

# A Perek a Day



By Shira Penn

**A** simple quiz: Who was king of Israel after Saul?

If you said David, you're mistaken. Saul's son Ishboshet reigned for two years before David ruled over a unified nation.

The fact of the matter is that most Jews—even observant Jews with a solid Jewish background and education—are woefully unaware of the contents of Tanach. “Sadly, many *frum* Jews have almost no exposure to Nach beyond the *haftarah* portions read in *shul* and Megillat Esther,” says Rabbi Jack Abramowitz, associate director of the

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Orthodox Union's Pepa and Rabbi Joseph Karasick Department of Synagogue Services.

The Orthodox Union (OU) is attempting to fill that gap. This past

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November, its Department of Synagogue Services unveiled Nach Yomi, a new program that provides a daily *shiur* in

Nach—the books of the Prophets (*Nevi'im*) and the Writings (*Ketuvim*)—at the pace of a chapter a day.

Nach Yomi's format is similar to that of Daf Yomi, the seven-year cycle of Talmud study in which participants study a page of Talmud a day. But unlike Daf Yomi, Nach Yomi is readily accessible to beginners.

“I did not have the benefit of an in-depth Jewish education as a child, so I often felt overwhelmed by the Torah readings each week,” says Penny Shima Glanz, the New York-based owner of PennyWise Consulting, LLC, a technology consulting company. “[But] Nach Yomi has solved this problem by guid-

ing me through the texts with a framework and with wonderful, inspiring, downloadable *shiurim*.”

“By learning a chapter a day, participants can complete Nach in just over two years,” says Rabbi Abramowitz, who spearheads the program. Nach Yomi consists of a daily audio *shiur* (available at [www.ouradio.org/nach](http://www.ouradio.org/nach) and via podcast), a synopsis of the day’s chapter in text format and intermittent in-depth audio *shiurim*. Additionally, Nach Yomi provides the actual text of the chapter in both Hebrew and English, courtesy of the Mechon Mamre web site. The synopses are written by Rabbi Abramowitz, who is also the author of the NCSY “Torah on One Foot” educational series and other OU publications.

Nach Yomi has quickly carved itself a unique niche in the Torah-education landscape. It is among the most popular features on the OU web site, attracting more than 8,000 visitors per month from three dozen countries on six continents, including Japan, Germany, Peru, Singapore and Kenya.

“In my travels, I meet many who approach me and thank me for the program and its easy accessibility,” says Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Hersh Weinreb, executive vice president of the OU. “I have been particularly moved by those who tell me they are studying it together with their spouses or children.”

Some listen to Nach Yomi on their commute, like Susan Presby, a user-support technologist at the Fashion Institute of Technology in New

York. “One of the first times that I listened [to the Nach Yomi *shiur*], I was walking down the streets of Manhattan and [the teacher] was talking to me,

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analyzing the Book of Joshua. I felt as if I was having a private *shiur*... I was blown away.”

Nach Yomi lecturers include prominent rabbis and educators, such as Rabbi Bini Maryles, director of the OU Department of Synagogue Services; Rabbi Yitzchak Etshalom, author of *Between the Lines of the Bible* (Brooklyn, 2006); Rabbi Dr. Gidon Rothstein, former director of Judaic studies curriculum and teacher training at the Hebrew Academy of the Five

Towns and Rockaway (HAFTR)/ Machon HaTorah; Dr. Shawn Zelig Aster, assistant professor of Bible at Yeshiva University and Rabbi Eric Levy, currently the *menahel* of Yeshivat Or Chaim in Toronto.

Howard Feiner, a participant from San Francisco, finds Nach Yomi essential to his work. “I work four to six

nights a week and sometimes during the day on an on-call basis,” says Feiner, who serves as a *shomer* for Sinai Memorial Chapel. “I would never have been able to learn these subjects any other way.... My primary function at work is to learn. [With Nach Yomi I can] fulfill the mitzvah to learn and study on behalf of a fellow Jew who passed away.”

Though the books of the *Nevi'im Rishonim*, the Early Prophets (Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings), are in chronological order, the Nach Yomi *shiurim* are easy to follow from any starting point. Additionally, text, commentary and *shiurim* are all available online, free for the taking. Every section of Nach already completed is archived on the Nach Yomi web site so “latecomers” can listen to the *shiurim* at their own pace.

While the entire Nach will be completed in the fall of 2009, the OU has more educational projects on the horizon. Currently, Rabbi Abramowitz is in the process of compiling synopses of *Nevi'im Rishonim* into a Nach companion. “The plan is to make [the companion] available so that people can read through the contents as they would a book, chapter by chapter, familiarizing themselves with the basics of *Nevi'im*,” says Rabbi Abramowitz. A CD with the *shiurim* will also be released.

The *shiurim* have sparked something of a revolution in learning Nach. Aside from the throngs of visitors to the Nach Yomi web site and the podcast subscribers worldwide, there are new groups in various communities learning Nach.

“Familiarity with the narratives and lessons of our prophets is essential for the observant Jew,” says Rabbi Weinreb. “After all, they constitute nothing less than the *devar Hashem*, the very words of the Almighty.” **IA**

*To sponsor a day, week or month of learning, or to obtain a calendar with the Nach Yomi cycle through November 2009, visit [www.ouradio.org/nach](http://www.ouradio.org/nach) or e-mail [nachyomi@ou.org](mailto:nachyomi@ou.org).*

