A Guide to Reading
Nevi'im and Ketuvim

By Seth (Avi) Kadish

Contents

(All materials are in Hebrew only unless otherwise noted.)

Midrash
Introduction (English)
How to Use the Guide Sheets (English)

Chart for Reading *Sefer Tehillim* (six-month cycle)
Chart for Reading *Sefer Tehillim* (leap year)
Guide to Reading the Five *Megillot* in the Synagogue

Sources and Notes (English)

A Guide to Reading
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Introduction

What purpose did the divisions serve?
They let Moses pause to reflect
between sections and between topics.

The matter may be inferred:
If a person who heard the Torah directly from the Holy One, Blessed be He,
who spoke with the Holy Spirit,
must pause to reflect between sections and between topics,
then this is true all the more so for an ordinary person
who hears it from another ordinary person.

(On the *parashiyot petuhot* and *setumot*. From *Dibbura de-Nedava* at the beginning of *Sifra*.)

A Basic Problem with Reading Tanakh

Knowing *where* to stop to pause and reflect is not a trivial detail when it comes to reading Tanakh. In my own study, simply not knowing where to start reading and where to stop kept me, for many years, from picking up a Tanakh and reading the books I was unfamiliar with. It was even hard for me to to review the books that I had once studied seriously. Numerous commentaries were easily available, but they were of little help when it came to deciding exactly what to try to read at one sitting. In fact, the availability of so many commentaries only compounded the problem by making the first-time study of even a short section seem like a huge endeavor.

But the other extreme – to pick up a standard Tanakh without commentaries and just read – was also daunting. Language wasn't the main problem, because I have a good background in that, and because it is always easy enough to glance at a commentary or translation when necessary. Rather, the problem was twofold: Firstly, that I didn't know *what* I was about to read, nor did I know how it fit into the overall scheme of the book I was reading. Second, I didn't know *how much* of it to read. In other words, at the outset I didn't know how long a particular biblical narrative or prophecy was, nor where it ended. I didn't know whether I should try to read it in its entirety in one sitting, or divide it and leave some for the next day. And should it need to be divided, I didn't know where to stop, i.e. the point that would least interrupt the flow of the text.

Why not just read "a *perek* a day"? There already are, in fact, programs for reading *Nakh* based on the simple idea of reading one or two chapters a day.[1] So why didn't they work for me?

The problem with the chapter divisions – besides their non-Jewish origin – is that they are notorious for breaking up the text at inappropriate points. Worse, they are also extremely uneven in length, sometimes for legitimate textual reasons, but very often for no good reason at all. Worst of all, the chapter numbers by themselves tell us nothing at all about the content of the text. What all this means is that since the chapter divisions are notoriously poor, it is quite likely that "chapter 2" does not delineate a single independent unit of the text. But even if we are lucky and it does, turning to "chapter 2" still says nothing about what the chapter contains, nor about its local context between "chapter 1" and "chapter 3," nor what its place is within the global context of the entire book.

This last point is especially important, because if you know something in advance about the context and content of what you are about to read in Tanakh, that already contributes enormously to your comprehension during reading. Even short titles of one or two words will do! In fact, that is exactly how the rabbis of the Talmud and the *rishonim* (medieval scholars) referred to sections of the Bible. They never cited meaningless numbers for chapters and verses. Instead, they referred to meaningful sections of the biblical books by using unofficial titles that derived either from the section's content of from its initial words. For some familiar examples think of *Parashat Tzitzit* (Numbers 15:37-41) or *Parashat Shema* (Deuteronomy 6:4-9), the former title based on content and the latter on the initial words of the section.

A Practical Solution

So for my own study and review, I began to create a new division of the books of *Nakh* that would at once be (a) faithful to the natural flow of the books and (b) practical as a means of dividing the texts into sections for daily reading.

I also experimented with several options for organizing all the books of *Nevi'im* and *Ketuvim* into an overall reading schedule. In the end, I settled on what seems to me the most sensible plan for a flexible, ongoing system of study and review.

Then I worked on dividing the individual books into smaller sections and subsections. After that I began creating individual sheets (usually one page per book) to guide myself in reading and review. I hope that others will find them useful as well.

A Flexible System

The system I developed relies on the idea that each month is independent, i.e. that in any given month you can study or review any *sefer* you want. Each *Rosh Hodesh* is a fresh start, so what you learn is extremely flexible: You can read all of *Nakh* in a year,

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[1]A schedule for the most common two-*perek*-a-day study-cycle for Nakh has been published for many years in both the *Lu'ah Dinim u-Minhagim* published by Heikhal Shlomoh, and in the similar *Lu'ah* distributed by the IDF Rabbinate.

or review *Nevi'im Rishonim* four times, or *Nevi'im Aharonim* three times. Or you can choose any *sefer* you want at the beginning of each month, without binding yourself to any preset order. You can also focus on a single *sefer* of particular interest to you and review it as many times as you like, month after month, until you know it well.

The basic idea is: Choose the *sefer* you want to study before *Rosh Hodesh*. Then print out the guide sheet, fold it in half (or in quarters), and keep it in your Tanakh for guidance as you make progress throughout the month.

