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VA-YASEM 'OTO `AL NES:¹ STANDARDS IN *LIMMUDEI KODESH* FOR MODERN ORTHODOX DAY SCHOOLS

Preface: Delineating the question

Recently, a well-regarded day school hired a veteran Jewish Studies teacher from another well-regarded day school. After her first semester at her new place of employment, she was asked to compare her current students to her previous ones. When she replied: The students in the other school are better, the new school was nonplused. How much better? Better in what ways? Neither the teacher nor the administrators was able to answer those questions because they could not measure the students at either school against a standard.

Standards now proliferate throughout the American educational system and national standards in reading and math are canonized in the current No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). This essay seeks to address the questions of why many schools resist standardization and how that situation can be changed. We shall argue the advantages and merits of instituting standards for the study of *limmudei kodesh* in Modern Orthodox day schools and provide a sample of proposed standards, benchmarks and exit requirements as well.

This article is intended to serve as a fulcrum to pry open a discussion on the merits and logistics of standards. The examples it utilizes

are my own; no curricular deliberations have been held over them and no external authority vouchsafes them. It would be my pleasure to devote as much room as future issues of *TEN DA'AT* might require to provide a forum for ongoing negotiations over the entire proposition or any of its salient details.

Part One

Standards in General Education: Pros and Cons

Some of the arguments for and against standards in general apply to Modern Orthodox schools as well. One argument stipulates that standards spell conformity and are therefore specific to public schools – which are disparaged as the equivalents of educational “factories” – while private schools ostensibly thrive on individuality and originality. The rejoinder cites the vast number of private schools that voluntarily employ standardized testing (e.g. “Regents” examinations) as well as the evidence of college entrance examinations that impose identical criteria on students of all backgrounds, private and public, secular and parochial alike.

Without collective standards, say their proponents, individual schools have no objective means of evaluating their educational accomplishments. They may be able to note progress—accurately—between successive grades or divisions, but lack the wherewithal to assess what their students and graduates, in the aggregate, have learned or how well they have learned it. The opponents retort: individual schools are better situated to evaluate the work of their own students than the “bureaucrats” in Washington (or wherever they may be) to whom these students are abstract concepts known only from quantitative social science research.

Yet another perspective on the issue views the debate as a “kulturkampf” of sorts, with stark political overtones. According to this paradigm, the fight over standards pits the “old school” traditionalist educators against their “modern” progressive counterparts. In political terms, it matches the liberals against the conservatives. Given the modern Jewish tradition of embracing liberalism in its many cultural and social forms—a tradition shared by many Modern Orthodox thinkers and educators—it goes to say that advocates of standards are suspect

of being reactionaries, seeking to undo all the good work that has been accomplished in American education since John Dewey.

Is less more, or is it just that?Sizer vs. Hirsch

The debate over standards has found many protagonists. Among them, two are outstanding on account of both their personal prominence and the wide public reception that has greeted their ideas. While it has been, admittedly, some time since they squared off against one another, a look at their differences and distinctions remains instructive.

TheodoreSizer, once dean of the graduate school of education at Harvard and headmaster of a private high school in Massachusetts, is an opponent of standards,² while E.D. Hirsch, professor of English at the University of Virginia, is a strong advocate for them.³ Sizer started the “Coalition of Essential Schools” that supports his platform, while Hirsch launched the “Core Knowledge” school movement that implements his ideas.

Sizer argues that imposing national standards will lead only to more standardized testing. Hirsch, while expressing some reservations about such tests, finds them to be, overall, better indices of student progress than the “portfolio” method that progressive educators, like Sizer, would substitute for them. Sizer and other progressives point to the failure of most public schools to effect meaningful changes in students’ learning outcomes (read: economic opportunities) and attribute this to the malfunction of the “one size fits all” curriculum, characteristic of the “industrial model” school. Hirsch argues that schools have done little to improve the course of students’ economic futures precisely because they concern themselves more with HOW they learn than with WHAT they learn. Even computers and the Internet will do little to alter this, he maintains, as long as educators emphasize the access to information over the nature of the information acquired.

