

The Official Student Newspaper
of the
Abraham Joshua Heschel
High School



"We stand for what we utter..."

- Rabbi Heschel

Thank You to *Helios*' Senior Editor-in-Chiefs!

By Olivia Levine '25, Bianca Levy '25, Yhontan Yehudai '25, and Hannah Wurzbarger '26, Editors-in-Chief

Sylvia Zeltzer joined *Helios* her sophomore year and made an outstanding impact on the paper. Becoming Features Editor at the end of her sophomore year, Sylvia was determined to make her mark on the paper in whatever way she could. She implemented a food review section, which she continued to add onto into her senior year. By the end of her junior year, Sylvia

stood out with her passion for writing and creativity, implementing even more new ideas to the paper, and was elected Editor-in-Chief of *Helios*. Sylvia, thank you for all your hard work. You will greatly be missed!

Philp Efron joined *Helios* his freshman year. As a rising junior, he assumed the position of Opinions Editor, meticulously editing articles. Philip quickly became known for his superb writing skills and was elected Editor-in-Chief of *Helios* coming into his senior

year. He pushed to release newspaper issues at a faster pace, furiously texting in the EIC group chat when he started EIC edits. He also worked to improve the efficiency of the slugging process and the layout of the paper, which was often displayed on a smartboard in front of him. Philip, you will greatly be missed, and we sincerely appreciate everything you have done for the paper!

Thank you both for your dedication to *Helios*, and we wish you the best in college!

Heschel Students Commemorated *Yom Hazikaron* During the Aftermath of Oct. 7

By Olivia Levine '25, Editor-in-Chief

As students silently entered the gym on May 13, Hebrew Department faculty handed out *Yizkor* stickers. Although Heschel observes *Yom Hazikaron* every year, this year felt very different due to Israel's ongoing war in Gaza.

Programming Council VP Elana Farbiarz opened the program with an acknowledgement of the added weight of observing *Yom Hazikaron* in a post-Oct. 7 world, saying, "Usually we see *Yom Hazikaron* as historical, but this year it is terrifyingly close."

Following Farbiarz's speech, students and Heschel parents were called up to commemorate three fallen soldiers from various conflicts. Among those honored was Adir Mesika, a twenty-three year old Israeli who died fighting Hamas terrorists during the Oct. 7 attack.

Adir's aunts, Morielle and Ilana Lotan, described Adir as a role model to every person he met, having a gift for communicating with the people around him. He loved surfing and was usually late to Shabbat dinner because he stayed out to watch the sunset. After his army service, during which he was a unit commander in the Combat Engineering Corps,

he traveled the world and began making jewelry. Eventually, he decided to open his own business called "FLOW Jewels."

the time, he was hiding in a shelter with his girlfriend and his friends, Ilai Nahman and Matan Eckstein. When terrorists entered the shelter,

Adir ran out with his friends to protect everyone else inside. They were killed during the attack but saved many others in the shelter.

In his honor, Adir's family created numerous organizations to commemorate his life. His father started "Adir's Diamonds," an organization devoted to providing soldiers with wedding rings to help them start a family. Adir's brother, Or, took over "FLOW Jewels" to keep Adir's vision alive. Additionally, his family founded the Adir Challenge Foundation, an organization hoping to combat antisemitism through innovative technologies. His surf club also led a surf circle in his honor.

Photography by Liam Barlev '26, Photography Editor



In Adir's final hours, he texted his brother to let him know how much he loved him. At

Heschel Celebrates *Yom Haatzmaut*

By Maya Ortner '25, News Editor

On May 14, Heschel celebrated the 76th anniversary of Israel's independence with a day filled with activities planned by the Programming Council. Students were treated to a performance by the musical duo Yonina, a dance party, and Israel themed trivia, games, and learning. They also enjoyed a *shuk*-inspired



lunch on the roof with delicious Israeli food, snacks, cotton candy, and face paint offerings.

Towards the end of the day, the student body gathered to participate in the third annual *Heschelron*, made possible by the efforts of the Hebrew department. While all the performances were fantastic, the ninth grade's well-co-

ordinated performance of Yagel Oshri's "*Latzet M'dicaon*" ultimately proved victorious.

To cap off the eventful day, the final matches of Hoops for *Hesed* were held in the eighth floor gym. Although many of the games were close, a team of juniors ultimately won and became the tournament's champions. All the proceeds from the tournament were donated to ELEM, an Israeli nonprofit dedicated to helping at-risk youth.

The day was an inspiring celebration of Israel, and we can't wait to see what next year's *Yom Haatzmaut* will bring!

Photography by Liam Barlev '26, Photography Editor

Yom HaShoah Programming: Leora Klein Shares Family Story with Student Body

By Hannah Wurzbarger '26, Editor-in-Chief

a nonprofit organization called 3GNY, which creates a safe space for grandchildren of Holo-

caust survivors to share stories and experiences. 3GNY also focuses on keeping this generation's

Monday, May 7 was *Yom HaShoah*, Holocaust Remembrance Day. In a post-Oct. 7 world facing a rise in antisemitism and ignorance about the Holocaust, the day carried even more weight than usual.

After first period on Monday, the entire high school met in the gym for a Tekes in which students heard from learning lab specialist Leora Klein.

Klein is the granddaughter of four Holocaust survivors. In a beautiful and emotionally-stirring presentation, she described her grandmother's experiences and the atrocities she endured.

Klein explained the need to keep these stories alive. She told the community that she is a founding member of



grandparents' stories alive as time passes and survivors die.

Sophomore Caleb Creizman said, "I thought the way she told her story and how she used her experience [with her grandparents] to create 3GNY was really meaningful. I thought it was really inspiring that not only did she have the courage to tell her own grandmother's story, but to also ensure that other people's stories are preserved so that as an entire community we will never forget."

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

Heschel Harmonizers Bring Dedication and Lightheartedness to Annual Concert

By Pierce Malter '26, News Editor

On Monday, May 15, the Heschel Harmonizers brought their typical cheer to a full auditorium on the evening of their 18th annual concert. Special care was taken to ensure the event was meaningful and sensitive, as it took place over the last few hours of *Yom Hazikaron*.

The theme of the evening was Chai, Hebrew for life, the *Gematria* value for the number 18, and so the Harmonizers rebranded as the "Chai-monizers" for the evening. The program began with a prayer for the State of Israel, as well as *Hatikva*. Throughout the performance, skits paying homage to Israeli history were acted out between songs.

The Heschel Half-notes opened for the Harmonizers, directed by Naomi Bloch-Schartz. Senior Jayden Podchlebnik also helped direct the performance in her role as the lower school's music intern. She was a vital part of the Half-notes' performance, playing the rain shaker and even taking a solo on a song to fill in for a member

who was out sick.

Podchlebnik also soloed on the Harmonizers' first song of the evening, *Matanot Ktanot*. The song was the first of many Hebrew songs, sharing sentiments of gratitude for mundane and everyday occurrences that are often overlooked. Other Hebrew songs from the program included *Lashuv Habaita*, with soloists Zeva Landa and Eli Lebwohl, and *Yachad*, with

Michael Kaplan-Nolan, was likened to a sorrowful reminder of loss, while *Drops of Jupiter* soloed by Aerin Levine, was a wistful reminiscence of life before tragedy. While acknowledging tragedy, appreciation for the strength of the Jewish people and the existence of the Jewish State of Israel underscored the evening. Ezra Zbar donned Theodor Herzl's beard to explain the metaphors behind *Somewhere Over the*



Rainbow— a song written by Jews who intended for the bird flying over the rainbow to represent a Jew escaping religious persecution to Israel. Shoham Zuker provided visual aid while costumed as a bird.