The Twelve Month-Units

Nevi'im and *Ketuvim* are divided into 12 month-units. Each month-unit is devoted to one average-length *sefer* (or two or more shorter books), as follows:[2]

Month 1: Yehoshua & Shofetim (1 page each)
Month 2: Shemuel
Month 3: Melakhim
Month 4: Yeshayahu
Month 5: Yirmiyahu (2 pages)
Month 6: Yehezkel
Month 7: Trei Asar (2 pages)
Month 8: Iyyov
Month 9: Mishlei & Kohelet
Month 10: Megillot (except Kohelet) & Daniel
Months 11-12: Divrei ha-Yamim & Ezra-Nehemia (3 pages)

Tehillim

Sefer Tehillim is kept separate: Its reading is governed by a separate chart for a six-month cycle of reading *just one* average-length *mizmor* per day. Longer *mizmorim* are subdivided.

By focusing on just *one mizmor* each day (as opposed to the common practice of reading a string of *mizmorim* all at once), this system makes it likely that one will read that *mizmor* with understanding and *kavvanah*. Plus, reviewing *Tehillim* in its entirety twice a year, with understanding, can help to greatly improve one's language skills for reading Tanakh in general.

Purposes of the Guide Sheets:

1) To show a clear outline of the contents of the *sefer*, or (better yet) to be a sort of textual "snapshot" of the entire book. In this outline or "snapshot" I've done my very best to arrange the contents of each book thematically, according to organizational signals present in the text itself. In creating this new arrangement I ignore the chapter divisions entirely (except as parenthetical aids for reference). On the other hand, I do

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[2]For the considerations that led me to organize the books this way, see "Notes on the Overall Reading Schedule" in "Sources and Notes."

rely heavily (but not slavishly) on the *parashiyot petuhot* and *setumot*. Wherever possible, I try to provide titles that help the reader see how what he is about to read fits into the overall form of the *sefer*. All of this is presented with selective and careful use of text formatting (fonts, spacing, *nikkud*, etc.) so that a glance at a single page gives you a clear picture of the organization of the entire book at hand.

2) To divide the *sefer* into sections for daily reading. As far as possible, these daily readings should (a) be of reasonable length; (b) begin and end at appropriate points, but *not* where they interrupt the flow of the text.

It is obviously impossible to fully achieve both of these goals at once. I've done the best I can to reach a reasonable balance between them, and I hope others can offer me specific suggestions as to where the division of the text (as well as the titles) can be improved.

How long does it take, and who should try to do it?

In general, for most of the books in *Nakh*, this system for reading and review requires one to read roughly 40-50 *pesukim* a day. Sometimes, for unavoidable reasons connected to dividing the texts, it was necessary for these sections to be shorter or longer than 40-50 verses, but I tried to keep the deviations in length as small as I could.

For my own study, I find it best to sit and read a daily section out loud to myself with the *te'amim* ("trope"), which helps me absorb the material much better than a "dry" reading (without *te'amim*). This usually takes under 20 minutes a day. Other people with different learning styles or less proficiency in *laining* may prefer a "dry" narration[3] (which takes even less time). Obviously, quiet reading and study with commentaries are also good options.

My initial reading of books whose language is unusually hard (such as *Iyyov, Mishlei, Yeshayahu*) often took significantly longer than 20 minutes. But subsequent readings took less time. If one sees this as a long-term project of continual review, then my estimate of less than 20 minutes per day is quite fair, even for non-narrative texts.

Also note that the quantity can easily be halved: Simply divide each daily unit in two, on your own.[4] The result is that the amount to be read each day is quite small, and yet you still read or review an entire book once every second month. This option is especially important for initial readings of the books with the hardest language.

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[3]For a recording of a "dry" narration of Tanakh (i.e. without te`amim) by a professional narrator, see http://www.solomonstreasurechest.com/HebrewBible.html. The narration (in MP3) is by Shlomo Bertonov, whose voice was broadcast over the course of decades on "Kol Yisrael" doing readings of Tanakh.

[4]The simplest way to do this is to take the Guide Sheet and mark "aleph – bet" at the beginning of the line for the first daily unit. At the beginning of the line for the second unit, mark "gimel – dalet," etc. At the 15th unit you will have reached "kaf-tet – lamed." Then at the 16th unit start the second month again with "aleph – bet," etc.

Remember that the best way to learn biblical Hebrew is to read lots of it! Therefore, a system like this will probably work best for people who have been reading *shenayim mikra* every week for a number of years, preferably with *te'amim*. In fact, for those who have not read *shenayim mikra* in the past, I suggest they do that alone for a couple of years *instead* of trying to read *Nakh*. (*Shenayim mikra* is, after all, a mitzvah!) Only afterwards should they try to supplement it, perhaps first with a few cycles of *Tehillim*, and later with the rest of *Nevi'im* and *Ketuvim*.

Even those with long experience reading *shenayim mikra* may want to adopt this *Nakh* system slowly, initially reading and reviewing just one or two books a number of times, instead of trying to read all of *Nakh* the first year. Those who have limited experience reading Tanakh in Hebrew may want to begin by reading a daily section of *Nakh* in translation. Better yet, they can try using a Hebrew-English text in parallel columns (like the new JPS edition) or parallel pages (as in the Artscroll Tanakh).

