

Dr. Deena Rabinovich

Barkhi Nafshi

Twice in *Sefer Tehillim*, in *Mizmor* 103 and *Mizmor* 104, David Ha-Melekh commands his soul *le-varekh et Hashem*, to bless God. In fact, for both *mizmorim*, the phrase *barkhi nafshi* serves as an *inclusio* by both beginning and ending with the phrase, framing the rest of the *mizmor*. *Mizmor* 103 deals with Divine providence in the life of an individual. R. Samson Raphael Hirsch summarized it this way:

David declares the significance of God in his own life, both physical and spiritual, and, accordingly, he engages himself to live with all of his life for the fulfillment of God's will...[voicing] this call because of the debt which he owed God as a human soul, as a Jew, and in communion with all other creatures.²⁹⁵

The *mizmor* is seen by R. Hirsch as a *todah*,²⁹⁶ a gesture of gratitude for all that God has done for David in particular, and for mankind as a whole. The language of the *mizmor* is formal, with the *meshorer* using third-person forms of the verbs that help create a distance between God and the psalmist.

The Lord executes righteous acts and judgments for all who are wronged....

The Lord is compassionate and gracious; slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love. (103:6, 8)²⁹⁷

But while the form of the verbs denotes distance, the words themselves demonstrate God's relationship with man.

As a father has compassion for his children, so the Lord has compassion for those who fear Him. (103:13)²⁹⁸

The second *mizmor*, in contrast, does not focus on man as an individual, but as a species which is part of the world of nature, one cog in the overall structure of God's handiwork. Viewed by R. Hirsch as a *tehillah*,²⁹⁹ praise, the verbs fluctuate between the second person, the more informal method of address, and the third person, more formal language. Where man is the center of creation in 103, man is but one of many creations in 104. But in either scenario, man is the ultimate of creations. Of all the *chayot*, living creatures, only man was granted the power of reasoning and the power of speech. Rashi, R. Shlomo Yitzchaki (1040–1105, France) notes:

Even the domesticated animal and the wild animals are called *nefesh chayah*, living souls; but man is considered more alive than the others since he was also granted knowledge and speech.³⁰⁰

The relationship of 103 to 104 is similar to *Bereishit* chapters 1 and 2 where *Bereishit* chapter 2 shows how the entire world was created for man and *Bereishit* chapter 1 presents the creation of man at the end, as a finale to creation. It is *Mizmor* 104 that is the one more commonly found in our liturgy, and it is this *mizmor* that will be the focus of our attention in this chapter.

²⁹⁵. Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch, *The Psalm, Volume 2: Books 3, 4, and 5* (New York, 1961), 212.

²⁹⁶. *Ibid.*, 221.

²⁹⁷. NJPS translation.

²⁹⁸. *Ibid.*

²⁹⁹. Rabbi Hirsch, *ibid.*, 221.

³⁰⁰. Rashi to *Bereishit* 2:7, s.v. *le-nefesh chayah*; translated by the author.

Mizmor 104 is connected both thematically and linguistically to *Bereishit* chapter 1. The overall sequence of creation in *Mizmor* 104 roughly follows the order of the Six Days of Creation as they appear in *Bereishit* 1, though the *mizmor* presents a more poetic version of the same events. Words like *or*, *shamayim*, *ru'ach*, *eretz*, *tehom*, *shemesh*, *yarei'ach*, *mo'adim*, *afar* (light, heavens, wind, land, depths, sun, moon, holidays, dust), which appear in both texts, help to anchor the comparison, and serve also as a point of departure as we see the different ways in which the creations are discussed.