In a word (their own!), Sizer addresses the balance of content vs. skills with the proposition that “less (content) is more (accomplishment),” while Hirsch retorts that “less (content) is just that.”⁴

Truth to tell, the prevailing view in cognitive psychology supports Hirsch’s proposition more than it sustains Sizer’s. If we subscribe to what is known as “constructionist” learning theory, education is incremental and requires gradually larger and more complex doses of spe-

cific knowledge to build an edifice of comprehension. A student who is unequipped with prior knowledge (particularly of the “domain specific” variety), will make little forward progress no matter how well-honed his skills may be.⁵

The measure of practicality in curriculum and instruction

The most self-evident argument for introducing and maintaining standards in Jewish Studies is utility. Because of their desire to accommodate both Jewish and General Studies, Modern Orthodox day schools, in particular, place a high premium on time and its effective use. Given that no day school can allocate all the time that would be required to comprehensively study all *Tanakh* (or the discipline of your choice), some system of “curricular triage” must be utilized. The curriculum developer must employ some criterion to determine which books, chapters, verses and commentaries will be studied—to the exclusion of other books, chapters, etc., which will not be studied. Resort to objective standards in the field of *Tanakh* studies—particularly those that would be developed by and on behalf of a consortium of like-minded schools—would undoubtedly make the task of the curriculum developer easier and more productive.

Instructional tasks would benefit as well. The status quo of *Tanakh* instruction in Modern Orthodox day schools is often characterized by the inadequacy of subject-matter knowledge and didactic methodology; the resort to standards could serve a salutary role giving priority and direction to teacher pre-service and in-service training.

In a kindred vein, General Studies courses currently adopt new and revised textbooks every few years. These textbooks are replete with up-to-date information displayed through aesthetically pleasing and attractive texts and graphics. Their teachers’ editions provide supplementary content knowledge and didactic guidance to instructors, and frequently contain sample tests or alternative forms of assessment that can be employed in their classes. The fact that Jewish Studies courses, on the other hand, eschew textbooks, only exacerbates the tension that already inheres between the religious and secular realms. The adoption of standards by an association of day schools could be leveraged into the production of textbooks for Jewish Studies courses that would be suitable for system-wide use.

But is it “Good for the Jews?”

A rather particularistic argument implies that whatever position one adopts vis a vis standards in General Studies, imposing them in Jewish Studies is simply un-Orthodox. Secular subjects, the argument goes, avail themselves of standardization because, in one instance, they are essentially quantifiable, and, in the second, they are often mandated by the “authorities.”⁶ Jewish Studies, on the other hand, are neither quantifiable nor do they suffer assessment because they answer only to a “higher authority.” Indeed, the very notion of subjecting the study of “Torah” to standardization is presumed to be contrary to the principle of *torah li-shmah* (Torah study for its own sake).

Rather than enter into the analysis and application of this profound abstraction, we shall posit that a case can be made equally for and against the idiosyncrasy of *limmudei kodesh*.⁷ Surely no one acquainted with the “certification” process typical of Orthodox institutions of higher Jewish learning (i.e., *yeshivot*) will challenge the observation that requirements for ordination are uniform—they presuppose “domain specific” knowledge rather than “skills of learning”—and that *behinot* for *semikhah* are, arguably, “standardized” examinations. In our attempt to argue for the standardization of knowledge, skills and values in our day schools, we have both permit and precedent on which to rely.

The contemporary scene: A definition of terms

Lately, “Jewish Studies” has begun to undergo standardization, with the Melton Research Center of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America proposing “Standards and Benchmarks for the Teaching of *Tanakh* in Jewish Day Schools” on behalf of a consortium of Solomon Schechter, Reform and Community day schools.⁸ Elsewhere in this issue of TEN DA'AT, we present a similar recipe for standardization of *humash* study in Centrist Orthodox schools in England.⁹ Without blurring the real differences between those consortia and the audience addressed here, why can they not serve, all the same, as a guide to both theory and practice?

The fundamental proposition of commonality has already been proven and borne fruit with the curricular collaboration by six AMODS schools over the past several years.¹⁰ Their agreement on values, skills and knowledge in *humash* and *limmudei erez yisrael* for primary grades

indicates that *ha'omed merubeh al ha-parutz*; the features and factors that unite Modern Orthodox day schools are more numerous and more important than those that divide them.

At the founding conference of AMODS, I proposed a series of “benchmarks” in *limmudei kodesh* that met with general interest, albeit with only limited commitment. [See Appendix I.] I shall reiterate those milestones here within the framework of a larger and more ambitious project: establishing an “exit examination” in *limmudei kodesh* that would set minimum standards of accomplishment for students graduating Modern Orthodox yeshiva high schools. First, however, a clarification of terms and references is in order.

