

3. Go around the room and have each student read a Pasuk and explain it. For each Pasuk ask what object in nature is being described. Because the Mizmor uses a lot of figurative language, some are not obvious. Then ask, *What day of creation does this correlate to? Is it in the right order or out of place?* Keep a running chart on the board listing which pesukim describe each day of creation and which are in order or out of place.

Textual Notes – added explanations to point out for these pesukim.

Pasuk 1 is an introduction to the theme of the entire Mizmor. The writer commands his soul, his life-force and emotions, to bless God. *What does it mean for humans to bless God?* Of course, God does not need our blessing. “To bless” in reference to God simply means we will praise or thank Hashem (Ibn Ezra). *Do you see parallelism in this Pasuk?* *גדלת מאד*, a simple description, becomes a grand metaphor in the next parallel phrase, “you are clothed in glory and majesty” – as if such traits can be worn and as if God had a body to wear them.

Pasuk 2 continues this imagery by describing God as “wrapped in a robe of light.” This is the first direct allusion to Bereshit 1. *On what day is light created?* The first day. The Pasuk continues with a poetic description of the creation of the heavens. *What does it mean to say that God is wrapped in light and spreads a tent cloth between Himself and man?* Clothing and a tent-cloth are both means of hiding ourselves, of keeping our privacy. We cannot know anything about God’s essence; He is completely hidden from us. We only know of God from nature and the grandeur of the sky makes us think of the heavens as God’s residence. Clothing usually blocks light and so to have a garment of light is paradoxical. This paradox reflects the paradox of a God who is at once the source of life and light and yet hidden from view. *On what day is the שמים created?* The second day.

Pasuk 3 – *What does it mean that God “covers his lofts with water”?* This can be explained by the description of the creation of heavens in Bereshit 1:6-7 where the רקיע or שמים separates between the water below it on earth and the water above it. Many poetic texts in Tanakh picture God as riding on the clouds. The idea that God moves on the winds of the wind echoes Bereshit 1:2 – *ורוח אלהים מרחפת על פני המים*. Pasuk 4 continues to elaborate on the wind. The wind and fiery flames are God’s messengers. *Where do we find wind and fire together in nature?* This refers to the strong winds and lightening during a storm.

Pasuk 5 describes the creation of land and so parallels the third day of creation. Pesukim 6-9 detail the process by which land was created. At first it was covered with water, just as described in Bereshit 1:9. God shouted at them, a reference to God’s command in Bereshit, and they fled to their place revealing the mountains and valleys. God placed a border for them at the seashore which the waters cannot pass. However, Pesukim 10-12 state that God did allow some water into the land by creating canals for rivers which quench the thirst of animals and birds. The singing of the birds adds life to this beautiful scene. Ask artistic students to draw this scene for extra credit. The mention of animals and birds, which are created on the sixth and fifth days, seems out of place. Make a note of this on the chart, take suggestions as to why they are out of place, but do not fully explain until students have studied the rest of the Mizmor.

Pasuk 13 states that not only does the lower water go out of its place, but also the upper waters fall from the sky as rain. This rain is called fruit because it feeds and satiates the

personified earth. Mention of the word fruit here also foreshadows vegetation that grows from the earth in the next Pesukim. God makes grass grow for cattle and herbage for man to work (Pasuk 14) – all references to the growth of grass and trees on the third day of creation. Humans do not eat raw herbage like animals do but rather make grapes into wine, olives into oil, and grain into bread (Pasuk 15). The rain also satisfies the great trees which provide habitat for birds (Pesukim 16-17). Once we mention the topic of habitat, the writer goes on a tangent to say that the mountains are the habitat for various animals (Pasuk 18). Here again, mention of humans, animals, and birds seems out of place in a description of the third day of creation, but this will be explained later.

Pasuk 19 praises God for creating the moon and the sun which we use for our calendar, thus recalling the fourth day of creation. Pesukim 20-23 describe the cycle of night and day and the activities of animals and humans during each.

In Pasuk 24, the writer wonders at the bounty and wisdom of creation. Pasuk 25 then points to yet another example, “There is the sea” teeming with creatures, referring to the fifth day of creation. גדלות is an allusion to the תנינים הגדולים in Bereshit 1:21. The sea is also the where boats sail (Pasuk 26). *What are boats doing in the middle of a list of things God created?* The answer to this is related to why animals and humans are mentioned out of place. All this will be clarified later. לוייתן זה יצרת לשחק בו is open to multiple interpretations with important consequences. There are two basic approaches represented by Rashi and Ibn Ezra.