Melodies

If you sing Nevi'im and Ketuvim with the *te`amim*, what melodies can you use? Perhaps the most natural thing is to read Nevi'im with the melody for *haftarot*, and Ketuvim with the melody for the *megillot*.[5] This is what I do, and it seems to fit well with an established tradition to reserve one special melody for Torah, another for Nevi'im, and a third for Ketuvim.[6] There are many good recordings available today for Torah, haftarot, and megillot.[7]

However, *Sifrei Emet* – Tehillim, Mishei, and Iyyov – still pose a real problem. These three poetic books share a unique system of *te`amim* – called *Ta`amei Emet* – which

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[5]Specifically, this means using the melody of the three *megillot* read on the *shalosh regalim* (Shir ha-Shirim, Ruth, Kohelet) for the books at the end of Ketuvim (Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah, and Divrei ha-Yamim). It is reasonable to consider the melody for the three *megillot* as the general melody for Ketuvim, as opposed to the special tunes for Esther (joy) and Eikhah (sorrow).

My personal models for the music of the *megillot* are the following: For *Shir ha-Shirim* the extraordinary recording by Avigdor Herzog, distributed by [Renanot] as part of their "ושנתתם ולבניך" program for learning *te`amim*, is simply perfection and an absolute joy to listen to and learn from. Unfortunately, Cantor Herzog has not recorded Ruth and Kohelet (I even sent him a letter asking him to do so), but the melody for *Shir ha-Shirim* can serve as a model for them, too (even though the short book is unfortunately missing examples of a couple of the *te`amim*, so the model is incomplete). For Esther and Eikhah I use the lovely recordings by Jay Braun, which may be heard free at the [Virtual Cantor] website, and may be ordered as an MP3 disk along with all the other excellent material at that website for a modest fee. Includes a second, slower recording of Esther for learning purposes.

[6]See *Sefer Hasidim* 302; this seems to be reflected in the Ashkenazic musical tradition. Nevertheless, there is no halakhic obligation to use three separate melodies.

[7]For the common Ashkenazic melody I highly recommend Rabbi Jeremy Wieder's ["Leining Master"] (available in both traditional Askenazic and Israeli pronunciation), which features a clear, precise reading, pleasant to the ear, by a Rosh Yeshivah at Yeshivah University who is also an expert in Tanakh. The disk contains all of the Torah readings, *haftarot* and *megillot* for the entire year. The melody I personally use for the *haftarot* is based entirely on Rabbi Weider's. For other excellent Torah readings and *haftarot* according to a variety of traditions (Sepharadi Yerushalmi, Moroccan, and Ashkenazic) read along with the text in a beautiful computer program, see www.kolkore.com.

is not found in the other books of Tanakh. There is no Ashkenazic musical tradition for *Ta`amei Emet*.[8]

There are, however, many Eastern musical traditions for *Ta`amei Emet*. Numerous recordings are available for Tehillim sung with the *te`amim*, and some of them are strikingly beautiful.[9] There are also very good recordings of Mishlei and Iyyov.[10]

Schools:

Typical daily study programs (*Daf Yomi*, *Mishnah Yomit*, *Halakhah Yomit*, *Rambam Yomi*, etc.) are largely meant for self-motivated individuals committed to Torah study, who take the importance of regular review very seriously: "One who has studied a section a hundred times cannot be compared to another, who has studied it a hundred and one times" (*Hagigah* 9b). This is certainly true of Tanakh, which is supposed to be chanted regularly by individuals from a very young age: *Ben hamesh la-mikra* (*Avot* 5:21).

Sometimes such *bekiut* programs are appropriate for group study (as in a *Daf Yomi* class). And though they are primarily meant for individual study, at times they can be adapted to schools, and even to the formal classroom. This *Nakh* system is mostly meant for self-motivated individuals, but it may have certain classroom uses. I offered it to my students as a review technique in preparation for the Israeli *bagrut* exam on *bekiut* in *Nevi'im Rishonim*. I suspect that if this system were combined with a well-done set of questions on each daily unit, it could prove valuable both inside the classroom and out.

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[8]There is a common Ashkenazic "nusach" (chant) for reciting *Tehillim*, but it has no systematic connection to the *te`amim*.

[9]Numerous *hazzanim* from a variety of Eastern traditions (Yemenite, Iraqi, Syrian, Morrocan, Tunisian, etc.) have recorded *Sefer Tehillim*; these recordings are very popular amongst Sefardim in Israel today. The various recordings have different levels of musical quality, accuracy in pronunciation, and fidelity to the *te`amim*. Some of the very finest can be listened to free at http://tehilim.net/. I especially recommend the Moroccan reading by Rabbi Levi Sudri and the Sefaradi-Yerushalmi reading by Rabbi Zion Palah, both of them for their beauty, accuracy, and fidelity to the *te`amim*. Both can be purchased for modest prices as MP3 disks.
     In general, I feel that the Moroccan musical traditions are the best introductions to eastern liturgy and *te`amim*. Sefaradi-Yerushalmi is also quite fine (and in Israel it is somewhat more widespread), but the Moroccan music is generally richer and more nuanced, and for *Ta`amei Emet* in particular I think it is the best way to learn how to sing them.

