בס״ד

ZS BEYOND THE COURT

שנים מקרא ואחד תרגום

SHNAYIM MIKRA

Rabbi Wiesenfeld Shiurim

Halachos, sources and stories

Compiled by
Zevi Samet
ZS Beyond the Court

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How to read this booklet. Sources are set in blue, transliterated terms in *italics*, and the key rulings and stories are pulled out in their own panels.

SHIUR 01 · SHNAYIM MIKRAH #1

INTRODUCTION AND THE STEIPLER'S APPROACH

Rabbi Wiesenfeld Shiurim · Notes by Zevi Samet

STORY

There is a well-known story that when the Steipler zt"l was a soldier in the Russian army, he had to stand guard on Friday night deep in Russia, where it was freezing cold. The soldier who had served in the shift before him had left a coat hanging on a tree.

However, the Steipler knew that it is strictly forbidden (*asur*) to use a tree on Shabbos, which includes taking something off of it, putting something on it, or hanging something up. Therefore, he did not use the coat.

Faced with freezing conditions in Siberia, the Steipler reflected on his situation:

> *"There is no way that I can survive the night without a coat. It is freezing cold, and there is a nice, warm, geshmak fur coat right there. All you have to do is pick it up and take it. Not so bad, right? It is probably okay."*

The Steipler did not rely on "it is probably okay"; he knew it was *asur*. At the same time, he realized:

> *"But I am not going to survive the night. In this freezing cold, it is plain danger, a matter of pikuach nefesh [saving a life]. There is no*

> *way I am going to survive the night. What am I going to do? I am going to survive for 10 minutes. Can I survive 10 minutes? Yes."*
>
> He maintained this mindset throughout the entire night, telling himself every 10 minutes, "The whole night? No way. But the next 10 minutes, I think I can manage." And he made it through.

> ***"The whole night? No way. But the next 10 minutes, I think I can manage."***
>
> THE STEIPLER ZT"L

This is a tremendous lesson for us: Sometimes we look at challenges in our personal lives and in our spiritual lives (*Yiddishkeit*) and feel they are simply too much for us.

Let us take one example: Shas. Thousands of pages of Shas! How is a person supposed to accomplish that? It is easy to think, "Forget about it!" But if you break it down—a few lines, half an *amud*, an *amud*, a *daf*—can you do something today? You certainly can. So, do what you can today and move on to the next day.

When you look at an accomplishment as a whole, it can look overwhelming. When you split it up into pieces, it completely changes your perspective. That is what the Steipler teaches us.

When you look at the entire Torah—*Chamisha Chumshei Torah*—with all the weekly *parshiyos* and commentaries, it can feel like too much: "I am not even going to know all of this. It is impossible!" But if you divide it into smaller, manageable parts, you will be surprised at how easy it is to reach the finish line.

The Halachah of Shnayim Mikra Ve'Echad Targum

The Gemara in Berachos (Daf 8a) teaches us: "A person should always finish his *parashah* with the community, *shnayim mikra ve'echad targum* [twice the pasuk and once the Targum, translation]."

- Rabbeinu Yonah explains what *im hatzibur* means: you finish it by yourself before the community does. This means you have an entire week to finish the *parashah* before Shabbos, because on Shabbos the community lains (*reads*) the *parashah* in shul.

Status as a Chiyuv (Obligation)

The Shulchan Aruch in Orach Chaim (Siman 285) brings this halachah *lema'aseh* and says it's a *chiyuv* (an obligation):

THE HALACHAH

It is not merely a nice thing to do, nor is it a *reshus* (optional); it is an absolute obligation (*chiyuv*) for every single person to complete *shnayim mikra ve'echad targum*.

The Greatness and Reward of Shnayim Mikra

The Rosh asks: What is the *ma'alah* (great quality) of *shnayim mikra*?

- The Rosh says that when a person does *shnayim mikra*, he is truly reading *Krias Shema*, accepting the yoke of the Kingdom of Heaven (*Kabbalas Ol Malchus Shamayim*).

Who Instituted This Chiyuv?

- The Aruch HaShulchan says that Moshe Rabbeinu instituted this *chiyuv* for every single person.
- The Chinuch, in his introduction (*hakdamah*), writes that Chazal instituted this so that a person would know Torah better. How do you come to know Torah better? Through *shnayim mikra ve'echad targum*.