Towards the end of the evening, the Harmonizers thanked their senior members for all of their hard work over the years. The event ended with the Half-notes rejoining the Harmonizers for *Al Kol Eleh*, a song by Naomi Shemer about pleading God to protect what she holds dear.

Photography by Liam Barlev '26,

soloists Amia Kaplun and Hannah Goldman.

The Harmonizers' catalog of English songs were also carefully selected to demonstrate their continued thinking about Israel. *Pompeii*, soloed by Lily Jaktupat-Schneider and

Photography Editor

Campus Protests Spark Uproar

From Palestinian and Jewish Communities

By Olivia Levine '25, Editor-in-Chief and Yohanan Yehudai '25, Editor-in-Chief

On April 17, pro-Palestinian Columbia University students rushed to the campus' lawn to set up a "Gaza solidarity encampment," sparking a worldwide debate on the validity of free speech on college campuses. Inspired by Columbia's protest, New York University students also set up an encampment in front of NYU Stern, which was quickly shut down by the New York City Police Department the following day.

To get the perspective of those involved in the recent campus protests in New York City, we traveled to New York University and The New School and interviewed protesters.

"The fact [that] there's cops everywhere makes students feel uncomfortable," said one NYU student attending a pro-Palestinian protest.

A "neutral" NYU senior said, "The way the NYPD came down both on NYU's campus down here and in Columbia up there felt like an egregious violation of the First Amendment." He also noted instances of "blatant antisemitism," which "many Jewish students felt threatened by."

A freshman protester at The New School, just a few blocks away from NYU, said, "This is not about being Jewish; it's about Zionism, and Zionism should not be equated to Judaism. I feel like that's an insult."

A Jewish NYU senior corroborated reports of antisemitism and said she felt ridiculed for her beliefs: "I feel very judged and looked down upon."

When asked about the reason behind the protesters' face coverings, the student said, "They're scared to be doing things because they know it's wrong, but they're doing it anyway."

A pro-Palestinian student had a different take on the masks, saying, "[The administration]

rose as police arrested over 40 students at an encampment at The New School. In response to the raid, dozens of faculty members at the university reinstated the encampment, marking the first ever faculty-led pro-Palestinian encampment on a college campus in the United States.

"We are protesting Israel's attacks on Rafah, Gaza, and all those places that are on stolen land," said a New School student when asked about the goal of the demonstration. "At the school, what we're protesting is the school's investment in arms companies and companies that fund the IDF."

Both at NYU and The New School, student protesters insisted that their main priority was their school's divestment from Israeli companies: "NYU is directly implicated in what is happening in Palestine," said one protester.

One of the faculty members who set up the New School encampment, an assistant professor, criticized the university's role in the conflict, saying, "What we want here, in this encampment, is for the New School's board of trustees

to vote on divesting from 13 companies in Israel."

Protesters quickly dismissed the argument that Israel's attack on Gaza is a justified response to the Oct. 7 massacres. One student said, "I think on Oct. 7, the 1,000 deaths in Israel are really tragic and were a big loss on that community, but 30,000-40,000 Palestinians dead is a bit of an imbalance."

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



has technology that can ID you. Now, if you stand up against injustice, they can suspend you or expel you."

NYU students have mixed views on whether the protests were peaceful or not. "[The protesters] yell foul things at me and my Jewish friends. . . and I don't like to engage."

Meanwhile, another student said, "If you look at the way the police did the raids both at Columbia and NYU [...], it didn't really feel like it was in response to some specific instance of violence."

Tensions between NYPD and protesters

Professor Michelle Greenberg-Kobrin Discusses Sexual Assault with Eleventh-Grade *Talmud* Students

By Daphne Stifelman '25, News Editor

After finishing the *Rodef* unit in their *Talmud* curriculum, the eleventh grade heard from guest speaker Professor Michelle Greenberg-Kobrin to culminate their learning. The *Rodef* unit centers around the question of what bystanders should do when they see that a crime is about to be committed, and the text specifically addresses sexual assault.

Greenberg-Kobrin, a law professor at Cardozo School of Law and lecturer at Columbia University, is involved in sexual assault prevention and investigation initiatives. She helped

document Hamas' war crimes against women and children on Oct. 7 and works to combat sexual assault on college campuses.

of warfare during conflicts, the goal is to lower the status of a group of people. She asserted, "Stranger rape is always about power, control, and degradation."

This idea is also found in the *Gemara* that the juniors studied, which teaches that when an betrothed woman is raped, it results in the lowering of her value.

Although rape is not an official war crime, war crimes are classified based on intent. On Oct. 7, Hamas established clear intent to degrade Israeli citizens by proudly documenting their actions online for the whole world to see. Professor Greenberg-Kobrin explained that this declared intent is what allows Hamas' sexual assault against Israeli women to be classified as a war crime.

Professor Greenberg-Kobrin's lecture was very well received by students, who found that she did an excellent job discussing sexual assault in a way that is relevant to today. Junior Charlotte Levine said, "The program allowed us to apply our studies to a real-world situation, which really enhanced my learning."

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



In her lecture, Professor Greenberg-Kobrin explained that when rape is used as a form

Sophomores Go On First Ever Heschel High School Washington Trip

By Georgia Bregman '26, Contributing Writer

After a four-hour bus ride, Heschel's sophomore class arrived at The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. Students were granted freedom to roam independently and ample time to absorb the tragic history on display. Each student felt the impact of the Holocaust differently as they explored the museum.

Sophomore Jordan Nili said, "Personally, although I come from an Iranian background with no direct ties to the Holocaust, I still found myself deeply moved."

Sophomore Dani Grinker said, "My experience at the museum was made more meaningful by the fact that I had taken the 10th grade Holocaust literature elective first semester. The museum really helped to contextualize the personal accounts that I had read of what it was like to live through this genocide. Of course, I had a decent amount of previous knowledge on the Holocaust, but during my trip to the museum, I paid extra attention to learning about the Nazis' rise to power. I think it is important to understand how authoritarian regimes arise in the first place so that we can identify the warning signs in contemporary contexts."

After the Holocaust Museum, the students ate delicious falafel and shawarma at the Washington D.C. Jewish Community Center. Then, they attended the interactive comedic murder mystery *Shear Madness*. The show features five characters who come together in a barber shop one morning. At the end of the first act, the lady living on the floor above them dies. The characters leave hints throughout the entire first act to help the audience figure out who committed the murder, and then, during the second act, the audience questions the suspects to uncover the true murderer.

Sophomore Gaia Reissfeld said, "I really liked that the play was engaging, and it was nice that we had a say in the plot. It was a very nice and happy way to end such a long day."



After attending morning services at the University of Maryland Hillel, students took a guided walking tour of D.C., visiting The Lincoln Memorial, the Washington Monument, the World War II Memorial, and the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial. Later that day, the sophomores walked around Old Town Alexandria. They visited shops, walked along the river, and enjoyed local ice cream.

Sophomore Charlie Shiff said, "It was nice to have a little break just to hang out in between all the really cool places we went to."

Sophomore Amelie Prevor said, "It was great to walk around with friends— I got lemon sorbet and a bracelet!"

In the afternoon, the students were invited to the White House Executive Building to speak with Heschel alumni Gabriel Barnett. Barnett is a Senior Legal Assistant in the White House Counsel's Office and a Senior Advisor in the Office of Public Engagement. At the time the sophomores met with him, he was also serving as the Acting White House Liaison to the American Jewish Community. Barnett spoke about his path to his current position as Biden's senior

advisor for Jewish public engagement, as well as his work for the Democratic Party since his junior year of high school.

