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Beyond Outreach: The Abraham Joshua Heschel School— A Case Study in Inter-denominational Collaboration

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The Abraham Joshua Heschel School, a 26-year-old Jewish day school that added a high school division in 2002, is a pluralistic, progressive, mission-driven school that attracts students whose families affiliate across all Jewish denominations as well as those who do not affiliate at all. The high school division opened to meet the needs of existing

Heschel families, and to attract those families who were interested in educating their adolescents in a Jewishly diverse community. When it opened its doors to forty-two ninth-graders in September 2002, it became the first pluralistic, multi-denominational school in the New York area. Its current student population of just under 300 draws students from four of the five boroughs in New York (none yet from Staten Island), Westchester, Long Island, as well as students from New Jersey and Connecticut. We do not ask and therefore cannot track how families affiliate, but in the high school, where students may select a *minyán* from among many options, the Orthodox and Conservative *minyanim* together account for close to half our students. The language of labels is alien to the culture of the Heschel School. Neither students nor adults routinely use denominational labels in discourse, nor use titles such as rabbi or doctor to address one another; even surnames have been dropped and everyone is addressed by first name only.

We are not about *kiruv*, since *kiruv* implies that a certain set of religious behaviors is distant from a prescribed and agreed-upon norm. We are not about tolerance, either, since that term too implies something undesirable that another will make space for in his or her thinking or worldview; we *are* about genuine respect for differences. We *are* about creating a community in which interactions among members are consonant with Torah ethics. The crafting of a *tzibbur* that embodies the values of *tzelem Elokim*, that focuses on the myriad *mitzvot ben adam lechaveiro*, has become the springboard for the school's entire educational (not only academic) program and the extension into the high school of its mission.¹ In the preparatory year before the high school opened, a small group of colleagues² and I collaborated regularly to determine how best to implement the school's mission for fourteen- to eighteen-year-olds and to develop *limudei qodesh* and general studies curricula as well as an overarching approach to high school governance. What emerged was a commitment to create a community characterized by dignity, respect, caring, and accountability in which all members had a stake and a voice. We agreed to live by the inclusive guidelines of the school's existing Education and Religious Policy. (A committee of the same name has been meeting regularly since the school's inception to review, reexamine, and also rewrite policy so

that it reflects what should as well as what does go on in the school. The opening of the high school was one occasion that catalyzed such revision and highlights the school's own commitment to reflective practice. A manual entitled *Educational and Religious Policy*, reflecting the work of the committee, is distributed to parents and faculty.) We also discussed and adopted the "Just Community" model already adapted for Jewish schools by Steven Bailey and Jerry Freidman, from Lawrence Kohlberg's work on moral development.³ Interestingly, this choice of school governance emerged from Freidman's contention that Orthodox Jewish Day School students were (despite the many hours in religious education, regrettably) no more inclined to act morally or ethically than their secular peers. Among the students studied by Bailey and Freidman were high school students in Orthodox day schools in Boston, and Freidman subsequently completed doctoral work at Harvard using this research to support his contention. The first Jewish school to employ Kohlberg's Just Community model is the *Shalhevet* School in Los Angeles, founded by Freidman and first headed by Bailey. It is still being used there seventeen years later.

While Kohlberg appreciated the importance and value of moral dilemma discussions, he held from very early on that moral education required more than individual reflection, but also needed to include experiences for students to operate as moral agents within a community. In this regard, Kohlberg reconciled some of the differences in orientation that existed between the theories of moral growth held by Piaget and Durkheim. In order to provide students with an optimal context within which to grow morally, Kohlberg and his colleagues developed the Just Community schools' approach towards promoting moral development. The basic premise of these schools is to enhance students' moral development by offering them the chance to participate in a democratic community. Here, democracy refers to more than simply casting a vote. It entails full participation of community members in arriving at *consensual* (emphasis mine) rather than "majority rules" decision-making. One primary feature of these schools is their relatively small size (often they are actually schools within

schools), aimed at providing the students with a sense of belonging to a group which is responsive to individual needs. The central institution of these schools is a community meeting in which issues related to life and discipline in the schools are discussed and democratically decided, with an equal value placed on the voices of students and teachers. An underlying goal of these meetings is to establish collective norms, which express fairness for all members of the community. It is believed that by placing the responsibility of determining and enforcing rules on students, they will take pro-social behavior more seriously. At the same time, this approach stems from the cognitive-developmental view that discussion of moral dilemmas can stimulate moral development.

However, this is not to say that a Just Community school simply leaves students to their own devices; teachers play a crucial leadership role in these discussions, promoting rules and norms, which have a concern for justice and community, and ultimately enforcing the rules. This role is not an easy one, as teachers must listen closely and understand a student's reasoning, in order to help the student to the *next level* of reasoning. This requires a delicate balance between letting the students make decisions, and advocating in a way, which shows them the limits in their reasoning. A primary advantage to the Just Community approach is its effectiveness in affecting students' actions, not just their reasoning. Students are, in effect, expected to "practice what they preach," by following the rules determined in community meetings.⁴

Student-run town meetings take place at our high school about once a month. Student Senators (three per grade) present proposals for school policy that have come from ideas of students across the grades and that have been discussed by the members of the Student Senate, including administrative and faculty representatives. After presentation to students and discussion, members of the school community vote the proposals in or out. Students also vote in every class during the first week of school. At this time, teachers present a policies

and procedures document through which they suggest (based on their experience in the classroom) policies that might govern the classroom community fairly and enhance the learning process. Responsibilities of both teachers and students are delineated. Each policy is backed by a rationale (no arbitrary policies) that benefits and binds (not only in the obligatory sense) all members of the community. Teachers and students discuss the fairness of each guideline; modifications are often made, and only then is a vote finally taken.⁵

The notion of a community in which all members may expect to be treated respectfully and fairly at all times is neither ingenious nor revolutionary, but it is an articulated, well-defined norm in our Jewish school. At the Heschel High School it is only one of the ways in which we strive to create a caring community. We require our full-time teachers to be at work from 7:45 A.M. until 4:45 P.M.; all faculty members share a large common space, positioned in the center of the main classroom floor, where students are welcome. When teachers are not in the classroom or at lunch, it is easy to find them in the faculty room. No additional teacher or department spaces have been set aside. This design allows for much greater accessibility for students and greater collaboration for teachers, who get to know one another very well and their students even better. The greater amount of time spent in school affords teachers greater awareness of students' inner lives, including their religious lives. It is very important to us to have all of our school community members involved in the life of the school and accomplishing that goal requires both quantity and quality time spent *in* the school.⁶

If the creation of a *tzibbur* characterized by justice, righteousness, human dignity, the characteristics of *kedushah*, holiness, and *tzelem Elokim* values underscores the intrinsic value of each member of our school community and defines the relationships that members form with one another, the *limudei qodesh* curriculum focuses on the primary relationship that has governed Jews from time immemorial: the *brit* (covenant) between the Jewish people and the Divine. Text selections from *Tanakh* and *Talmud* in grades nine through eleven are made to underscore the significance of the covenantal relationship, its intricacies and implications. By grade twelve, course offerings expand to

include a glimpse of contemporary Jewish thinkers (including Rabbi Heschel), ethical dilemmas that characterize modern life, Israel and Israeli Jews, and how the politics of the Middle East will confront our students once they arrive on a college campus. It is at this point in their academic and religious education that we challenge students to begin to articulate a personal theology and to grapple with the question of where and how they fit into the covenantal continuum of God, Torah, and Israel.⁷

The ongoing challenge of sustaining a community whose members demonstrate genuine respect for one another, despite *hashkafic* and religious praxis differences, and who are also invested in having learning emerge from their interactions with both text and open dialogue (constructivist and progressive), requires daily teacher collaboration and reflection not only about the pacing of curricular content, but also with how a specific lesson is processed by a particular set of students with its particular teacher, and the daily adjusting and fine-tuning of lesson plans and assignments to reflect that process.

The nine members of the *limudei qodesh* team (three males and six females) include a department head with extensive professional experience as a teacher educator, a *musmakh* of YU with an Orthodox pulpit as assistant rabbi, a *musmakh* of *Chovevei Torah*, a Ph.D. from Yale, a graduate of YU's *beit midrash* program for women, a graduate of Drisha's Scholar's Circle, and several beginning teachers who have studied at JTS, Pardes, or the Hartman Institute. Most have had previous workplace exposure to non-Orthodox populations. (Interestingly, the high school has attracted ritually observant Jews [many of whom self-identify as Orthodox across the departments [most of the math, science, and social studies departments, in fact]. This composition allows for a rich integration of Jewish content and concepts outside of *limudei qodesh* classes. Jewish History is embedded in all general history courses, and it is not unusual for figurative language to be illustrated in English classes through translations of liturgical material.) When I asked the *limudei qodesh* faculty to identify issues they face in working with a diverse Jewish population, few came up. One suggested that she was occasionally disturbed by how some of the students dress; another remarked that while *kol isha* was an issue for him, he felt respected

by students and colleagues alike when absenting himself from *kol isha* events. Further remarks are assembled in Appendix IV.