[10]Rabbi Levi Sudri has also produced MP3 recordings of *Mishlei* and *Iyyov*, which may be purchased from Darga for a modest price. I listen to his beautiful recordings for these two books. Sample recordings of the initial chapters of each book are also available online (*Mishlei* here and here; *Iyyov* here).
     For *Mishlei*, there is also a 4-cassette album called *Eme"t Keneh* by Rabbi Meir Mazouz, Rosh Yeshiva of the Tunisian Yeshivat Kisse Rahamim in Bnei Brak, and produced by the yeshiva's "Makhon Lev Masliah" foundation (5757). *Mishlei* is read responsively (verse by verse) by Rabbi Mazouz and his students. The album begins with an introduction to *Ta`amei Emet* by Rabbi Mazouz, the reading of Mishlei is interspersed with his *divrei Torah* on *Mishlei* (especially on grammar and *te`amim*), and concludes with samples of the *te`amim* for *Tehillim* and *Iyyov*. Highly worthwhile. Yeshivat Kisse Rahamim, Rehov Harav Uziel 26, Bnei Brak. Tel. (03) 676-7163/4.

For exceptionally motivated students, the Guide Sheets may also prove valuable in promoting *bekiut* knowledge early on, knowledge that could eventually allow them to prepare for the international *Hiddon ha-Tanakh*.

Torah

The yearly cycle of *Parashat ha-Shavua* is an extraordinary pedagogical device. There is no need at all to create a new reading cycle for the Torah.

Nevertheless, there is still a mild need to present the overall structure of each *Humash* clearly, as well as for a detailed outline of each week's *parashah*. Such pages are currently being prepared.

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to Rabbi Dr. Shalom Berger for hosting the initial version of the Guide Sheets on LookJed, and to Mrs. Chana Honig German for her patient, helpful efforts in the not-so-simple task of converting, arranging, and uploading the *Nakh* pages correctly at the Lookstein center for Jewish education at Bar-Ilan University. Thanks to their help, the initial version may still be viewed here.

A second corrected version appeared at Erel Segal's wonderful Tanakh website; Erel helped improve the Guide vastly in terms of user-friendliness, and I am very greatful to him for his help and goodwill.

The improvements made at Erel Segal's website were incorporated into a new, third version, once again to be found at the Lookstein center. This contained other corrections as well, and I was once again grateful to Mrs. Chana Honig German for her help.

This current version is hosted at my own website, which will allow me to make continual improvements. For the first time, all the Hebrew texts are much more conveniently located together in a single file, and there is a second file (the one you are currently reading) for all the explanatory material in English.

Feedback

Feel free to correspond with me about this *Guide*, as well as (and especially) to offer technical suggestions on how the titles, the division of the text, or the format of the pages can be improved. I would love to know if you make modifications, so that I can learn from what you've done. Remember that as they now stand, the *Guide* is still an imperfect draft, with many rough spots that need to be smoothed out.[11]

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[11]Numerous small details may need to be corrected. But please be aware of one serious thing that remains incomplete: Each page is only formatted for a short Hebrew month (*hodesh haser*) of 29 days. Ideally, the Guide should include a device to "fit" each book into 30 daily units for a full Hebrew month (*hodesh malei*), or even a second version of each page. For now, simply divide one of the longer units on your own, or take advantage of the "spare" day for review, or in case you miss a day.

<u>Personal</u>

To my wife Sheri: Everything I have been able to do during our years in Israel (including this small project) has only been in the *zekhut* of your love, patience, and encouragement. Thank you. This project is dedicated to our children, but God willing I plan to dedicate a much bigger project to you personally in the very near future.

This Tanakh project was done during the years when our two sons were born, and when they were small children. The completion of its [first version](#) (Nisan 5764) marked the end of David Zvi's fourth year (he turned five on 20 Tammuz) and Ezra Shmuel's second one (Pesach 5764), and it is dedicated to the two of them. May God bless us to guide them through Mikra, Mishnah, and Talmud – and then on to *huppah* and a life of good deeds! – in health, prosperity and peace. May they grow to be bnei Torah and fine human beings.

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Updated 5771 (2010): Minor corrections and improvements, as well as updates to hyperlinks (especially for audio recordings).

How to Use the Guide Sheets

"A Guide to Reading Nevi'im and Ketuvim" serves a dual purpose:

(1) It gives you an overall picture, a sort of textual snapshot, of the book you are reading. The book is divided into major sections, subsections, and individual segments, all with titles. Thus, at a glance you can always see where the small segment you are about to read fits into its immediate environment, as well as how it relates to its context within the whole book. Plus, the title gives you a small hint as to the topic you will read, even before you read it.

(2) It divides the book into sections of reasonable length for daily study sessions.

To begin, simply print out the Guide Sheet for the book you want to study, fold it in half (or in quarters), and keep it in your volume for guidance as you make progress throughout the month. A typical daily unit from a Guide Sheet looks like this one (from Melakhim):

<div dir="rtl">

(51)   **ג.** שרים ונציבים (ד/ב-ה/א); עשיר וחכם (ה/ב-יד); עסקי מלכים ומיסים (ה/טו-לב)

</div>

The number in parenthesis (51) at the beginning of the line is the total number of pesukim to be read that day. The ג in bold followed by a period is the day of the Hebrew month. The reading for לחודש ג comprises, in this case, a total of 51 verses in three short but distinct narrative units. The letters in small print between parenthesis are the chapter/verse numbers for each of these short units: the perek is followed by a slash, then the pasuk. (Note that the layout for Yehoshua & Shofetim is done slightly differently than in the above example, but is even simpler to understand.)