THE REWARD

The Gemara in Berachos says that the reward for a person who does *shnayim mikra*, receives *arichus yamim*—a long life.

The Maharsha explains that people might sometimes think, "It is only Chumash; let me learn something a bit more worthwhile."

- People often feel—"I don't have so much time, I am busy doing this, I am busy doing that, there is so much going on"—**Hashem grants you *arichus yamim* (a long life), and you end up living longer because that makes up for the time you invest in it.**
  - It is an incredible mitzvah, an incredible *chiyuv*, and something we should definitely take upon ourselves. It helps us journey through the *parshiyos* of the Torah—one per week—finishing before Shabbos, and it fundamentally changes our perspective of Chumash and the weekly *parashah*.

The Three-Part System and Historical Context

The Lechem Chamudos explains that this is really a three-part system when the Torah is read *b'tzibur*:

1. A person is called up for the *aliyah*.
2. A person stands next to him to ensure there are no mistakes.
3. Historically, they had a *meturgeman* (translator). This is the underlying concept of *ma'avir sedrah*—going through the Pasuk twice and the *Targum* once.

The Aruch HaShulchan asks: Why three times?

- It symbolizes the three times the Torah was actually explained: once in *Ohel Moed*, once at *Har Sinai*, and once at *Arvos Moav*.
- Furthermore, when HaKadosh Baruch Hu taught Moshe Rabbeinu the Torah, He said it twice to Himself and once more to Moshe Rabbeinu.

When Does the Obligation Begin?

The Shulchan Aruch notes that the obligation to read *shnayim mikra* begins **after Minchah on Shabbos**, because that is when the community already reads the *parashah* for the upcoming week.

The Most L'chatchilah (Optimal) Time

What is the best, most *l'chatchilah* (optimal) time to do it?

- The Magen Avraham brings in the name of the Shlah HaKadosh (based on *kabbalah*) that the most ideal time is Erev Shabbos, a little before or after *chatzos* (halachic midday).

Alternative Schedules

- The Vilna Gaon divided the *sedrah* across the days of the week, doing a little bit each day after Shacharis so he could finish it before Shabbos. The Mishnah Berurah (Siman 285, Seif Katan 30) brings this halachah *lema'aseh*.

What if You Missed It Before Shabbos?

Even if a person did not manage to complete it before Shabbos:

- They can do it Friday night before a meal, or even Shabbos morning before going to shul.
- Even if they missed that, they can complete it after Shacharis before the Shabbos meal.

Tosfos (Brachos 8) brings a Midrash that tells us—**One of the three things that Rebbe instituted for his children to do before he died was not to eat the Shabbos meal until they had completed *ma'avir sedra*.** He wanted to ensure they entered the Shabbos meal fully prepared with that week's *sedrah*, thus fulfilling *m'slim im hatzibur* (completing it alongside the community) and get the *koach* (strength) of the *tzibur*.

BEDIEVED

Bedieved (secondary / after the fact), if you do not finish by then, you have until **Tuesday**, or—REALLY *bedieved*, you have until **Simchas Torah**.

SHIUR 02 · SHNAYIM MIKRAH #2

BEING MAFSIK AND LEARNING AT NIGHT

Rabbi Wiesenfeld Shiurim · Notes by Zevi Samet

Halachos of Being Mafsik (Interruption)

- **Ba'er Heitev** (*Kitzur Shulchan Aruch*, *Eliyah Rabbah*, *Mishnah Berurah also brings it*): A person should try not to be *mafsik* while doing *ma'avir sedrah* / *Shnayim Mikra*, unless it is a *sha'as hadchak* (extreme emergency).
- **Aruch HaShulchan** Questions the problem with stopping, noting no *bracha* was made stipulating not to interrupt. Just like regular *limmud HaTorah*, you shouldn't stop in the middle. He is much more *makil*.
- **Mishnah Berurah** Writes it is very good not to be *mafsik*.

Learning Mikra at Night

> **SOURCE**
>
> *Ba'er Heitev* quotes the Arizal: HaKadosh Baruch Hu taught Moshe Rabbeinu *Mikra* by day and *Mishnah* by night (also cited by *Or HaChaim Hakadosh* in *Parshas Ha'azinu*).
>
> **HALACHA**
>
> *Sha'ar HaTziyun* (238:1) writes one should not learn *Mikra* at night. However, the *Pri Megadim* implies it is not a strict *issur*, which is how the *Mishnah Berurah* rules *lema'aseh*. It is a *lechatchilah* preference, not a prohibition.