Despite the lack of overt discomfort on the part of self-identifying Orthodox faculty and administrators, we did have to grapple (and we continue to do so) with the question of *tefillah* for students who represent all the streams of Judaism. After much discussion, a trans-denominational option, in which all students would have the identical *tefillah* experience, was rejected. It felt preferable to us to have students acquire *tefillah* skills that were reflected in real-world *tefillah* venues. And so we created several options for *tefillah* that include normative egalitarian and *mekhitza tefillot* (what one would expect to find in a Conservative or Orthodox morning service, respectively), and a range of options to engage those students who require or desire something else. The result has been that more students are meaningfully engaged in prayerful experience and form positive attitudes to *tefillah*. All faculty members are involved in some way in facilitating *tefillah* to underscore its place and value in the school. Those who can, facilitate different *minyanim*; everyone else contributes either by taking attendance, monitoring hallways, or joining a *tefillah* service. No faculty member uses this time to meet with students or to prepare lessons or to grade work.

The following is a statement of the place of *Tefillah* at the high school and the options for 2008—2009. Students make their selections, with parental approval, for the duration of the school year.

The Heschel High School believes in the benefits of starting one's day in prayerful stance and seeks to imbue its students with the skills, attitudes, and dispositions of prayer. All students begin their school day in a *tefillah* service. *Tefillah* options, regardless of their emphases or structures, include a core daily service and reflect school policy that all boys wear *tefillin* to fulfill their responsibility as members of a Heschel High School *minyan*. Beyond these shared standards, the emphases of each of the *minyanim* differ significantly from one another. In the interest of pluralistic Jewish education, the high school maximizes opportunities for exposure to a multiplicity of forms of *tefillah* practice. Students select a *minyan* in consultation with their families for the year's duration.

Egalitarian Minyan: Grades Nine through Twelve

This *minyan* is for students who want to participate in and shape a warm community that connects to God through the words of the traditional *shaharit matbeah* (morning liturgy) and its melodies. This is a student-run *minyan* with faculty facilitators. Students serve as *shlihei tzibbur*, *gabbaim*, and Torah readers. In addition, students give *divrei tefillah*, teach each other *davening* skills, and lead group-wide activities.

The Orthodox Minyan: Grades Nine through Twelve

Tefillah is a daily struggle; to succeed is to start again.

Committed to tradition in both form and content, the Orthodox *minyan* is home to those who find meaning in reciting the words of the *tefillah* and feel comfortable with the separation of a *mechitza*. This group is committed to the primacy of prayer, guided by the dual beliefs that in the quest for a worthwhile *tefillah* experience there is no substitute for reciting the words, but that reciting the words of the rabbis cannot substitute for personal investment in the attempt to find meaning. Thus the challenge: to experience a meaningful *tefillah* moment each day in which the full service is not mere lip service; to foster a collective group atmosphere that withstands the *mechitza* barrier; to create substantive opportunities for personal involvement from both genders while remaining within the confines of tradition. To meet these goals, all members of the group must show respect for *tefillah* by not distracting the group; all sound comes from praying, not talking.

Hesed Minyan: Grades Nine through Twelve

In the *Hesed Minyan*, the community will pray and engage in *Hesed* (Acts of Loving Kindness) together, and explore the connection between the two. What does it mean to build a community devoted to *Hesed* and prayer, a *Hesed* community that prays together and a prayer community that does *Hesed* together? How can the experience of *tefillah*, and particularly *Tefillah be-Tzibbur*, communal prayer, be enhanced by *Hesed* and engagement in *Hesed* be enhanced by *tefillah*? The *Hesed Minyan* will include: a modified prayer service, including exploration of the connection between the words and experience of prayer and *Hesed*; exploration of social justice issues from a Jewish

and humanitarian perspective; and planning and implementing *Hesed* projects. The members of the *Hesed Minyan* will take leadership roles in shaping the prayer service; identify social justice issues to explore; and choose, organize, and carry out *Hesed* projects.

Tefillah Exploration: Grades Nine and Ten

Do you know what all the morning prayers mean? When they were written? Why they are organized the way that they are? Do you know why males are mandated to wear *tefillin* but females are not? Would you feel comfortable walking into any morning *Shacharit* service, because you would know exactly where to find the prayers that the community is reciting? Do you know how to connect the words of the traditional prayers to your own life? If the answer to these questions is no, then the *Tefillah Exploration Minyan* is for you. In this open, supportive, and safe environment where all questions are welcome, we will explore the content and the structure of the prayers in ways that will help us find our own personal meaning in them. In addition, we will work on gaining the skills and comfort level necessary to be able to fully participate in and lead the *Shacharit* service.

God and People Searching for Each Other: Grades Nine and Ten

This *tefillah* group includes a short, basic daily service fulfilling the obligation for daily, community-minded prayer. This group will be suited for students who are philosophically minded and like grounding their spirituality in learning. Students will read segments of teachings about our relationship with God and God's relationship to us. These teachings will include Talmudic texts, medieval theologians, and contemporary thinkers such as Rabbi Joseph Dov Baer Soloveitchik, Martin Buber, Mordechai Kaplan, and Abraham Joshua Heschel.

The Varieties of Human Experience: Grades Eleven and Twelve

This *minyan* will focus on an authentically Jewish approach regarding universal human experiences in a setting that is comfortable for students with *both* religious and secular leanings. Through the medium of documentary film, memoir, blogs, and audio diaries we will explore such themes as forgiveness, grief, hope, and injustice. Ad-

ditionally, the *minyan* will engage in an exploration of human rights. This *minyan* is appropriate for students seeking serious dialogue who are prepared for active participation.

The Meditation and Sacred Music Minyan: Grades Eleven and Twelve

The Meditation and Sacred Music *Minyan* combines Jewish meditation practice, the sacred art of *niggun*, wisdom teachings, and ecstatic Jewish prayer from the Kabbalistic and Chassidic traditions to open participants to deeper and more subtle shades of consciousness, spiritual awareness, self-expression, and a sense of Divine Presence. In addition to Jewish meditation, music, and prayer, this *minyan* includes regular God-talk sessions where students are given an opportunity to reflect upon, journal, and talk about issues relating to God, with the goal of shaping personal theology. The *minyan* seeks to foster the creative self-expression of each student by inviting students to compose, arrange, and teach their own *niggunim* and harmonies, share music that moves them, play leadership roles in leading and shaping the prayer service, and share insight from personal experience. Students are encouraged to bring musical instruments to *minyan* and to participate in jam sessions as they accompany *niggunim* and explore the power of music as a gateway to spiritual awareness. Each student will pair up and check in with a spiritual *chavruta* (or spirit buddy) who will serve as a support and confidant.

God Seekers: The Minyan, Grades Eleven and Twelve

Have you ever wondered who/what we're praying to?! How and why do we want to encounter God at all? This *minyan* will explore ideas about what God means to us and our Jewish identities through a variety of different texts, from modern fiction to Buddhist ideas and Jewish philosophy. Throughout the first half of the year we will explore the question of who is God, and we will develop our own individual theologies. During the second half of the year we will think about the question "Where is God, and how can I meet/experience/perceive God?" One of our goals will be to integrate our personal theologies into our own Jewish prayer experiences in the *minyan* itself.

This *minyán* is appropriate for individuals who want to engage in serious theological discussion and investigation.

Whereas *tefillot* are not trans-denominational, other areas of Jewish life are common to all students irrespective of personal denominational identification. Where *halakhah* is invoked, it is for the purpose of inclusiveness. The following is excerpted from student and parent manuals:

Jewish Life at the Heschel School

The core communal values that the Heschel School expects every student to adopt and infuse with personal meaning are not solely intellectual; they project directions and define contexts for specific behaviors. Every area of Jewish life creates a context for active student participation. To be a Heschel student is to be active inside and outside the school community.

Our students and graduates should continually strive to

- demonstrate spiritual sensitivity by recognizing the challenges and opportunities of meaningful prayer
- cultivate a habit of gratitude, including an awareness that food comes from the Creator, and the fact that we have food to eat suggests a moral obligation to give to others
- participate in ongoing *hesed* and communal outreach programs
- recognize the mystery of the created world and steward it in a responsible way
- talk about and seek ways of demonstrating pride in being a member of the Jewish community and Jewish people
- recognize that Torah study plays an important role in one's self-understanding
- demonstrate an unwavering concern for, and support of, a vibrant, strong, democratic, Jewish State of Israel

Tefillah

The Heschel High School begins the day with *tefillah*. All students are required to participate in a *shacharit minyan* (morning-prayer service) of their choice. The standard *minyán* is traditional and egali-

tarian, reflecting the school's dedication to a mastery of Jewish texts and prayers along with the philosophical commitment to the ways in which egalitarian thought has shaped the Jewish community in America. However, the Heschel School also remains equally dedicated to the importance of pluralism within the school's community, in order to sustain a model in which Jews who disagree with each other on religious and social issues can find ways of forming honest, trusting, and respectful relationships through discourse and study, and it offers a daily Orthodox *minyan* and egalitarian *minyan*, as well as a variety of alternative *minyanim*. In any given year, these may include a learner's service, women's *tefillah*, *Iyyun tefillah* dedicated to the study of prayer, a *hesed minyan*, meditation *minyan*, musical *minyan*, and a Sephardic *minyan*. All *minyanim* and *tefillah* groups include a daily routine of fixed prayer, whether traditional in form or not. In addition, all males are required to wear *kippot* (not other types of head covering) and *tefillin* during all *tefillot*. The expectations for females regarding *tallit*, *tefillin*, *kippah*, and other forms of practice connected to *tefillah* will vary depending upon the specific *minyan*. We do not expect all students to think about God and their relationship to God in the same way. However, we do expect all students to participate actively in the *minyan* of their choice during *tefillah*.

