



Mesivta of Houston Curriculum

We would like to present you with the Mesivta's prospective לימודי קודש curriculum. The curriculum is very much goal oriented primarily based on our fundamental Chinuch philosophy, and designed to build upon the previous educational achievements of our prospective Talmidim.

A cornerstone of that Hashkofoh is חנוך לנער על פי דרכו which maintains that as essential as curricula are they are basically no more than an outline, or roadmap if you will. Torah-true Chinuch demands that we always be dedicated to working with each and every Talmid with the individual goal of maximizing his own potential to help him develop "his best self." Our goals must be elastic enough to accommodate the very advanced and motivated and to measure appropriately for the more paced Talmid who requires more time. The Mesivta will creatively and conscientiously labor to satisfy the needs of each and every Talmid.

The following is the Mesivta of Houston's projected Limudei Kodesh curriculum.

Please read it. The curriculum should offer a better understanding of our goals and expectations which we have for our Talmidim in the Mesivta, and it will also give you the framework from which the Rebbe teaches and the goals he sets for his class.



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9th Grade

גמרא בעיון

The primary objectives of the 9th Grade curriculum is to help each Talmid develop both the ability to a) properly read and b) comprehend a “Blatt Gemorah”, with Rashi and its relevant Tosfos.

The 9th Grade Shiur will teach a Talmid how to integrate Tosfos into the Blatt and to appreciate the differences between Rashi and Tosfos. This is predicated on the recognition that an approach to Tosfos is only after a thorough understanding of the Gemorah and Rashi have been achieved.

Furthermore, the 9th Grader will be exposed to the relevant Reshonim who commentate the Gemorah, and initially to some Acharonim, and Meforshim that elucidate Rashi and Tosfos, such as the Maharsha and the Pnei Yehoshua.

The Rebbe will also use additional and supplemental Meforshim to give Bochurim a taste and an excitement for Lomdus.

THE PRIMARY AREAS OF EVALUATION OVER THE COURSE OF THE YEAR WOULD BE:

- A. Each Talmid’s reading and comprehension of the basic Gemorah and Rashi. An ultimate consolidation of these skills is crucial.
- B. How well the Talmid adapt’s to Tosfos study.
The initial focus will be to familiarize each Talmid with the basic terminology of Tosfos, and then to ensure smooth readings and translations, all-the-while understanding and building vocabulary.
- C. As the year progresses the Rebbe will coach each Talmid in appreciating the issues that Tosfos raises. For example: can the Talmid articulate what Tosfos has done with the Gemorah (or Rashi)? Has he answered a question and left the Sugya unchanged, or does the answer of the Tosfos present a new approach to reading and understanding the Gemorah? **This particular proficiency requires the better part of the year to fully grasp.**



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- D. Can the Talmid begin to identify and explain a Machlokes between Rashi and Tosfos (and other Meforshim)?
- E. Occasionally, Tosfos (as well as Rashi) will imply the Kushya but not explicate it, or conversely the resolution is offered without clearly stating the problem. A Talmid by mid-year should begin to detect and identify the unspoken questions of Tosfos (and Rashi).
- G. **The Rebbe will prioritize that Talmidim recognize the difference between Tanaim, Amoraim, Rishonim and Acharonim etc., and identify them. *How Rashi and Tosfos can only explain Gemorah and not argue with it, and that Achronim are there to explain or expound on the Rishonim and Gemara not argue with it.***

ACHIEVEMENT ASSESSMENT OVER THE COURSE OF THE 9th GRADE YEAR WOULD BE:

- First Semester – Talmid’s proficiency in Gemorah and Rashi consolidation, familiarity and comfortability with Tosfos.
- Second Semester – Afore-stated Tosfos proficiency.
- Third Semester - Does Talmid comprehend and appreciate Tosfos’es and the occasional Meforshim’s contribution to the Gemorah? Does he appreciate the difference between Rashi and Tosfos’s objectives ? Is he beginning to understand the Blatt Gemorah on a profounder level through his advancements in Tosfos and the occasional Meforshim?

מוסר

20 minutes of the morning Shiur each day will be focused on Mussar studies. The Rebbe will learn together with the Bochorim the core Mussar Seforim that focus on יראת שמים and מידות טובות such as אורחת צדיקים and מסילת ישרים. The objective of this מוסר סדר is simply to teach and instill דרך ארץ to the Bochorim, thereby supplying them with the necessary tools to grow.

In addition, once a week there will be a “Shmuz” from the Rebbe, or a guest-speaker focusing on Mussar concepts from that week’s Parsha. Prior to the מוסר סדר ימים טובים the מוסר סדר will use the Yom Tov as the catalyst for growth; selecting from the unique message each Yom Tov offers. During the rest of the year, the Rebbe will find propitious opportunities to introduce and discuss various other topics in מוסר and השקפה such as חסד, אמונה, מידות, קדושה, תפילה etc. which the Talmidim show interest in, and the Rebbe deems germane.