At times it was impossible to divide the text into daily readings quite so easily, and so we end up with something like this:

<div dir="rtl">

(110/2)**ד-ה.** בנין בית ה' ובית המלך (ו-ז); מאוהל אל בית (ח/א-יא); ברכה (ח/יב-כא)

קריאה ליום ד לחודש עד "ולאֻלָם הבית" (ז/יב)

</div>

King Solomon's building activities comprise one very long but cohesive unit. That unit has to be artificially divided into *two* days' reading (days ד and ה of the Hebrew month). The line in tiny print recommends reading until "ולאֻלָם הבית" (ז/יב) on ד לחודש, and the rest the next day. The number (110/2) at the beginning of the line means that a very long unit of 110 pesukim is to be divided and read over the course of two days. For "(110/2)" read: "110 divided into 2 days."

On the other hand, sometimes we find examples like the following (from Shemuel):

<div dir="rtl">

(26/48)**כז1.** מרד חדש (כ/א-כב); עוזרי המלך (כ/כג-כו)

</div>

<div dir="rtl">

חלק חמישי. שאר דברי דוד (שמ"ב פרקים כא-כד)

(22/48)**כז2.** נקמה מול חסד (כא/א-יד); מעשי גבורה (כא/טו-כב)

</div>

What this means is that the daily reading for כז לחודש has two parts: it comprises the end of the fourth major section of Sefer Shemuel and the beginning of the fifth. The numbers in parenthesis at the beginning of each line for כז לחודש tell us that a total of 48 pesukim are to be read that day, 26 at the end of one section and 22 at the beginning of the next. For "(26/48)" read: "26 out of 48," etc.

The basic idea is quite simple, and you'll pick it up in no time. The real work is to read and review the sefarim: "A Torah scholar must be conversant with the twenty-four books of

Scripture" (Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah 4:11). May God grant us success in our study of His Torah.

Sources & Notes

1. General Sources
2. Notes on Specific Books
3. Notes on the Overall Reading Schedule (the 12 Month-Units)
4. A Note on the function of *Parashiyyot*
5. Layout

1. General Sources

The first sefer I created a guide sheet for was Shemuel, both because I had to prepare my students for a bekiut exam that included the entire book, and also because I came across Shimon Bar-Efrat's wonderful commentary (Mikra le-Yisra'el series, Jerusalem: Magnes, 5756). Bar-Efrat's careful division of Sefer Shemuel into coherent narrative units with thoughtful titles is what initially gave me the idea to create this type of reading/review sheet. In my Shemuel page, the "micro" division (plus titles) is mostly based on Bar-Efrat, though I have made many changes. The "macro" division into larger units is from M. Z. Segal's *Sifrei Shemuel* (Jerusalem: Kiryat Sefer, 1987).

In other narrative books I tried to create titles for the smaller units similar to those that Bar-Efrat used in Shemuel, though I am aware that I have been only partially successful. In terms of dividing the other books of Nevi'im and Ketuvim into coherent thematic units, I made eclectic use of three types of sources:

1. First and foremost were the *parashiyot petuhot* and *setumot*, as they appear in the important biblical codices. I relied heavily (but not slavishly) on the *parashah* divisions. On the one hand, I did not create a new section every time there is a *parashah petuhah* or *setumah*. But on the other hand, whenever I did mark off a new section it nearly always coincides with a *petuhah* or a *setumah*.

The masoretic codices agree among themselves on *parashiyot petuhot* and *setumot* the large majority of the time. Nevertheless, there are some significant differences between them (even among the codices in the tradition of the Allepo Codex). On the rare occasions where my own division is based on a *parashah* division that appears in one (but not all) of the codices, I noted this by using square brackets. Also: in certain books (Mishlei, Kohelet, Ruth, and the last part of Yehezkel) there are unusually long sections without any parashah divisions at all. In these cases I noted the *parashah* divisions in square brackets whenever they do occur. In Mishlei specifically, because the division of large parts of the book is necessarily arbitrary, I based it on *parashah* divisions where possible, and noted them whenever they do occur throughout the book (in square brackets).

2. Secondly, I made use of the "macro" and "micro" divisions by those of the classic exegetes who were concerned with carefully dividing the books, such as: Ralbag, Abravanel, Meiri (on Mishlei), Sa`adia Gaon, and others.

3. For my third and final group of sources, I checked various popular modern commentaries (e.g. Hartom, Da`at Mikra, Segal, Tanakh La-Am, Olam ha-Tanakh) to see where they divided the *sefarim* and how they entitled the units. I found that they often recycle each other's work when it comes to this, but sometimes do have interesting insights into the structure and arrangement of the books.

Though I made eclectic use of all these sources, what ultimately decided the divisions and titles were my own impressions as a reader, and I added many elements entirely on my own. Responsibility for errors thus lies entirely with me.

2. Notes on Specific Books

Yehoshua and Shofetim: Besides Shemuel, I also worked on Yehoshua and Shofetim early on because of my students' *bekiut* test. I tried to make the pages for Yehoshua and Shofetim especially clear, useful and easy to use, because I assume that these are the very first books of Nakh that many people read. Since beginnings are always hard, I tried to turn these first two pages into light introductions to my concept of Guide-Sheets for *bekiut* in Nakh. Because each of these two short books has its own separate page, there was enough space to accomplish this. In Yehoshua, I made a special effort to present the long, difficult section on the *nahalot* of the tribes (13-19) in a clear way that would make it much easier to read in its entirety. On the Shofetim page I had a lot of space left, so I added an explanation of the structure of *Shirat Devorah*. The initial idea came from a chart found in *Olam ha-Tanakh* (p. 51). But I made sweeping changes to it, which I think make mine a far more useful chart.