REASON

Likutey Maharich explains *Torah Shebiksav* is *din*, while *Torah Sheba'al Peh* is *chesed*. Night is a time of *din*, so we learn *Torah Sheba'al Peh* to sweeten the *din*.

MIDAS CHASIDUS

Maharsham (Chelek 1 Siman 158) notes it is only a *midas chasidus*.

PRACTICAL RULING · RAV SCHEINBERG ZATZAL

When asked about learning Chumash late at night, Rav Scheinberg zt"l ruled 100% that you can learn Chumash if you otherwise would not be learning.

Perspective and the Story of Mashiach

STORY

Rebbe Yehoshua ben Levi asked Mashiach when he was coming, and Mashiach replied, "Today." When the day passed without arrival, Eliyahu HaNavi explained: Mashiach meant he is ready, but "you have to listen to his voice"—bringing him depends on our actions today.

TAKEAWAY

Just like the overwhelming scope of a whole *parashah* or Torah, breaking undertakings down into manageable daily pieces brings *siyata d'shmaya* to finish the Torah, become a *baki*, and bring the redemption.

SHIUR 03 · SHNAYIM MIKRAH #3

FULL-TIME LEARNERS, METHODS AND THE BA'AL KOREH

Rabbi Wiesenfeld Shiurim · Notes by Zevi Samet

> *There are various combinations and questions regarding* shnayim mikra. *It is impossible to go through every single question, but the main point is simply to do it. If you have a specific question, you should contact your Rebbe.*

Are Those Who Learn Full-Time Exempt?

- Rav Moshe (Igros Moshe, Orach Chaim Chelek 5 Siman 17) addresses those learning 14 hours a day who claim no time for *Shnayim Mikra*. Citing a Rashba, Rav Moshe rules there is no *heter* to skip it; it is a binding *d'rabbanan*.
- Are they exempt from the mitzvah of *milah*? As the Midrash states, *chas veshalom*!

The Gemara in Kiddushin (Daf 40b) teaches that learning is great because it leads to action (*gadol talmud shemevi l'yidei ma'aseh*). The entire purpose of our learning is to fulfill the mitzvos. A person cannot simply say, "I am learning the whole time and do not have time to do mitzvos." *Shnayim mikra* is not merely learning; it is also a mitzvah that encompasses both aspects.

> **SAFEK ON LOCATION**
>
> If unsure where you are holding, *poskim* (Rav Chaim Kanievsky, Belzer Rav, Belzer Dayan, *Shevet HaKehati*) rule you return to where you are certain.

STANDING

Rav Chaim Kanievsky stated there is no requirement to stand; sitting is fully permitted.

ORDER

Ideally *k'seder*, but *bedieved* valid out of order.

Methods of Recitation

The Shulchan Aruch HaRav, the Vilna Gaon (Gra), the Baal HaTanya, the Kaf HaChaim, and the Mishnah Berurah all hold that **whichever method you use, you fulfill your obligation**. You do not need to worry that one way is inherently better than another; whichever fits your routine and your comfortability is wonderful.

There are three primary methods:

1 **Pasuk by Pasuk**

Read each Pasuk twice, and then its *targum*. This method is brought by the Shaarei Teshuva in the name of the Arizal, and it was the custom of the Chafetz Chaim.

2 **Paragraph by Paragraph**

Read an entire paragraph (up to a *pei* or *samech* break) twice, and then go back and read the *targum* for that section. This is brought by the Magen Avraham in the name of the holy Shlah HaKadosh.

3 **Entire Parashah**

Read the entire *parashah* from start to finish twice, and then go back and read the *targum* from start to finish. This was the custom of the Steipler and of Rav Chaim Kanievsky's father.

The main thing is that you did it, regardless of the method chosen.

Using Trup and Understanding What You Read

- **Trup:** The Sefer HaYirah from Rabbeinu Yonah, along with the Magen Avraham citing the Radbaz and Kaf HaChaim, notes that while knowing the *trup* is not an absolute requirement, it is definitely better to perform *shnayim mikra ve'echad targum* using the *trup* if you know how.

What if a person does not understand what they are reading?