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בקיאות

Each day, time will be dedicated to learning בקיאות. The format for this subject is to learn - at a quicker pace- one of the smaller and Yom Tov related Masechtos (i.e Meseches Rosh Hashana, Meseches Megilla etc.), allowing each Bochur to complete the Masechta. Tests on this subject matter will be given on a consistent basis, and בחורים will be expected to review the material throughout the week as it is being learned (there will be time allotted for these review sessions; such as night seder, friday morning- seder and on Shabbos). The goal is for the Bochorim to master the Masechta by reviewing each Blatt numerous times and be tested on it. The Yeshiva will offer major incentives for any Talmid who reaches that plateau of Masechta mastery.

הלכה

Every morning after Shachris there will be a 20 min Halacha Shiur. The daily הלכה curriculum will primarily focus on 'הלק א' and 'הלק ב' of the משנה ברורה. As Yom Tov approaches the study will temporarily shift to the relevant הלכות pertaining to that particular Yom Tov, taught through the משנה ברורה and applicable sources.

A major emphasis will be placed on teaching students how to become familiar and comfortable in the use of this critically vital basis of our world of Halacha, the משנה ברורה.

The Mishna Berurah as the "last word" in our daily Halachik life will, of course, be set in its proper context as just one of the four sections of the Shulchan Aruch code. Talmidim will be introduced to the general layout and content of the other sections, the primary commentaries for each Chelek, and the overall connective history of the Rambam, Tur, and Shulchan Aruch along with their commentaries.

חומש

Chumash/Rashi proficiency is a basic and critical component of a Ben – Torah's overall learning aptitude. It is expected that when a Talmid graduates Mesivta of Houston that he will have developed such competence. Each week substantial time will be devoted to build on elementary – school's Chumash/Rashi education with the aforementioned goal in mind. There will be regularly scheduled assessment-exams to monitor Chumash progress. In addition, every Friday the Rebbe will offer a more in-depth treatment of the Parsha including "take away" messages and Divrei Torah "of the week."



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10th Grade

The 10th grade Talmid will build on his 9th grade accomplishments, especially with respect to his competence in Gemorah reading, along with Rashi and Tosfos. Over the course of the year, these skills are to be honed with a deeper appreciation of the more subtle differences between Rashi and Tosfos, and related Rishonim, and how these differences impact the outcome of the Sugya.

The Rebbe will begin to introduce on a more consistent basis other unrelated Rishonim (ie. Rambam Ravad, Rif and Rosh) and Achronim on the Sugya, as well as their variances, so that the Talmid can begin to see a broader spectrum of the Sugya, without losing focus of the basic comprehension in Gemorah, Rashi and Tosfos. This advance will expand the Sugya without losing its fundamentals.

Finally as the year progresses the 10th grade will be given initial introduction to “Laynens making” (self-teaching of new Gemorah segments) in the Chavrusoh (“buddy”) setting. This shall however not impact the overall format of the 10th grade Shiur.

THE PRIMARY AREAS OF EVALUATION OVER THE COURSE OF THE YEAR WOULD BE:

- A. To what degree is the Talmid able to read Rashi and Tosfos?
- B. How well does the Talmid understand and appreciate the Sugya with the varied Pshat of Rashi and of Tosfos integrated into the Sugya.
- C. To what extent can the Talmid appreciate a Mahrsha’s or Pnei Yeehoshua’s Kushya on Rashi and Tosfos.
- D. Can a Talmid appreciate a new approach to a Gemara or Tosfos introduced by one of the Meforshim and how it changes the way he understood it until now.
- E. Throughout the 10th grade year and subsequent years it is essential that the Rebbe regularly reinforce the idea that the Rishonim and Meforshim are vehicles in order to properly understand Gemorah, not ends onto themselves.

Ultimately the Talmid will be expected to “have Pshat” in the Gemorah.



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THE 3 AREAS OF ASSESSMENT OVER THE COURSE OF THE 10th GRADE YEAR WOULD BE:

- First Semester - Does the student possess proper skills from 9th grade and is he beginning to sharpen them?
- Second Semester - To what extent have his skills matured – is he comprehending an Achron's Kushya on the Gemara or Tosfos, and appreciating the answer?
- Third Semester - Is he ready to start making a "Laynen", is he ready to integrate a broader approach to the Sugya?



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11th GRADE

A Talmid entering 11th grade will need to be adequately prepared to comprehend a Shiur that will consistently and methodically integrate targeted Rishonim and Achronim into the Sugya. He will be expected to be sufficiently proficient in the actual reading of Gemorah, Rashi and Tosfos texts, so that he can - on his own - adequately prepare for such a Shiur, while already possessing a mature comprehension of the material. In addition, he should be comfortable in tackling and grasping some of the other primary Rishonim and Achronim.

The program designed for the 11th grade shiur will be to broaden the Sugya and the Talmid's exposure to it, yet, understandably still limit the analytical depth of the Sugya.