Meals

How we eat together reflects our individual and communal sensibilities. The blessings we recite before and after a meal reflect our recognition of the abundance we enjoy and our obligation to share it. The four blessings of the Grace after Meals, *Birkat haMazon*, acknowledge that God enables food to grow from the earth; that the Land of Israel is the part of the earth with historic significance for us; that Jerusalem nourishes us spiritually; that life, with its pleasures, bounty, and health, is worth living.

We expect all Heschel High School students to begin and end their meals with words of blessing. A double sink in the cafeteria provides students with a facility for ritual hand washing (*netilat yadayim*). On special occasions, when we eat together formally, we will recite *Birkat haMazon* collectively. Otherwise, we expect students to recite a ver-

sion of *Birkat haMazon* by themselves. As an expression of the Heschel School's pluralistic philosophy, students may request alternative versions of *Birkat haMazon*.

Kashrut

The Heschel School is committed to both appreciation of diversity within Jewish tradition and our own community observance of certain *mitzvot* and *halakhot* (Jewish laws). Our observance of *kashrut*, as explained below, is guided by the concern that all members of our community feel comfortable eating at both lunch and school functions and that no one be in the position of judging another's level of *kashrut* observance, or of being judged. Heschel High School students are expected to adhere to the school's *kashrut* standards while in the building, or at any school-sponsored event outside the building.

Food that students bring to school

Cold, non-meat products may be brought to school as long as there are no non-kosher ingredients in them. We ask students to bring only *pareve* (non-meat, non-dairy) or dairy products into the school in order to avoid mixing meat and milk.

No home-cooked or baked goods should be brought to school for sharing with others. Packaged food brought to be shared with other students must be marked by the sign of a professional *kashrut*-supervision organization or individual. A simple "K" does not indicate an acceptable standard for school use. Food prepared by kosher bakeries, restaurants, caterers, and other food suppliers who have kosher certification is permitted.

The school maintains a strictly kosher kitchen under the supervision of Dean of Judaic Studies Rabbi Dov Lerea. All school kitchen appliances and utensils are kosher according to *halakhah*, and these facilities and utensils are used to prepare food for school lunches and other occasions.

Microwave ovens in the cafeteria

The microwaves in the cafeteria are public ovens, used by students and teachers. Therefore, using the microwave requires balancing two

values that are central to our school: inclusive respect of every individual, and the commitment to *kashrut*/Jewish dietary laws. In order to balance these values, our procedure for using the microwave in the lunchroom includes the rules listed below. Technically, as long as food is double-wrapped, it can be placed in the microwave oven without causing the microwave to become non-kosher. Using two zip-lock bags, saran wrap, or paper bags can be considered “double wrapping.” If any member of the Heschel community has a question regarding the *kashrut* of the oven, or of the foods being placed in the oven, he/she is encouraged to speak directly with the dean of Judaic Studies, in his capacity as the rabbinic authority for the school.

1. No shellfish permitted under any circumstances.
2. No meat permitted in school unless served under special circumstances.
3. All food placed in the microwave must be “double-wrapped” using either zip-lock bags, saran wrap, or paper bags.

Dress Code

Clothing should be comfortable and appropriate to a learning environment that includes the study of Torah. Students should not wear clothing that is ripped or contains inappropriate language or images. Tops and shirts must cover the midriff, lower back, and shoulders completely and may not be cut low in the front or back. Tank tops are not permitted. Skirt and pant length should approach the knee and be neither too tight nor too loose. A student whose attire does not conform to dress code will receive a reminder at the first offense and will be asked to change. After the second offense, the student will be asked to go home and change clothing.

Kippot

School policy on wearing *kippot* reflects the school’s respect for diversity as well as tradition, and for the range of religious practice found within the Heschel School community. Boys are required and girls are encouraged to wear *kippot* during *tefillot*, *Tanakh*, and *Talmud* classes, in the cafeteria during meal service, and at activities in the *Beit Midrash*.

Tikkun Olam

Students, faculty, and administration collaborate throughout the year in many ongoing *hesed* initiatives. The Student Life bulletin boards provide a central clearinghouse for information about *hesed* programs throughout the city. *Hesed* is an integral component of the mission and vision of the Heschel School. The high school dedicates three half days to *hesed* programs: on the day before Thanksgiving, on the Friday before Purim, and on Lag ba'omer. Attendance is required. A reminder notice of these days will be sent to parents and students. Beginning in the 2008-2009 academic year, each advisory group will be required to engage in a *hesed* activity at least once a year.

We expect every student to engage in the *hesed* initiatives organized through school and/or activities that students might discover on their own. Some examples of ongoing projects include clothing drives, toy drives, canned food drives, CD drives, and specific projects that have been adopted by a grade, such as support for victims of terror in Israel during the Intifada, support for the Jewish community of the Abuyadaya in Uganda, support of tsunami victims in Asia, and support for recovery and rebuilding efforts along the Gulf Coast in the wake of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Students form a *Va'adat Hesed* through the Student Senate, whose goal is to disseminate information and organize student activities to ensure that *hesed* work permeates the culture and life of the school. The high school does not have a formal community service requirement, but it is our expectation that all students participate in ongoing community service activity on their own time. The director of student life maintains files on student community service.

Shabbatonim

Shabbat is a primary vehicle for participating in the life of the Jewish people and for cultivating an individual spiritual life. As Asher Greenberg (known as *Ahad haAm*), the great cultural-Zionist thinker, remarked, "More than the Jewish people kept *Shabbat*, *Shabbat* has kept the Jewish people." Therefore, together with students, we plan *Shabbatonim* each year that provide opportunities for religious as well as social growth and connectedness to the Jewish community.

Our *Shabbaton* policy reflects the same dialectic that guides life at the school. The overarching structure of our *Shabbatonim* is determined by *halakhic* restrictions of activity (which make it possible for us to detach ourselves from habits that depend heavily upon technology and that extend our control over our environment). Responsibility for interpreting the *issurei melakha* (activity restrictions) for our *Shabbatonim* rests with the Dean of Judaic Studies and the High School Head. We ensure a variety of *tefillah* options. Our *Shabbaton* program always includes *Torah* study on themes of pressing contemporary importance and interest, as well as good food, good company, and good times.

Heschel Environment and Torah

We expect individuals' behavior and language to reflect awareness that the entire building is a place of Torah study, from the deliberations of the Student Senate to the casual conversations and interactions among students in the hallway. Heschel students may seek opportunities to study Torah beyond the academic requirements of the curriculum. They may collaborate with faculty to find ways of scheduling and using the *Beit Midrash* or work independently with a faculty mentor. We expect Heschel students to recognize and respond to the importance of Torah texts, setting standards for behaviors and sensibilities.

Holiday and *Rosh Hodesh* Celebrations

The Heschel School prepares for Jewish holidays in a variety of ways: communal celebrations, text study, and reflective discussions. On *Rosh Hodesh* (the first day of the month on the Jewish calendar), we bring new or challenging perspectives on a variety of timely issues to the students' attention through our Ron Sumner Memorial *Rosh Hodesh* Program. As with *hesed*, these programs are informed by the collaboration of students with the Director of Student Life and other faculty mentors.

The Israel Experience

The Abraham Joshua Heschel School supports the principles of Zionism, through which we celebrate our people's return to their spiritual and ancient homeland and their reestablishing of a society dedi-

cated to principles of democracy and Jewish culture, religion, and life. The Heschel School remains dedicated to supporting our return to the Land of Israel and the State of Israel through meaningful, experiential engagement with the land, the people, and the issues of the State. This manifests through the content of both the general studies and Hebrew Language and Literature programs and through our annual, student-centered celebrations of *Yom HaZikaron*, *Yom HaAtzmaut*, and *Yom Yerushalayim*. The Heschel School encourages and takes great pride in students who pursue opportunities to spend time in Israel whether during their tenure at the school or after. The school itself continues to support and develop Israel programs for its students.

What are the outcomes that we foresee for our graduates? To date we have graduated only three classes. Many of our oldest graduates are only juniors in college and others are sophomores or freshmen. The vast majority involve themselves in some form of Jewish life on campus, whether through *Hillel* or *Chabad*. More than a third of our graduates (and in previous years almost half) choose to take a gap year between high school and college. Those students spend at least a semester in Israel. Some combine *tikkun olam* activities with touring and/or studying in Israel. A handful opt for full-time *yeshiva* study. It is too soon to tell if our aspirations for our graduates mesh with their own. We hope that our graduates will demonstrate, through their choices, actions, and affiliations, an appreciation of their place in the covenant. We hope that they will see themselves as agents in their own lives, capable of change, and bringing change to their communities and the wider world. We hope that they will want to live in a community of co-religionists, that some will take on Jewish leadership. We already know that many value the specific Jewish, progressive education they received and we hope that some will want to be educators. We strive to give our students skills to enable them to parse dense texts of our tradition; we hope that they will continue to demonstrate the desire to do so. Anecdotally, we hear that some of our aspirations are also theirs, but it is too soon to talk about trends. We are fairly certain that they will be open and respectful of others they encounter, Jews and non-Jews alike. We know that they will appreciate that we all have more to gain from living in community together, that our commonalities as

Jews are greater than what keeps us apart. Like *Beit Hillel* and *Beit Shammai*, we hope that our graduates will continue to articulate powerfully what they believe in and find a way to live together.

