

## Lesson 14 – Mizmor 145: All Encompassing Praise

### Goal:

Students should be able to break down this Mizmor into its sections and summarize the content of each section and of the entire Mizmor.

### Activity:

1. Since this Mizmor is very familiar and does not contain many difficult words, this is a good opportunity to encourage students to discover the structure, progression, and meaning of this Mizmor on their own. Ask students to break up into small groups and analyze the Mizmor together looking for the following:

What is the main idea of the Mizmor?  
What is the structure of the Mizmor?  
What **keywords** are used in the Mizmor?  
What other poetic devices do you see?  
Do you see any flow of ideas or progression from beginning to end?  
What else do you notice that is worth mentioning?

2. Students should be able to find many of the keywords. When they mention a keyword ask them to look for every occurrence of it. If they are all near one another, this becomes a section. Once the students have said everything they have found and they begin to see the structure forming, review each keyword in order from the beginning and delineate each section.

Refrains - This is the only Mizmor that opens with the word תהלה. The last verse also begins תהלת. Both of these words are from the root הלל which is the key word running throughout this and the next five Mizmorim. Pesukim 1 and 2 both end with שמך לעולם ועד. These words also end the last Pasuk only slightly expanded, שם קדשו לעולם ועד. The verb ברך occurs four times in the Mizmor in vv 1, 2, 10, and 21. Taking all these words together, we find that the first two pesukim and the last Pasuk form an envelope around the rest of the Mizmor. Since the only other occurrence of ברכ is in the middle Pasuk at v 10, this Pasuk too is linked to the opening and closing. Once we compare these Pesukim side by side we find that there is a progression from one to the next.

(א) תהלה לדוד ארוממך א-לוהי המלך	ואברכה שמך לעולם ועד:
(ב) בכל יום אברכה	ואהלה שמך לעולם ועד:
...	
(י) ידוך ידוד כל מעשיך	וחסידיך יברככה:
...	
(כא) תהלת ידוד ידבר פי	ויברך כל בשר שם קדשו לעולם ועד:

In the first two pesukim, the singer blesses Hashem by himself. In the middle Pasuk, a small group of faithful ones – וחסידיך bless Hashem. By the end, all creatures bless His Holy Name. We can picture someone beginning to sing by himself, then being joined by a few devotees, and finally rallying everyone to sing together. These four Pesukim act as a refrain in the beginning, middle, and end of the Mizmor.



greatness and kingship. Sections 2 and 4, on the other hand, think of God as near at hand as they praise His goodness.