Section One: Structure and Meaning:

When reading through *Mizmor* 104, one is instantly struck by the poet's description of the sheer beauty in the harmonious workings of nature. We read of cedar trees and juniper trees, mountains and valleys, springs and streams. The birds make their nests in the branches of the majestic cedar trees; the storks make their home amongst the juniper trees. The hills provide a stomping ground for mountain goats, the rocks a hiding place for hyraxes. The young lions search for prey at night while man goes out to work during the day. There is symbiosis in the workings of nature; the rain slides down the mountains, into the valleys and streams, irrigating all the vegetation which feeds both animals and man. One can almost imagine the eyes of the writer flitting right and left, up and down, as he takes in all the wonders of creation.

Bless the Lord, O my soul. O Lord, my God, You are very great; You are clothed with glory and majesty.
Wrapped in a robe of light; You spread the heavens like a tent cloth. (104:1, 2)³⁰¹

Avraham ibn Ezra (1108–1167, Spain) points to the parallels in the way both our *mizmor* and chapter 1 of *Bereishit* begin:

This *mizmor* [re]tells the story of Creation beginning with the light which was created at the start [of the process of creation], and continues with the heavens and earth and the grassy vegetation and the celestial lights and the fish of the ocean and the wild animals of the field.³⁰²

But while light is ostensibly the first creation, there are some extra descriptions of God found in the *mizmor* prior to the description of light in verse 2. The *mizmor* begins by noting that "O Lord, my God, You are very great," and mentions that "You are clothed with glory and majesty,"³⁰³ the past tense seemingly referring to a time prior to the onset of creation. The *Midrash Tehillim* (Buber edition, *Mizmor* 104:1) shockingly suggests that while God was great before creation, He became even greater once the world was formed.

R. Berachiah said in the name of R. Elazar the son of Yehoshua: "until You created the world, You were great in the world; once You created the world, You became even greater."³⁰⁴

In *Bereishit*, once light is created and classified, the day's work is done. In the *mizmor*, though, we are given a description of what God does with the *or*: *oteh or ka-salmah*. The word *oteh* can be used as a transitive verb or an intransitive verb. While in both cases the meaning relates to light as a garment, the question is who is doing the covering and what is being covered. R. Hirsch notes that usually the word *oteh* is intransitive (we might say reflexive), meaning "to cover oneself with..." In this *pasuk*, the implication would be that God covers Himself with light.³⁰⁵ Notes R. Hirsch:

³⁰¹. NJPS translation.

³⁰². Ibn Ezra to *Tehillim* 104:1. R. Menachem Ha-Me'iri in his commentary to *Tehillim* also stresses the parallels between the two texts. Modern scholars, with rather a different methodology and focus, agree that these two texts, as opposed to others in *Tanakh*, reflect a common tradition. See, for instance, Jon Levinson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil* (New York, 1988).

³⁰³. NJPS translation.

³⁰⁴. Translated by the author.

³⁰⁵. Rabbi Hirsch, *ibid.*, 222.

To our minds, 'light' is the finest and most ethereal of all the creations that are visible to our eye. And even this most sublime of creations which is physically intangible, and penetrates and quickens all things, is nothing but a cover, veiling God's invisibility.³⁰⁶

But R. Hirsch is not content with this interpretation and looks to the second half of the verse for assistance. God is described as "*noteh shamayim ka-yeri'ah*" – "spreading the heavens like a tent cloth": here the verb *noteh* is transitive. Likewise, maintains R. Hirsch, the preferred interpretation for the opening of the verse means, "Thou coverest all living things with light as with a garment."³⁰⁷

When discussing the creation of light, the *mizmor* refers to points not found in the *Bereishit* narrative. So, too, when discussing the formation of land masses, through separation of the waters, and the beginnings of vegetation, we find items additional to those found in *Bereishit*. In this case, the additional items are animals and man, creations that belong with Day Six and not Day Three. Both animals and man are introduced as inhabitants of the land that was formed and consumers of the vegetation that was produced. This is the first reference to a harmonious existence between the two groups that permeates throughout the *mizmor*. The account in *Mizmor* 104 also reflects a more direct involvement of God in the process. As noted by Meir Weiss, in *Bereishit*, God commands and the creation obeys the command.³⁰⁸ For example, in the formation of latter, God commands the water to gather in one place so that the earth can appear, and the water obeys the command.