APPENDIX I

CLASSROOM POLICIES AND PROCEDURES: LIMUDEI QODESH
Teachers' names have been deleted.

As teachers of *Limudei Qodesh*, we hope to create a community where love of learning is paramount; where students feel safe, both physically and intellectually; where risk-taking is valued as an indispensable component of furthering our learning; and where students see *each other* as well as the teacher as repositories of knowledge and resources for furthering their own learning. We hope that our community will be a place that values questions of all sorts; a place where reasoned, reflective analysis will be at the center of our discussions; and a place where students will feel encouraged and empowered to build their own relationships with the texts we are studying. The following policies are intended to help us build a community that reflects these values.

Student Responsibilities

I. Coming to Class Prepared to Engage in Learning.

In order to participate in the learning of this class, you will need to come to class with your computer, your *Tanakh* or *Gemara*, paper and writing utensil, and any other books necessary to do the work for that session. The classroom will contain books, paper, and writing utensils that are available for students who have forgotten theirs. Students who show a pattern of coming to class unprepared (by coming unprepared three times over the course of the semester) will meet with us to determine a specific behavior modification plan to help them develop this skill, which is crucial for success in school and success in life in general.

II. Assignments

The completion of specific assignments to be produced (outside or inside class) and handed in (such as homework, producing a learning

portfolio, projects) is crucial to the learning that we hope will occur in this class. Homework will often be used as a way to productively prepare for the next session's class. Therefore, if you do not do the homework you will be hampered in your ability to be a full participant in the next class session. Often, students will be asked to read texts at home prior to our discussing these texts in class. In cases where it is clear to us that a student has not done that reading, we will ask the student to turn in a written synopsis of the major points. This will both help them to do the work necessary to participate in the learning of the class, and give them practice in abstracting the major points of a text or reading. Since the completion of assignments in a timely fashion is necessary for full participation in this class, late work will be accepted only at our discretion. Ability to complete and submit assignments promptly will be noted on the student's assessment record.

III. Creating and Maintaining a Safe Environment Conducive to Learning

All of us share responsibility for ensuring that this class is a safe place where learning can occur. Below we have listed those behaviors that we feel will contribute to the establishment and maintenance of such an environment, without which learning cannot occur.

Respectful Behavior: You are expected to act respectfully towards all members of this learning community, both students and the teacher. This means listening to others, showing that you take their views seriously through engaging their views in respectful ways, and making sure that you communicate respect both verbally and through body language. Respect for our physical space manifests itself in our communal responsibility to keep our space neat, free from graffiti and litter. This includes not touching those items marked "For Teachers Only" without first asking permission. When we see you acting in ways that are not respectful, we will approach you discreetly, point out the disrespectful behavior, and ask you to pay more careful attention to your behavior in the future. In the event that we determine that there is an ongoing problem, we will meet with you to discuss the acceptable param-

eters of behavior that will allow you to remain a member of this classroom community

Disruptive Behavior: Disrupting takes time away from the learning of the class and is unfair to all members of this learning community. Disruptive behavior means deliberately engaging in off-task behavior that prevents you from participating in the learning, engaging with other students in a way that takes them off task and prevents them from participating in the learning, and any other behavior that requires excessive teacher intervention in order to bring you and/or others back on task. When we see you disrupting the class, we will approach you discreetly and tell you to stop. If you continue to disrupt, we will approach you and ask you to leave the classroom. In order to be readmitted to our class, you will need to meet with us in person to discuss the incident.

Dishonesty: People cannot feel safe in an environment that tolerates dishonesty. Lying, cheating, and plagiarism have no place in this classroom. Students are responsible for doing any work they sign their name to. If we discover dishonest behavior, we will meet with the student(s) to discuss an effective course of action to ensure that the behavior is not repeated. No credit will be given for work that is the result of dishonest behavior.

Use of Computers in Class: Our computers provide a powerful tool that can aid in the learning process. Unfortunately, computers present tremendous opportunities for engaging in activities that distract students from learning. Students are expected to use computers during class time solely for activities that are related to their learning. Any use of instant messaging or e-mailing, unless specifically requested by the teacher, distracts from learning and is not allowed in class. Students may access the internet only when specifically requested to do so by the teacher, and then only for the specific activities in which the class is engaged. It is never appropriate to play computer games during class. At any point in class, the teacher might ask either the whole class or individual students to close their computers in order to better focus on the work of the class. Students who misuse their computers will lose the right to use their computers for the rest of the class and will

have to take notes with paper and pen. If misuse of computers becomes an ongoing problem for a student, then we will meet with the student, his/her parents, and the principal to determine how the student can utilize his/her computer in class while not being distracted by it.

Teacher Responsibilities

I. Coming to Class Prepared to Help Students Engage in Learning

We will come to class on time.

We will have our lesson prepared.

If no one in class knows the answer to a thoughtfully posed question, we will research the answer ourselves and report back to the class, or help another member of the class do so.

II. Responding to Student Work

All out-of-class work will be looked at/ referred to/built upon during class, in a timely fashion.

We will provide clear standards and rubrics to identify what constitutes good work for each graded assignment.

When we as the teacher comment on your work, we will do so in a timely fashion and in ways that will help both teacher and student better understand exactly what you are learning.

We will not ask you to do work, inside or outside of class, if we have not given you the tools to do the work adequately.

III. Creating and Maintaining a Safe Environment Conducive to Learning

We will work to create an environment that acknowledges and appreciates intellectual risk-taking.

We will never ask our students to do anything in the classroom that we would not ask of ourselves.

We will not allow students to treat each other in a disrespectful way, including but not limited to bullying, name-calling, and more subtle forms of verbal and non-verbal behavior that indicate disrespect.

We will meet with you to discuss the content of the course, your grades, or any other issue related to class.

Classroom Policies and Procedures: U.S. History

As members of this community, it is our joint responsibility to create an environment that supports and encourages learning. In order to establish an effective, safe, and intellectually nurturing setting for learning, we need a commitment to certain prerequisites. The following are the basic requirements for this course.

Preparedness

In order to participate actively and engage effectively with the course material, students and teacher must be prepared. It is expected that you will bring laptops, binders, paper, writing utensils and any course texts to each class. You are expected to complete your assignments on time so as to ensure your ability to participate constructively in class. Preparedness is a factor in the class participation grade.

Class Participation

In order for students and teacher to gain as much as possible from each lesson, it is imperative that all members of the class participate actively and constructively. Active and constructive participation includes participation in class discussion, engagement in group and individual work during class time, and demonstration of respect for peers and the teacher. Class participation counts significantly toward the course grade.

Respect

In order to foster and maintain a collaborative classroom environment, it is imperative that all members of the class be respectful to one another. A respectful class environment is one in which all feel comfortable sharing their ideas without fear of humiliation; it is also an environment where none acts with the intention to belittle or humiliate another. It is then possible for the class to engage in thoughtful and meaningful conversation so as to help each person learn to the best of his or her ability.

Tardiness and Absence

Our studies require the attention of the whole class from the beginning until the end of the period. It is expected that both teacher and students arrive for class on time. Students who enter class after the end of the bell will be marked late. Punctuality is a factor in the class participation grade. If you are absent you must check First Class and

contact your peers to see what you missed and what assignments are due. If you cannot complete the work by the deadline you must speak with me before the assignment is due.

Restroom

If you must visit the restroom during class, leave and return quietly and quickly, and sign out and in on the sign-out sheet.

Eating and Drinking

You may not eat in the classroom, but you may have water or another drink.

Proper Use of Technology

Students can enhance their learning experience through the proper use of their computers and other forms of technology. It is expected that everyone will bring their computers to each class, and that they will use them only in ways directly related to the course. Misuse of technology impedes learning, distracts focus from the task at hand, and directly affects the individual's ability to interact with the class and the material. The use of computer research to answer questions to evade or minimize critical thinking is not permitted. Misuse of technology, such as, but not limited to, playing games, surfing the internet, communicating with others on topics unrelated to the class, is not permitted. Improper use of the computers can result in a loss of computer privileges. Proper use of technology is a factor in class participation as well as assignment grades.

Homework

Unless specified otherwise, all work must be typed in standard format. At this point, all homework must be handed in in hard copy. It must be printed out BEFORE the bell rings. Please label all homework assignments in the following manner. I will provide titles for the homework assignments.

Your name	example:	Abraham Cohen
Section		Social Studies 11c
Date		9/8/08
Homework Title		Revolution begins, chapter 1

Late Work Work more than three days late will not be accepted. Late work will be downgraded.

Extension Policy You are expected to turn in all your assignments on time.

In the case of a planned absence, an illness, or a family emergency, we will work out a schedule by which you will make up the missed work. If you are absent on the day a major assignment is due, you are expected to e-mail the assignment to me. Requests for extension after a deadline will not be considered.

Return of Assignments Students learn best when they receive timely feedback on assignments. You can expect quizzes and tests to be returned before the next quiz or test. Projects will be returned in a timely manner as well. Students who feel that the feedback is unclear or who have questions should make an appointment to discuss the assignment with me at the earliest convenient moment.