Melakhim: Here I added symbols so that – at a glance – the reader can identify Malkhei Beit David (Magen David) and Malkhei Yisrael (banner). The star is U+2721 in Unicode, and the banner ("white flag") is U+2690 (⚐). Both may also be found in the "Wingdings" fonts for most word processors.

Yeshayahu: Shadal was very helpful at some difficult points. The *nehamot* were broken up into daily readings that are somewhat arbitrary (i.e. mostly based on quantity), yet coinciding with *parashiyot* (see below).

Yirmiyahu: The individual nevu'ot in Yirmiyahu are divided as Abravanel proposed, according to introductory formulas. (Segal later followed Abravanel with one exception.) I wanted to adapt Abravanel's summaries of the individual nevu'ot as well, but it proved impractical so I made my own (which still need more work). The "macro" division of Yirmiyahu with titles from the phrases in verse 1:10 is mine.

The summaries of the individual nevu'ot, plus the "macro" division, resulted in the need to present Yirmiyahu on *two* pages. Thus, in order to be able to take in the structure of the entire book in a single glance, the layout of the Guide Sheets should present the two Yirmiyahu pages facing each other side-by-side.

Trei Asar: Though there was enough "room" to do so, I decided not to divide Yonah in two. *Not* dividing Yonah meant the following for Nahum, Habbakuk, Zephaniah and Malachi: three of these four books could be divided in two to make reading them easier. In the end I decided to divide Habbakuk, Zephaniah, and Malachi into two parts each. Nahum, the shortest and most cohesive of these four short books, is thus read in a single sitting.

Iyyov: The material divided easily into 28 days, the division being pretty much dictated by the separate *ma`anot* upon which the book's structure is based. To reach 29, it was possible to: (A) Divide chaps. 9-10 (57 verses) into 2 parts, or else chaps. 36-37 (57 verses) into 2 parts; I leaned towards the former in order to make things easier at the beginning of the month. (B) Not combine chaps. 18-19 or not combine chaps. 34-35. The choice I made in the Guide Sheet is obviously arbitrary, and can easily be changed if people feel it should be.

Mishlei: I broke the text up into daily readings at *parashiyot petuhot* or *setumot* whenever possible, and they are indicated on the Guide-Sheet (see below).

Eikhah: The titles of the five kinnot are from *Daat Mikra*, with one small change.

<u>Kohelet:</u> The text is highly ambiguous, containing very few clear organizational signals. Thus, its division into daily readings is mostly based on quantity (see below).

<u>Shir ha-Shirim:</u> Here too the text is highly ambiguous. It has been broken up into daily readings at points coinciding with *parashiyot*.

<u>Daniel:</u> The division of Daniel is more or less dictated by the book's contents. The earliest authority to point out the book's parts explicitly was, to the best of my knowledge, Saadia Gaon.

<u>Ezra-Nehemiah:</u> In order to make the structure clearer, I quoted a number of verses relating to dating and context within the outline.

<u>Divrei ha-Yamim:</u> I tried to make the titles of large and small sections reflect the book's own structure and purposes (as I understood them). Thus, even when sections of Divrei ha-Yamim have parallels in Melakhim, the titles in Divrei ha-Yamim are often different.

<u>Arbitrary divisions (Mishlei, Kohelet, Shir ha-Shirim, end of Yeshayahu):</u> In general, I did my best to divide and entitle the parts of each book thematically, according to organizational signals present in the text itself, and to try to make the division into daily readings coincide with such signals. But in certain poetic books this was impossible to achieve, because "organizational signals" are either highly ambiguous or entirely absent. In such cases I divided the text into daily readings based largely on quantity, and quoted the initial verse instead of giving a concrete (and probably misleading) title.

Fortunately, for *Shir ha-Shirim* and for the *nehamot* at the end of Yeshayahu, it was at least possible to mark the exact starting point for each daily reading – though still somewhat arbitrary – by having it coincide with a *parashah petuhah* or *setumah*. These *parashiyot* are noted on the Guide Sheets.

For Mishlei and Kohelet the problem was more severe: Even the *parashiyot* could not always serve as guides because they are rare in a major portion of Mishlei (chapters 10-24) and throughout most of Kohelet. Thus, the points where the text is broken up in these two places are almost entirely arbitrary, and based almost entirely upon quantity (though I did try to avoid starting new readings in the middle of a single thought).

Tehillim: A Jew needs to feel "at home" in Sefer Tehillim. There is nothing else like it for bringing home the personal, human side of avodat Hashem.

However, I never liked the idea of reading Sefer Tehillim once a week or even once a month. Reading many mizmorim in a row is, it seems to me, a sure recipe for rote reading, and I don't believe there is any value to the rote recitation of Tehillim (though I am fully aware that others do). Instead, I prefer the idea of one mizmor per day, which allows the reader to reflect upon the meaning and mood of that particular mizmor alone.

The basic idea for the six-month chart is simple: There are 150 mizmorim in printed editions (though Hazal didn't count them exactly this way). Six Hebrew months are 177 days. That means one mizmor per day, with longer mizmorim being subdivided.

Figuring out how best to subdivide the longest mizmorim was a tedious and technical process that involved a lot of counting. In general, I tried to divide long mizmorim where there seem to be pauses, or where a new thought seems to begin. In the end I decided to occasionally combine some of the shortest mizmorim as well, in order to allow some longer ones to be reduced to even smaller sections.