And God said, "Let the waters under the heavens be gathered in one place so that the dry land will appear," and so it was. (*Bereishit* 1:9)³⁰⁹

Similarly, God commands the earth to sprout with all sorts of vegetation, and the earth heeds the command.

Let the earth grow grass, plants yielding seed of each kind, and trees bearing fruit that has its seed within in of each kind, and trees bearing fruit that has its seed within it of each kind. (*Bereishit* 1:11)³¹⁰

And sure enough:

And the earth put forth grass, plants yielding seed of each kind, and trees bearing fruit that has its seed of each kind, and trees bearing fruit that has its seed within it of each kind, and God saw that it was good. (*Bereishit* 1:12)³¹¹

In *Mizmor* 104, however, it is not the land that is producing the vegetation at the command of God, but God Himself who is credited directly with creation. He is the One who set the borders between the waters and the land, and furthermore, integrated the water inland in appropriate measures.

You set bounds they must not pass so that they never again cover the earth. (104:9)
You make springs gush forth in torrents; they make their way between the hills. (104:10)³¹²

³⁰⁶. Ibid.

³⁰⁷. Ibid.

³⁰⁸. Meir Weiss, *Mikra'ot Ke-Kavanatam: Leket Ma'amarim. Iyyunim Ba-Sifrut: Shirah Barkhi Nafshi Tehillim 104* (Jerusalem, 1987), 230–231. Weiss was born in Hungary in 1908 and studied for his doctorate at the University of Budapest (which he received in 1932) while simultaneously studying for *semikhah* at the rabbinic seminary in Budapest (which he received in 1933). He introduced the method of "total interpretation" that involves a close textual reading and pays attention to both "the forest," the overall literary unit, and "the trees," each and every detail found within the literary unit. He outlines this approach in the introduction to his commentary on *Sefer Amos* as follows:

The method of total interpretation...was presented and illustrated in my books *Ha-Mikra Ki-Demuto...and Mikra'ot Ke-Kavanatam....* According to this approach, the explanation of a literary work is based on a "close reading," that is to say, explaining each and every detail based on the work – the literary unit – as a whole, and explaining the entire work based on each and every detail contained therein. To be more precise, this is an explanation that is based on a deep understanding of all the elements that together fashion the unified form of the given work.

³⁰⁹. Robert Alter, *The Five Books of Moses: A Translation with Commentary* (New York, 2004), 17.

³¹⁰. Ibid, p. 18.

³¹¹. Ibid.

³¹². NJPS translation.

It was also He who made the vegetation, for the specific use of animal and man.

You make the grass grow for the cattle, and herbage for man's labor. (104:14)³¹³

The luminaries, created on Day Four, are described best in verse 19, in a manner that focuses on their functionality, "He made the moon to mark the seasons; the sun knows when to set"³¹⁴ – thus delineating the end of the day. The theme of the harmony of creation continues to develop with the description of the twenty-four-hour cycle which benefits both mankind and animals. Man goes out to work in the morning and returns home at night, and nocturnal animals (like the young lions) go out to prey during the night and return to their dens to sleep during the day. There is, however, no mention of the stars. Ibn Ezra theorizes that the moon and sun are mentioned because they influence weather patterns, particularly rain, and the stars, though mentioned in *Bereishit*, are not significant from the perspective of people on earth.

Many commentators said that God made the moon in order to establish the holidays, but this is not the purpose of this *mizmor*. Rather, the *mizmor* aims to tell the story of Creation. Thus, the sun and the moon are mentioned, but not the stars, since the two [the sun and the moon] are both "rulers" [in the heaven]. And the reason to make mention of them at this juncture is that they, through their movement, control the rain.³¹⁵

In *Parashat Bereishit*, when the luminaries are introduced, the larger, the sun, is mentioned first. Why does David Ha-Melekh choose to start with the moon in the *mizmor*? The Radak, R. David Kimchi (1160–1235, Provence), notes that since day follows night, the luminary for the night gets first billing in the *mizmor*.