Academic Honesty is a core value of the Heschel community. Students and teacher alike must take care to present all ideas accurately, citing another's work where appropriate. No one may use another's work product (with the exception of work that is assigned as collaborative); present another's work as his/her own; omit citing the ideas, conclusions, and organizational framework or language of others, whether from a known or anonymous source. This includes, but is not limited to, all assignments, homework, classwork, research, and information about the content or answers to tests and quizzes.

Plagiarism and cheating will not be tolerated, under any circumstances. Overlooking such offenses calls into question the integrity of the entire Heschel community and undermines the very principles of trust and respect upon which our community is built. Consequences of plagiarism and/or cheating are defined in the Student Handbook and will be discussed in class during the year.

Collaboration You may work together with a classmate on regular nightly homework assignments in the following manner only: You may discuss (by phone, e-mail, etc.) the work together, but each of you must write out the work **IN YOUR OWN WORDS** and each of you must submit the assignment separately.

Communication with the Teacher A productive learning exchange is predicated on a trusting and respectful relationship between students

and teacher. I am available as a resource for you both during and outside of class. You should make an appointment to see me during lunch, before or after school, or during a free period if you need extra assistance. Out of respect for students and colleagues, I will not meet with students during advisory, *tefillah*, or your other courses. You may also communicate with me via e-mail. I will make every effort to ensure that students feel comfortable and supported in class. If you ever feel I have been unfair, you should make every effort to let me know as soon as possible. If, after approaching me, you are still uncomfortable, you should speak with members of the *Va'adat Tzedek*.

APPENDIX II

RESPONSIBILITIES ALONGSIDE TEACHING

DAILY:

TEFILLAH

You will be actively involved in helping to support the *tefillah* program either by serving as a **minyan facilitator**, (already identified) **participant** (please let us know if you would like to be a daily participant in one of our *minyanim*), or **support** person. If you are a support person, you will be either taking attendance, monitoring hallways, or greeting at the door according to the period one rotating schedule. Please note that every faculty/staff member works to ensure that our period one *tefillah* program successfully meets the needs of our students.

LUNCH

Please make yourself available during student lunch hours to meet with students around classroom issues. There is no formal lunch-duty assignment but most faculty members have lunch in the student cafeteria and foster a low-key presence.

WEEKLY:

ADVISORY

Full-time faculty/staff serve as advisors to students. Advisors meet with their group of students once weekly on Fridays. All advisors will meet with their grade deans periodically and with our school psychologists. In addition, advisors are required to contact parents of their students

at least once in a quarter. It is recommended that you have lunch with or initiate contact time outside of advisory with your advisees at least once a month.

FACULTY MEETING every Tuesday from 4:50—5:50. **DEPARTMENT MEETING**, weekly, TBA with your department chair.

MEETINGS/ASSEMBLIES/PROGRAMS

All faculty members are required to attend during-the-school-day programs and to sit among students to maintain decorum.

CLUBS

Faculty members/specialists serve as club advisors. Most clubs meet on Wednesdays.

STUDY HALL COVERAGE

Faculty members cover study hall for ninth graders.

LUNCH DETENTION

Students will serve detention during lunch period on Mondays and Wednesdays. You will receive a schedule. Please mark your rotation day on your personal calendar.

OCCASIONALLY:

GRADE TEAM MEETINGS as needed and scheduled by deans, psychologists, administration

SUBSTITUTING FOR ABSENT COLLEAGUES

Faculty members are asked to sub (students will have work to do) for absent teachers up to six times in each semester.

WEEKEND, SHABBATON/TRIP CHAPERONING/FACILITATION

All faculty members are required to attend the full-school *shabbaton* at the end of October. Three other *shabbatonim* and a ninth-grade overnight are scheduled throughout the year. Students also participate in other multi-day programs for which travel is required.

PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCES, 12/11,12/14, **ADVISOR CONFERENCES** 3/02 These include one Sunday each year.

BACK TO SCHOOL NIGHT, 9/15, 6:30 **NEW PARENT/STUDENT RECEPTION** 2/24, 7:00.

APPENDIX III

LIMUDEI QODESH COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

I include the table of contents page of the course booklet to illustrate that *limudei qodesh* courses are positioned first.

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Limudei Qodesh

Limudei Qodesh classes are designed to generate learning experiences that provide students with the skills, knowledge, and most important, the disposition to continue to interact with biblical and rabbinic texts throughout their lives. Students are encouraged to see this ongoing interaction as part of their own constantly developing and growing identity as Jews. Stressing the value of critical thinking, classes are designed to help students learn the skills necessary to engage in close, thoughtful, and reflective readings of the text. Students learn both to raise questions based on their textual studies and to develop the skills necessary to locate textual evidence to support their own conjectures and interpretations. In order to help students develop the textual skills necessary to continue to learn texts in the original language after high school, classes stress the grammatical and hermeneutical structures central to understanding biblical and rabbinic texts.

All four years of the curriculum cohere around an examination of the ברית *brit* (covenant) between God and the Jewish People. Among

the fundamental questions that guide the students' textual explorations over the four years are the following:

- What does it mean for humans to be in a ברית *brit* relationship with God?
- What are the responsibilities and expectations of both parties?
- What forms of leadership and authority can help to sustain this relationship over time?
- What role does law play in this relationship, and what are the religious values and institutions that serve as the legal structure for safeguarding the relationship?

Students in ninth grade study those moments in ספר בראשית (Sefer Bereshit, the Book of Genesis) when the Divine-human relationship is most sharply defined as an expression of ברית *brit*. Through selected סוגיות (*sugyot*, portions) from the Talmud, מסכת ברכות (Masekhet Brachot, Tractate Blessings), students examine תפילה (*tefillah*, prayer) as a manifestation of the *brit*. Building on the contextual and textual framework from ninth grade, *Limudei Qodesh* in tenth grade explores the concept of *brit* at the national level. In the eleventh grade, students further explore the covenantal relationship between God and nation as they move forward together through history, focusing on the concepts of continuity and transition. Twelfth grade students conclude their study of Tanakh as they investigate the impact that the covenantal relationship has on the rise and fall of the Israelite nation. Issues of theology form the core of the twelfth grade courses in *Talmud* and Jewish thought, as students work towards articulating their own personal theology and how this theology affects their lives.

Ninth Grade לימודי קדש (*Limudei Qodesh*): Bible and Talmud

Ninth grade *Limudei Qodesh* focuses on the ברית (covenantal relationship) between God and human beings. The year begins with an exploration of those moments in ספר בראשית (*Sefer Bereishit*, the Book of Genesis) when the Divine-human relationship is most sharply defined as an expression of ברית. We study the development of this concept through an exploration of major personalities in בראשית (*Bereishit*, Genesis), from *Noach* (Noah) through *Ya'akov* (Jacob). Utilizing

the conversations between God and each major figure, and the actions and reactions that surround their relationships, we probe the underpinnings of those interactions, examine the formulation of their covenant, and interpret the ties that bind them to each other.

The second half of the year turns to an examination of תפילה (*tefillah*, prayer) as a manifestation of the ברית between God and human beings. Selected סוגיות (*sugyot*, portions) from Talmud ברכות (*Masekhet Brachot*, Tractate Blessings) serve as the textual basis for this exploration. The two halves of the course are unified by the following set of guiding questions that form the lens through which we view ברית in all of its various manifestations:

- How does ברית inform the relationship between God and people?
- What are the ramifications of the mutual nature of the ברית?
- How does the ברית as expressed in these foundational Jewish texts reflect itself in our lives today?

In ninth grade, *Limudei Qodesh* is taught as one integrated and unified course that utilizes the meeting time of two separate courses, תנ"ך (*Tanakh*, biblical texts) and תלמוד (*Talmud*).

Ninth Grade LQ *Sha'ar*: Introduction to Bible and Talmud

This double-course embraces the responsibility of introducing the ninth grade *Sha'ar* students to Jewish studies at a day school, and begins the two-year process of preparing students to join their peers in eleventh and twelfth grade *Talmud* and *Tanakh*. As such, we explore issues in Jewish holidays, the covenantal narratives of Genesis, and selected sections from the Talmudic Tractate *B'rachot*. The texts are chosen with an eye toward four distinct but linked goals: (1) skills-building and introducing the students to Hebrew texts at an appropriate pace for their learning; (2) familiarizing the students with ever-present Judaic realities in the school setting, (3) developing the students' personal understandings of their relationship to the tradition and observances of Judaism, (4) paralleling the non-*Sha'ar* ninth grade curriculum—offering all ninth graders the opportunities to explore similar themes with an emphasis on how the texts we look at

depict the relationship between God and human beings. The course also attempts to take advantage of its small number of students, allowing for the tailoring of materials and assessments, to whatever extent possible, toward each student's abilities.

Tenth Grade לימודי קדש (*Limudei Qodesh*)

Building on the conceptual and textual framework from ninth grade, *Limudei Qodesh* in the tenth grade explores the concept of ברית (covenantal relationship) at the national level. The following set of guiding questions frame the nature and scope of our investigations this year, direct our selections of text, and serve as a link between the study of biblical text and rabbinic texts:

- How does the ברית between God and each patriarch serve as a foundation for a formalized covenant between God and nation?
- What is the relationship between Divine commandments and human morality?
- How are הלכות (Jewish laws) both a reflection and an enactment of the values of the ברית?
- In tenth grade, *Limudei Qodesh* is divided into two separate classes, one in תנ"ך (*Tanakh*, biblical texts) and one in תלמוד (*Talmud*).