After Barnett finished speaking, he opened the floor up to questions. Students asked him questions about his opinions on Israel, his day-to-day schedule and his plans for the future.

Sophomore Bobby Covit reflected on meeting Barnett: "Being inside the White House complex, especially so close to the West Wing, was an enormous privilege, and Gabe Barnett was so welcoming to us. Having a recent Heschel alum who is already so accomplished is very inspiring for me and I'm sure for my peers as well. I mean... what a role model to have." Many students marked the visit as the highlight of their trip.

On Thursday morning, the trip concluded with a visit to the African American Culture and Heritage Museum. The main exhibit covered the history of African Americans over hundreds of years in the Americas, including slavery, the Jim Crow and Reconstruction eras, and the Civil Rights Movement. The rest of the museum was filled with interactive and colorful exhibits showcasing African American culture.

Sophomore Omer Dayan said, "I think it was really interesting to learn about African American culture, and I will definitely come back in the future so that I can see more exhibits."

After the museum, the sophomores boarded the bus and headed home. The students arrived home tired, happy, and fulfilled with their learning experiences in Washington D.C.

Photography by Liam Barlev '26, Photography Editor

Arizona Repeals Strict Abortion Ban, While Florida Cracks Down on Reproductive Rights

By Gershon Leib '27, Staff Writer

On April 9, the top court in Arizona moved to restrict reproductive rights state-wide, reinstating a 160-year-old near-total ban on abortion. The bill permits abortion only if the pregnant person's life is in danger, proving unpopular among Democrats and Republicans alike for its severity and ambiguity.

In response to widespread public outcry, the state Legislature passed a narrow majority vote to repeal said ban. However, the repeal is yet to take effect, meaning most residents of Arizona are unable to receive an abortion for at least the next three months; according to Arizona state law, the state legislature is unable to pass new legislation for 90 days after the end of the annual legislative session, unless extenuating circumstances are at play.

Once the older ban has been repealed, Arizona state law is set to reinstate a 2022

abortion-ban past a 15-week gestational period, although neither the 1864 ban nor the post *Roe v. Wade*-era ban permits exceptions to victims of sexual assault and incest. A pregnancy may only be terminated to prevent serious health risks, and can only occur after a 24-hour waiting period between mandatory abortion counseling and a second visit to the health center. This means that if a woman is 15 weeks and 6 days pregnant on the date of her initial visit, she will not be eligible for an abortion. Hence, the pregnant person must receive an abortion out of state, as telemedicine appointments are banned in Arizona. Arizona is situated between California, Nevada, New Mexico, and Colorado, where abortions are accessible and confidential.

The Committee to Protect Health Care, comprised of progressive medical professionals and pro-choice activists, continues to advocate for a reduced 24-week ban past the point of fetal viability through the Arizona Abortion Access

Act. At the same time, the Alliance Defending Freedom, a conservative Christian legal advocacy group expresses concern over the broader implications of the recent repeal of the 1864 ban and the fate of the pro-life movement at large.

In Florida, its state supreme court recently ruled in favor of an even more restrictive 6-week ban. To receive an abortion past 6 weeks gestation, Floridians must travel to either North Carolina or Virginia, where little to no restrictions on abortion exist. The state law before May 1, 2024 was a 15-week ban consistent with that of the current legislation in Arizona, although the lack of certain exceptions for victims of rape and incest was a source of contention between Floridian voters. Hence, the current Florida state law permits exemptions for victims of rape and incest for 15 weeks, although it is important to note that Florida implemented a similar to Arizona 24-hour waiting period between the initial visit and the date of the procedure.

The Best Banana Bread Recipe

Eliya Yehudai '27, Assistant Art Editor

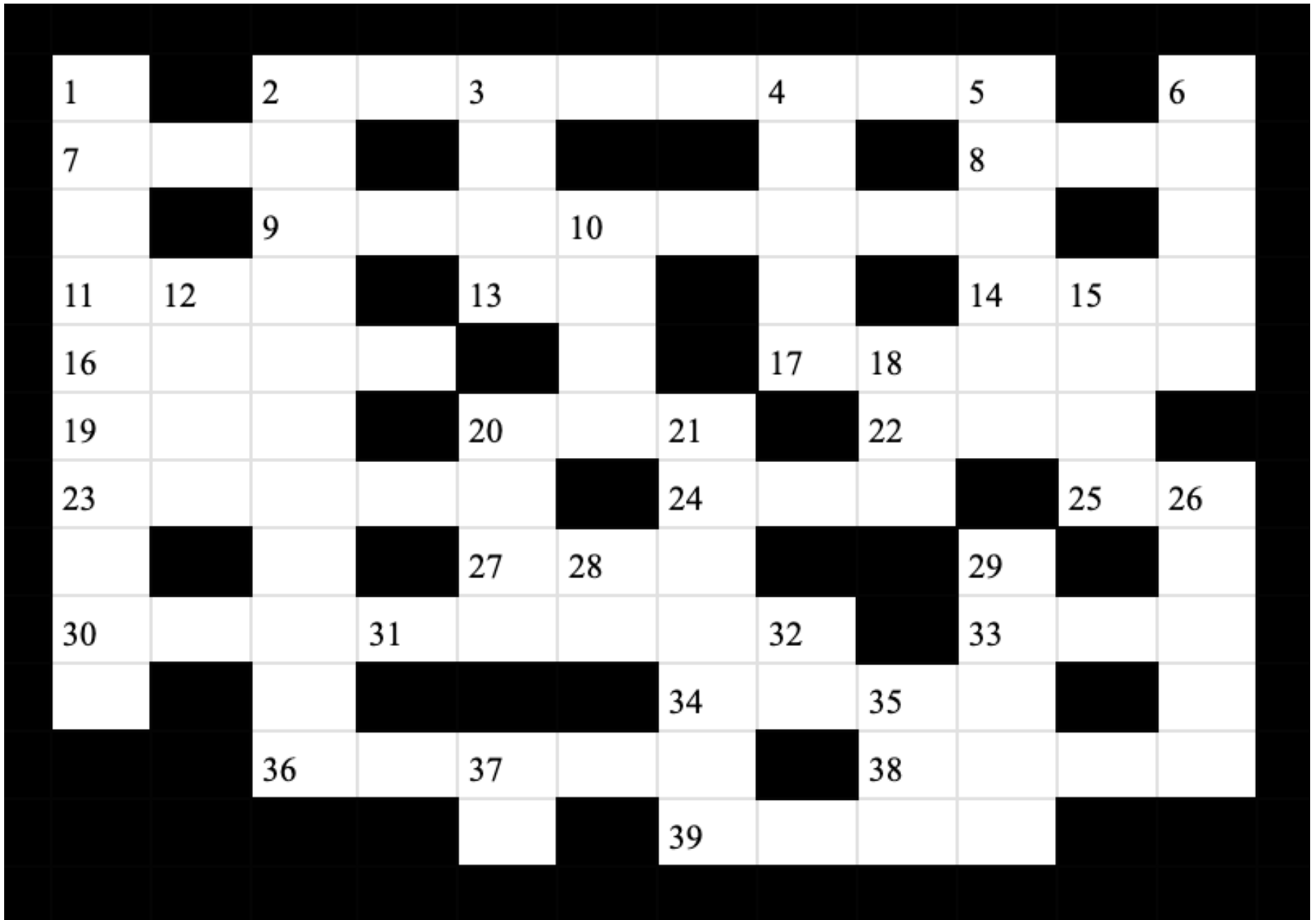
Summer is drawing nearer by the minute, meaning the time has arrived for excitement and celebration! Usher in June with this fun-to-make and incredibly delicious banana bread.

