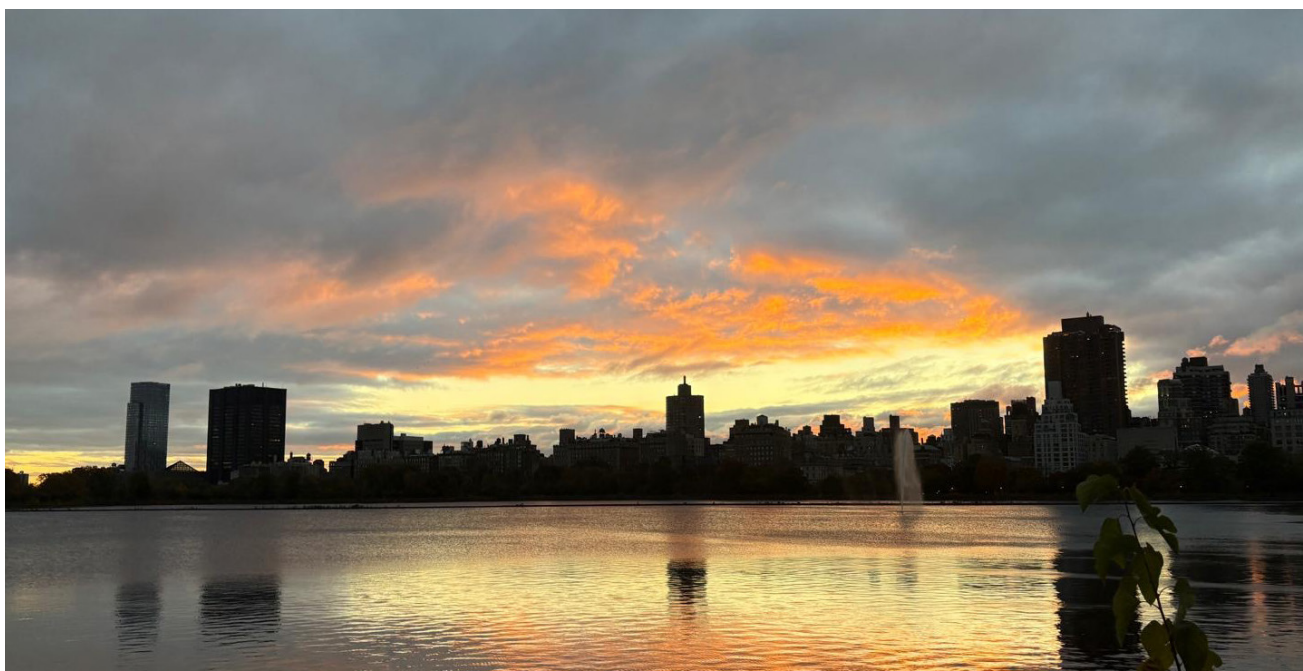


Photo by Agam Back '26,

Contributing Photographer

raining at first," said senior Lev Dubler-Furman. "It ended up being a fun and cozy day. I'm glad

Some Heschel Teachers Are More Open to AI Than You Think

By Toby Rapoport '29, Staff Writer

Close to 90% of students claim to use AI in their studies, according to the Digital Education Council's Global 2024 AI Student Survey. However, Heschel High School does not have a standard AI policy. Curious about how teachers are adapting to this new age, Helios interviewed four high school teachers on their AI policies.

Social Studies teacher Steven Weber says his AI policy is that in "anything you turn in, you shouldn't have used AI." He continued: "I can see a time where AI is useful, but for now it is prohibited. AI doesn't help students learn to think."

Celine Clerfueille, head of the World Languages Department, is a bit less strict on student AI use. "Students may not use AI on assignments," Clerfueille said, but "you can ask AI to generate tests for you to prepare. That makes the student active. Any other use makes the student passive." She added, "I'd like to use it for French conversations. I'd like kids to speak to AI in French."

Math teacher Zev Traum said, "AI is a very important tool for students to know how to use." Use of AI is permitted in his class, as long as students also show their work. "That way, you cannot just rely on AI to get your solutions."

Meanwhile, computer science teacher

AJ Holzer has a more unorthodox policy on AI. "Students can use AI as a resource, just like Google and the internet," Holzer said. But he feels strongly that, if students use AI to write code, they have to know what it means.

Regardless of their policies, teachers are still confident that they can tell when a student is using AI. "I know students are using AI if tests don't match up with the homework," Traum said. "When students use French structures they haven't learned yet, they are probably using AI," said Clerfueille. Be sure to check what your teacher's policy is, lest you be accused of cheating!

Danielle Sassoon Speaks on the Importance of Rights and Freedoms

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

On Tuesday, Oct. 21, Danielle Sassoon, former Interim United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, spoke with the high school about her time in the position and its abrupt end. Sassoon said she resigned after receiving orders to drop charges against Mayor Eric Adams for what she believed were political reasons unrelated to the strength of the case of corruption for which he had been indicted. Sassoon told students that she sacrificed her dream job to oppose what she viewed as legislative overreach and to uphold principles of equality and justice.

Growing up in New York City and attending The Ramaz School, Sassoon credits her Jewish upbringing for helping craft her mindset, approach to the law, and devotion to public service. In reference to her resignation, Sassoon quoted a pasuk from Dvarim that her former Talmud teacher sent

her: "תשמעו לא תגורו מפני איש כי המשפט לאלוקים הוא לא-תכירו פנים במשפט כקתן כגדל." This pasuk commands judges to fairly adjudicate among people of high and low status alike, because justice is

"I appreciated her authenticity," said senior Juliette Heisler, co-leader of the Young Conservatives Club at Heschel. "It showed in her willingness to prioritize her principles over

a job she clearly loved. She taught an important lesson: that aligning with a political group doesn't require total agreement on every issue."

"I really like the public service initiative [from the Programming Council]," said Sohn. "I love that we are a Zionist school, but a lot of the programs in the past few years have been about Israel, and we needed more programs about America." And for students who agree with Sohn, there is much to look forward to, as Heschel will be bringing more speakers to discuss American public service.



God's and not for the powerful.

"Her comments on how her Judaic studies have influenced and helped her in her career added to my appreciation for my classes," said senior Leo Sohn.

Photography by Gabe Godin

Minyans Honor Victims of Oct. 7 with Another Torah Siyyum

By Yael Ben Daniel '28, Staff Writer

All high school *minyans* participated in a Torah study to honor the victims of the Oct. 7 attacks and commemorate the tragedy's second anniversary. Each *minyan* read a portion from the five books of the Torah, collectively completing all 54 weekly parshiyot.

A larger, but similar, siyyum was held last year, during which the entire Heschel community (including parent volunteers, teachers, and younger classes) completed studying the entire Tanakh. This year, the commemoration

was much more intimate and involved student planning to distribute the learning.