Tenth Grade תנ"ך (*Tanakh*): Bible

This course studies the way in which all laws—both “religious” and “civil”—serve to actualize the nationalization and codification of the ברית between God and humans. The course is divided into two semesters: the first semester focuses on חומש (*Chumash*, Five Books of Moses), and the second on נביאים (*Nevi'im*, Prophets). During the first semester students study the majority of ספר שמות (*Sefer Shmot*, the Book of Exodus), emphasizing both narrative and legal material. The second semester continues to explore the theme of national enactment of the ברית through events in ספר שופטים (*Sefer Shoftim*, the Book of Judges).

Tenth Grade *Sha'ar* תנ"ך (Tanakh): Topics in Bible

The focus in tenth grade *Sha'ar* תנ"ך follows the covenantal relationship as it shifts from an individual relationship to a national one that is codified in law. Following the Jewish people as they leave Egypt, experience the revelation at Sinai, receive the Torah, build the משכן (*mishkan*, Tabernacle), and encamp in the desert, this course explores the making of a nation. The text for this course is ספר שמות (*Sefer Shmot*, the Book of Exodus). This course is designed to help students build the necessary Hebrew skills to make a smooth transition into eleventh grade תנ"ך.

Tenth Grade תלמוד (Talmud)

This course examines the interplay between civil laws and religious values. Based on the assumption that laws regulating the relationships between human beings are a manifestation of the ברית between God and humans, this course explores the legal and religious ramifications of one human being's causing physical damage or harm to another. The text for this course is the eighth chapter of מסכת בבא קמא (*Masekhet Bava Kama*, Tractate Bava Kamma). The chapter contains rabbinic expositions of selected legal material studied in the תנ"ך course.

Tenth Grade *Sha'ar* משנה ותלמוד (Topics in Talmud)

This course builds on the introduction to rabbinic literature that *Sha'ar* students encounter. The classroom environment supports the collaborative reading of a variety of Mishnaic texts, investigating the broad range of legal and theological issues, frames of mind, and ways of thinking that characterize classical rabbinic texts. Students learn the skills necessary to investigate these texts in Hebrew, including becoming familiar with the technical expressions and legal concepts embedded in the *Mishnah*. As quickly as the students' ability levels allow, the course moves into Talmudic texts, as a way of building upon the students' burgeoning grasp of rabbinic literature and as a preparation for eleventh grade Talmud class. Texts studied are from two Mishnaic *sedarim* (orders): *moed* (holidays) and *nezikin* (property), and from the Talmudic tractate *Bava Kamma*.

Eleventh Grade לימודי קדש (*Limudei Qodesh*)

The eleventh grade *Limudei Qodesh* curriculum further explores the covenantal relationship between God and nation as they move forward together through history, focusing on the concepts of continuity and transition. In the context of the evolution of the ברית from an individual to a national level, students investigate the institutions and structures that now allow for the enactment and expression of the values inherent in that ברית, as its parties respond to a changing world. The curriculum examines the changing forms of leadership that emerge in the biblical and rabbinic periods, and the legislative and judicial institutions that structure Jewish society, and help the community enact its value system. As in tenth grade, *Limudei Qodesh* is divided into two separate classes, one in תנ"ך (*Tanakh*, biblical texts) and one in תלמוד (*Talmud*).

Eleventh Grade תנ"ך (*Tanakh*): Bible

This course explores the challenges that face the nascent Jewish nation as they struggle to live within the covenantal relationship. Focusing on ספר במדבר (*Sefer Bamidbar*, the Book of Numbers) chapters 11 through 27, the first semester investigates issues of leadership, transition, and authority during the desert years. The second semester focuses on ספר שמואל (*Sefer Shmuel*, the Book of Samuel, volumes one and two) and the interplay, tensions, and challenges among three forms of leadership: priestly, prophetic, and monarchic.

In eleventh grade, an honors option, in which the language of instruction is Hebrew, is available for students.

Eleventh Grade תלמוד (*Talmud*)

Talmud in the eleventh grade focuses on fundamental Jewish religious values as they are manifested in the rabbinic justice system. Beginning with the biblical injunction:

צדק, צדק תרדוף ("You shall pursue justice" Deuteronomy 17), and continuing with an exploration of Tractate *Sanhedrin*, students examine various ways in which that command manifests itself in the court system. What elements go into creating a legal system that ensures fair-

ness and equality to everyone? What are the fundamental procedures that are vital to the workings of rabbinic דין בתי (courts), and what are the values and principles those procedures reflect? What happens when two fundamental principles that are at the heart of the legal system come into conflict with each other? In what ways does the rabbinic justice system, which derives its authority from God's commandments and which is intended to promote religious values, differ from the secular legal system in the United States?

Twelfth Grade תנ"ך (Tanakh)

Honors Bible: The Book of Kings and Selections from The Prophets (Year-Long Course)

Investigating the rise and fall of kings culminates the progression from the previous three years of *Tanakh* study. *The Book of Kings* is *Tanakh* at its most subtle, and perhaps most interesting, with plot twists involving battles for succession, political intrigue, wars, miracles, untold wealth and unparalleled fall from grace, destruction, and despair. But most of all, the Book of Kings forces one to engage in issues of theology: how God is involved in wars and the world, why do bad things happen to good people, does God want kings to fail, are the people at fault for their sins, and how useful is prophecy to the success of a nation? The Prophets convey the emotions of God in a palpable way unmatched in *Tanakh*, asking readers to consider God's perspective and how it relates to their own. As an honors course, this class will focus on skills-building and textual analysis.

The Books of Jonah, Esther, and Ruth (Fall Semester only)

This class explores the biblical texts of *Yonah*, *Esther*, and *Ruth* and their connections to the Jewish holidays on which they are read. Why is *Yonah* read on Yom Kippur, *Esther* on Purim, and *Ruth* on Shavuot? How does the reading of these texts give meaning to the experience of those holidays? Students will engage in a close reading of each text with an emphasis on literary analysis and explore the personal relevance of these narratives as we celebrate the cycle of the Jewish year.

Multiple Approaches to the Study of *Tanakh* (Spring Semester only)

This course is for those who enjoy studying *Tanakh* and wish to explore famous narratives not covered in the ninth through eleventh grade curricula. In addition, it is designed for students who are open to investigating different approaches to the study of *Tanakh*. Texts include: *Akeidat Yitzhak* [Binding of Isaac], the story of יוסף [Joseph], and the monarchy under שלמה המלך [King Solomon] including the building of the בית המקדש [Temple]. Each narrative provides an arena for students to focus on a different approach to studying *Tanakh*. Those methodologies will include: an in-depth exploration of rabbinic commentaries and their differing methods including פשט [simple meaning] versus מדרש [midrash], the literary approach, the use of archaeology, and the documentary hypothesis. The class will also focus on some of the philosophical issues that these different approaches raise.

Twelfth Grade תלמוד (*Talmud*)

Twelfth Grade Honors תלמוד *Talmud* (Year-Long Course)

The goal of this course is first and foremost to continue to develop the necessary tools for independent *Talmud* study. A great portion of the course will be dedicated to studying in *hevruta*, to build upon and extend students' independent work in decoding and interpreting the *Gemara* and its classical commentaries. We will be studying the complete fourth *perek* of מסכת ברכות (Tractate *Berakhot*) among other texts.

Theology in Talmudic Texts (Semester-Long Course): **People vs. God**

In ninth through eleventh grades, students study biblical texts that emphasize the direct interactions between God and our ancestors. However, by Talmudic times God no longer spoke to people. How did the rabbis who wrote the *Talmud* have a relationship with God, when God did not overtly communicate with them? How much was God involved in their legal decision-making? How did they deal with the tension of believing in God while terrible things were happening around them? This course also explores how students relate to God in their world today. The core texts for the course are Talmudic and sup-

plemented by readings from modern philosophers. The focus of the course is on the content of theological issues, as opposed to improving Talmudic reading skills.

Twelfth Grade *Limudei Qodesh* Electives
Jewish Philosophy (Semester-Long Course)

This course explores central questions and themes in Jewish thought, with an eye to helping students formulate their own positions on issues. Students look closely at texts from biblical, rabbinic, medieval, and modern times and trace how thinking about these questions has developed historically. The course is organized topically around the following issues: faith and doubt, revelation, Jewish community, Jews and non-Jews, and women and the Jewish tradition. The course opens with an exploration of an individual's relationship to God and then turns to questions of the larger Jewish community. What is the role of community in Judaism? How does the Jewish community relate to those outside of it? How does the Jewish community address diversity within it? In this seminar-style course, students are expected to share their thinking, listen, and respond to others through class discussion, presentations, and reflection papers.

Ethics (Semester-Long Course)

How are traditional Torah values relevant to one's life and the choices that one makes? Seeking to explore the values that the Jewish legal tradition applies to real-life issues, the ethics course surveys some core *halakhic* texts and brings them into dialogue with contemporary ethical topics such as war, abortion, homosexuality, organ donation, and sexual ethics. The course includes skills-building but is heavily discussion and reflection based. Students complete weekly journal assignments and produce a substantial final research project regarding an ethical issue of their choice. This course emphasizes creating meaning from the text rather than developing skills for independent study.