I tried to achieve a good balance, but in the end, here too, much is arbitrary. I will gratefully accept advise on where and how to shift the combinations and divisions in the chart.

3. Notes on the Overall Reading Schedule (the 12 Month-Units)

The overall scheme, based on twelve months-units as presented in the Guide Sheets, is just one possible way to create a schedule for reading *Nevi'im* and *Ketuvim*. I initially experimented with a number of other options before settling on the current scheme, which I consider the most sensible and flexible way to organize a system of study and review. (Its flexibility is part of what makes it so sensible!) Nevertheless, different organizational schemes may work better for others, and if someone wants to rearrange what I have done it order to facilitate the study of Torah, that is fine.

The following were some of the considerations that led me to the present scheme for the Guide Sheets:

Starting Point – Nevi'im: I began with the simple fact each of the books of *Nevi'im* is a cohesive unit of roughly the same standard length. The only true exceptions are Yehoshua and Shofetim, but luckily these two books combine easily to form a single standard unit as well. The direct result is seven clear units for reading Nevi'im, namely: (1) Yehoshua and Shofetim, (2) Shemuel, (3) Melakhim, (4) Yeshayahu, (5) Yirmiyahu, (6) Yehezkel, (7) Trei Asar.[12] This simple quantitative fact is the reason that publishers usually print Mikraot Gedolot on Nevi'im in seven volumes.

Ketuvim: Ketuvim is more problematic: Divrei ha-Yamim is unusually long, while Tehillim is the longest book in all of Tanakh by far, and its text is often quite hard to read. Alongside these two books, each of which is too long to be a single unit, there are many short books: Five Megillot, Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah. Mishlei is longer, but still too short to be a unit of its own. So how should these books be combined?

Iyyov: The only "easy" part of Ketuvim was Iyyov, which automatically fits a single clear month-unit, similar to the books in Nevi'im. Iyyov is somewhat short (like Trei Asar), but its language is notoriously difficult, so it was reasonable to make its average daily readings a bit shorter. Thus, Iyyov easily became one month-unit.

For the other books of Ketuvim, I juggled a number of options, as follows:

*Should Tehillim be part of the regular bekiut program, or a separate study-cycle? In the end I settled for the latter option, because the structure of Sefer Tehillim is radically different than the rest of Nakh, and also because this very structure (a collection of roughly[13] 150 independent units) lent itself so nicely to a 6-month cycle.[14]

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[12]Trei Asar is the shortest of these seven units, but as a combination of twelve small and diverse books it is also more difficult to read, so I thought it worth devoting slightly more time to each short book. In any case, the books of Trei Asar naturally divide into about 29-30 days (as shown on the Guide Sheet). Thus, we begin with seven clear reading units in Nevi'im.

[13]Roughly, but not exactly, since the number 150 is based on the chapter divisions. There are actually slightly fewer than 150 mizmorim since several pairs of mizmorim may originally have been one together (see the Guide Sheet). Hazal spoke of "the 147 mizmorim in Sefer Tehillim."

[14]Also see comments above on why Tehillim needs a separate study-cycle.

<u>Megillot?</u> Should the Five Megillot be a regular part of the bekiut program at all, since they are read anyways over the course of the year? In the end I decided that they should be, for two reasons:

(1) A public reading does not really mean that the book has been read and digested on an individual level, especially because the Megillot are too long to be read as one "daily dose". Rather, they should be subdivided.

(2) It is true that the entire Jewish People reads Esther on Purim and Eikhah on Tisha be-Av. But many communities (including most Israeli communities!) do *not* have any public reading of the three megillot on the *shalosh regalim*.[15] And even Esther and Eikhah would benefit from being subdivided into several daily readings. So in the end I included the Five Megillot, and even paid them special attention by creating relatively short daily readings for the harder ones.

*Perhaps Kohelet should be combined with Mishlei, putting the two related "Wisdom Books" together in the same reading unit? In the end I decided to do this, even though it meant separating Kohelet from the rest of the Megillot. Reading Mishlei and Kohelet together has thematic value, and they also combine very well in terms of length and difficulty.

*Perhaps the books focusing on the Persian period (Esther, Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah) should be combined as a single unit? Or perhaps the prophets of the Return to Zion (the last three nevi'im of Trei Asar) should be combined with the book of Ezra-Nehemia as a single unit? These are both attractive options for thematic reasons, and some people may justifiably want to read them this way. In the end I didn't divide the month-units this way because it created problems in combining other books. If someone else wants to create a reading cycle based on these types of combinations, that would be wonderful.

Perhaps Daniel and Ezra-Nehemiah should be combined? Both are books about the Persian period, and both have Aramaic parts, and they also combine well into one Month-Unit in terms of length. Alternatively, perhaps Daniel – which is a relatively short narrative – should be combined with the megillot, while Ezra-Nehemiah should be combined with Divrei ha-Yamim as its natural continuation? In the end I chose the latter option, but I encourage others to combine the books the first way if it facilitates their study, and perhaps even contribute a new alternative Guide-Sheet.