<u>Leviathan</u>
<p><u>תהלים פרק קד פסוק כו</u> שם אַנְיוֹת יִהְלֶכְוּ לְוִיָּתָן זֶה יִצְרֶתָ לְשַׁחֵק בּוֹ :</p>
<p><u>רש"י</u> לשחק בו - שלש שעות ביום כך אמרו רבותינו במסכת עבודת אלילים וכך מפורש בספר איוב התשחק בו כצפור (איוב מ:כט):</p>
<p><u>בבלי מסכת עבודה זרה דף ג :</u> אמר רב יהודה אמר רב: שתיים עשרה שעות הוי היום, שלש הראשונות הקב"ה יושב ועוסק בתורה, שניות - יושב ודן את כל העולם כולו, כיון שרואה שנתחייב עולם כלייה, עומד מכסא הדין ויושב על כסא רחמים, שלישיות - יושב וזן את כל העולם כולו מקרני ראמים עד ביצי כנים, רביעיות - יושב ומשחק עם לוייתן, שנאמר: (תהלים קד) לוייתן זה יצרת לשחק בו!</p>
<p><u>אבן עזרא</u> לוייתן - שם לכל דג גדול כמותו או הוא שם לכל מין ידוע. ו"בו" שב אל הים כי כל הדגים מאכל לו והוא איננו מאכל:</p>

Ibn Ezra says that Leviathan is just a name for any big fish. The subject of לשחק is the Leviathan and בו refers to the ocean. He would translate, “This Leviathan You have created to play in [the seas].” Rashi, however, says that the subject of לשחק is God and בו refers to the Leviathan. Rashi would translate, “This Leviathan which You have created in order to play with it.” Rashi has strong proof for this interpretation from a pasuk in Iyob which also speaks of God playing with the Leviathan as well as an Aggadah in the name of Rav.

What does it mean that God plays with the Leviathan? The Leviathan was known in ancient Near Eastern mythology as a great sea monster with whom the warrior Gods did battle. This Pasuk comes to reject that mythology by stating that the Leviathan is God's creation, not an independent force, and is simply a plaything for God, not a force to be reckoned with.

Pesukim 27-30 declare the dependence of all life on God's providence. When God turns His face, they perish but when he returns His life-breath they are renewed. This may refer to the passing of seasons - from dormant winters to the renewal of life in the spring. This section alludes to day six (Bereshit 1:29-30) where God offers vegetation to humans and animals for food.

Pesukim 31-35 form a conclusion. Pasuk 31 is a prayer that the glory of God should endure forever and that He should rejoice in His words. This alludes to Bereshit 1:31 where God sees all He created and declares it is very good - וַיֵּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת כָּל אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה וְהִנֵּה - טוֹב מְאֹד. Pasuk 32 emphasizes God's power by noting that a simple glance at the world by God causes an earthquake and His slight touch causes a volcano. The writer commits himself to praise God as long as he lives and he hopes his words will be acceptable to God. God's glory endures forever, but a human can only praise Him as long as he lives. The writer rejoices in God (Pasuk 34) just as God rejoices in His words (Pasuk 31) indicating a mutual harmonious relationship. Having recounted the perfection of creation, there is but one afterthought which bothers the writer: the existence of evil in the world. He therefore ends with a prayer for their destruction. Finally, the last words form an envelope with the opening words and add הללויה.

4. Analyze the list of items mentioned in order of creation and out of order. *What is out of order and why?*

Out of Order		In Order of Creation	
בראשית א	מזמור קד	בראשית א	מזמור קד
		יום ראשון	(ב) עֵטָה אֹר כְּשֶׁלֶמָה
		יום שני	נוֹטָה שָׁמַיִם כְּרִיעָה:
		יום שלישי – חלק א	(ה) יָסַד אֲרֶץ
יום הששי – חלק א	(יא) יִשְׁקוּ כָּל חַיֵּינוּ שְׂדֵי		(יד) מִצְמִיחַ חֲצִיר
יום חמישי	(יב) עָלִיָּהֶם עוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם	יום שלישי – חלק ב	לְבַהֲמָה וְעֵשֶׂב
יום הששי – חלק א	לְבַהֲמָה		
יום הששי – חלק ב	לְעַבְדַּת הָאָדָם		
יום חמישי	(יז) אֲשֶׁר שָׁם צְפָרִיִּים		
		יום רביעי	(יט) עָשָׂה יָרֵחַ
יום הששי – חלק א	כָּל חַיֵּינוּ יַעַר:	יום רביעי	(כב) תִּזְרַח הַשָּׁמַשׁ
יום הששי – חלק ב	(כג) יֵצֵא אָדָם	יום חמישי	(כה) זֶה הַיָּם גְּדוֹל...