APPENDIX IV

***Limudei Qodesh* Teachers Reflect on Working in a Pluralistic Jewish School**

Teacher 1:

Though I do not any longer orient myself squarely within the mainstream Orthodox camp in ideology or in praxis for various reasons that I won't delve into here, I do continue to value *halakhah* as the central framework that informs my personal orientation to committed and serious Jewish religious living. As a person who values Orthodox values and who simultaneously works in a highly heterodox school setting, I have experienced a number of religious tensions during my tenure at the Heschel School. Most notably, as the facilitator of the Meditation and Sacred Music Minyan—which is fully egalitarian and which does not follow halakhic norms as understood by and applied within Orthodoxy—I have been struggling to balance the tension between the halakhic requirements (and my personal preference) to pray with a halakhic *minyan* on the one hand, and the students' need for a *minyan* that resonates with their personal spiritual sensitivities and which allows for fearless open exploration of spirituality and the deepest religious and existential questions. Certain values have proven useful in navigating the tension with some semblance of integrity. First, on philosophical grounds I have never wished to serve merely as a moderator in the *minyan*; I always saw myself as a co-suppliant participating in the prayer experience *with* my students. I wanted to model a specific approach to prayer and community for them, and I felt that praying with an Orthodox quorum prior to arriving at school would undermine this goal, sending the message that what we do in our *minyan* is not genuine prayer. Second, I have decided that providing students with a rich prayer experience and an unfettered exploration of their inner lives is more valuable to me than fulfilling my personal obligation to pray with a halakhic *minyan*. In the battle against intermarriage and cultural assimilation, I feel that the only antidote is to steer clear of the numbers game and focus instead on rich and impassioned Jewish learning and living. Such an attitude toward Jewish practice can be nourished only within an environment that celebrates a healthy spirit of exploration and curiosity rather than operating from fear and sup-

pression. “Doing Jewish” seriously is not a monopoly held exclusively by the Orthodox community. Throughout my rabbinic and graduate studies and tenure as a rabbi and educator, I have continued to encounter and work with Jews who are non-Orthodox but whose Jewish practice is deeply and seriously rooted in tradition and a deep connection with Torah and *mitzvot*. Discourse with my colleagues at the Heschel School continues to confirm that experience. Among many, one common ingredient that seems to consistently season serious Jewish living is a rich prayer life that engages the tension between traditional forms and subjective, heartfelt inner expression and contemplation. It is this tension that I want to model for my students, and which I feel is indispensable to teaching young Jews how to live rich Jewish lives. So I have decided to craft a *minyán* experience that in some ways undermines the possibility to fully harmonize all of my personal religious needs, but that allows me to feel that I am doing young Jews and Judaism a service by teaching Jews how to pray deeply and activate their inner lives. In my experience, this can be done only in a setting that is fully open to exploration and questioning and that is free of dogma and sacred cows. In short, that one can successfully grapple with this tension by challenging and poking at the boundaries is exactly what I am trying to model for my students. I want them to learn that one does not need to water down tradition in favor of subjectivity. Additionally, one need not accept tradition unquestioningly without any personal input or an attempt to infuse it with personal meaning. With some reflection, one can oscillate back and forth between the two, striking a delicate, graceful balance that fosters deep, heartfelt commitment to serious and engaged Jewish living. In the process of teaching and modeling this process, I have found that I continue to reap the benefits of greater clarity about my own ability to hold the balance, which in turn helps me to present my students with deeper, more pointed questions that lead them to personal self-discovery within a uniquely Jewish communal, intellectual, and spiritual setting.

Teacher 2:

I hope that the forum will be devoted to larger denominational/theological issues. What does it mean to teach non-Orthodox without

having *kiruv* in mind? What is it like to be surrounded by Jews who do not toe the Orthodox party line?

I find that the difference between working in the non-Orthodox world versus the Orthodox world is that this situation is not one dominated by fear. It doesn't ask "how will this compromise me" or "how will this hurt my religious standing." That's an atmosphere born of optimism and the belief that we can learn from each other in ways that cannot be approximated in the Orthodox world.

To work in the—or this—non-Orthodox world is to *not* have answers for everything at every time (heretical in some areas), and while I understand why that issue is not for everyone, it's why I choose to work in this type of Jewish world. The ability to explore ideas and religion, conceptions of God, the religion itself, in a freedom that comes from lack of fear, is liberating.

Whereas the Orthodox often feel that they need to teach the non-Orthodox—working in the non-Orthodox world involves learning that there is much for the Orthodox to learn, which, when combined with Orthodox observance, is very powerful. The Forum essentially identifies the non-Orthodox as the "other." Working here is an affirmation that they are not.

I do understand the dangers, and the counterarguments. I'm not saying it's for everyone

The final irony is that as someone who has spent his entire life firmly in the Orthodox world, not even on the left of YU but firmly in the center, it is only in the non-Orthodox world that I find my religion, religious expression, ideas, observance, etc, respected. In YU, you're either to the right or to the left of everyone else. The Orthodox world emphasizes differences and fears them. This world embraces the differences and emphasizes commonalities, allowing for a community beyond your own little sect/branch that behaves like you.

While I'll admit that the values of the school are clearly not Orthodox, they are also clearly pluralistic. Therefore, while it's trite to say that working here does not raise religious issues for me, I don't think it really does. *Kol isha* issues are always resolved by the fact that I am allowed to leave performances. *Tefillah* is never an issue because we have multiple options. I am aware that I could be asked to staff an

egalitarian *tefillah*, but there is a good reason that it has never happened, largely because the school is pluralistic and understanding. So *tefillah* becomes a non-issue.

Kol isha is an issue in the following way: though I am allowed to leave, as one who is invested in seeing student performances, it is personally extremely difficult to get up and leave—especially if I did not know that the issue would arise beforehand. But those moments are really few and far between, and they boil down to my own resolve. Those instances always offer teaching moments, as the students always notice when I do or do not leave, and always ask about it.

Dress code is an issue, but it is an issue at every modern Orthodox day school, and the *tzniut* issues are just as problematic in those schools as they are here. So teaching here did not put me in a situation of greater compromise than teaching in a co-ed modern Orthodox day school, and is far better than working in the business world.

Teacher 3:

When I was looking for a place to teach, I specifically wanted to teach somewhere that took text skills seriously and learned texts in their original languages. However, I would not feel comfortable teaching in an Orthodox school where my religious practices would be judged and I would have to be careful about not saying anything too “radical” about Torah or Judaism in general. I wanted to teach at Heschel and enjoy teaching there because I am given the opportunity to teach Jewish texts seriously, closely reading the texts in the original and analyzing the language, while also engaging in a serious OPEN discussion about the students’ relationships with God and with Judaism. The students know that they can freely discuss their own religious ideas and/or issues without feeling restricted or judged by me or by the school.

Teacher 4:

I find teaching at a pluralistic school exciting and refreshing, even with the practical “issues” that arise from that pluralism. Whereas in schools associated with particular movements, there are boundaries that force students to parrot beliefs not their own (to the detriment of

their own development or, for that matter, the internalization of those values held by the movement), a pluralistic school provides students with an opportunity to engage, and be engaged by, the tradition of text and interpretation. Respecting students' values encourages students to take others seriously and to consider their relationship with Torah important enough to move beyond lip service and superficial understanding (which often leads to naive rejection).

A greater danger, from my perspective, is that one must assert the authority of the school in enforcing *mitzvot* that are meaningless outside the practice of *halakhah*. In other words, I find myself uncomfortable telling students that they must observe *kashrut* within the confines of the school or put on *tefillin* during *tefillah*, "because it is a school rule." Because pluralism precludes reference to a shared commitment to *halakhic* practice, one is forced (after discussions of meaning/tradition/spiritual opportunity" to recourse to the one shared legal system, which is that of the school. This, to me, is problematic from the standpoint of my understanding of the *halakhah*.

Teacher 5:

I chose to work at a community Jewish day school because I believe in educating students to think independently rather than giving them answers. I believe that having real dialogue with people who have different beliefs and religious lifestyles about their differences can deepen each person's belief and make their approach to religion more complex. I also believe that this kind of education strengthens the Jewish community as a whole by building respect, empathy, and deep connections between different kinds of Jews.

Still, being a modern Orthodox teacher at a pluralistic Jewish day school can be challenging. One of the key challenges for me is *tefillah*. I agreed to facilitate an egalitarian *tefillah* group, but I do not personally pray in egalitarian *tefillah*. I pray in the morning on my own before I get to school and then guide the students' *tefillah* through saying the words with them. How can I create an inspiring *tefillah* experience for my students when I myself am not praying in the formal sense of fulfilling my prayer obligations? One of the most powerful ways to educate students about *tefillah* is to provide them with a role model

of someone who is praying with *kavanah* and is truly moved by those prayers. I do not feel that I can be a role model of someone who prays with *kavanah* through my prayer in the egalitarian *tefillah*.