Directions:

- Preheat oven to 350°F
- Butter 4x8 loaf pan and set aside
- Mash ripe bananas and stir in melted butter
- Mix in baking soda and salt
- Add sugar, egg, and vanilla extract

- Add flour and stir until smooth
- Add chocolate chips to batter
- Pour batter into pan and bake for 50m-1hr
- Remove from oven and let cool
- Remove from pan, serve, and enjoy!

Crossword



Across

- 2. Holds the end of your sleeve together
- 7. Norwegian band behind "Take On Me"
- 8. Greek exclamation
- 9. The underworld in Greek mythology
- 11. Common pest
- 13. Union established by the Maastricht Treaty abbr.
- 14. Advanced in age
- 16. You may need these to get inside
- 17. Sandals with a Hebrew brand name
- 19. Hem and ____
- 20. Michael Jackson's 1987 follow-up to "Thriller"
- 22. Apple's mobile operating system
- 23. Beatles drummer Ringo _____
- 24. Conclusion
- 25. In the direction of
- 27. Corporation
- 30. A chord's notes played individually rather than simultaneously
- 33. Main muscle in the lower and mid back abbr.
- 34. German-American Nazi group in the 1930s
- 36. Strainer
- 38. Culinary drama show "The _____"
- 39. King of Britain in a Shakespeare tragedy

Down

- 1. Country ending in "stan" with the greatest landmass
- 2. Askew
- 3. ____hand, opposite of backhand
- 4. "Hebrew" in Hebrew
- 5. Balkan country, previously part of Serbia
- 6. "A show of _____"
- 10. Lowest-pitched instrument in the brass family
- 12. Tidy
- 15. Final
- 18. Major Muslim holiday
- 20. A ship with two masts
- 21. Unit used to measure volume of sound
- 26. External
- 28. Surname of 38% of the Vietnamese population abbr.
- 29. Member of the birch family of trees
- 32. Leading Kosher certification agency
- 35. Third most-watched sports league in the USA
- 37. ____ Cummings, American poet

Dan Senor Broadcasts Truth and Decency on *Call Me Back* Podcast

By Pierce Malter '26, News Editor

In the months since Oct. 7, Dan Senor's *Call Me Back* podcast has attracted hundreds of thousands of listeners and featured dozens of high-profile guests, from novelists to prime ministers. But to Senor, the podcast is the same as it's always been: just conversations and a microphone.

Senor started *Call Me Back* in the fall of 2020. During the pandemic, he found himself having long conversations with friends who also happened to be acclaimed intellectuals, journalists, and politicians. Senor recalled that one day he "thought— why not record one of these conversations, and see if there's appreciation for it beyond just me and my guest? And there was."

His earlier episodes focus on the pandemic's ongoing influence on the economy, politics, and pop culture, and how it would continue to do so even after the end of quarantine. Yet, Senor knew he didn't want the podcast to remain focused on the pandemic after COVID's cultural relevance diminished.

Episodes of *Call Me Back* began to focus on a wider variety of topics, including American higher education, the war in Ukraine, and infighting within the Israeli government. However, after the horrific events of Oct. 7, and in the process of checking in with all of his Israeli friends after the terror attacks, Senor refocused

on Israel. During a conversation he had with Haviv Rettig Gur, The Times of Israel's political analyst, Senor said to Gur, "Wait, stop talking. Let me record this conversation." And Gur responded, "I don't want this to be a podcast episode." And I said, "I won't upload it unless you'd like me to." The episode went up on Oct. 8 and brought a massive jump in listenership for *Call Me Back*. After it was released, Senor recalls thinking that the path forward for *Call Me Back* "all made sense."

Senor believes the podcast has earned its high degree of popularity because it caters to how the general public wants to be informed about the conflict. Senor said, "There's a lot of demand for resources, for the history of this conflict— understanding how we got here." Episodes consist of historical context, educated opinions, facts, and above all else, stories from real people who have experienced struggle through the war. In the months since Oct. 7, Senor's guest list has included Rachel Goldberg and Jon Polin, parents of Hamas hostage Hersch Goldberg-Polin, US representative Ritchie Torres, and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Although antisemitism in America is a rarer topic of discussion on *Call Me Back*, it weighs heavily on Senor. He notes that "saying hateful things and inciting violence [are seen as unacceptable] to virtually every other minority

group," but against Jews, they have been met with encouragement, the "textbook definition of discrimination" in his words. Universities' reactions to the conflict have been especially stupefying.

Senor attributes universities' reactions to "a culture that was morally indefensible (anti-Jewish hatred) now becoming socially acceptable." He "[wants to encourage] families to think much less traditionally about where their kids go to school now. I think a lot of these places [universities] are very hostile now and aren't going to be done anytime soon."

Senor attributes some of his success with *Call Me Back* to his books on Israeli culture. The first, *Startup Nation*, focused on the Israeli economy, while *The Genius of Israel*, released on Nov. 7, 2023, focused on Israeli culture, specifically the Israeli tendency to withstand hardship by creating happiness. The books, *Startup Nation* especially, exposed the general public to an aspect of Israeli culture that is often obscured. In similar fashion, *Call Me Back* exposes the general public to the emotion and tragedy underscoring Oct. 7 and the subsequent months. "You know, people hear from Israelis every day. But it was clear to me that people weren't hearing enough from regular Israelis. . . . So what I've learned along the way: there is an extraordinary appetite for education," he said.

Ken Carson: The Future of Hip-Hop

By Jacob Zucher '25, Staff Writer

The landscape of hip-hop is constantly changing, and every so often an artist emerges with the potential to redefine the genre. Ken Carson, an Atlanta-based rapper and producer, is quickly becoming a leader in this transformative era of hip-hop music.

Born Kenyatta Lee Frazier Jr. in 2000, Carson has developed a unique style combining autotuned melodies with hard-hitting lyrics. Inspired by icons like Lil Wayne, Future, and Lil Uzi Vert, Carson started making waves in the music scene after dropping out of school to pursue his passion. His early connection with notable figures, like producer TM88 and rapper Playboi Carti, catapulted him from underground circles to the spotlight.

Carson's journey through music has been anything but conventional. His initial

venture into the industry saw him navigating through social media and small gigs, only to later be signed to Playboi Carti's record label, Opium. Here, he began to truly shape his musical identity, releasing projects that gradually built his reputation.

2023 marked a crucial year for Carson with the release of his album, *A Great Chaos*. The album's broad mix of tracks showcases Carson's versatility, blending energetic rap with braggadocious verses and humorous one-liners. The success of singles like "Jennifer's Body" and "Fighting My Demons," amplified by their viral fame on platforms like TikTok, has solidified Carson's place in mainstream music. His distinctive sound has not only captured the attention of millions but has also started to influence emerging genres within hip-hop.

As Carson prepares up for his 2024 Chaos World Tour, his influence continues

to expand. The tour, which spans from North America to Europe, promises to bring his lively performances to an international audience. This exposure will further solidify his global appeal.

Carson's story is more than just a tale of musical success; it is a testament to the evolving nature of hip-hop and its endless possibilities. His journey reflects the genre's ongoing discourse between the underground and the mainstream, between traditional rap and innovative new sounds.

Carson is not just making music; he is building a legacy. With a style deeply rooted in the current digital and cultural trends, he represents the next wave of hip-hop. Carson is an artist truly emblematic of his time, ready to take the throne as the next big thing in a constantly evolving genre.