Senior Navah Luxenberg took charge of distributing the parshiyot for the Egalitarian minyan, which studied Devarim. This minyan decided to study the last chapter of the Torah as a group.

Luxenberg said, "We all studied the last chapter in Vezot Habracha as a minyan and discussed it together." When asked about the minyan's intention while learning together, Luxenberg said, "For me it was really meaningful to study the closing of the Torah, which includes

the death of Moshe, with the memory of the 1219 people killed on Oct. 7th."

Every student who took part in the siyyum dedicated their learning to the memory of the victims murdered on Oct. 7, as well as the newly returned hostages.

Senior Hannah Wurzbarger said, "Studying Torah with the hostages in mind felt very fulfilling. I'm grateful for the opportunity to focus on Oct. 7 in this meaningful way while maintaining hope for the returning hostages."

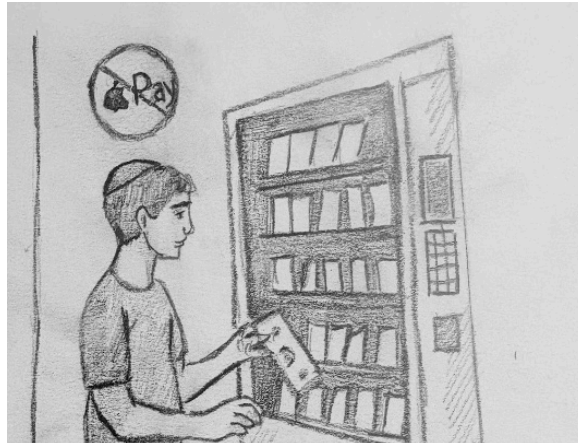
Phone Policy Affects Student Vending Machine Use

By Noam Shimoni '28, Staff Writer

The new phone policy has changed vending machine usage in the high school. Last year, when students were hungry or thirsty, most would pay for a snack or drink by double-clicking on the side of their phones to select a credit card on Apple Pay. This year's new phone policy eliminates that method of paying.

Now, students must pay for a snack or drink using cash, specifically \$1 or \$5 bills, as the vending machine does not accept larger bills, or by bringing a physical credit card. However, few students carry cash, and many do not own a physical card.

While vending machine usage is down, so is the wait time. Last year, during times like *mincha* and lunch, the lines for the vending machine were very long. However, during *mincha* this year, with fewer students purchasing snacks and drinks, there are shorter lines in the stu-



dent lounge, making it easier to buy snacks and reducing the chaotic crowds that used to form.

Furthermore, since students are purchasing fewer snacks and drinks, the vending machine is stocked for a longer period of time, allowing more students to access their favorite items towards the end of the day and even the end of the week.

Art by Aaron Koffman '28, Art Editor

Heschel Hosts Annual Blood Drive

By Rocky Furst '27, Staff Writer

On Wednesday, Oct. 22, Heschel came together for its annual blood drive. In the weeks leading up to the event, health educator Samantha Brandspiegel encouraged eligible students aged 16 and older to sign up and save up to three lives, highlighting the importance of donating amid the country's ongoing blood shortage. To boost participation, donors were also entered into a sweepstakes with a chance to win Nets vs. Knicks tickets.

This year's drive was a tremendous success, with 65 people donating blood, including 13 first time donors, collectively helping to save an estimated 195 lives.



To ensure a safe and positive experience, students were reminded to stay hydrated and eat iron-rich foods beforehand. These precautions helped make the donation process smooth and comfortable for everyone involved.

The Heschel and Tzedek Council has been an active participant in planning the school's blood drive. Senior Hannah Wurzbarger, the Blood Drive Student Coordinator, works closely with Samantha and the New York Blood Center to

organize three major drives each year. As coordinator, Hannah's main responsibilities include promoting the drives and spreading awareness via emails, public speaking, and posters displayed throughout the school. She then updates the Heschel and Tzedek Council on its status, so members can table before each drive and volunteer at the events themselves.

Reflecting on the experience, junior Mika Afriat said, "While giving blood was physically draining, it felt very rewarding knowing I was saving three lives in the process."

Junior Ezra Tiven-Gottesman said, "Giving blood is a mitzvah. I'm glad I can make a positive difference."

Thank you to everyone who donated and made this year's blood drive such a success!

Photography by Gabe Godin

Clearing the Table: Harry's Table Closes

By Liza Gerstein '27, Staff Writer

Harry's Table by Cipriani shut its doors on Nov. 1, officially ending a three-and-a-half year run as one of the Upper West Side's premier dining spots. The Italian market and fine dining food court sold a wide-variety of products, and contained a coffee bar, a patisserie, a pasta station, a salad bar, and more.

Residents of the Upper West Side did not

let Harry's Table go without a fight. A community petition called for the renegotiation of the food hall's lease, but due to unreasonably high rent, the store closed forever.

Junior Serena Yunis said, "Harry's Table was a pivotal part of my years in high school. The food was so good, and no restaurant can replace it."

Harry's Table's fate reignited local concerns about rising rent and the growing number

of restaurant closures. Similarly, Empellón, a taqueria across the square, was recently forced to shut down. The two shut downs represent a larger trend, and many community members have grown concerned about the lack of nearby dining options.

Harry's Table will be greatly missed, but never forgotten.

Media Outlets Reject the Pentagon's New Press Policy

By Bella Kalimian '27, Editor-in-Chief

On Sept. 20, U.S. Secretary of War Pete Hegseth announced a major change to the Pentagon's press policy. In the past, reporters covering the Pentagon only had to agree to a one page list of reasonable security measures. Now, reporters must sign a 21 page document outlining a new, strict set of guidelines—including one that gives the Pentagon the right to censor unclassified information. The Pentagon gave reporters a mere ten days to sign the agreement or risk losing their press credentials.

The next day, reporters asked President Trump whether the Pentagon should control media content regarding the U.S. military. He responded by saying, "No, I don't think so... Nothing stops reporters. You know that." Nevertheless, Hegseth remains determined to implement this new policy.

On Oct. 15, dozens of journalists and major news outlets protested the new terms by

handing in their press credentials and refusing to sign the updated conditions. What distinguished this walk-out from others was the unity across political lines: reporters from the New York Times and Fox News stood united against this policy.

Many news sources have expressed fear of censorship by the U.S. military. The National Press Club said on October 15, "The First Amendment does not stop at the Pentagon's gates."

In response to Hegseth's changes, English teacher Stefan Dorosz said, "There's an understandable concern here about keeping sensitive information private so as not to jeopardize national security. But a responsible free press serves a vital role in a functioning democracy; restricting the former undermines the latter."

However, not everyone disagreed with this policy; an anonymous student defended the policy stating, "In an era of cyber-espionage and

rapid information spread, caution is now a form of defense."