By the term “standard,” we intend a larger purpose or objective of our curriculum that addresses what Jerome Bruner called the “structure” of a discipline¹¹ and what *Understanding by Design* would designate as either a “big idea,” an “enduring understanding” or an “essential question.” By “benchmark,” we mean the subdivision of the standards on a grade to grade basis with each successive benchmark indicating a progressively higher order application of the same standard. These benchmarks can be formulated along the lines of Bloom’s “Taxonomy” of the cognitive, affective and behavioral domains.

Finally, by “exit examination” we mean just that: examinations to be administered to 5th, 8th and 12th graders in yeshiva day schools—chosen as critical transition points: primary - to middle - to secondary-to adult-education—to determine the extent to which they have met the minimum standards (by way of the benchmarks) for their respective levels.¹² [See Appendix II for “What a yeshiva high school graduate should know, value and be able to do.”]

Part Two

Standards in TANAKH

Tanakh is the subject to which the most day schools allocate the most curricular time over the longest span of an educational lifetime. I have attempted to formulate standards in *Tanakh* that address both the discipline, per se, as well as the educational-ideological goals of Modern Orthodoxy. In doing so, I am guided by Neal Postman’s astute observation that: “What one needs to ask of a standard is not ‘Is it high or low’, but ‘Is it appropriate to your goals?’”¹³ Examples of such standards in *Tanakh* may include:

1. Students will recognize that *Torah* is the word of God dictated to Moshe and that *nevi'im* and *ketuvim* are divinely inspired.
2. Students will understand that God intervenes in human affairs. Events that appear coincidental are, in reality, divinely providential.
3. Students will appreciate that Jewish History is the unfolding of a divinely ordained plan that was communicated by God to our patriarchs, matriarchs and prophets.
4. Students will acknowledge that the historical fate of the Jewish people is a function of its relationship with God, which is defined by the observance of Torah and Mitzvot.
5. Students will appreciate that the Jewish nation is bound together by both religion and nationality. Jews have religious and national obligations and are mutually responsible for their individual and collective fulfillment.
6. Students will recognize that God designated the Land of Israel for the fulfillment of Jewish religious and national destiny. The possession and settlement of the Land of Israel is the perpetual focal point and goal of Jewish civilization.
7. Students will acknowledge that the Oral Law is the authoritative and definitive interpretation of the Written Law; they share simultaneity of revelation and existential authority.
8. Students will acknowledge that the values espoused in the Torah are eternal. Their specific applications are at the discretion of contemporary halakhic and hashkafic authorities.
9. Students will recognize traditional Talmudic, medieval and modern Biblical exegesis (*parshanut ha-mikra*) as the authoritative and valid interpretations of *Tanakh* and will learn how to utilize the insights they provide in formulating their own understanding of the Biblical text and its implications for their own lives.
10. Students will acquire a knowledge and comprehension of ancient Near Eastern history and literature sufficient to create a literary and cultural framework within which to view *Tanakh*.
11. Students will acquire knowledge of Hebrew adequate to facilitate their independent study of *Tanakh* and *parshanut* in the original.

While not all the standards are meant to be accomplished in all grades, I would maintain—paraphrasing Bruner—that “something in-

tellectually honest about each standard can be taught to any child at any stage of development.”¹⁴ Standard #1 (divine dictation), for instance, may appear to be far too sophisticated for realization in 1st grade, yet we teach something genuine about it to even younger children! I refer, of course, to the Talmudic stipulation that once a child learns to speak, a father is required to teach him “Moshe commanded us the Torah” (Devarim 33:4).¹⁵ Standard #5 (religion and nationality) may be met at that same level through the inclusion of the balance of the verse: “An inheritance for the congregation of Yaakov.”¹⁶

Standard #2: The rationale

We shall utilize Standard #2 as an illustration of how benchmarks are to be formulated and distributed across the grade lines. To reiterate the standard:

Students will understand that God intervenes in human affairs. Events that appear coincidental are, in reality, divinely providential.