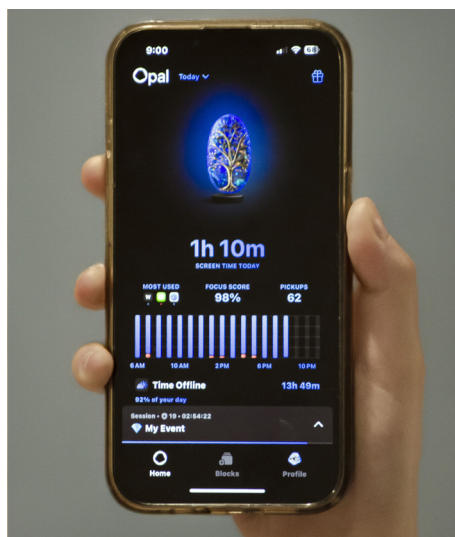
Opal Screen Time App Review

By Lila Nanasi '25, Staff Writer

After realizing I spent six hours on my phone after getting home from school, I downloaded the Opal screen time app. My phone addiction was out of control. Since I downloaded it, I have essentially gotten years of my life back.

I downloaded the app and inputted my daily screen time average. At the time, it was seven hours a day. Opal told me that if I stayed on that path, I was on track to spend a total of 32 years on my phone. Yikes.

Opal lets users rank their apps on a sev-



en-point scale from most distracting to most productive. Then, it blocks them accordingly with snooze opportunities for up to 15 minutes. Users can set up scheduled blocks. For example, I have all of my distracting apps blocked every weekday from 6 p.m. to 10 p.m. This, in the best-case scenario, encourages me to start my homework at 6 p.m. instead of pushing it off. More realistically, it forces me to procrastinate

with something a little more productive, like talking to my family or FaceTiming a friend.

Opal provides detailed breakdowns of your screen time usage, accounting for every minute of your day. These analytics show how much time you have spent offline and give you a daily focus score out of 100. The app lets you create a profile and add users to your contacts. You can then see a leaderboard of block session length. Opal keeps users motivated with these leaderboard competitions and with gemstone rewards for achievements.

I implore anyone who wishes to minimize their screen time to give Opal a try. Opal has enabled me lower my average screen time by 31% and has helped me to regain 10 of my 32 lost years!

Photography by Liam Barlev '26, Photography Editor

Smoothie Bowls Under the Spotlight

By Gila Lehon '26, Staff Writer

Smoothie bowls are a delicious treat, especially in the warm months of the year. There are many smoothie bowl places, but how do you know which place will produce the best bowl for you? These four places are all good choices, and each features different ingredients to please a wide range of preferences.

Baya Bar – Baya Bar creates delicious smoothie bowls for \$15. Their smoothie bases are particularly tasty and sweet, and their ratio of fruit to granola to smoothie is very balanced. However, their portions are quite small, and not necessarily worth a full \$15. The bowl is only big enough for one person to enjoy. So, if taste is your top priority and you are willing to spend the money, get yourself a Baya Bowl.

Harry's Table – Harry's Table's smoothie

bowls are a high quality find at under \$15. Service takes a while, but this can be attributed to the amount of care and precision that is put into each order. As for the taste and texture of the bowls, the granola is of high quality, although the smoothie itself is on the liquidy side. So if you are looking for a bowl with a little more texture, Harry's Table is not the place for you. It is less sweet than other smoothie bowls, which can be either good or bad, depending on one's preference.

Morton Williams – Morton Williams offers a more affordable smoothie bowl option at about \$8. Morton's bowls are densely packed with toppings, so if this is not your preference, then this is not the bowl for you. The taste is satisfactory considering the price. It is not too sweet, but still very enjoyable. The bowls can also take a lot of time to be made, so don't opt

for Morton's bowls if you are in a rush.

Playa Bowls – Playa Bowls is the priciest option on this list at nearly \$20. However, Playa offers a wide selection of smoothie bowls to choose from, and gives abundant toppings. Along with its large menu, Playa Bowls' serving sizes are large enough to share with a friend or save some for later. As for the taste, most of Playa's bases offer a very neutral flavor – one that is not particularly sweet or flavorful but still tastes good. Playa offers customers the choice of splitting a base, meaning that you can have half of one base and half of another, which is definitely a positive. Playa delivers large amounts of freshly cut toppings on each bowl. Therefore, its unique flavors and textures come from the toppings, not the base

Indulge in Ice Cream Trucks' Icy Delights

Noa Chorowsky '25, Features Editor

As summer rapidly approaches and temperatures rise, ice cream trucks become a familiar sight across New York City. Whether in need of a sweet treat or a cold snack to cool down, ice cream trucks boast an array of delicious frozen desserts to choose from.

According to a school-wide survey, the most popular delicacy from ice cream trucks is soft serve, particularly vanilla-chocolate twist, with rainbow sprinkles. Students commend the delicious flavor, texture, and nostalgia it evokes.

Junior Olivia Levine said, "I love vanilla-chocolate swirl with rainbow sprinkles because it is classic and tasty. The rainbow sprin-

kles remind me of my childhood. My dad also orders this, so it is clearly generational." Levine noted that the ice cream melts very quickly and can get quite messy.



Junior Amia Kaplun similarly raved about a vanilla-chocolate twist with rainbow sprinkles. "The twist is a perfect choice when you don't know whether you want chocolate or vanilla, and the rainbow sprinkles really bring out the flavor," said Kaplun. The one flaw she noted was that the cones often taste like styrofoam.

Junior Leeraz Joseph echoed this sentiment, opting to enjoy her vanilla soft serve with rainbow sprinkles in a cup. She said, "the cup

really allows you to focus on the delicious ice cream, unlike the styrofoam-tasting cone."

Other crowd favorites include the SpongeBob popsicle, perfect for students

searching for a dairy-free frozen delight.

"The SpongeBob popsicle is perfectly sweet and just a little tangy, with amazing gumball eyes," said junior Aviva Guttman. "The only issue is that the gumball eyes are really black and dye my tongue, and sometimes they fall out before I can eat them."

Senior Malka Aderman-Alcorn said, "The flavor is great. It's very refreshing, and the gumballs top it off perfectly. They are so good!"

Some members of the student body reject the ice cream truck craze, refusing to buy their icy treats. Junior Lior Shimoni said, "I don't trust the ice cream truck regime. They overprice everything. I would rather have Ben and Jerry's, Haagen-Dazs, or Anitas, which is the best ice cream in the city."

New York City ice cream trucks offer students delectable frozen desserts that satisfy them during long spring school days and will continue to do so throughout the summer.

Art by Yalei Ravin '26, Layout Editor

Kendrick Lamar vs. Drake: The Escalating Feud That Shook Hip-Hop

Miriam Gross '25, Opinion Editor

The ongoing feud between Kendrick Lamar and Drake has escalated to diss tracks, personal jabs, and accusations flying back and forth. The latest chapter in their drama recently unfolded, with both rappers releasing songs that take blows at each other's personal lives and careers. However, it's been hard to follow along with the latest updates. Here's what you need to know:

The most recent tensions began with Drake's song "First Person Shooter" from his album *For All the Dogs*, released in Oct. 2023. On this track, featured guest J. Cole refers to himself, Drake, and Lamar as the "big three" of hip-hop. This reference didn't sit well with Lamar, who responded on Future's song "Like That" in March, dismissing the notion that Drake and Cole are on the same level as him.

J. Cole briefly entered the fray when he released a surprise album called *Might Delete Later*, which included a track titled "7-Minute Drill." However, Cole soon reconsidered his

approach and distanced himself from the developing drama, saying that it "didn't sit right with [his] spirit."