And now he mentions the creations for the fourth day, and they are the luminaries, and he begins with the moon, even though it is the smaller luminary, since the night preceded the day, and for the fourth night, the moon and stars served for light, and on the fourth day, in the morning, the sun rose.³¹⁶

Could this also be a covert means of reminding us that we share the natural resources with the animal kingdom, which traditionally come out at night?

From the account in *Mizmor* 104, we gain new appreciation for the world that God created. R. Hirsch notes that the purpose of the *mizmor* is not to give a factual account of the Creation,

...but to sing the praises of the works and order of that Creation, declaring that their existence and their reciprocal effect constitute a continuous, ever-present revelation of God's greatness and glory...[h]e calls upon his soul to 'bless the Lord' simply because of His greatness and glory.³¹⁷

The aforementioned Meir Weiss offers the following explanation for the minor deviations found between the order of events in *Mizmor* 104 as compared to *Bereishit*:

...[A] careful study of these deviations [from the sequence found in *Bereishit* chapter 1] will reveal just what our poet sees when he looks at the phenomena of nature and what his intention is in praising their Creator. When he 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 to one another, but rather in their interrelationship.³¹⁸

³¹³. Ibid.

³¹⁴. Ibid.

³¹⁵. Ibn Ezra to *Tehillim* 104:19, s.v. *asah*; translated by the author.

³¹⁶. Radak to *Tehillim* 104:19, s.v. *asah yarei'ach le-mo'adim*; translated by the author.

³¹⁷. Rabbi Hirsch, *ibid.*, 221.

³¹⁸. Meir Weiss, "Words and Phrases, Psalm 104:26," in *The Bible from Within* (Jerusalem, 1984), 89.

Weiss's interpretation sees the poet as stressing the harmony of nature. Everything that God created has its place in the world. Everything was given a task. The churning waters of the deep (*tehom*) were covered and are constantly kept at bay. That, Weiss notes, is an example of the power and greatness of God. Yet a world without any water is one in which nothing can survive. Thus, God created ways in which the water could be funneled to the earth in appropriate quantities – through springs and streams, through rivers and oceans, through clouds and rain. That, according to Weiss, is an example of the lovingkindness (*chesed*) of God. With water as the source of life, all of the creations live in harmony. The mountains provide homes for some animals, the trees for others, and the sea for still others. There is vegetation – readily available for the animals, the fruit of labor for man. Even the cycle of time was developed in such a way that all have their turn. Man goes to work in the morning and returns home at night. The wild animals (depicted here by the young lions) go out to get their food during the night and return to their dens to rest during the day.

R. Elchanan Samet, who builds his reading of this *mizmor* on Weiss's, takes the idea one step further. In dividing up the *mizmor* into two sections, he identifies a primary theme for each: the first half of the *mizmor*, verses 1–17, is clearly about water (and with it the demarcation of space) while the second half of the *mizmor*, verse 18 and forward, revolves around time. In the second section, notes Samet, the focus is on time. Thus, the overall message of the *mizmor* is God's wisdom in establishing both space and time and the harmony that exists in both.

In addition to describing the cycle of time, the *mizmor* outlines the cycle of life. Twice in *Sefer Bereishit* God used the term *nefesh* in describing His creations. In the first, in *Bereishit* 1:24, the term *nefesh* refers to creatures created on the sixth day – the *beheimah*, the *remes* and the *chayah*, and man. Man is but one of the species created on this day. But while man is but one of the many creatures that God created, his existence is the most complex. As mentioned above, Rashi notes on the words *le-nefesh chayah*:

Even the domesticated animal and the wild animals are called *nefesh chayah*, living souls; but man is considered more alive than the others since he was also granted knowledge and speech.³¹⁹

Man uses his knowledge to enable him to make moral choices. When man makes an appropriate choice, God is happy. When, though, people choose badly, God is not happy. Thus, while God initially assessed the creation of man *ve-hinei tov me'od* (v. 31), at the beginning of *Bereishit* chapter 6, when God observes the evil that has engulfed human society, He is saddened and questions His creation of man.