Notice that all the inanimate and inaccessible objects in nature are in order while humans and the animals and birds which live with humans are out of order. Fish are animate but do not live with us on land and so are part of surrounding nature. Bereshit is an objective, step-by-step account of each state of creation. Mizmor 104, besides describing the same

creation with fantastic imagery and metaphor, is a subjective view of creation. It reflects the experience of a person looking around at nature and appreciating all the ways that it provides for his needs and for the needs of the animals and birds who he lives with. Meir Weiss sums up this experience:

When [the poet] looks at the springs of water, he sees near them the beasts of the field since the streams provide their drink, and he also feels the presence of the birds and hears their voices among the branches of the trees which grow alongside the water. When he thinks of the plants, he remembers their usefulness to living creatures, to men and birds. Similarly, when he remembers the luminaries, by night and by day, he immediately recalls the function they fulfill for animals and human beings. Our poet does not, then see the phenomena of nature in isolation from one another, but rather in their interrelationship. He sees in them what they serve to supply for other creatures, for the whole of creation. (p. 89)

This also explains the mention of boats. When the writer looks out at the sea and thinks about the 25,000 species it contains, he also sees boats and expresses how useful the sea is to humans that humans can travel on it by ship.

5. *Summarize overall messages of the Mizmor.* Everything is made with wisdom. All is under God's reign. Each part of creation provides us with our needs and we are completely dependent on God's continued providence.

Review the structure of the Mizmor. Show how it simply follows each of the six days of creation but elaborates on each from the perspective of how whatever is created on that day is needed for animals and humans to survive. See chart below.

[It is noteworthy that while humans are seen as more advanced than animals (they bake bread while animals eat raw grass), animals are not viewed as servants of man. This goes hand in hand with the hierarchy of creation in Bereshit 1 where animals and humans are created on the same day and both are blessed by God with vegetarian sustenance. This changes only after the flood when man is permitted to eat meat.]