Drake then released two diss tracks, "Push Ups" and "Taylor Made Freestyle," on April 19. In these songs, Drake ridicules Lamar for many things, big and small, including his shoe size, and mocks his collaborations with pop artists like Maroon 5 and Taylor Swift. Lamar's reply was swift and brutal. On April 30, he released "Euphoria," a track in which he accuses Drake of fabricating stories and criticizes his biracial identity. Lamar's lines in "Euphoria" were scathing, suggesting that Drake is more of a "scam artist" than a rap artist.

Drake responded with "Family Matters," released on May 3, questioning the paternity of Lamar's child with his fiancée, Whitney Alford, and suggesting Lamar is unfaithful in his relationships. He also criticized Lamar's civil rights activism, calling him a "scam artist." The music video for this track featured the destruction of the van used on Lamar's 2012 Album cover for *Good Kid, M.A.A.D City*.

Lamar then released "Meet the Grammys" on the same day. In it, he wrote letters to Drake's family, apologizing for being such a terrible person. This track was one of the most aggressive in the feud, as Lamar did not hold back his attacks.

In response, Drake released "The Heart Part 6" on May 5, dismissing Lamar's allegations, including those about inappropriate relationships with younger women.

Despite accusations of Lamar "crossing the line," his disses have been notably sharper and better crafted, demonstrating his superior lyrical abilities. With a Pulitzer Prize to his name, Lamar's wordplay often features double, triple, and even quadruple entendres that captivate listeners and scholars alike. On social media, entire communities, including individuals with advanced degrees, delve into the deeper meanings of his lyrics. In contrast, Drake's responses have felt more reactive and defensive, focusing on debunking rumors and addressing specific allegations.

Drafting for the Future: The Generational 2024 NFL Draft

By Zack Levy '26, Staff Writer

The 2024 National Football League (NFL) draft included a wide variety of talent, with many skilled players ready to redefine the league. Many analysts saw this draft as “generational” due to its depth and diversity across positions.

The most impressive group was the quarterbacks. The headliner was USC star Caleb Williams, chosen first overall by the Chicago Bears. His exceptional on-field talent and football knowledge make him a franchise cornerstone. However, Williams wasn't alone in the spotlight. Jayden Daniels, Drake Maye, and J.J. McCarthy, along with many others, emerged as top-tier prospects, each with the potential to become their new franchise's starting quarterbacks.

Although six quarterbacks were taken in the first 12 picks, and the first 14 were offensive

players, the draft showcased many defensive weapons. Laitatu Latu, a dominant pass rusher coming out of UCLA, was drafted 15th as the first defensive player off the board, instantly elevating the Colts' defense. Other standouts like Byron Murphy, Dallas Turner, and Terrion Arnold are promised to disrupt offenses with their athleticism and skill.

There were also some hidden gems in the draft. Adonai Mitchell, a top prospect, ended up falling to the Colts in the middle of round two. As such an athletic and dominant force, analysts believed he was a late first-round talent. Impressed by his work at the Combine, and outstanding college career at Georgia and Texas, Mitchell landed himself a spot on a young and very talented Colts offense. With determination and talent, he's destined to make a mark.

While there were many eye-opening picks and generational athletes who hoped to be franchise players, the most talked about pick of

the entire draft was the Atlanta Falcons selection of QB Michael Penix Jr. out of Washington with the 8th pick in the entire draft. While he is a great talent and has a bright future ahead, the NFL world was completely shocked when this pick was made. This is because only a few weeks before the draft, the Falcons signed QB Kirk Cousins to a four-year 180 million-dollar contract. With Penix already being 24 years old, and his rookie contract ending around when Cousins's contract ends, this pick was mind-boggling.

The media on the 2024 NFL draft is unbelievable. The 2024 draft, held in Detroit, hosted a staggering 700,000 fans over the three days. This shattered previous records, leading the 2024 NFL draft to be highlighted as one of the greatest drafts ever. All the talk about the draft is thrilling, but the real action begins once the season kicks off. Now we can only wait.

Heschel Tennis Team Finishes Strong

By Claudia Messer '25, Online Editor

As the Heschel tennis season comes to a close, the overall enthusiasm and sense of camaradery within the team have left everyone with new friends and many new tennis skills.

The girls are currently undefeated, with wins against Ilan, Kushner and SAR. The boys have competed in two matches, winning one against TABC and losing the other against SAR.

Since the start of the season, the sense of unity and friendship on the team has grown enormously. Students across grades have formed unforgettable memories and indestructible bonds.

Junior Maya Lalezarian said, “The tennis team has been really fun this year. The entire team is motivated each practice and every match is exciting. The team has also been a great way to become closer with people outside of the

grade.”

Junior Jesse Kalimian said, “I love the Heschel tennis team. It is full of positivity and we are all one big family.”

Though the seniors have now sadly left the team, the energy is still as high as ever among the remaining players. Everyone is eager to play in the rest of the matches and finish the season with a bang!

Heschel Baseball Finishes Regular Season

By Sammy Fisher '25, Sports Editor

The Heschel baseball team has begun to dominate the Yeshiva League after a few early-season hiccups.

After gut-wrenching losses to SAR and Frisch to start the season, the Heat got their first win of the year against HANC on April 14 in a nail-biter. Tied 1-1 through six innings, HANC threatened in the top of the seventh with the bases loaded and two outs, but sophomore Nate Abramson

was able to get a crucial strikeout to keep the score tied. In the bottom of the inning, sophomore

Nate Abramson was able to drive junior Jonah Gross home to win the game in walk-off fashion.

Next, the Heat took on their cross-town rival, Ramaz. Motivated to start a win streak, the Heat scored 12 runs in the first inning, capped off by junior Samson Furst's bas-

es-loaded double.

The Heat put up another impressive score when they went out to Long Island to play HAFTR. After being up 4-2 for most of the game, the Heat broke the game open in the fifth, with a PJ Abramson run-scoring single, and then a triple from junior Sammy Fisher that brought in another three runs.

After a tough loss to DRS coming down to the last batter, the Heat looked to bounce back against North Shore and Flatbush. However, North Shore and Flatbush were not up for the challenge and both decided to forfeit. The Heat finished the season 5-3 and the second seed in their conference.

Center Fielder Samson Furst said, “It's been a roller coaster of a season, but we are excited to be in the playoffs and we feel like we can run the table.”

Art by Eliyah Yehudai '27, Assistant Art Editor



Girls Soccer Dominates Against Odds

By Tessa Mank '25, Online Editor

After a delayed start to the season due to the uncertainty of the team's future, the Heschel girls' soccer team has come out on the other side. Their first game was rough, but since then their strength and drive has been unwavering!

With four wins, the girls soccer team represents Heschel's resilience and ability to bounce back. Although their first game ended in a 0-10 loss to Flatbush, they are now stronger than ever! As Junior Daphne Steiflman says, “this team gets better with each year. Even with some minor setbacks at the beginning of this

season, we came back spirited, focused, and ready to play.” Their skill and devotion earned them a spot in the playoffs!

We can't wait to see what they have in store for the rest of the season!

Heschel Ultimate Frisbee Team Dominates New York

By Zack Levy '26, Staff Writer

The Heschel Heat went undefeated in the regular season, finishing 7-0 and ranking #1 in New York City and New York State.

As the dominant team in the Empire State, the Heat never let up 8 or more points in a game that is played to 15.