And the Lord saw that the evil of the human creature was great on the earth, and that every scheme of his heart's devising was only perpetually evil. And the Lord regretted having made the human on earth and was grieved to the heart. (*Bereishit* 6:5)³²⁰

How can man assure that God stays happy, that the *kevod* of God remains on the earth and looks after society forever? This is clearly the aim of the *meshorer* as he proclaims:

May the glory of the Lord endure for ever; may the Lord rejoice in His works! (104:31)

One option is for the *meshorer* to sing praises of God:

I will sing to the Lord as long as I live; all my life I will chant hymns to my God. (104:33)

May my prayer be pleasing to Him; I will rejoice in the Lord. (104:34)

R. Samet sees the song of the *meshorer* as a form of *tefillah* and expression of the *meshorer's* own happiness with God. The hope is that this will lead God, in return, to be happy with man.

As long as he lives, the author will sing and praise God, and it is his hope that his *si'ach* ["conversation," v. 34] – his prayer, his song, and his praise, will be found sweet to God. He declares about himself that "I will be happy with God" and his conversation is an expression of that happiness.

³¹⁹. Rashi to *Bereishit* 2:7, s.v. *le-nefesh chayah*.

³²⁰. Alter, *ibid*, 38. There are, of course, *midrashim* that the animal world, too, became corrupt prior to the flood. But in this *pasuk*, we see God focused on human failure.

There exists a connection between the request at the beginning of the section, “Let God be happy with His creations,” and the self testimony, “I will be happy with God.” The person who is happy with God and who expresses this in song and praise to God causes God to be happy with His creations.³²¹

Another option is to pray for the sinners to repent. This is the position of Beruriah, the wife of R. Meir, in the well-known story found in *Talmud Berakhot* 10a (with a parallel version in *Midrash Tehillim* [Buber] *Mizmor* 104), summarized as follows:

There was a group of highwaymen (Rashi: *peritzim*, impudent or obscene men) in R. Meir’s neighborhood who continuously tormented him. R. Meir prayed that they would die. Beruriah, the wife of R. Meir, rebuked him, reminding him that the *pasuk* (v. 35) in *Tehillim* 104 reads let the sins (*chata’im*) be ended; not that the sinners (*chotim*) be ended. By praying for the end of sin, she notes, the conclusion of the *pasuk* will then happen – and there will be no more wicked people due to sin having been negated through repentance. She recommended that R. Meir pray for these men to do *teshuvah* and the wicked people would thus no longer exist (to bother him). Whereupon, R. Meir prayed that the men do *teshuvah*, and they did indeed repent.

For this reason, the *meshorer* commands his soul to bless God and to find ways to make God happy with man – the *meshorer* in particular and mankind in general.

Man’s task in this world, notes R. Joseph Soloveitchik, is “to live in full harmony with his environment.”³²²

The intimate close contact with the environment was recommended and approved by Judaism. The Jew whom God called upon was a worker, a farmer, a shepherd; men who lived in harmony and at peace with nature and saw God not in transcendent heavens, but descending from infinity into finitude.³²³

That is the essence of this *mizmor*. He looks at all that God has created and is amazed at the wisdom reflected in creations: the harmonious way in which they share the resources of time and space, the greatness of God that they reflect. The contact with the environment helps the *meshorer* feel in awe of God on the one hand, and close to God on the other. From both of those perspectives, the *meshorer* calls on his soul to bless God, *Barkhi nafshi et Hashem*.