On Oct. 22, Sean Parnell, the Chief Defense Department spokesman, shared on X that the Pentagon had recently ushered in the "next generation" of journalists. The new media outlets and journalists have "created the formula to circumvent the lies of the mainstream media and get real news directly to the American people."

However, the confidence and faith he has in the new policy isn't shared by the media industry. Reuters wrote, "At least 30 news organizations declined to sign a new Pentagon access policy for journalists, warning of the potential for less comprehensive coverage of the world's most powerful military."

This is an important event to follow, especially since there has not been a restriction on media access in the past.

One Battle After Another

Sparks Interest Despite Box Office Struggles

By Charlie Shiff '26, Assistant Features Editor

Paul Thomas Anderson's *One Battle After Another* has emerged as one of the most talked-about films of the year. Starring Leonardo DiCaprio as a former revolutionary on the run in search of his daughter, played by Chase Infiniti in her film debut, the movie masterfully blends intense action sequences with political messaging while also delivering moments of laugh-out-loud humor.

"The movie had some serious points and themes it was trying to get across," said senior Ro'i Fierstein. "But at the same time, it had some genuinely funny moments."

One Battle After Another is currently considered by both critics and fans alike to be a frontrunner at the Oscars. It's giving films like Ryan Coogler's *Sinners*



or Chloe Zhao's upcoming adaptation of the 2020 novel *Hamnet* competition for Best Picture. Additionally, DiCaprio and Anderson are both currently frontrunners in the categories of Best Actor and Best Director. With such promise at the Oscars, the film's modest commercial performance has surprised many viewers. On a budget of \$175 million, it has earned only \$163 million, so it is considered a box office flop.

The two highest-grossing American films of the year were *A Minecraft Movie*, a video game adaptation, and *Lilo & Stitch*, a remake. Fans are wondering whether there is still room for artisan films like *One Battle After Another* to make a profit.

Poster Design by Ravi Zupa

Is America Ready for the First All-Spanish Super Bowl Halftime Show?

By Jessie Nanasi and Maya Fine '28, Staff Writers

Puerto Rican superstar Bad Bunny is confirmed to be the performer for the Super Bowl LV halftime show, marking the first time the event will be held fully in Spanish.

Known as the "Latin King of Trap," Bad Bunny began his music career in 2013 but only shot to stardom in 2016 with his hit "Diles." One of his first breakthroughs in the U.S. charts was his feature on the song "I Like It" by Cardi B and J Balvin. Since then, Bad Bunny has dominated the worldwide Spanish pop scene, currently commanding over 80 million monthly listeners on Spotify, according to the streaming platform.

For decades, the Super Bowl halftime show has been performed in English. Even when Hispanic artists Shakira and Jennifer Lopez took to the stage in 2020, they sang a mix of English and Spanish songs. This year, however,

Bad Bunny plans to sing entirely in Spanish, a first in Super Bowl history.

"Ever since Happy Gilmore 2, I've been a huge fan of Bad Bunny," said senior Haym Suisa. "I completely support him doing the halftime show. I like his music and know it'll be fun to watch him perform."

"I don't have anything against [Bad Bunny], but my dad definitely won't understand a word," said junior Uri Dayan. "I'm going to watch it either way, but people might not want to if they can't connect with the lyrics."

Bad Bunny's performance represents a significant moment in the NFL and American pop culture as Spanish language music and culture continues to grow in popularity. Recently, Colombian popstar Karol G performed at the Victoria's Secret Fashion Show—an iconic American event known for featuring global pop stars and models—revealing how Latin musicians are becoming a major staple in mainstream enter-

tainment.

English teacher David Karpel, who is of Jewish Cuban heritage, shared his thoughts on the performance: "I think it's amazing. It's so important to celebrate all the various ways of being American; being Latino means so much to so many people. The culture matters, and to see it celebrated in such a public way at the Super Bowl feels healthy for all Americans, Latino or not." Karpel said he supports the idea of cultural representation on such a big stage. He added that while other Latino artists have performed before, what makes these sets this year apart is that Bad Bunny will be the first to sing entirely in Spanish.

As the Super Bowl approaches, all eyes are on how the audience will respond to Bad Bunny's historic performance. Each year, the show attempts to evolve to increase ratings and appeal to a wider audience; the question now is whether this year's performance will follow suit.

Heschel Welcomes New Chemistry Teacher Andrew Cook

By Ella Ben Daniel '29, Staff Writer

We welcomed many new teachers to the Heschel School this year, including Andrew Cook. He teaches tenth-grade Honors Chemistry and twelfth-grade Honors Chemistry 2.

Andrew was born and raised in New York City. He went to Northwestern and got his PhD at the University of California Santa Barbara.

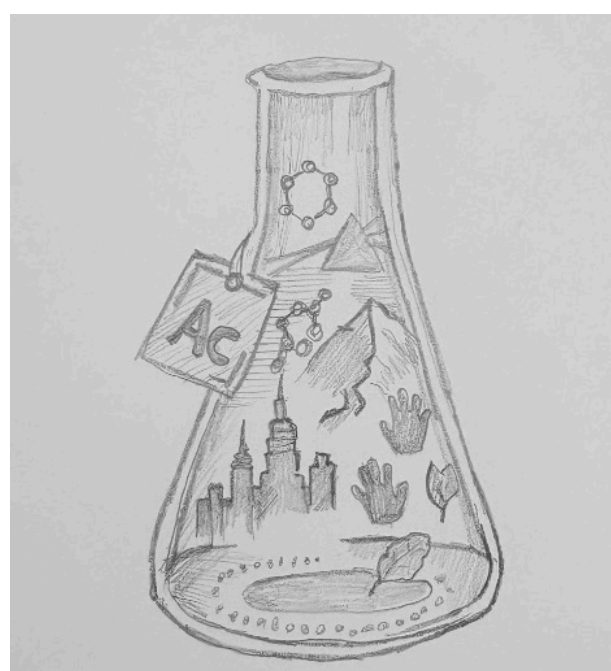
He loves playing with his kids and says, "Anything they do, I do." Together, they enjoy exploring the outdoors.

Andrew was inspired to teach chemistry by his own high school science teacher, Mr. Dibbs, whose classes sparked his passion for the subject. He tries to make classes fun and engaging for his students, just like Mr. Dibbs did. For

example, he brought special glasses to class that showed how color is actually light reflecting on an object.

When asked why he loves chemistry, Andrew said, "In chemistry small things have big effects," and pointed out that "everything we do is chemistry."

Before teaching at Heschel, Andrew taught Chemistry for four years at Mt. Saint Vincent University. He



says that, compared to the university, Heschel has a stronger sense of community, and that his classroom environment also feels different: he finds that students at Heschel are more engaged and excited to learn which in turn makes teaching more rewarding.