This year's team featured a staggering 29 players. Every player had a role. James Kashan and Ezra T-G, the only two freshmen on the team, had a large presence. Captains Max Harnoy and Evan Altman guided the team forward and

were key players in this historic season. Harnoy said, "We are proud of our undefeated regular season and look forward to hopefully bringing

home the city championship trophy, along with the state tournament trophy Memorial Day weekend."



This is exactly what the Heschel Heat did. The team went on to beat Brooklyn Tech in the city and state finals! They won both games by more than 7 and completed the perfect season, bringing home the city championship, and the first-ever state championship!

The team is especially grateful to Coaches Aaron Bell and Heschel Alum Lev Gordan. Altman said, "We are very lucky to have two phenomenal coaches who bring energy and positive vibes to every practice and game. We couldn't have done it without them."

Photography by Liam Barlev '26, Photography Editor

Hockey Team Ends An Amazing Season

By Olivia Levine '25, Editor-in-Chief

On May 3rd, the Heschel indoor hockey team geared up for its anticipated game against SAR. Coming out of a tough loss against them in the regular season, Heschel knew it would have to give the game their all in order to secure a win.

Going into the first period, Heschel was surprisingly up 1-0, even with the absence of their Head Coach Isaac Dweck. Assistant Coach Jonathan took over and was determined to lead the team to victory using similar strategies taught during practice.

By the end of the second period, the score was 3-2 with Heschel leading. The pressure was on to keep up the pace so the team could advance to the second round of the playoffs.

Unfortunately, during the third quarter, Heschel lost some traction and SAR tied the score. Since this was a playoff game, the game continued with sudden death style periods.



Heschel put up a great fight, leading the game into double overtime, though SAR scored a goal through a breakaway.

Photography Editor

Even though Heschel suffered a tough loss, Junior Captain Miriam Gross said, "the game was so intense and fun. [It was a] great end to the season in my opinion." She continued, "there were so many intense practices and games that really paid off and we were able to demonstrate our talents during this game. My hope for next season is that we are as good as we were this year!"

Photography by Liam Barlev '26,

Editor Thank Yous!

Shira, on behalf of the entire Helios Staff, we extend our deepest gratitude for all of your contributions. You were an integral member of our community and an incredible News Editor. You will be missed!

Felix, you have been an amazing Helios Sports Editor for the past two years. You always brought brilliant, creative ideas to our meetings and consistently wrote informative articles. We will miss your presence!

Karen, for the last three years you have been an indispensable member of the Helios community. Your devotion to each of your roles, whether as a staff writer, Online Editor, or News Editor, has left an indelible mark on this newspaper. We wish you success in all your future endeavors!

Isaac, we are so grateful for your tireless work as a layout editor for the past three years. Without you, we would not have a printed newspaper. We are so sad to see you go.

Jordan, thank you for all your hard work creating amazing art for every issue. Our newspaper would not be the same without you, and we wish you the best in your future endeavors!

Israel Must Uphold its Moral Standards, Including Freedom of Press

By the *Helios* Editorial Board

On May 5, Israeli officials raided Qatar-based newspaper Al Jazeera's offices. Immediately following the raid, officials ordered the newspaper to shut down in Israel.

During a press release, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu reasoned that "Al Jazeera reporters harmed Israel's security and incited violence against soldiers." Netanyahu continued, saying, "It's time to remove the Hamas mouthpiece from our country."

We, as newspaper editors, take great issue with the suppression of news outlets, even those with whom we may disagree. Israel is a country that prides itself on being a beacon of democracy in the Middle East, but what is a functioning democracy without freedom to dissent and freedom of the press?

We understand the reasoning behind this decision but do not support the outcome. By outlawing Al Jazeera from spreading their propaganda, it seems that Israel believes that it is giving itself an advantage to the Israeli cause in the media war. We believe this puts the newspaper's legitimacy under scrutiny.

Israeli officials must take more care with their actions considering the lens of scrutiny they are under. Netanyahu has increasingly been accused of abuse of power by Zionists and Pro-Palestinians alike. By suppressing Al Jazeera, the Israeli government is doing nothing besides feeding into this message. The possibility that Netanyahu could be using this suppression to further his personal political agenda is also not out of the question, especially as he continues to face increasing pressure from the far right to act.

But beyond that, on a more practical level, what exactly does this policy accomplish? Besides the fact that many Israelis have been able to bypass the ban through VPNs and websites not under the Al Jazeera name, Israelis typically are not the ones reading Al Jazeera as articles are mainly targeted toward Arabs, a minority that makes up only 21% of Israel's population. And even so, those who support Hamas' cause will not change their minds if they see Israeli officials suppressing their news sources.

As Israel continues to fight a war both in the media and on the ground, it must maintain its position as a free and democratic state, and that includes freedom of press.

The Reason It Seems Israel Has Lost Support In the Recent Months

By Aviva Guttman '25, Opinion Editor

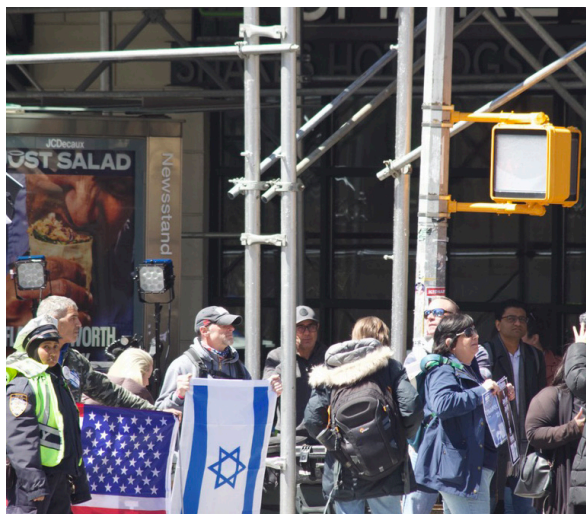
In the days following Oct. 7, support for Israel was widespread. Now, seven months later, that does not seem to be the case. So, where has this support gone?

According to The Washington Post, the Free Palestine hashtag has been used on more than 11 million posts, which is 39 times more than the #Stand-With-Israel hashtag. Similarly, "on Instagram, the pro-Palestine hashtag is found on 6 million posts, 26 times more than the pro-Israel hashtag." TikTok shows a similar disparity.

Junior Noa Chorowsky believes that the lack of pro-Israel representation on social media stems from the fact that "people are scared to speak out for fear of being labeled as 'un-woke.'"

Junior Anabelle Gononsky recently identified this lack of pro-Israel representation at protests. On May 6 at 7 pm, she was "looking out the window of [her] apartment, watching as a protest began to form." She reported, "At first,

only a few pro-Palestinians were waving flags and wearing Keffiyahs. My dad went downstairs and stood there waving an Israeli flag. Within the hour, the small group of pro-Palestinians had grown to some couple hundred, all chanting and holding posters. It was only then that the rabbi of our community and a few Jewish teenagers joined my dad." She continued, "In total, there must have been 300-400 pro-Palestinians while there were only 5-6 pro-Israel individuals, including my dad."



In the past few months, as I have toured colleges, I've noticed this disparity as well. While touring Tulane University in Feb., I walked through a pro-Palestinian protest consisting of 10-15 students while the pro-Israel counterprotest consisted of less than 5 people. Around campus, I noticed pro-Palestinian graf-

fiti and posters while there was very little pro-Israel representation. This was particularly shocking to me considering that Tulane has a robust Jewish population of over 40%. I wondered why there was so little Jewish representation while there were so many Jews in the community.