A significant emphasis will be applied to familiarizing and training our Bochorim with the concepts of "Lomdus", as studied in the great Yeshivos. Classic Acharonim such as the Ketzos Hachoshen, Nesivos HaMishpat and the Kovetz Shiurim are examples of some of the grade-appropriate Achronim which shall be studied at this level. It is nonetheless imperative that despite the 11th grade shiur addressing an ostensibly higher level, the Rebbe must still constantly monitor the pulse of the class. This, in order to ascertain that each *Talmid* first grasps the Gemorah, Rashi and Tosfos before endeavoring to master a Rashba, Ran or "Svoro" from a great Acharon. *Bochorim* will be further exposed to the workings of the *Rishonim* who in their commentaries are offering alternative explanations to the *Gemorah*, and to the critical consequences that these variations can raise.

During the 11th grade year - prior to the formal Shiur - a *Bochor* will initiate a "*Laynens*" (supervised student - Shiur preparation) as a regular part of the schedule. These monitored daily sessions will progress throughout the course of the year. The Shiur will factor in, of course, the novice level of the Talmid's preparatory skills, and be delivered without assuming that -at this stage in his development - he already knows the material proficiently.

By year's end the hope will be that the Talmid's success will allow him to prepare sufficiently so that the Shiur may be offered with the assumption that this basic "pshat" has been adequately secured. This delicate balance will be calibrated and adjusted according to the development and progress of the class.

The Rebbe will also employ various aids and devices to maximize the Laynen Seder, such as offering Bochorim an introduction to the Sugya, specialized vocabulary lists, and "Marei Mekomos" (relevant sources) in the Rishonim or Achronim for referencing in the Laynen Seder.



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THE PRIMARY AREAS OF EVALUATION OVER THE COURSE OF THE YEAR WOULD BE:

- A. One's reading and comprehension proficiency in the core texts? Is he adequately ready for this level?
- B. Does he truly understand the Shiur's objective and what the Rebbe is trying to convey both by what is said and by what is not said in "Shiur"?
- C. The Rebbe will need to ensure that each individual Talmid not lose the core Sugya by focusing on the distinct and minute points of the Shiur (missing the forest for the trees), but rather integrate the Shiur into his overall understanding of the Sugya.
- D. Are the Talmid's Laynen skills adequately developing?

THE 3 AREAS OF ASSESSMENT OVER THE COURSE OF THE 11th GRADE YEAR WOULD BE:

- First Semester -Is the Talmid developing and synthesizing the dual studies of Laynen and Shiur properly.
- Second Semester -Is the Talmid now able to digest the Shiur and integrate the Shiur into the Sugya? At the same time is he utilizing his time effectively during Laynen seder?
- Third Semester -Does the Talmid now have a broader view of the Sugya. Can he properly understand the way an Acharon analyzes Rishonim? Finally, is the Bochor confident in his Laynen, to offer his own understanding to his peers and Rabbeim?



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12th GRADE

The objective of the 12th grade is to transit the Bochor who has accomplished the 11th grade curricula to the “Bais Hamedrash” academy level. This means, that with the commencement of 12th grade he begins to deepen his overall comprehension, to hone his now critical Laynen skills, and to sharpen his power of analysis until that of a Bais Medrash level. The 12th grade Shiur itself will essentially be quite similar to a Bais Medrash Shiur with the substantive difference primarily being in the depth of the Lomdus the Rebbe will expose the class to. The Shiur will now presume that 12th graders have prepared the fundamental Sugya (Layning) on their own as they will be spending more time with one’s various chavrusos to further their readiness for Bais Medrash where most of the day is spent studying in this manner. Though the Rebbe should already **“take for granted”** that the Talmidim have prepared for the shiur, it is of course still the responsibility of the Rebbe to gauge the level of every class and each Talmid, and then develop the proper approach accordingly.

Nevertheless, carefully “raising the bar” for a Bochor and for the class as a whole, does seem to elicit more productivity and maturity. In addition, the Rebbe may require each Bochor in the 12th grade shiur to prepare a Chubura (short Talmudic lecture that typically includes a novel idea in the Sugya) on his own, to be repeated before his peers.

THE PRIMARY AREAS OF EVALUATION OVER THE COURSE OF THE YEAR WOULD BE:

- A. Can the Talmid really make a full laynen? Does he understand the basic issues of the Sugya on his own?
- B. Does he appreciate the problems in a Sugya that the shiur is addressing?
- C. Is he using his time in the Bais Hamedrash productively, for both Layning and Shiur review?
- D. Does he know how to work well with a chavrusa?
- E. Can the Talmid – through his advancements in both comprehension and Layning skills – prepare and articulate a straightforward Chabura?



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THE 3 AREAS OF ASSESSMENT OVER THE COURSE OF THE 12th GRADE YEAR WOULD BE:

- First Semester -Are the Talmid's Laynen skills already at a pre Bais Medrash level? Are his comprehension skills already at a pre Bais Medrash level?
- Second Semester - Are the Laynen skills being further developed and are they being reflected in his accomplishments during Laynen seder? How well does the Bochur grasp the shiur?
- Third Semester -Is the Bochur ready for Bais Hamedrash?