

How to Use the Guide Sheets

The "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):

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

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 ג לחודש 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:

ד-ה. בנין בית ה' ובית המלך (ו-ז); מאוהל אל בית (ח/א-יא); ברכה (ח/יב-כא)
קריאה ליום ד לחודש עד "ולאֵלם הבית" (ז/יב)

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 "ולאֵלם 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):

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

חלק חמישי. שאר דברי דוד (שמ"ב פרקים כא-כד)
כז. כז (22/48). נקמה מול חסד (כא/א-יד); מעשי גבורה (כא/טו-כב)

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.