Teacher 6:

When people ask me what it's like to teach in a pluralistic school, I often tell them about the way my *Tanakh* students talk about G-d. There are some students who deny G-d's existence outright, or put "G-d" in quotation marks. Even more common is for students to analyze a story and come to the conclusion that G-d was too harsh, cruel, mistaken, or just plain wrong. This way of talking about G-d as a fallible character in the story just like any other, did not happen in the Orthodox day school that I attended as a student. We started from the assumption that G-d was right, and we tried to figure out the story from there. The G-d of *Tanakh* was the same perfect G-d that we pray to and strive to become close with. This is that G-d that we learn from and try to imitate. The "G-d critical" comments surprised me at first, but the more that I have learned with the students at Heschel, the more I have come to appreciate this approach. Without the constraint of needing to see G-d as perfect, the text can be read closely and literally, without skimming over challenges to that assumption. Therefore, a wider range of possible interpretations is opened up that would be otherwise closed. With the help of my students, I have been able to learn stories again in a fresh way. From the perspective of the Egyptian citizens, G-d was destructive and cruel. From the perspective of *Bnei Yisrael* in the Desert, G-d punishes quickly in response to their requests. One student told me that she believes G-d doesn't always do the right thing, and that's why it is so important for us to pray and act in the world based on what we believe is right, to argue with G-d the way *Avraham* did over the destruction of *Sdom*. While this critical approach raises challenges about whether and how the G-d of *Tanakh* relates to our thinking about G-d in our lives today, I think there is much to be gained from a truly open discussion of the text that is not based on Orthodox assumptions.

NOTES

MISSION STATEMENT

1. The Abraham Joshua Heschel School is an independent school named in memory of one of the great Jewish leaders, teachers, and activists of the 20th century. Unaffiliated with any single movement or synagogue, the Heschel School sees as essential the creating of a community with families from a wide range of Jewish backgrounds, practices, and beliefs. The school is devoted to equal participation—boys and girls, men and women—in all aspects of the school's religious, intellectual, and communal life.

The Heschel School is dedicated to the values and principles that characterized Rabbi Heschel's life: integrity, intellectual exploration, traditional Jewish study and practice, justice, righteousness, human dignity, and holiness. It regards the texts of the Jewish tradition and the history of the Jewish people as fundamental resources for developing ideas, beliefs, behaviors, and values to shape and inspire the lives of individuals in our time.

The school's approach to education is governed by profound respect for students. It nurtures their curiosity, cultivates their imagination, encourages creative expression, values their initiative, and engenders critical thinking skills. In an academic setting that values open, engaged inquiry, the school's curriculum interweaves the best of both Jewish and general knowledge and culture throughout the day. Within the context of this integrated and interdisciplinary approach, the school honors the intellectual integrity of the core subjects.

Our educational ideals are drawn from the strands of the Jewish, Western, and world traditions to which we belong. They are reflected in our deep concern for the whole child and the balance in each student's academic, aesthetic, emotional, intellectual, physical, and spiritual growth. In addition, the school seeks to create an environment that encourages the professional and personal growth of teachers, administrators, and staff.

Among the specific goals of the Abraham Joshua Heschel School are the following:

The Heschel School is committed to fostering a lifelong love of learning. It seeks to engender the understanding that the discovery of personal meaning and the growth of individual identity can emerge from the rigors of study.

The Heschel School is dedicated to creating an environment of intellectual challenge and academic excellence.

The Heschel School seeks to create an ethical learning community that encompasses the students, staff, parents, and all those who join in the work of the school. The school values both the uniqueness of each individual member and the relationships they form with one another.

The Heschel School is dedicated to cultivating the spiritual lives of its students and nurturing their commitment to Jewish values. The school helps students learn about and respect a range of Jewish prac-

tices and encourages them to embody these traditions in the way they live their lives; students learn the skills that enable them to participate fully in Jewish life.

The Heschel School is dedicated to building bridges between different sectors of the Jewish community, and between the Jewish community and other communities, as expressions of our religious imperative to unite human beings through justice, shared humanity, and mutual respect.

The Heschel School is dedicated to engaging our students in a relationship with the language, culture, land, and people of the State of Israel.

The Heschel School is dedicated to inspiring its students to become responsible, active, compassionate citizens and leaders in the Jewish and world communities

2. I am particularly grateful to have had the input of Roanna Shorofsky, Head of School, Rabbi Dov Lerea, Dean of Judaic Studies, Ruth Satinover Fagen, currently *Limudei Qodesh* department head, Peter Geffen, Founder, Judith Tumin, and a small subcommittee of board members as well as Richard Hanson, a mentor from PEJE.
3. Steve Bailey, "Educating for *Menschlichkeit*: A Kohlbergian Model for Jewish Day Schools" in *Wisdom from All My Teachers: Challenges and Initiatives in Contemporary Torah Education*, ed. J. Saks and S. Handelman (Jerusalem: ATID/Urime, 2003), pp. 137-158. Clark F. Power, Ann Higgins, and Lawrence Kohlberg, *Lawrence Kohlberg's Approach to Moral Education* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989).

The High School is committed to collaborative governance in which all constituents have a voice. Such governance accords students the right to be heard, for their reasoned needs to be taken seriously, and the right to be treated fairly and respectfully by administrators and teachers at all times. However, exclusive authority is retained by administration and faculty in the following three areas:

- Religious policy as defined in the Educational and Religious Policy handbook
- Academic issues and graduation requirements
- Health and safety

With the exception of the above areas of authoritative responsibility, students can creatively and critically participate in their own educational process. Even within these three areas, students have the right to be heard and to be treated fairly and respectfully at all times by administrators, teachers, and peers. Although not all policies may be subject to democratic vote, students and teachers have the right to discuss and understand statutory policies—secular and religious.

During the first few days of school, teachers distribute written statements

of policies and procedures for their specific classes. These cover as many areas of classroom procedure as possible. These include classroom preparation (what students must bring to class), homework, attendance, lateness, what is considered disruptive behavior and its consequences, what is considered respectful behavior among students and between student and teacher, requirements for papers, reports, tests, quizzes and projects, consequences for missed deadlines, restroom policy, and grading. In addition, teachers list their responsibilities to the students in their classes. Students and teachers discuss these policies and may modify them before a vote is taken to adhere to the policies discussed.

4. From the Website of the Office of Studies in Moral Development and Education, at the College of Education, the University of Illinois, Chicago, <http://tigger.uic.edu/~Inucci/MoralEd/>, accessed March 01, 2009.

At Heschel, the Just Community includes two *va'adot*, (committees) *Tzedek* and *Hesed*. These have been jointly defined by administration and students as follows:

V'adat Tzedek has two roles in the high school community. It deals with problems of fairness that arise among students, between teacher and students, and between administration and students. In this context, *tzedek* means that both parties have a right to be treated with respect and to have their needs balanced so that both sides can accept a resolution. The second function of *V'adat Tzedek* is to foster meaningful and positive interactions between students and teachers. It is the goal of *V'adat Tzedek* to strengthen the bonds that are created in and outside the classroom. In this context, *tzedek* is used as in the biblical verse *tzedek tzedek tirdof* (Deuteronomy 16: 20) where the community is charged with creating and maintaining structures and procedures to allow the people to successfully live by its core values.

The *va'adah* has several functions. It offers an opportunity for members of the school community to voice their personal concerns for respect and fairness with confidentiality and without fear of reprisal. It trains students in conflict negotiation and demonstrates that students are not always right while teachers are not always wrong, and vice versa. It helps students develop a more honest and open relationship with people of any age and status. The *va'adah* is a conflict negotiation committee and is authorized to recommend a particular resolution to the High School Head by which the parties agree to be bound.

The *va'adah* plays an integral role in helping to acclimate the freshman class into the high school community. By providing ongoing activities for advisory groups and senior buddies, it provides members of the ninth grade with meaningful group bonding experiences. The *va'adah* will also suggest educational and experiential programs for all grades and advisory groups.

The *va'adah* comprises one elected student representative from each grade and a faculty and administrative representative.

V'adat hesed is a subcommittee of the Student Senate that oversees all school-wide *tikkun olam* activities. The *va'adah* has several functions. It brainstorms, plans, and runs school-wide initiatives. It also must approve of any

school-wide student-run event and/or drive. All students are welcome to submit names of charities they would like the school to work with or their own work plans to the *va'adah*. The *va'adah* will oversee student-run programs. In expanding the scope of *hesed* in our school community, they have created weekly after-school volunteer opportunities (by advisory to a local soup kitchen) as well as club and sport teams projects. The *va'adah* also helps to calendar *tikkun olam* programs. The *va'adah* will make every effort not to turn down initiatives, but may ask students to postpone initiatives to a better time.

Va'adat Hesed President: *Va'adat hesed* President must be an upperclassman and eligible to run for office. Eligibility will also be determined based on prior involvement in the *hesed* club, *minyana*, and *hesed* initiatives. S/he will conduct all *va'adat hesed* meetings.

Va'adat Hesed Representatives: Each grade will elect two representatives to the *va'adat hesed*. All students must be eligible to run for office. Eligibility of tenth through twelfth grade representatives to the *va'adat hesed* will be determined based on prior involvement in the *hesed* club and attendance on school-wide *hesed* days. There is no eligibility requirement for ninth graders.

5. Samples may be found in Appendix I
6. Job responsibilities alongside teaching may be viewed in Appendix II
7. *Limudei Qodesh* course descriptions may be found in Appendix III