### Structure of Mizmor 145

		<p>תהלה לדוד ממך אֱלֹהֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ בְּכֹל יוֹם אֲבָרְכֶךָ</p>
Refrain	<p>וּאֲבָרְכָה שְׁמֶךָ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד: וְאֶהְלֵל שְׁמֶךָ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד:</p>	
I - Greatness	<p>וּלְגִדְלָתוֹ אֵין חֶקֶר: וּגְבוּרָתֶיךָ יִגִּידוּ: וְדַבְרֵי נִפְלְאוֹתֶיךָ אֲשִׁיחָה: וּגְדֻלוֹתֶיךָ אֲסַפְּרָנָה:</p>	<p>יְדוּל יְדוּד וּמַהֲלֵל מְאֹד דֹּד לְדוֹר יִשְׁבַּח מַעֲשֵׂיךָ הַדָּר כְּבוֹד הוֹדֵךְ יִעֲזוֹז נוֹרָאֵיךָ יֹאמְרוּ</p>
II - Goodness	<p>וּצְדָקָתְךָ יִרְנְנוּ: אֶרְךְ אַפִּים וּגְדֹל חֶסֶד: וּרְחֻמֵי עַל כָּל מַעֲשֵׂיו:</p>	<p>כֹּר רַב טוֹבֶךָ יִבְיְעוּ חֲנוּן וְרַחוּם יְדוּד טוֹב יְדוּד לְכָל</p>
Refrain	<p>וּחֲסִידֶיךָ יְבָרְכֻנָה:</p>	<p>וְדוֹךְ יְדוּד כָּל מַעֲשֵׂיךָ</p>
III - Kingship	<p>וּגְבוּרָתְךָ יִדְבְּרוּ: וּכְבוֹד הַדָּר מַלְכוּתוֹ: וּמִמְשַׁלְתֶךָ בְּכֹל דוֹר וָדוֹר:</p>	<p>כְּבוֹד מַלְכוּתְךָ יֹאמְרוּ לְהוֹדִיעַ לְבִנֵי הָאָדָם גְּבוּרָתִי מַלְכוּתְךָ מַלְכוּת כָּל עַלְמִים</p>
IV - Goodness	<p>זוֹקֵף לְכָל הַכְּפוּפִים: וְאַתָּה נוֹתֵן לָהֶם אֶת אֲכָלָם בְּעֵתוֹ: וּמִשְׁבִּיעַ לְכָל חַי רְצוֹן: וּחֲסִיד בְּכָל מַעֲשָׂיו: לְכָל אֲשֶׁר יִקְרָאֵהוּ בְּאַמְתּוֹ: וְאֵת שׁוֹעֲתֵם יִשְׁמַע וְיוֹשִׁיעֵם: וְאֵת כָּל הַרְשָׁעִים יִשְׁמִיד:</p>	<p>סוֹמֵךְ יְדוּד לְכָל הַנִּפְלִים עֵינֵי כָל אֱלֹדֵי יִשְׁבְּרוּ פּוֹתַח אֶת יָדְךָ צְדִיק יְדוּד בְּכָל דְּרָכָיו קְרוֹב יְדוּד לְכָל קְרָאֵיו רְצוֹן יִרְאֵיו יַעֲשֶׂה שׁוֹמֵר יְדוּד אֶת כָּל אֲהַבָּיו</p>
Refrain	<p>וַיְבָרֵךְ כָּל בֶּשֶׂר שֵׁם קְדָשׁוֹ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד:</p>	<p>תְּהַלֵּת יְדוּד יְדַבֵּר פִּי</p>

Why is the Nun-Pasuk missing?

**בבלי ברכות ד :**

אמר רבי יוחנן: מפני מה לא נאמר נו"ן באשרי? - מפני שיש בה מפלתן של שונאי ישראל, דכתיב: (עמוס ה') נפלה לא תוסיף קום בתולת ישראל. במערבא מתרצי לה הכי: נפלה ולא תוסיף לנפול עוד, קום בתולת ישראל. אמר רב נחמן בר יצחק: אפילו הכי חזר דוד וסמכן ברוח הקדש, שנאמר (תהלים קמ"ה) סומך ה' לכל הנפלים.

R. Johanan says: Why is there no nun in Ashre? Because the fall of Israel's enemies begins with it. For it is written: Fallen is the virgin of Israel, she shall no more rise. In the West this verse is thus interpreted: She is fallen, but she shall no more fall. Rise, O maiden of Israel.

R. Nahman b. Isaac says: Even so, David refers to it by inspiration and promises them an uplifting. For it is written: The Lord upholdeth all that fall.

We can now trace the movement of the reader as he experiences this Mizmor. At first alone, the reader begins by thinking of God's greatness and awesomeness in Section 1 but he doesn't feel close to Him. Once he begins to fathom God's mighty acts in creation, we begin to think of acts He performs for us. In Section two we begin to sense God's mercy. The reader now reaches a higher level where he feels connected with a group of "faithful ones" in the refrain. Now he thinks about God as an infinite king in Section 3. But even a king must take care of his subjects and the infinite king provides infinite care for all beings. It is significant that the last section is the longest and most detailed. It is clearly the climax of the Mizmor and contains its most essential message.