Art by Aaron Koffman '27, Contributing Artist

Freshmen Adjust to the High School

By Stella Heymann and Freda Dwek '29, Staff Writers

This September, the class of 2029 transitioned from middle school to high school. Many former Heschel Middle School students are pleasantly surprised by the changes that came with the big switch.

One of the most notable differences was the new building. Heschel Middle School is located at 30 West End Avenue, occupying the 4th and 5th floors. Many students liked its modest size, as it made it easier to get to class. Others, however, didn't like sharing the building with the Lower School and Early Childhood. Now, in the 20 W. End Ave. building, a 7-floor complex, students complain about the long distances between their classes. Some students have to hike from the science labs in the basement to the 7th floor, which is exhausting, especially with heavy backpacks.

"I think going from floors four to five made it easier to keep track of classes," said freshman Noa Girtz.

But many students like the change, as

they enjoy having a building dedicated solely to the high school.

Additionally, students can now pick which minyan they pray in. In middle school, administrators assigned the *tefillah* groups. Every student participated in the same egalitarian service each morning. While some students enjoyed the standard service, many wanted more options. Now, students have a wide range of selections to choose from. Sephardic students can pray in their own *minyans*, and Orthodox students can participate in Orthodox services. *Minyans* that include other connections to God are also offered, such as the Creative Expression *Minyan*. Even though many of the *Minyans* offered have many students enrolled, like the Egalitarian and Orthodox *Minyans*, there are also smaller *tefillah* groups, such as the Wellness and Israel *Minyans*. Some students prefer these *minyans*, as they create a calmer atmosphere. "I think that the smaller *tefillah* groups are better because it feels more intimate," said freshman Leora Bowers-Poulad.

For freshmen, the school introduces a variety of world language classes to choose

from. In Heschel Middle School, they only offered Hebrew. Now, however, Spanish, Arabic, Latin, and French are added to the mix. Some students like this and are excited for the opportunity to learn a new language. Others feel that it adds more work to their already demanding schedules.

"It is really important to have the option to learn another language in case you want to travel," said Talia Shafizadeh, a freshman taking Arabic. "It takes up a lot of my time, but I don't regret taking it."

Although freshmen are enjoying the upgrades that come with joining the high school, they are struggling with the tremendous workload and longer school days. In Middle School, the average school day went from 8:00am to 4:00pm, but now school ends no earlier than 4:30pm on most weekdays. Even with the late start on Wednesdays, and the time off in October, students are still feeling exhausted. Teachers are assigning more work than students had in middle school.

MCC's "Bears Boomin' Bakery" to Open on the Upper West Side

By Emily Borden '26, Features Editor

The Manhattan Children's Center on the Upper West Side, which many Heschel students have visited as part of a 9th grade *Hesed* initiative, has introduced a new bakery program within its upper school, designed to provide students with autism a vocational, hands-on experience in a job-like environment.

Located at 715 Columbus Avenue, Bears

Boomin' Bakery has begun training its students to prepare for when they open up to the public. Currently, the bakery has been open to the staff and students of the upper school, and it has also initiated a once-a-week bake sale at its lower school location on West 92nd Street.

Under staff guidance, students participate in many aspects of the bakery's operations, including mixing batter, operating the cash register, and restocking goods.

According to the bakery's website, Bears Boomin' Bakery was "created to provide pre-vocational training and inclusive employment opportunities for the neurodiverse community." The program aims to help students develop both technical and interpersonal skills that can help prepare them for employment. Check it out for a delicious snack to support a great cause!

Hollywood's Trendiest Grocery Store Arrives in New York With a Catch

By Mia Bilon '28, Staff Writer

Hollywood's most popular and most expensive grocery store is coming to New York.

Erewhon, named after the 1872 utopian novel by Samuel Butler, and anagram for "nowhere," reflects the store's vision of an idealized, health-focused lifestyle. It is a full-service high-end grocery store most famous for its prepared foods, tonics, and smoothies.

Some of the smoothies are made in collaboration with different celebrities, most notably the Hailey Bieber smoothie, which

became well-known thanks to social media platforms like TikTok and Instagram. Erewhon has become a symbol of the California lifestyle as well as a popular place for tourists to stop.

What once started as a small health food store is now expanding, and, to no surprise, they chose New York City as their next step.

However, the expansion is not happening in the way one might think. Erewhon will not be in a typical storefront that any New Yorker can shop at, but

rather is opening inside the private Kith Ivy club in the West Village. Only exclusive members of

the club will have complete access to the new location. Non-members within a certain radius of the club will be able to order the viral celebrity smoothies and Erewhon juices on Uber Eats.

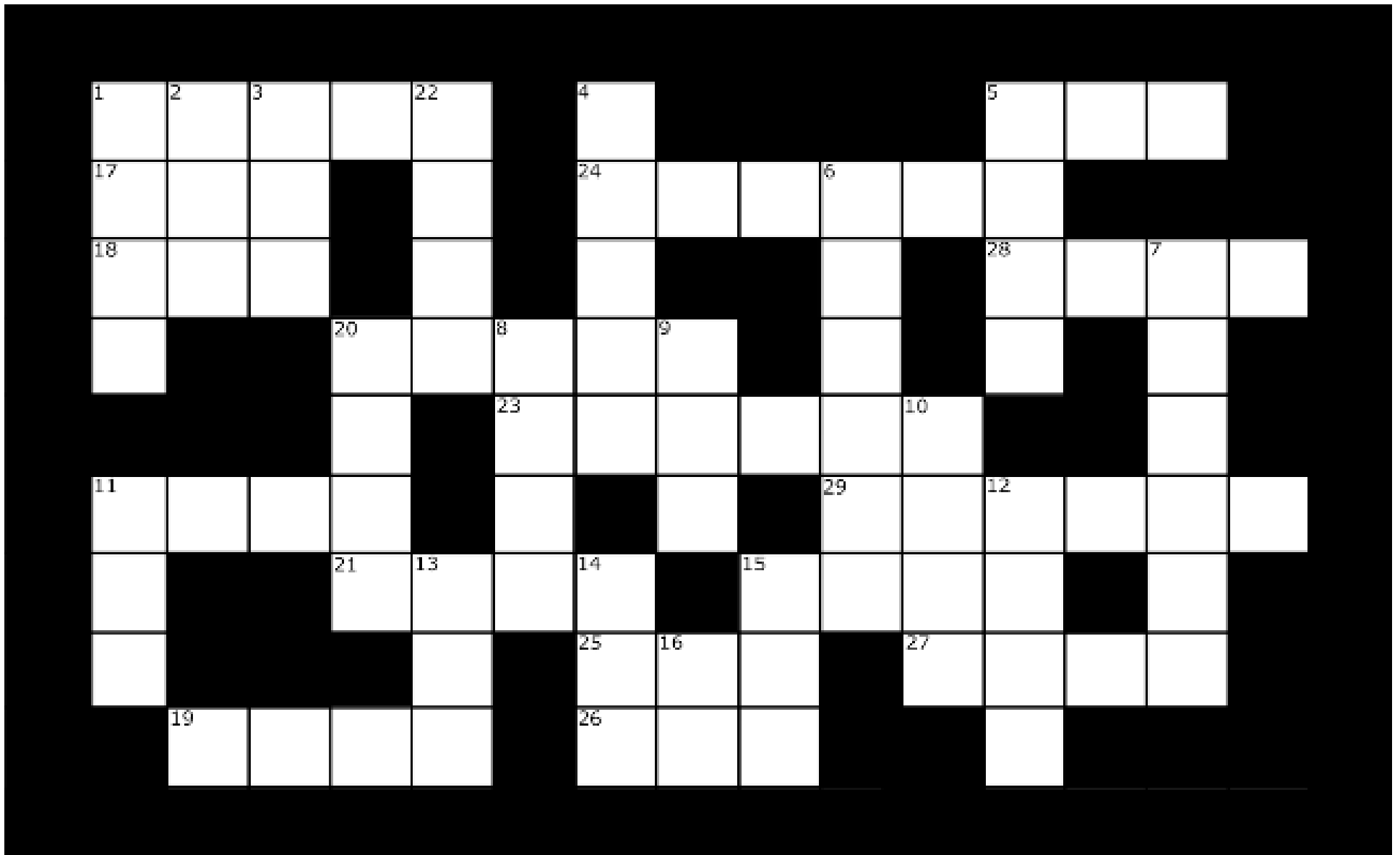
Sophomore Jordana Pena said, "My first thought when I heard Erewhon was coming to the city was 'I am so excited, I have always wanted to try Erewhon.' But then I was really disappointed when I realized I could not actually go and would only be able to get their smoothies through Uber Eats. Honestly, I would not go all the way downtown just to order one, but if I was already there, maybe I would try it." For now, New Yorkers can get a taste of this piece of California culture, just not the full Erewhon experience.