Section Two: *Barkhi Nafshi* in the Liturgy

Barkhi Nafshi has served various liturgical roles over the millennia and customs vary, to this day, concerning its recital. A possible early reference to a liturgical use for the *mizmor* is found in *Mesechet Soferim* (one of the “minor” talmudic tractates):³²⁴

And on Rosh Ha-Shanah one recites “*Kol Ha-Amim*” (Psalm 47). On Yom Kippur “*Barkhi Nafshi*” and “*Mi-Ma’amakim Keratikha*” (Psalm 130). On Sukkot...

R. Menachem Azariah da Fano (1548–1620) in a responsum understands the term *Barkhi Nafshi* here as a reference not to Psalm 104 but to Psalm 103 (which also begins with the words *barkhi nafshi*), since the third verse speaks of forgiveness of sins.³²⁵ In *Seder Rav Amram Ga’on*, though (*Shacharit* for Yom Kippur, section 124), the recitation of both *Mizmorim* 103 and 104 is prescribed along with various other psalms. This custom

³²¹. R. Elchanan Samet, <http://etzion.org.il/en/shiur-47-you-have-madethem-all-wisdom-psalm-104-according-meir-weiss>.

³²². Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, *The Emergence of Ethical Man*, edited by Michael S. Berger (New York, 2005), 61.

³²³. *Ibid.*, 63.

³²⁴. In Joel Mueller’s 1878 edition (Leipzig, 1873) as well as in the version found in the *Vilna Shas*, this “*halakhah*” is found at 19:2. In M. Higger’s 1937 edition, it is found at 18:11.

³²⁵. *She’eilot U-Teshuvot Bei’urim U-Peirushim*, no. 25, sec. 2. Mueller and Higger also agree that the reference is to *Mizmor* 103.

is also mentioned in other medieval works.³²⁶ It does not appear to have survived in most contemporary communities.

A second liturgical use is of uncertain provenance. The Talmud (*Sukkah* 54b) refers to the *shir* (psalm) of Rosh Chodesh without identifying which *mizmor* served that purpose.³²⁷ Elbogen identified the *Orchot Ha-Chayim* (early fourteenth century) as the earliest source that identifies *mizmor* 104 as the song for Rosh Chodesh.³²⁸

And there are places where [the community members] recite “*Mizmor Barkhi Nafshi Et Hashem, Hashem Elokai Gadalta Me’od*” [the opening words of Psalm 104], the song which the Levites would sing on Rosh Chodesh at the *Mikdash*.³²⁹

R. Yaakov b. Asher, the author of the *Tur*, notes³³⁰ “that in Spain [following *Musaf* on Rosh Chodesh] the custom is to recite the *mizmor Barkhi Nafshi* because it contains the phrase, “He made the moon to mark the seasons” (v. 19). This comment by R. Yaakov indicates that this was not the custom in his native Germany (he left with his father c. 1303), and, indeed, we find no reference to any such custom in the works of Rashi and his students. This custom has spread and is practiced to this day in most communities.

In its third liturgical role, *Barkhi Nafshi* is often placed at the head of a group of psalms cited following *Minchah* for Shabbat. This seems the case in many contemporary *siddurim* reflecting a custom to recite the *mizmor* at that time. We read, for instance, in the *Levush* (a commentary on the *Shulchan Arukh*) by Rabbi Modechai Jaffe (born in Prague; 1530–1612):

At *Minchah* on that Shabbat [*Shabbat Bereishit*] we have the custom to begin to say *Barkhi Nafshi* [*Tehillim* 104], since the entire *mizmor* tells about the creation, thus we begin to recite it on the Shabbat on which we read *Parashat Bereishit*. And we recite the *mizmor* from that week on during *Minchah* in order to remember creation, as Shabbat ebbs, since the entire day of Shabbat is a testimonial to creation. And it appears to me that we recite the Fifteen *Shir Ha-Ma’alot* [following *Barkhi Nafshi*] for the same reason. For David recited the Fifteen *Shir -Ha-Ma’alot* when he was digging the foundation for the *Beit -Ha-Mikdash* and opened up the depths of the oceans, and the world threatened to revert back to nothingness, as is indicated in the Midrash [*Talmud Yerushalmi Sanhedrin* 10:2], and through the Fifteen *Shir Ha-Ma’alot*, the depths receded and it became an affirmation of creation, and that is why they are recited with *Barkhi Nafshi*.³³¹