The rationale behind this standard is as follows:

An indispensable proposition of Orthodox education must be the recognition of God’s providence (*hashgahah*), i.e., His control of natural and human affairs. Another such proposition dictates that He revealed His purposes to man in the form of the Torah. It follows from these propositions that the study of Torah is meant to provide evidence of His providence and proof of His purposes. The *Tanakh* curriculum, then, must gradually bring a student to the realization and appreciation that he interacts with God in all his deeds and that they must all be conducted “for the sake of heaven.” As the Rav, Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, wrote:

The fundamental of providence is here transformed into a concrete commandment, an obligation incumbent upon man. Man is obliged to broaden the scope and strengthen the intensity of the individual providence that watches over him. Everything is dependent on him; it is all in his hands. When a person creates himself, ceases to be a mere species man, and becomes a man of God, then he has fulfilled that commandment which is implicit in the principle of providence.¹⁷

Benchmarks¹⁸

The next step is to translate this rationale into “domain specific” (i.e., *Tanakh*) terms. The key to setting benchmarks for this standard inheres in its phraseology. In relatively lower grades, it comprises the recognition of God’s intervention in human affairs, while in upper grades it consists of understanding divine providence. The former makes itself manifest in overt “miracles” (*nes nigleh*), while the latter requires greater sophistication; the capacity to penetrate beneath the veneer of coincidence to the discovery of the “covert” miracle (*nes nistar*) reposing within it.

Our task is to identify the intersections between these objectives (which combine cognitive, affective and behavioral elements¹⁹) and the traditional *Tanakh* curriculum and insure that every opportunity is taken to promote and advance them, gradually, over the entire span of a student’s encounter with *Tanakh*. For the sake of relative brevity, we will address three grade concentrations: Primary (thru grade 5), Middle (thru grade 8), and Upper (thru grade 12).

- **Primary:** In these grades, students traditionally learn the books of *Bereishit* and *Shemot* in Torah, and *Yehoshua* and *Shofetim* in Nevi’im. By the close of 5th grade, we would expect them to know and appreciate:
 - The doctrine of creation “ex nihilo”²⁰
 - God’s authorship of creation entitles Him to manipulate nature for His purposes
 - Awarding the earth to whomever He chooses²¹
 - The “burning” bush (and other “signs” such as those given to Moshe, Gideon and Shimshon)
 - Splitting the Yam Suf/ the Yarden
 - Standing the sun “still” at Giv’on
 - God’s authorship of creation entitles Him to utilize nature as a tool for chastisement and punishment
 - The flood
 - Sedom and Amorah
 - The ten plagues
 - Casting “great stones from heaven” onto the Canaanites at Giv’on

- His direct dealings with the Avot and involvement in their affairs
- His fulfillment of His promises to them and to their descendants
- **Middle:** In these grades, students traditionally learn portions of *VaYikra*, *Bemidbar* and *Devarim* in Torah, *Shemuel* and *Melakhim* in *Nevi'im*, and some of the *Megillot* in Ketuvim. By the close of elementary school, we would expect them to know and appreciate the primary-school benchmarks with the ability to illustrate them from the additional texts that they will have learned. Additional benchmarks include:
 - God's active role in human affairs entitles Him to impose certain conditions on man's behavior
 - The prohibition against idolatry
 - God's authorship of creation entitles Him to assign hierarchical roles to His creatures
 - Man may sacrifice animals and eat of their flesh, but may not mistreat them²²
 - Certain combinations of animals and vegetables are prohibited
 - God's authorship of creation entitles Him to impose conditions on its use in acknowledgement of His proprietary rights
 - The prohibition against labors of "craftsmanship" on Shabbat
 - The laws of *Shemittah* and *Yoveil*
 - Agricultural laws including *Terumah*, *Ma'aser*, *Bikkurim*
 - *Birkat ha-Mazon*
- **Upper:** By the close of high school, students should have supplemented their primary- and middle-school studies in *Tanakh* with portions of *Nevi'im Aharonim* and Ketuvim. [Schools differ widely in their selections.] To the aforementioned benchmarks, we now add the following:
 - God often disguises His providence as an ordinary event
 - Yosef meets a "man" who directs him to his brothers
 - Mordekhai "happens" to overhear Bigtan and Teresh plot to kill the king