"I think it is great that they are expanding because they have a large variety of excellent products," said junior Tamar Schwarz, "Now people won't have to go all the way to LA to try it!"

Art by Aaron Koffman '28, Contributing Artist



Crossword



Down

1. The small edible blackish-purple berries of a South American palm tree.
2. (abbr.) Informal British-English way of saying a popular dessert.
3. During the Revolutionary War, what did people throw into the sea?
4. A tower built in Genesis that was said to have reached the sky.
5. "Could you let me know ___ if this is something you would consider?"
6. A book whose title is "Never Give a Mouse a ___"
7. To move in the shape of an arc
8. The first name of a musical artist whose concert recently broke records for attendance.
9. To annoy or irritate someone.
10. An animal that can carry 50x its body weight.
11. The last name of an American author who was known for writing short-stories and poems.
12. What the emperor of Russia was called before 1917.
13. A tree that belongs to the beech family and is known to produce acorns.
14. A basic algebraic operation.
15. An Apple-made portable device that students use todo work on.
16. A basic refusal.
20. To run quickly.
22. To give something another try after failing.

Across

1. Comparative adjective meaning "better suited."
5. The name of a boat that held two of every animal.
11. (abbr.) Forever chemicals that make pots stain resistant.
15. A New York City sports team.
17. Something said or done that serves as a signal.
18. (abbr.) 1990 law protecting people with disabilities.
19. The sound a dog makes.
20. "A baker's ___."
21. A popular running shoe brand.
23. The state with the largest coastline.
24. A manual calculator that uses colored beads.
25. A molecule that forms a double helix.
26. A title for a medical worker.
27. Past tense of producing music with your voice.
28. "The door was ___."
29. To understand or work out by instinct.

Zach Bryan Delivers a Night to Remember

By Eden Barlev '29 and Sadie Graff '29, Contributing Writers

On Sep. 27, 2025, country singer-songwriter Zach Bryan performed for over 112 thousand fans at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. The show took place in Michigan Stadium (known as "The Big House"), home

to the University's football team. It set a new record for the largest ticketed concert in the US, surpassing the previous attendance record by 1,503 people.

Bryan grew up in a small town in Oklahoma and has loved music since he was a child. He played 27 songs throughout his two and a half hour concert.

Senior Maddie Friedland said, "Going to the concert was so much fun. From John Mayer joining Bryan onstage to the whole crowd screaming the lyrics to Bryan's hits, such as 'Revival' and 'Overtime,' the whole event was truly a surreal experience."

This concert marked the end of Bryan's 2025 tour.

MLB Recap: Yankees Disappoint Fans (Again)

By Jake Rothenberg '27, Assistant Sports Editor

As the 2025 Major League Baseball season comes to an end, there is one trend that's hard to ignore: the New York Yankees' World Series drought. The Yankees, a profoundly successful franchise, have gone 16 consecutive seasons without bringing a trophy back to the Bronx. It has only had a drought this long twice in its history, dating back to the year 1903. The truth is, the Yankees have had great success over the past 15 years, reaching the playoffs 13 times, but they have yet to cross the finish line.

This year was no different. The Yankees won a respectable 94 out of 162 games and finished second in the American League East. They defeated the Boston Red Sox in the Wild Card before falling to the Toronto Blue Jays in the Division Series in four games. Yankees captain Aaron Judge had a tremendous playoff run, but poor pitching ultimately cost them the series. Although the Yankees had a disappointing season, the Toronto Blue Jays and the Los Angeles Dodgers each had outstanding seasons, winning their respective leagues. The Dodgers prevailed in a seven-game thriller, claiming the World

Series trophy a second year in a row.

When asked about what went wrong this year for the Yankees, junior Eli Kotler said, "The team was way too inconsistent, and it showed in the playoffs. Against the Blue Jays, they relied way too much on Aaron Judge, their pitchers were inconsistent, and their bullpen was lacking."

Yankees fans now eagerly await the 2026 season, hoping for their team to bring a championship back to the Bronx for trophy number 28.

Girls Varsity Soccer Season Recap

By Margot Hess '27, Assistant News Editor

Since the beginning of pre-season, the Girls Varsity Soccer team has been a committed and unified group. Head Coach George Alavardashvili and Assistant Coach Avi Chowdhry led the team, and have played major roles in training and strengthening the players. The Heat began their season winning their scrimmage against Calhoun and have continued to prove themselves on the field with subsequent victories.

On Sep. 29, the girls played their senior night game against Waldorf. Not only was the team's celebration and speeches for the seniors energetic, but so was their performance.

They beat Waldorf 3-1, with all 3 goals scored by sophomore Zoe Nadel.

To continue their winning streak, the

a hard fought 3-2 victory, a great reflection of their diligence.

When asked about his impression of the team, Coach Avi said, "They impressed me with how together they were. They weren't faster or stronger, but their unity helped them win."