A recent visit from alum Charlie Covit reminded me of the answer. While speaking during Hachana on Friday, May 31, he referred to the term "silent minority," which I think accurately explains what Anabelle, many others, and I have noticed. While it may seem that every day and on social media there are more people who support Palestine, in actuality, it may be that some in the Jewish community feel a need to remain silent.

This silencing was not felt, though, at the Israeli Day Parade on Sunday, June 2nd. There, Jews from all over united in hope and pride, song and dance to give us all strength in these hard times. That day served as a great example for how we as Jews can publicly and proudly voice our support for Israel.

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

Students Suffer the Consequences of Having No Finals

By Gila Lehon '26, Staff Writer

Upon releasing the first-semester report cards in February, the administration announced that there would be no finals and instead a few weeks of end-of-year non-cumulative assessments. This choice has resulted in jam-packed test calendars from the end of May to early June with back-to-back assessments. By not having a designated finals period, students were at high risk for burnout and could not give their grades the potential boost that a final offers.

While students received one day off on May 29 another day off on June 3 to study, these intermittent days off were not as effective as reading days because we still followed the usual class schedule, along with homework. As a re-

sult, students had significantly less time to study for their assessments than for a final.

Many assessments covered a hefty amount of material. For example, the sophomore class had a social studies test covering three months of material, much of which was taught before the *Pesach* break. This meant that students needed to review a large quantity of information while juggling other assessments and day-to-day classes.

This brings to light a large issue: burnout. With the usual class schedule and no reading days, students did not have time to mentally prepare or rest before or between assessments. The consistency of these assessments inevitably left students feeling as though they could not catch their breath and put them at high risk for burnout, which can be detrimental to grades.

While these grades are worth less than a final, one grade can still make a huge difference in a student's grade.

Another loss that comes with this lack of finals is the potential for a large boost in one's grade that finals offer. Since finals are worth much more than one test, they can give students an opportunity to raise their grades. Also, if a final grade is higher than a student's lowest test score, it will often replace the lowest test score in classes such as math, further helping students who want to raise their grades significantly.

By eliminating the finals period, students lost the opportunity to benefit from a final in each class and faced struggles to keep up with the intensity of the test calendar while juggling regular classes.

How Should We Talk About October 7th?

Olivia Levine '25, Editor-in-Chief

October 7th was over seven months ago, but the trauma still feels just as fresh as the day the horrors began. On social media, in school, during holidays, and in conversations with family and friends, we are constantly reminded of the atrocities that occurred that day. It has been ingrained in the Jewish narrative and will never be forgotten. But, as October 7th begins to seem farther and farther away, how do we talk about the event while giving us space to heal?

This question first came to mind after touring the Nova Exhibition in the Financial District. The exhibition aimed at “recreating” the Nova Festival massacre on October 7th. And although I undoubtedly support spreading awareness for the acts of brutality on October 7th, I am critical of the exhibit’s goal of trying to “recreate” that traumatic day, especially because it is targeted towards an audience that has already experienced so much trauma from the aftermath of the day.

While walking through the exhibit, the videos from the day quickly became overwhelming. Surrounded by videos of violence, rape, and death was a lot for me and my peers to process emotionally. And although I did not look away, I felt a sense of guilt for wanting to do so. I felt that making my own mental health a priority would be the same as turning my back against the victims of the atrocity.

Since October 7th, the Jewish community has perpetuated a misconception that

watching the graphic content produced either by survivors or Hamas is the only way to understand the tragedy. Yet, for me and many of my peers, this can feel like a duty and burden. While watching these videos might be helpful



for some, the truth is that it should not be as widespread or normalized.

Jewish history for centuries has been defined again and again by the oppression we face. Year after year, we pray for our return from exile, an exile created by thousands of years of oppression. During Passover, we even relive this trauma during our seders. Because of this, we have become so used to carrying a generational burden that at times we don’t recognize it at all. But, with a new wave of trauma to carry since October 7th, this burden can become too heavy to bear.

It is important to recognize that these videos were recorded by Hamas militants for a

reason: to inflict psychological damage on viewers. By forcing yourself to experience the same trauma that October 7th victims experienced, you are in part feeding into this goal. These videos aren’t supposed to be “moving.” These videos are meant to be as damaging as possible to the human psyche, especially to Jews.

There should be a time and place to consume and talk about this disturbing content. But, it is essential, especially because the Israel-Hamas conflict does not seem to be ending soon, that we make a space to heal and take a break from the headlines. Watching these videos should not be taken as lightly as a simple Instagram story. You should not be able to consume all of it in one day at an exhibit. They should be consumed consciously overtime -- time which the social media algorithm and the exhibit don’t provide.

It is important that we continue to discuss the events of October 7th, but it’s equally important that we take into account our own mental health and how the constant reminders of the atrocities that occurred affect our psyche. It is okay to not feel ready to talk about or watch content related to the event, and it is equally okay to want to watch this content and discuss the event. It is important that we create space for both and support each other in the way we individually choose to process October 7th. And it’s okay to need to take a break from it all.

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

Phones Need to Go

By Liam Barlev '26, Photography Editor

After asking an audience, “At what age did your parents give you autonomy—for example, walking home from a friend’s house?” Jonathan Haidt, a New York University Professor and Author of *The Anxious Generation*, received varying answers. Boomers and Gen X responded to the question with ages 6, 7, or 8, millennials with ages 8, 9, and 10, and Gen Z with 10, 11, or 12. The age difference reported by the audience shows that since the 1980s, the inception of millennials, there has been a movement to protect kids from the real world. The decade of decadence—the 80s—was known for high crime rates and for the emergence of the phrase ‘stranger danger.’

However, the rise of personal technology, such as computers and phones, has contributed to under-protecting children and increasing engagement in the virtual world. Children have watched television since its introduction in the 1950s, but legislation like the Children’s Television Act of 1950 has protected them from harmful content. The Children Online Privacy Protection Act, passed in 1998 when the internet took off, created age verification systems that only require minors to check a box indicating they have requested permission from a guardian. Technology, like bottomless feeds and video games, has become more accessible to minors under 13 over the years, but legislation has not caught up with the rapidly advancing technology, leaving kids unprotected.

The American Time Use Study assesses

time spent with friends in person daily across



varying age groups. For ages 15-24, minutes have declined nearly 73%, with a high of around 160 minutes daily. COVID had no meaningful impact on the decline; it was already down 62.5% in 2019. This reflects a significant decrease of in-person engagement. Moreover, since 2001, there has been a continuous decrease in activities such as learning to drive, engaging in romantic relationships, or obtaining a job.

Where do teens spend their time instead? The average teenager spends 7-9 hours

on their phone daily—over 40 hours a week; that’s more than the average hours of a full-time job. Although social media and video games are proven to provide consistent and bountiful dopamine hits, several studies have found a correlation between the increase in social media and video game usage to anxiety, depression, self-harm, and suicide, which are up over 158% on average, according to figures in *The Anxious Generation*.

This data reflects one key realization: with the introduction of computers, the internet, and phones, American parents and legislators have failed to protect kids from the threats of a virtual world while simultaneously discouraging and preventing them from engaging in the real world, thus fostering an anxious environment in the upcoming generations.

At Heschel, we currently have two strategies in place that are actively trying to reverse this. With school trips, the Shabbaton, Color War, Field Day, and more, we encourage inter-grade bonding and in-person interactions. At the beginning of class, some teachers collect phones. Yet, on the 10th grade Washington D.C. trip, as phones were handed back halfway on the bus ride back to school, the bus quickly turned from a singing party to dead silence. We do a relatively good job as a school, but there is clear room for improvement at Heschel, in the United States, and internationally.

Photography by Liam Barlev '26, Photography Editor

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