As the *Levush* notes, there are several reasons to explain the custom of reciting *Barkhi Nafshi* on Shabbat afternoon, commencing with *Shabbat Bereishit*. The obvious connection is the description of the creation in *Mizmor* 104 which echoes the story of creation from *Sefer Bereishit*. Moreover, the fundamental essence of Shabbat recalls that God created the world in seven days. Thus, as the day of Shabbat approaches its conclusion, we pause to reinforce the idea of creation by reciting *Mizmor* 104. *Mizmor* 104 is read during the winter months, as the natural world goes into hibernation, with the understanding and faith that life will renew itself in the spring. The recitation of *Barkhi Nafshi* continues until *Shabbat Ha-Gadol*, when portions of the Haggadah are read. Following Pesach, many communities

³²⁶. For instance, *Sefer Ha-Manhig*, ed. Y. Raphael (Jerusalem, 1978), vol. 1, p. 349. Others have also been puzzled by the text’s connection to Yom Kippur and Psalm 104. R. Yechiel Michel Epstein (*Arukh Ha-Shulchan*, O.C. 424:3) suggests that the text should be corrected but his recreation is hard to credit. Interestingly, he mentions that the Ga’on of Vilna also modified the text, although the printed textual notes of the Gra to *Masekhet Soferim* do not reflect this.

³²⁷. A *mizmor* for Rosh Chodesh is mentioned elsewhere, including *Masekhet Soferim* 18:1 (in the Mueller edition).

³²⁸. Ismar Elbogen, *Ha-Tefillah Be-Yisrael* (Tel Aviv, 1972; Hebrew translation of the original German), 95.

³²⁹. *Sefer Orchot Chaim* (Florence, 1750), *Hilkhot Rosh Chodesh*, folio 69b.

³³⁰. O.C. (*Hilkhot Rosh Chodesh*) 423.

³³¹. There were a wide variety of practices in different communities over the centuries concerning what to do between Shabbat *Minchah* and *Ma’ariv* at the conclusion of Shabbat. There was, for instance, a *minhag* dating back to the *Ge’onim* to recite *Pirkei Avot* at that point (*Siddur Rav Amram, ad loc. Siddur Rashi* (Berlin, 1911), p. 259 mentions this custom as well, while noting a competing custom not to learn on Shabbat after *Minchah* because Moshe Rabbenu died at that hour. In early Ashkenaz, this was also not the time for *se’udah shlishit* which needed to be completed prior to *Minchah*. See Israel Ta-Shma, “*Gilgulei Minhag Tzarfat Bi-Se’udah Shlishit Shel Shabbat*,” in his *Minhag Ashkenaz Ha-Kadmon* (Jerusalem, 1992), pp. 201–224. R. Yaakov Emden (*Siddur Beit Yaakov*; Lemberg, 1904), p. 187, like the *Levush*, justifies the custom of reciting *Barkhi Nafshi* beginning with *Shabbat Bereishit* based on the similarity between the subject matter of *Bereishit* and *Mizmor* 104.

read *Pirkei Avot* during the same time slot, reinforcing the idea that we are part of *Am Yisrael* which received the Torah.

As readers of the *mizmor*, we note all of the above: the beauty and grandeur of God's creations, the wisdom reflected in God's creations, and the ability of man to make God happy with His creation or wish for its destruction. We read this *mizmor* as part of the liturgy at different times to stress the aspects of wisdom, and *chesed*, and *teshuvah*.