- The task of the believer is to penetrate the disguise and recognize the miracle concealed within the ordinary and the natural
 - That was no man, that was an “angel” (a la Ramban)²³
 - Mordekhai’s admonition to Esther²⁴
- Familiarity with the concepts of “overt” and “covert” signs and the ability to illustrate them from Jewish history
 - The victories of the Hashmona’im
 - The refuge the exiles from Spain found in the Ottoman Empire
 - The mass emigration of Eastern European Jews to the United States prior to World War I
 - The establishment of the State of Israel in the wake of the Holocaust
 - The victories of the Israel Defense Force
- Recognizing that what people conventionally call “nature” is inseparable from God Himself and does not constitute an independent force in the universe (i.e., deism)
 - Understanding the deism of the “founding fathers” (Washington, Franklin, Jefferson, Adams) and its influence on American culture
 - Rejecting deism as incompatible with the Orthodox Jewish concept that “In His goodness, He constantly renews creation daily”
 - Understanding the deist origin of the conventional definition of “miracle” as an interruption or alteration of nature (through which God reasserts His proprietary rights over the universe)
 - Appreciating that the *nissim* for which we thank God three times daily²⁵ are actually “standards” (rather than “miracles”) that—in the fashion of the *nes* with which we entitled this article—draw our attention to God as the author of creation.²⁶

Part Three

Conclusions:

Standards exist in general studies and standards in Jewish Studies are being pursued assiduously in other countries and by other denomi-

nations. Modern Orthodox day schools have the wherewithal to promulgate appropriate and effective standards, and the responsibility to their students to do so. Standards will unify our educational purposes, improve our curriculum development, enhance our instruction, open new and improved vistas for teacher training and provide the critical mass of instructors and students that would invite and facilitate the production of much-needed textbooks.

Whatever aspirations we harbor of a school movement situated in a mutually agreeable Modern Orthodox ideology stand or fall on our ability to put pedagogical flesh on that particular ideological skeleton and garb it in suitable and appropriate curricula of reasonably standard dimensions. We have the ability to certify the graduates of our schools as literate in pertinent classical and contemporary texts, accomplished in a sophisticated skill-set and imbued with timeless traditional values. Why should we abstain from doing so?

NOTES

1 The dictionary offers two definitions of “standard:”

- a conspicuous object (as a banner) formerly carried at the top of a pole and used to mark a rallying point especially in battle or to serve as an emblem;
- something set up and established by authority as a rule for the measure of quantity, weight, extent, value, or quality.

The former appears in Biblical Hebrew as NES—hence, our title—while the Modern Hebrew version of the latter is TEKEN.

2 Cf., for just one instance, *Horace’s Hope What Works for the American High School*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company.

3 Cf., *The Schools We Need And Why We Don’t Have Them* New York: Doubleday.

4 It should be borne in mind that Hirsch andSizer are also appealing to different constituencies, Hirsch’s being primary schools andSizer’s—high schools. This, too, may account for some of the differences in their respective approaches.

5 This recalls the Talmudic discussion (*Horayot* 14a) of “Sinai” (comprehensive knowledge of the Oral Tradition) versus “*oker harim*” (analytical ability). When asked by their Babylonian colleagues who gets precedence, the Sages of Israel replied: “Sinai does, because everyone depends upon the producer of grain.”

[The epithet *oker harim* (uprooting mountains) is followed (*Sanhedrin* 24a) by the verb *tohanan*, to grind. The Talmud in *Horayot* explains that even though grinding flour is essential to the production of bread, even the “miller” must

await the delivery of wheat before going into operation. Analogously, however important analysis is to the production of Halakhah, even the “analyst” must await the delivery of reliable traditions lest he “spin his [grinding] wheels” in vain.]

- 6 According to a website offering information to parents on private schools, the “Characteristics of a Jewish School,” include the fact that “the schools have nationally recognised high standards in secular education.” <http://privateschool.about.com/od/jewishschools/qt/jewished.htm>
- 7 For a notable Modern Orthodox view of this concept, cf. Norman Lamm: *Torah for Torah's Sake in the World of Rabbi Hayyim of Volozhin and His Contemporaries* (NY: Ktav, 1989).
- 8 <http://www.jtsa.edu/davidson/melton/standards>
- 9 Cf. Eli Kohn: “Essay on a Curriculum Framework for Torah Study,”
- 10 The schools are: Pesah Raymon and Joseph Kushner of New Jersey, Addlestone of Charleston, Hillel of Milwaukee, Epstein of St. Louis and Netivot haTorah of Toronto.
- 11 *Idem: The Process of Education* (1960), *passim*. I am entirely sympathetic to Neal Postman's incisive critique of Bruner (cf. *Teaching as a Subversive Activity* (NY, 1969), 77 ff., and, with Postman, understand “structure” to be “the questions automatically raised in certain ‘fields’” (*ibid.*, 79).
- 12 In 2004, ACHIEVE, an organization that advocates for standards, studied high school exit exams in the public sector, and issued the following report of its findings:

After a detailed analysis of the mathematics and English language arts exams in Florida, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Ohio and Texas, ACHIEVE reached three conclusions: *First*, it is perfectly reasonable to expect high school graduates to pass these tests — they are not overly demanding. *Second*, these exams will need to be strengthened over time to better measure the knowledge and skills high school graduates need to succeed in the real world. *Third*, states should not rely exclusively on these tests to measure everything that matters in a young person's education. Over time, states will need to develop a more comprehensive set of measures beyond on-demand graduation tests. <http://www.achieve.org/files/TestGraduation-FinalReport.pdf>
- 13 Postman: *Op. cit.*, 67.
- 14 Bruner: *op. cit.*, 31.
- 15 Sukkah 42a.
- 16 Indeed, Rabbi Hayyim Hirschensohn, an early innovator in modern American Jewish education, proposed the instruction of this verse as the early-childhood equivalent of a religious-Zionist orientation. Cf. Moshe Sokolow: “Hayyim Hirschensohn and Modern Orthodox Religious Zionist Education,” *EDAH Journal* (forthcoming).
- 17 Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik: *Halkahic Man* (JPS, 1983), 128.
- 18 Additional benchmarks in TANAKH are provided in the accompanying article

cited in n. 9, above. For benchmarks in other disciplines in *LIMMUDEI KODESH*, see the chart in Appendix I, below.

- 19 If we regard the benchmarks as variations on the traditional objectives (a la Benjamin Bloom: *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives*), we can dispense here with the skills portion since it will not diverge significantly from the traditional taxonomy of TANAKH skills. Students will be required to move gradually from an ability to read Biblical texts phonetically/mechanically, to a reading based on *TA'AMEI HA-MIKRA* (accentuation/ punctuation marks). They will go from reading vocalized texts to unvocalized ones, gain an acquaintance with "Rashi" script, master the use of dictionaries and concordances, all the while improving their skills at "close reading." Similarly, we need not belabor the cognitive objectives, per se, since they are partially subsumed within the standards.

20 יש מאין

21 "כח מעשיו הגיד לעמו, לתת להם נחלת גוים" cf. RASHI Bereishit 1:1.

22 Including: אבר מן החי, אותו ואת בנו, שילוח הקן...

23 רמב"ן (בראשית פרק ל"ז פסוק ט"ז)

ולזה נתכוונו רבותינו באמרם כי האישים האלה הם מלאכים, שלא על חנם היה כל הסיפור הזה.
להודיענו כי עצת ה' היא תקום.

24 ומי יודע אם לעת כזאת הגעת למלכות

ועל-נסיך שבכל-יום עמנו

26 As the Mishnah (Rosh ha-Shanah 3:8) stipulates: "Does a serpent give or take life? Rather, when Israel lifted their eyes towards heaven and devoted themselves to God, they were cured."

APPENDIX I:

Benchmarks in *Limmudei Kodesh*

Here is an illustration of how a curriculum grid could look after a discussion on benchmarks for key areas in *limmudei kodesh*. As noted, these are merely guidelines I have proposed individually and not the result of an organized deliberation. I offer them here as an illustration of what individual schools can do to start the process.

Subject	5th grade	8th grade	12th grade
Ivrit	Ability to read vocalized Hebrew with correct pronunciation, accentuation, and comprehension	Ability to read unvocalized Hebrew (as above); participate in classroom discussion in Hebrew	Ability to read classical texts with adequate comprehension; maintain conversation in modern Hebrew
Tanakh	Knowledge of story line throughout Humash; ability to read Rashi	Story line throughout Nevi'im Rishonim; ability to read Rashi; acquaintance with Ibn Ezra and Ramban	"Story line" through Shivat Ziyon; acquaintance with major issues in Nevi'im Aharonim, Hamesh Megillot, and Tehillim
Torah Shebe'al Peh	Mishnayot: Avot, Moed	Mishnayot: Nezikin; Talmud: selected sugyot; Rashi and Tosafot	Mishnayot: Nashim; Talmud: selected sugyot—additional Rishonim;
Dinim	Mo'adim: Shalosh raglim	Moadim: Yamim Nora'im; Shabbat ("shamor")	Shabbat ("zakhor"); Kashrut; Taharat hamishpahah
Mahshevet Yisrael	Tefillot u-berakhot: kavanat hamitzvot	Sakhar ve'onesh (on individual and national levels)	Ta'amei hamitzvot; Yisrael ve'Artzo; "Ethics"