The Girls Varsity Soccer team finished the regular season in 3rd place in the PSAA League. They continued to the semifinals game on Oct. 21, where they unfortunately lost to Stony Brook, bringing their season to an end.

We are so proud of the team's hard work and dedication, and how far they made it. We wish them immense success in their upcoming seasons.



girls travelled 3 hours to Long Island to play Stony Brook School. The Heat defeated them in

Photography by Margot Hess '27, Assistant News Editor

Girls Varsity Volleyball Wraps Up a Powerful Season

By Maya Gleser '27, Staff Writer

From the first serve of preseason to the final point of playoffs, the girls' varsity volleyball team embodied perseverance, teamwork, and energy. Led by Coach Jezel Encarnacion and Coach Edwin Martinez, the team has worked tirelessly since the end of August to sharpen their skills and strengthen their bond both on and off the court.

The season began with a strong showing in early matches. The players' determination was clear: this would be a competitive year. Every game was viewed as an opportunity to improve and push further as a team.

On Sep. 15, one of the most exciting highlights of the season came when the team made school history by defeating Stony Brook

– a team that Heschel volleyball had never beaten before. After a long three-hour drive to

leaving each team suspenseful until the last point. The energy in the gym was electric as the girls fought for every point, ultimately securing victory.

The team came in fourth place after reaching the semifinals and continued to fight persistently until the end. Despite a tough loss against LuHi on Oct. 21, the girls showed resilience, closing out their season with immense growth and gratitude.

Setter Mika Afriat said, "The volleyball season is short yet so special. This team was truly the dream team. We played well and I am excited for next year!"

As the season comes to a close, the team's hard work is something the Heschel community can be proud of. We look forward to seeing what next year's team will bring.



Stony Brook's gym, the team showed up ready to fight. The game was filled with long rallies, powerful serves, and incredible defensive plays,

Photography by Liam Barlev '26, Photography Editor

Rookie Matthew Schaefer Sparks Hope for Islanders with Historic Debut

By Charlie Shiff '26, Assistant Features Editor

New York Islanders rookie Matthew Schaefer is wasting no time making his mark on the NHL. With only a few games under his belt, the 18-year-old defenseman is already putting his name in the record books.

After the Islanders' lackluster '24-'25 season, fans and the team alike knew changes were needed. Their prayers were answered on May 5, when the Islanders won the first pick in the draft lottery with only a 3.5% chance. Fans immediately speculated which player the New York team would pick, and Schaefer's name always stood at the top of the list. These speculations came true on June 27, when Islanders

General Manager, Mathieu Darche, announced that Schaefer would be coming to New York. Darche and his team made the right choice, as Schaefer is already giving fans something to cheer about. On Oct. 21, against the San Jose Sharks, Schaefer scored the game-winning goal, becoming the youngest defenseman in NHL history to do so. In that same game, he tied the record for the longest point streak to begin a career by a defenseman at six games in a row. The record was originally set by Marek Zidlicky in 2003 with the Nashville Predators.

"I feel like 2016 was the last time I felt like we had a future," said Social Studies teacher Steven Weber. "But there is now hope for this team to be better year on year forward."

Schaefer's success is not a total surprise. Last season with the Erie Otters of the Ontario Hockey League, he racked up seven goals and 15 assists in just 17 games before his season was cut short due to a broken collarbone. He also suited up for Team Canada at the world juniors, contributing a goal and an assist before suffering that same season-ending injury.

Now healthy and thriving, Schaefer has become a key part of the Islanders' blue line and a player hockey fans across the league are watching closely. If his first few weeks in the NHL are any indication, Matthew Schaefer isn't just a rookie to watch; he's a future star in the making.

Opinion

Early Decision Promotes a Toxic Mindset

By Gila Lehon '26, Opinion Editor

The Early Decision (ED) process forces students to adopt an inflexible mindset in their college applications, which can have serious repercussions if they do not get their preferred choice. ED is an opportunity for students to apply early to one school, communicating to the school that it is their top choice. If a student is accepted, they must go, as ED is a binding agreement.

While it is not required for any applicant to apply to a school through early decision, it increases an applicant's chances of acceptance, and can offer students a more relaxing senior year. Consequently, even if students do not have a favorite school, they will often choose to ED to one regardless. However, this encourages a

rigid mindset, because ED constitutes a binding agreement, and students feel forced to see themselves at only one college.

At the same time, students must maintain academic expectations and continue working on the rest of their applications in case they don't get accepted.

This creates a confusing emotional rollercoaster, as seniors must stay committed to their Early Decision choice while also sparking interest in other schools.

Early Decision also promotes unhealthy competition amongst peers. Realistically, not every (if any) student who applies to the same

school will receive an offer. So, seniors often worry about whether another student is applying ED to the same school as they are. Furthermore, when these decisions come out, it can be mentally challenging to support your friend who got into the very school you had bet on. In the Regular Decision cycle, you usually have more options and are less set on one particular school.

I would argue that the Early Decision practice is a recipe for disaster. It can lead to great disappointment and does not promote a healthy mindset about one's future. Students should learn to see value in multiple schools rather than putting one above all. Early Decision inhibits the ability to maintain controlled expectations and build realistic aspirations for the future. Rather than providing a wide range of possibilities, it encourages an incredibly narrow lens through which students can view their options.

Art by Eliya Yehudai '27, Art Editor



Taylor Swift's The Life of a Showgirl Album in Review

By Hannah Wurzburger '26, Editor-in-Chief and Maddie Friedland '26, Staff Writer

Taylor Swift has become a cultural phenomenon such that, whether or not each song was a masterpiece, *The Life of a Showgirl* was bound for success. So, are her newest songs worth the hype?

In August, Swift announced her album release on her fiancé's podcast, *New Heights*. Released on Oct. 3, 2025, Swift's newest album broke several records, such as "most albums sold in a single week." All twelve tracks on the album placed in the "Billboard Top 100" list, and fans excitedly gathered to listen the moment it dropped.

While there are some catchy songs, such as "The Fate of Ophelia," whose music video

surpassed 110 million views, fans were upset by the lack of emotional depth. In 2024, Swift released *The Tortured Poets Department*, an album consisting of 31 heartfelt tracks depicting Swift's mental state while performing during The Eras Tour. So, *The Life of a Showgirl*'s lyrics were an obvious contrast.

For example, on Swift's newest album, the song titled "Cancelled!" includes a line, "Did you girl-boss too close to the sun?" This cringe-worthy question is shocking when juxtaposed with *The Tortured Poets Department*'s song "But Daddy I Love Him," in which Swift sings that people are "sanctimoniously performing soliloquies I'll never see." There is a clear distinction between her prior complex phrases and her recent uninspired ones.