<u>Conclusion:</u> My final decision for Ketuvim was as follows: Iyyov as one unit, Mishlei & Kohelet as one unit, the four remaining Megillot plus Daniel as one unit, and Divrei ha-Yamim followed by Ezra-Nehemiah as a *double* two-month unit.[16]

The system I finally settled upon is more or less balanced, gives relatively more time to individual small books, and also remains quite close to the common order of the books in printed editions of Tanakh. Nevertheless, I encourage those who want to modify this scheme in order to facilitate their own study to do so.

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[15]Most Hasidim, Sefaradim, and Temanim (Baladi) do not read Shir ha-Shirim publicly on Shabbat Hol ha-Moed Pesah. (They often, however, do read it at home at the end of the Pesah seder. Furthermore, Sefaradim *do* read it publicly every *Erev Shabbat* before *Kabbalat Shabbat*.) These same groups do not publicly read Ruth on Shavuot (though they may read it during the *Tikkun*), and some have no custom at all associating Kohelet with Sukkot.

[16]I also tried but abandoned setups that would have involved books being read in *specific* months, especially based on the Five Megillot. For instance: Eikhah and Yirmiyahu in Av, Kohelet and Mishlei in Tishrei, Esther and Daniel (plus Ezra-Nehemiah) in Adar, Shivat Zion books in Iyyar (Yom ha-Atzmaut and Yom Yerushalayim) along with Ruth (towards Sivan). I also briefly thought about attaching Ruth to Yehoshua & Shofetim (Sivan). Nevertheless, it seems to me that the flexibility allowed by the current scheme is far better than any of these arrangements.

4. A Note on the function of *Parashiyot*

According to the rabbinic tradition recorded in *Sifra*, the purpose of the *parashiyot* is to indicate a pause between different sections and topics within the biblical books. Casual familiarity with the *parashiyot* backs up this impression, and my own attempt to "map" the biblical books while paying careful attention to the *parashiyot* has convinced me that this is indeed their primary purpose.

But while I am quite sure that this is generally the case, I have also noticed other features. Sometimes one finds a *parashah* indicated in the middle of a topic, whose purpose is unclear. Alternatively, sometimes finds a *parashah* where a new topic does *not* begin, but its purpose may be surmised: usually to emphasize the previous verse by pausing after it (or else some entirely different reason). At the opposite extreme, sometimes there are very long sections that cry out for "paragraphing" but have no *parashiyot* at all. In short, the *parashiyot* often reflect a clear exegetical tradition, but not always. They are worthy of further study.

There is a natural inclination to ascribe more "stopping power" to a *parashah petuhah* than to a *setumah*. My own reading has led me to doubt this, however, because the exceptions are so numerous.

One particular feature I noticed in dozens of places, which seems to be almost a systematic rule, is that when a narrative text moves from one situation to another within the same story, thus calling for a *parashah*, the break is inevitably placed *after* the verse which sets the stage for the new situation. In other words, the tradition of the *parashiyot* seems read such verses as the closing elements of the previous section, rather than as introductions to the next section. A "scene" is properly finished only after the elements for the next situation have been introduced. It is my impression that this is a general rule for the *parashah* tradition, though only a systematic study could prove it to be so.

5. Layout:

In order to print the *Guide to Reading Nevi'im and Ketuvim*, the following is a suggested layout for use within **a booklet using both sides of each page**. By printing on both sides of each page it is possible to present certain pages facing each other side-by-side (such as the two pages of Yirmiyahu).

The suggested layout is for the *Hebrew* portion of the booklet. The English explanatory material can easily be placed in order from left to right beginning at the facing left cover of the booklet.

<u>שמאל</u>	<u>ימין</u>
1(א) תוכן	X
(2א) מבוא עמ' 1	(1ב) מדרש
(3א) מבוא עמ' 3	(2ב) מבוא עמ' 2
(4א) מבוא עמ' 5	(3ב) מבוא עמ' 4
(5א) מבוא עמ' 7	(4ב) מבוא עמ' 6
(6א) כיצד להשתמש בדפי ההדרכה	(5ב) מבוא עמ' 8
(7א) שופטים	(6ב) יהושע
(8א) מלכים	(7ב) שמואל
(9א ישעיהו	(8ב) X
(10א) ירמיהו עמ' ב	(9ב) ירמיהו עמ' א

(11א) יחזקאל	X (10ב)
(12א) תרי עשר עמ' ב	(11ב) תרי עשר עמ' א
(13א) איוב	X (12ב)
(14א) מגילות ודניאל	(13ב) משלי וקהלת
(15א) דברי הימים עמ' ב	(14ב) דברי הימים עמ' א
(16א) עזרא-נחמיה	X (15ב)
(17א) תהלים (בששה חודשים)	X (16ב)
	(17ב) תהלים (מעוברת)

סה"כ: 17 דפים.

הצעה: מאמרים קצרים למילוי דפים ריקים:

לפני ישעיהו: אולי "סדרן של נביאים" או "בין נביאים ראשונים לנביאים אחרונים"
לפני יחזקאל: "מה כלה זו מתקשטת בעשרין וארבעה תכשיטין..."
לאחר נביאים ולפני איוב: "סדרן של כתובים" או משהו על "בין נביאים לכתובים" (או שניהם).
לפני עזרא: משהו על שיבת ציון או סוף נבואה, או על ארמית מקראית, או דרשת חז"ל על הפסוק בנחמיה
"ויבינו במקרא".
לפני לוח תהלים: משהו על קריאת תהלים או על המבנה של ספר תהלים.

ḤḤḥḥ

Zẓẓẓ