Parallel to Bereshit 1	תהלים פרק קד
(Introduction)	(א) בָּרַכִּי נַפְשִׁי אֶת יְדֹנָד יְדֹנָד אֱלֹהֵי גְדֻלַּת מַאֲד הוֹד וְהָדָר לְבִשְׁתָּ:
First Day	(ב) עֲטָה אֹר כְּשֶׁלֶמָה
Second Day	נוֹטָה שָׁמַיִם כִּירִיעָה: (ג) הַמְקַרְה בַּמַּיִם עֲלִיּוֹתָיו הַשָּׁם עֲבִים רְכוּבוֹ הַמְהַלֵּךְ עַל כַּנְפֵי רוּחַ: (ד) עֲשֵׂה מִלְאָכָיו רוּחוֹת מְשַׁרְתָּיו אֵשׁ לֵהֵט:
Third Day – Part 1 (Adds that even though God made a boundary for the sea, there are still rivers which provide water for animals and birds.)	(ה) יָסַד אֲרָץ עַל מְכוּנֶיהָ בַּל תַּמוּט עוֹלָם וָעֶד: (ו) תַּהוֹם כְּלָבוּשׁ כְּסִיתוֹ עַל הַרִים יַעֲמְדוּ מַיִם: (ז) מִן גַּעְרַתְךָ יְנוּסוּן מִן קוֹל רַעַמְךָ יַחְפְּזוּן: (ח) יַעֲלוּ הַרִים יִרְדּוּ בַקְעוֹת אֶל מְקוֹם זֶה יִסְדַּתְךָ לָהֶם: (ט) גְּבוּל שָׁמַת בַּל יַעֲבִרוּן בַּל יִשׁוּבוּן לְכַסּוֹת הָאָרֶץ: (י) הַמְשַׁלַּח מַעֲנִיָּים בְּנַחְלִים בֵּין הַרִים יִהְלֹכוּן: (יא) יִשְׁקוּ כָּל חַיֹּתוֹ שְׂדֵי יִשְׁבְּרוּ פְרָאִים צִמָּאִם: (יב) עֲלִיהֶם עוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם יִשְׁכּוּן מִבֵּין עֲפָאִים יִתְנוּ קוֹל:
Third Day – Part 2 (Rivers water ground which produces vegetation for animals and man to consume and trees for birds to live in. Once on the subject of habitat, mountains provide homes for animals.)	(יג) מְשַׁקָּה הַרִים מַעֲלִיּוֹתָיו מִפְרֵי מַעֲשֵׂיךָ תִשָּׁבַע הָאָרֶץ: (יד) מִצְמִיחַ חֲצִיר לְבַהֲמָה וְעֵשֶׂב לְעַבְדַּת הָאָדָם לְהוֹצִיא לָחֶם מִן הָאָרֶץ: (טו) וַיִּזְן יִשְׁמַח לִבָּב אֲנוּשׁ לְהַצְחִיל פְּנִים מִשְׁמֵן וְלָחֶם לִבָּב אֲנוּשׁ יִסְעַד: (טז) יִשְׁבְּעוּ עֲצֵי יְדֹנָד אֲרָזֵי לְבָנוֹן אֲשֶׁר נָטַע: (יז) אֲשֶׁר שָׁם צִפְרִים יִקְנְנוּ חֲסִידָה בְרוֹשִׁים בְּיַתֵּהּ: (יח) הַרִים הַגְּבוּהִים לְיַעֲלִים סִלְעִים מַחֲסֵה לְשֹׁפְנִים:
Fourth Day (Adds the way that the day and night cycle effects animals and humans.)	(יט) עֲשֵׂה יָרַח לְמוֹעֲדִים שָׁמֶשׁ יָדַע מְבוֹאוֹ: (כ) תִּשְׁתַּחֲשָׁךְ וַיְהִי לַיְלָה בּוֹ תִרְמַשׁ כָּל חַיֹּתוֹ יָעַר: (כא) הַכְּפִירִים שִׁאֲגִים לְטָרֶף וּלְבִקֵּשׁ מֵאֵל אֲכָלִם: (כב) תִּזְרַח הַשָּׁמֶשׁ יִאֲסֹפוּן וְאֵל מְעוֹנֹתָם יִרְבְּצוּן: (כג) יִצֵּא אָדָם לַפְעֵלוֹ וְלַעֲבֹדָתוֹ עַדֵי עָרֵב:
Fifth Day	(כד) מֵה רַבּוֹ מַעֲשֵׂיךָ יְדֹנָד כָּלֶם בְּחֻכְמָה עֲשִׂיתָ מְלֶאכֶה הָאָרֶץ קִנְיָנְךָ: (כה) זֶה הַיָּם גְּדוֹל וְרַחֵב יָדַיִם שֵׁם רִמְשׁ וְאִין מִסְפֵּר חַיֹּת קִטְנוֹת עִם גְּדֻלוֹת: (כו) שָׁם אֲנִיּוֹת יִהְלֹכוּן לֹוִיתָן זֶה יִצְרַת לְשַׁחֵק בּוֹ:
Sixth Day (Already mentioned animals and humans, so focuses on God's blessing of sustenance.)	(כז) כָּלֶם אֲלֵיךָ יִשְׁבְּרוּן לָתֵת אֲכָלָם בְּעֵתוֹ: (כח) תִּתֵּן לָהֶם יִלְקִטוּן תִּפְתַּח יָדְךָ יִשְׁבְּעוּן טוֹב: (כט) תִּסְתִּיר פְּנֵיךָ בַּהַלּוֹן תִּסְף רוּחַם יִגּוּעוּן וְאֵל עֲפָרָם יִשׁוּבוּן: (ל) תִּשְׁלַח רוּחְךָ יִבְרָאוּן וּתַחַדֵּשׁ פְּנֵי אֲדָמָה:
(Conclusion)	(לא) הֲיִי כְבוֹד יְדֹנָד לְעוֹלָם שְׁמַח יְדֹנָד בְּמַעֲשָׂיו: (לב) הַמְבִיט לְאֲרָץ וַתִּרְעַד יָגַע בְּהַרִים וַיַּעֲשֵׂנוּ: (לג) אֲשִׁירָה לִידֹנָד בְּחַיֵּי אֲזֻמָּרָה לְאֱלֹהֵי בְעוֹדֵי: (לד) יַעֲרֵב עֲלָיו שִׁיחֵי אֲנִכִּי אֲשַׁמַּח בִּידֹנָד: (לה) תַּמּוּ חֲטָאִים מִן הָאָרֶץ וּרְשָׁעִים עוֹד אֵינָם בָּרַכִּי נַפְשִׁי אֶת יְדֹנָד הַלְלוּ יְהוָה:

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