The primary reason *shnayim mikra* was instituted was to become well-versed in the Torah. If you do not understand the words, you are essentially reading *Tehillim*. While there is nothing wrong with reading *Tehillim*, the goal is comprehension. Therefore, poskim state that while you should try to understand it, **you still fulfill your obligation** even if you do not fully understand the language.

Targum Onkelos vs. Rashi

If you look at any decent Chumash, you will notice there are several types of *targumim*. However, **Targum Onkelos** is the universally accepted standard because he explains the text in a clear, understandable manner rather than just doing a word-for-word translation.

Should You Learn Rashi Instead or In Addition?

People often ask whether they should do Rashi instead because they understand it better and it brings fascinating Midrashim and questions.

The Shulchan Aruch rules that a **yerei shamayim should do both**—both Targum and Rashi!

STORY

This brings to mind a famous story: The Beis Halevi was once told that he was very *machmir* (strict), to which he replied that he actually had many *kulos* (lenient rulings). When asked for an example, he answered:

> *"My leniency is based on the Shulchan Aruch in Siman 285, which states that a yerei shamayim should say both Targum and Rashi. I rule leniently that even someone who is not yet a yerei shamayim is permitted to do both!"*

Rav Moshe Sternbuch: Has a major *teshuvah* noting many *shitos* hold Rashi is a better option than *Targum* if *Targum* is not understood.

Therefore, it is certainly meritorious to do both. However, if you prefer Rashi, you may choose one or the other; you do not have to do both to fulfill the basic obligation. Rashi is particularly wonderful because it aids comprehension, especially with an English-annotated Rashi.

When Should Shnayim Mikra Be Done?

Many people find it easier to complete *shnayim mikra* at night, when their schedule is a bit more relaxed after daytime learning of Gemara and Halachah. However, there is a discussion regarding this:

- **Learning Chumash at Night:** The Be'er Heitev (citing the Ari z"l in Siman 238) notes a Midrash stating that when Moshe Rabbeinu was on Har Sinai, Hashem taught him Written Torah by day and Oral Torah by night. Based on this, some suggest avoiding learning Chumash at night.
- **The Ruling:** The Pri Megadim and the Mishnah Berurah paskin that **there is no prohibition** to do it at night. If night is your only available time, or

if it is much easier for you, you may certainly do it at night. While daytime is ideal, you can be lenient if necessary.

- **Friday Night:** Learning *Mikra* and Chumash specifically on Friday night is encouraged, as ruled by the Steipler in Orchos Rabbeinu (Chelek 1) and other poskim.

Fulfilling the Obligation via the Ba'al Koreh

1. Listening to the Ba'al Koreh on Shabbos Morning

Can you fulfill your obligation simply by listening to the *ba'al koreh* read the *parashah* on Shabbos morning, relying on the principle of hearing being equivalent to speaking (*shomei k'oneh*)?

THE STRICT VIEW

The Mekor Chaim, Aruch HaShulchan, Kaf HaChaim, and the Chazon Ish rule that **listening alone does not count**.

THE LENIENT VIEW

A group of poskim—including the Magen Avraham, Shaarei Teshuvah, Chayei Adam, Shulchan Aruch HaRav, and Ezer Yisrael—hold that *bedieved* (after the fact) you can rely on this as one of the required readings if you get stuck or run out of time.

READING ALONG WORD-BY-WORD

If you read every single word **simultaneously** with the *ba'al koreh*, poskim like the Eliyah Rabbah, Chazon Ish, Mishnah Berurah, and Shulchan Aruch HaRav agree that **you fulfill one of your two required readings**. Thus, if you only managed to read the text and targum once during the week, you can complete the second reading word-for-word alongside the *ba'al koreh* on Shabbos morning.

2. During Chazaras HaShatz

DO NOT DO IT DURING CHAZARAS HASHATZ!

Rav Chaim Kanievsky explicitly writes in Orchos Yosher (page 104) that if someone recites *shnayim mikra* during *Chazaras HaShatz*, **they do not fulfill their obligation at all**. *Chazaras HaShatz* is a critical time when everyone must concentrate fully on the sanctification of Hashem's name.

Conclusion

There are many detailed questions regarding *shnayim mikra*, but the primary message is to open up a Chumash, set aside a little time each day, and make it happen. By doing so, a person becomes truly well-versed in Chumash and gains a deeper understanding of the Torah that speaks to us in every generation.

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