The difference in both originality and

lyrical depth between these two songs is exactly why Swift's *The Life of a Showgirl* is receiving backlash. Swift frequently rebrands her sound, and now she has shifted to an upbeat, electric pop-rock style.

Swift's current sound can partially be attributed to music producer Max Martin, who Swift worked with on her *Reputation* album in 2017. *Reputation* is known for its hit pop songs such as "Look What You Made Me Do," and "... Ready For It?" The shift in her sound coinciding with her reuniting with past musical partners makes sense.

At first listen, *The Life of a Showgirl* sounds cheesy and corny. Once you stop comparing this album to the rest of her discography and take it as a fun pop album, however, it is a joy to listen to and quite catchy!

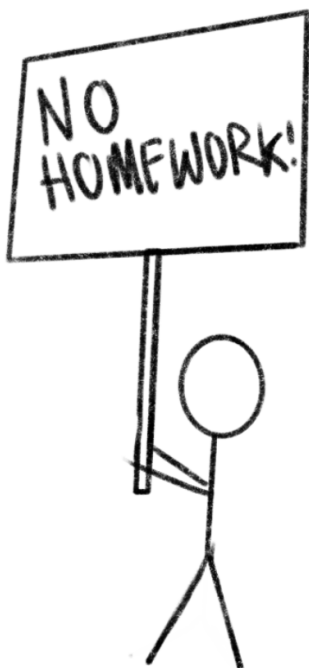
How to Improve the Senior No Homework / Assessment Period

By Leo Sohn '26, News Editor

On the first day of school, the administration and Rabbi Natan Kapustin surprised the senior class with the best gift any student could ask for from their school: no homework or assessments from Sep. 30-Oct. 20, and then again from Oct. 29-31. Most seniors looked forward to a month of uninterrupted time to focus solely on college work.

However, as the window of no homework / assessments closed, students were faced with tests or essays in their language, history, and, for some, Greek classes, all with-

in the week leading up to the Nov 1 deadline. What was initially believed to be the time to finish supplements and activities lists became crowded with homework and test prep.



Senior Hannah Wurzbarger '26 stated, "I'd much rather have a test on Oct. 1 than Oct. 28. Now that it's the end of October, I only want to focus on my supplements."

Further, because the no homework days almost entirely overlapped with the Jewish holidays, what initially seemed like almost

an entire month off of work was actually just about six days.

Next year, the administration should plan tests for earlier in the month and be sure to accurately communicate how many days off of homework and tests the students will have.

Admittedly, if tests are scheduled earlier in the month, students will face a more demanding September and early October, but it would allow seniors to approach the end of the month with more focus and less panic. Additionally, if the students are aware of the true number of days off from work, they'll be better equipped to plan their work for the months ahead.

The intention of the no homework and assessment time is generous and deeply appreciated by the entire senior class, but the execution led students to feel like the administration misled them. Next year, with clearer communication and perhaps new scheduling, seniors will be able to take full advantage of the opportunity to finish their supplements with less stress.

Art by Eliya Yehudai '27, Art Editor

Will the Junior Test Calendar Make or Break the Year?

By Serena Yunis '27, Assistant Opinion Editor

The Junior Test Calendar, although frightening at first glance, helps focus the minds of 11th graders. Their motivation to do well and study hard rapidly increases as the tests pile up.

However, many juniors still express the mental strain they feel when faced with multiple tests, in-class assignments, and quizzes in one week. Additionally, confusion circulates as to why there are two or more tests or quizzes in the same subject in the course of one month. This redundancy in the test calendar, some students argue, feels unproductive, and having two tests within the span of a few weeks seems unnecessary.

However, the benefits of having many tests close together are not spoken of enough. While it is an annoyance to have two Physics assessments, for example, within one month, the amount of material covered in each is more digestible. Studying for an exam that has considerably less information eases pressure on students, while the stress of studying for an assessment that contains months' worth of material can exhaust students. The fear of missing a small detail or messing up a simple question haunts them. This testing modification allows students to study more efficiently due to less information.

Additionally, if a student performs poorly on one test or essay, the score will have a lower impact on their grade because of the large

number of assignments already completed. This reduces the anxiety students experience when a heavily-weighted score causes their overall grade to drop.

Although the test calendar is extensive and difficult to manage, it can push the junior class to their fullest potential due to the frequency of assessments and the motivation that will ensue from it. Junior year is a rite of passage, and while it can seem overwhelming, it prepares students for the next phase of their education: college.

Heschel's New Clubs Fair Was a Big Success

By Margot Hess '27, Assistant News Editor

Heschel's annual clubs fair is one of my favorite events. It allows new students to learn about the culture of clubs and explore their interests through vast extracurricular options.

Yet, in the past, the fair often felt disorganized due to an overwhelming number of clubs and students circulating a small space. This year, with the initiative of the Student Affairs Council, there was a necessary, helpful change: the clubs fair was held over two

separate programming blocks.

The first one, on Sep. 29, was solely for freshmen. Conversations were tailored to their



inexperience, and I saw a newfound comfort and excitement among the grade. There was

little apprehension as they browsed the tables – just ambition.

The second fair, on Sep. 30, was for 10th, 11th, and 12th grades, which gave students a chance to revisit their options and reconsider or reconnect with their clubs.

The engagement and excitement surrounding clubs this year were unprecedented and incredible to see. I am grateful to the JSL team for running this process diligently and to the club leaders and members who were committed to the event.

This year's newly organized fair reminded me of the opportunities we have to join, create, or lead clubs and to make an impact on our community, and I hope it continues to be split between two different programming blocks in the future.

Photography by Gabe Godin

Freshmen Discover the Hidden Beauty of Heschel

By Sadie Graff '29, Staff Writer

Pretty strong title, huh? But it's 100% true. Heschel has so much beauty that is often overlooked by upperclassmen. But as a freshman, I've noticed what incredible opportunities this school has to offer.

Before coming to Heschel, I attended the same school for twelve years. The transition frightened me, but I can proudly say that coming to Heschel was one of the best decisions I have ever made.

On the first day of school, Rabbi Noam enthusiastically exclaimed "Boker Tov!"; an upperclassman complimented my outfit choice and smiled at me; Rabbi Dahlia asked, "How was your chag?" with genuine curiosity. These may seem like unimportant

interactions, but as a new kid, these were highlights of my day. Small moments like these eased

my nerves and melted away any awkwardness a new beginning might have.

Now that we're a few months into the



year, I've noticed how the Egalitarian minyan impacts my days, too. One morning, a senior

girl led the service, and her friends were beaming with pride. I sat there, admiring her bravery and leadership. This memory inspired me to follow in her footsteps; I wonder what amazing things I can achieve during my four years at an institution that values the pursuit of knowledge and asking questions.

Hachana stands out to me, because I see all of the high school come together as both a community and a family. There is something so special about holding hands with your friends, peers, and educators, feeling like you are a part of something more. Something real, a family.