3. There are two types of Pesukim in this Mizmor. Some Pesukim contain praise of Hashem. Others only announce an intention to praise Hashem. For example, the first two Pesukim say, "I will extol...and bless...and praise Your name..." But this is only a promise to praise in the future, not actual praise. Pasuk 3, on the other hand, is a straightforward praise "Great is Hashem..." Go through the Mizmor quickly Pasuk by Pasuk and have the class call out whether each Pasuk is praise or intention to praise. The results can be summed up as follows:

Actual Praise & Intention to Praise in the Structure of Mizmor 145		
Praise	Intention to Praise	תהילים פרק קמה
	X	(א) תהלה לְדוד אֲרוֹמָמָה אֱ-לוֹהֵי הַמַּלְאָה וְאַבְרָכָה שְׁמֶךָ לְעוֹלָם וָעֵד:
	X	(ב) בְּכָל יוֹם אֲבָרְכֶךָ וְאַהֲלִלְךָ שְׁמֶךָ לְעוֹלָם וָעֵד:
X		(ג) גָּדוֹל יְדוֹד וּמַהֲלָל מְאֹד וְלִגְדֹלְתוֹ אֵין חֶקֶר:
	X	(ד) דוֹר לְדוֹר יִשְׁבַּח מַעֲשֵׂיךָ וְגִבּוֹרְתֶיךָ יִגִּידוּ:
	X	(ה) הַדָּר כְּבוֹד הַהוֹדָף וְדַבְרֵי נִפְלְאוֹתֶיךָ אֲשִׁיחָה:
	X	(ו) וְעִזּוֹז נוֹרְאוֹתֶיךָ יֵאמְרוּ וְגִדְלוֹתֶיךָ אֲסַפְּרָנָה:
	X	(ז) זְכַר רַב טוֹבָה לִבְיַעַר וְצִדְקָתְךָ יִרְגַּנוּ:
X		(ח) חֲנוּן וְרַחוּם יְדוֹד אֶרְךָ אַפִּים וְגִדְל חֶסֶד:
X		(ט) טוֹב יְדוֹד לְכָל וְרַחֲמָיו עַל כָּל מַעֲשָׂיו:
	X	(י) יוֹדֶךָ יְדוֹד כָּל מַעֲשֵׂיךָ וְחִסְדֶּיךָ בְּרַכּוֹכָה:
	X	(יא) כְּבוֹד מַלְכוּתְךָ יֵאמְרוּ וְגִבּוֹרְתֶךָ יְדַבְּרוּ:
	X	(יב) כְּהוֹדִיעַ לְבַגְי הָאֲדָם גִּבּוֹרְתֵינוּ וְכְבוֹד הַדָּר מַלְכוּתוֹ:
X		(יג) מַלְכוּתוֹ מַלְכוּת כָּל עַלְמִים וּמִמְשַׁלְתֶךָ בְּכָל דוֹר וָדָר:
X		(יד) סוֹמֵךְ יְדוֹד לְכָל הַנְּפִלִים וְזוֹקֵף לְכָל הַכַּפְּפוּפִים:
X		(טו) עֵינֵי כָל אֱלֹהִים יִשְׁבְּרוּ וְאַתָּה נוֹתֵן לָהֶם אֶת אֲכֻלָּם בְּעֵתוֹ:
X		(טז) פּוֹתַח אֶת יָדְךָ וּמַשְׁבִּיעַ לְכָל חַי רְצוֹן:
X		(יז) צְדִיק יְדוֹד בְּכָל דְּרָכָיו וְחִסִּיד בְּכָל מַעֲשָׂיו:
X		(יח) קְרוֹב יְדוֹד לְכָל קָרְאִיו לְכָל אֲשֶׁר קָרְאוּהוּ בְּאֵמַת:
X		(יט) רְצוֹן יִרְאִיו יַעֲשֶׂה וְאֵת שׁוֹעֲתָם יִשְׁמַע וְיוֹשִׁיעֵם:
X		(כ) שׁוֹמֵר יְדוֹד אֶת כָּל אֲהַבָּיו וְאֵת כָּל הַרְשָׁעִים יִשְׁמִיד:
	X	(כא) תַּהֲלֵת יְדוֹד יְדַבֵּר פִּי וַיְבַרַךְ כָּל בֶּשֶׂר שִׁם קָדְשׁוֹ לְעוֹלָם וָעֵד:

L14 - Intention & Praise - Summary Sheet.doc

*Do you see any pattern?* Notice that most of the promises to pray are found in Sections 1 & 3 while most of the actual praise is found in Sections 2 & 4. *Why?* Since we cannot know anything about a transcendent God, it is very difficult to praise Him in Section 1 & 3. All we can do is strive for knowledge of Him. Therefore, we can say very little actual praise (only one Pasuk at the beginning and one at the end) and we express our desire to praise more with statements of intent. In Sections 2 & 4, on the other, hand we speak of God's infinite kindness to us. Examples of this in everyday life are plentiful and easily appreciated. In these sections we need only express intention to praise once and then the praise immediately pours forth.