Conversations with my former classmates about their stressful schools make me so thankful to be at a place with a loving and healthy learning environment. Heschel's beauty is so evident once we take the time to notice it.

Photography by Yalei Ravin '26, Layout Editor

Tension between Trump Administration and Colleges Threatens Higher Education

By Avi Spanier '26, Assistant Online Editor

Over the last few months, tension has grown between the Trump administration and America's most prestigious universities. The conflict centers on free speech, diversity politics, and government control of higher education.

The Trump administration accused over 50 universities of creating a politically biased, woke environment on campus and limiting conservative voices. To address this, the administration sent a letter to universities offering more federal funding if they agree to new policies, and threatening to cut funding for those who don't. These policies require universities to eliminate race and gender from admission deci-

sions, limit the number of international students enrolled, and define gender as based only on biological sex.

In response, many colleges pushed back, claiming that these policies would threaten academic freedom and force schools to go against their core values of inclusion and freedom of speech. Arguing that education should remain separate from political agendas, universities like Brown, MIT, and Penn, have refused to sign the federal funding deal.

Colleges have a duty to protect student rights and create a safe and responsible learning environment. The government shouldn't be able to dictate how universities operate or teach. The government may argue that its goal is to

ensure fairness and prevent bias, but their strict demands imperil academic freedom and open discussion on campus. This is especially relevant to seniors who are applying to college this year, as it affects admission decisions and the campus environment of popular schools around the country.

In my opinion, the government should focus on supporting universities through funding and resources rather than imposing political rules. Colleges should continue to protect academic freedom while maintaining inclusive and open learning environments on campus.

Students Crave Change: Vending Machines Need a Revamp

By Eli Bernstein '28, Staff Writer

Have you ever found yourself starving during school? Maybe you missed lunch to meet with a teacher, or gained a ravenous appetite during history class and decided to go to the vending machine. Perhaps your mouth desired soda to quench your thirst, leading you to the drinks machine. However, reaching it, you are reminded that you do not want more of the same, and you go back to class empty handed.

Heschel has had the same vending machine items for years, and by now, they feel repetitive and stale. Students crave variety, but

the lack of new options makes the snacks lose their appeal.

Personally, I am often not hungry in the mornings and skip breakfast at home. However, most days I do not have time to go to a store before school, so I rely on the vending machine. But I find my only options are a Hershey chocolate bar, or a Sprite or an overly processed sticky bun, none of which are the ideal breakfast snack.

The student body desperately needs a vending machine refresh. Items like Oreos do not need four slots; the remaining space could hold a new food. Last year, Chips Ahoy were

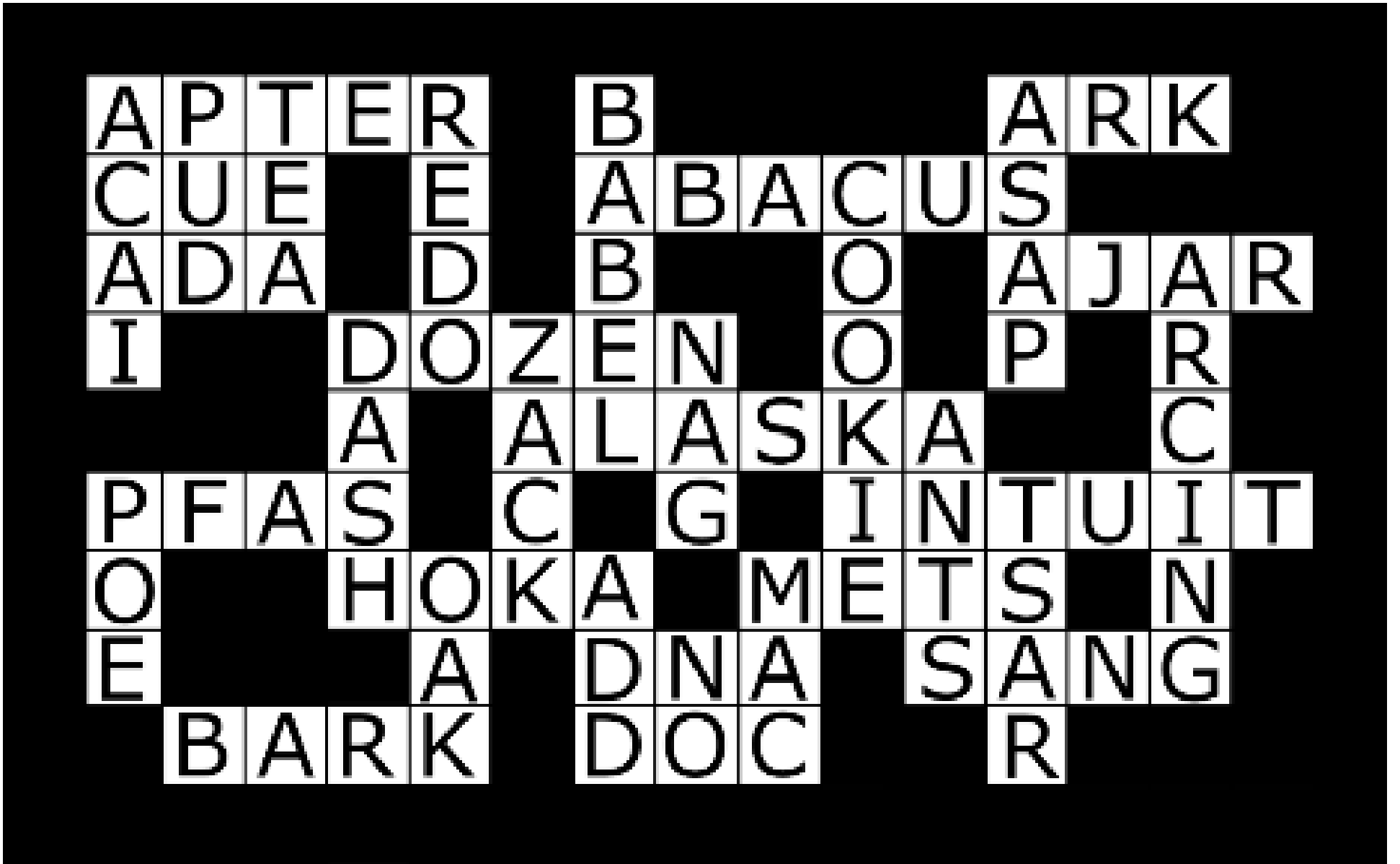
added and received positive feedback from the student body. The school should also consider adding healthier options like nut-free protein bars.

New vending machine items would help ensure that the students have the energy to finish the day. Fresh snack choices will spark better moods and lead to active participation in class. A minor update to the vending machines will transform hunger into motivation and raise the spirit of the student body.

Hesed Days



Crossword



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