#### 4. The Acrostic and the Missing Nun

The Gemara in Berakhot 4b asks why the Nun-Pasuk is missing. Read the Gemara quoted in the source sheet above. *Do you find this answer convincing? What are the problems with it?* This answer is not convincing for a few reasons. Just because there is a negative Pasuk in Amos which begins with Nun does not mean that Nun is forever tainted. There are many positive Pesukim that begin with Nun and many negative Pesukim that begin with other letters. If Nun really is unusable, why is it found in other acrostic Mizmorim such as 111, 112, and 119? Furthermore, assuming that David wrote Mizmor 145 as indicated in the heading, the Mizmor would have preceded Amos by hundreds of years.

*[If this Midrash is not meant to provide a historical reason for the missing Nun-Pasuk, then what is the point of the Midrash?* This Midrash presents two ways of dealing with a troubling Pasuk in Amos. The Pasuk says that Israel has fallen and will nevermore rise. This hopeless situation is difficult to swallow and also goes against the messages of hope found in other places. In Israel, they repunctuate the Pasuk to mean, "Israel has fallen no more; rise maiden of Israel." The Babylonian Rabbis dealt with this problematic Pasuk in a different way. They use the coincidence of a missing Nun-Pasuk and the presence of the word נופלים in the next Pasuk (14) as a midrashic hook. They suggest that Mizmor 145 rectifies the Pasuk in Amos by not only leaving it out but also stating that Hashem does, in fact, lift the fallen. This is not meant as a commentary to Mizmor 145 but rather as a way to deal with the Pasuk in Amos.]

Next provide students a printout of the copy of this Mizmor found in the Dead Sea scrolls. First, notice that Hashem's name is written in *ketav `ivri*; the scribes already shifted to the newer *ketav ashuri* but were apprehensive about changing the font for God's name. Second, notice that each pasuk ends with *Barukh Hashem u-barukh shemo le`olam va`ed*. This must have been used in a liturgical context where the crowd responded with this refrain. Third, notice that here we have a pasuk for *nun*: נאמן א-להים בדבריו וחסידי בכל מעשיו. Is this the original missing *nun* pasuk? This is not very likely considering that the second half is a duplicate of pasuk 17. More likely, an overzealous scribe invented this pasuk to "correct" what he thought was a mistake. Rather, let us look for a literary reason why the Mizmor intentionally omitted a pasuk for this letter.

*If we read through the Mizmor while paying attention to the acrostic what happens when we reach Pasuk 14?* When we read סומך we realize that the Nun-Pasuk is skipped. This makes us pause before we go on. Skipping the Nun-Pasuk may be a literary device to

indicate a section break. In fact, as we saw from the structure above, Section 4 is the climax and essence of the Mizmor and so it is fitting to mark a section break between it and the rest of the Mizmor. In fact Pesukim 1-13 are marked off as a unit by the envelope created by the word המלך in Pasuk 1 and the keyword מלכות in Pesukim 11-13. The missing Nun-Pasuk also indicates a break when reading the acrostic backwards and marks the beginning of the letters מלכ of Section 3.

#### 4. Conclusion

*What is the main message of this Mizmor?* The main idea of the Mizmor is a total praise of Hashem by all people at all times. This is summed up in the progression of the refrains and in the repetition of the keyword כל. *Why was acrostic structure chosen to best convey this message?* By using every letter of the alphabet, we sense that we are praising God using all possible language. It is complete praise from A to Z.

#### **Bibliography**

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