We will engage in a close reading of a number of psalms chosen from different contexts in Jewish liturgy. I am interested in the relationship between literary appreciation and the process of prayer as reflected in the voice of the psalmist. How does a psalm express its meaning? Where is the psalmist at the beginning of the psalm and where does the psalmist end up? What kind of process is demanded of the reader/pray-er in transforming aesthetic appreciation into prayerful significance?

Preparation: Each psalm is to be prepared with close attention to the text, making use of study questions, lexicon and concordance, as well as a combination of traditional and modern commentaries. Attention to different translations can also be very useful. Secondary readings marked with an asterisk (*) are required; the remainder are recommended for further study. A number of readings on general issues in the psalms are also strongly recommended.

The following psalms will be studied in this order:
148 and 150 (together), 29, 90, 19, 92, 114, 126.

Commentaries
F. James, Thirty Psalmists, ed. R. L. Hicks, N. Y., 1965
F-L Hossfeld, E. Zenger, Psalms 2, Psalms 3 (Hermeneia), Minneapolis, 2005-2011.

Selected Bibliography on Issues in the Psalms
(Items marked with an asterisk (*) are required).

Introduction
Parallelism in Biblical Poetry

The Psalms and Form Criticism

The Psalms and the Cult

The Psalms and Divine Kingship

History and Historiography

Metaphor and Iconography

Medieval Commentaries and the Psalms

Prayer
Readings on Individual Psalms

**Psalms 148, 150**


**Psalms 29**


**Psalms 90**


**Psalms 19**

* M. Fishbane, *Text and Texture*, (N.Y., 1979), pp. 84-90
Psalm 92

Psalm 114

Psalm 126

**Study Questions - Psalms - Hebrew College**

Psalm 148 – Oct. 7
Read the article by Hillers and note the structure of the psalm. Compare those who praise God in the heavens (vss. 1-6) with those who praise God on the earth (vss. 7-13).
Vs. 4 - On the place of water in the Bible’s understanding of creation look at Gen.1 and Psalm 104.
Vs. 8 – Why are these elements including with the “earthly” things?
Vs. 14 – How is God depicted here? How does this verse redefine the psalmist’s conception of the universe?

Psalm 150 – Oct. 7
Note the structure of the psalm. Note how successive verses address the questions of where to praise God, why to praise God and how to praise God.
Vss. 3-5 - How is the list of musical instruments in these verses different from the lists of those who praise God in Psalm 148?
Vs. 6 – How is this verse different from those that preceded it and how does it serve as a capstone for the psalm.

It has been suggested that Psalm 150 was intended as a point of closure for the entire book of Psalms, and that Psalm 1 was intended as an introduction to the book. How do these two psalms contrast with one another?

Psalm 29 – Oct. 14

Read Avishur’s article on the issue of the ancient Near Eastern background of the psalm.

Vs. 1 - Who are the אלים בני? Look at commentaries and note Ps. 89:7; Job 38:7; Deut. 32:8 (LXX and Qumran readings).

Vs. 2 - What is the meaning of המורה ידים? Where else does the phrase occur?

Ps. 90 – Oct. 21

How does the psalm divide up into sections? Is the psalmist developing an “argument”? Cf. Alter, Biblical Poetry, pp. 126-130.

Vs. 1 - What, if any, significance is there to the superscription למשה תפילה? What is the sense of the last part of the verse?

Vs. 2 - What is intended by the word מבר here? How does the image fit the context? Where is המבר ידים as referred to in the Psalm?

Vs. 3 - Explain the image יתשלו אלוהים וremium יפרת יתחל. What is the sense of the last part of the verse?

Vs. 4 - What is the meaning of חלף? cf. Job. 9:26; 14:7; 29:20; Song 2:11; Ps. 102:27; Is. 40:31; 41:1. How do you understand the repetition of 5b and 6a?
Psalm 19 – Oct. 28
What are the three parts of the psalm and how do they fit together? Read the article by Fishbane.
Vs. 2 – How do you understand the phrase השמים מוסיפים כבוד אל כבוד? Do the heavens speak? What is implied by כבוד?
Vs. 3 – What is the sense of יום ליום? See Ps. 145:4.
Vs. 4 – In what different ways can the phrase בלב נשמת קהל be interpreted? Which best fits the context?
Vs. 5 – Who is the subject of בהם אהל שם לשמש?
Vss. 6-7 – What picture of the sun emerges from these verses? On the word חמה see Song 6:10; Is. 24:23; 30:26; Job 30:28.
Vss. 8-10 – Note the identical structure of the six phrases about תורה. How do these aspects of תורה match up with the attributes of the sun in the first part of the psalm?
Vs. 12 – What is the sense of גם here? How should נזהר be understood?
See Ezek. 3:21; 8:2; 33:4-6; Dan. 12:3.
Vs. 13 – To what extent is מנהרותו נקיניו parallel to ושואות מי יבר? What is the logic of the psalmist’s request here?
Vs. 14 – What or who are זרים здесь here? See Exod. 21:14; Deut. 18:20; Jer. 47:2; Prov. 21:24; Is. 13:11.
Vs. 15 – What is the connection between God as ז roi הנעלי and the picture of God which emerges from the rest of the psalm?

Psalm 92 – Nov. 4
Read the article by H. Fisch on the structure of Psalm 92.
What is the connection between this psalm and the Shabbat? See Mishnah Tamid 7:3-4.
Vs. 2 - On the phrase מוכב חלומת הליל see Ps. 55:8; 100:3-4.
Vs. 3- On the parallelism of אפונה תדה and see Gen. 24:49; 47:29; Exod. 34:6.
Vs. 5 – What is the sense of ידיך 무假期 here?
Vs. 6 – What is the sense of the parallelism of grandi מחשבותך // ממשיכך? Of grandi //MSG סמק?
Vs. 7 – What do the words יאש בכר and the כיס בך have to do with the subject of the psalm here? Does the word point back to vss. 4-6 or ahead to vss. 8ff?
Vs. 8 – Should the infinitive be understood as past or future? Why are the wicked compared to grass or weeds? Who are the מפ ilişkin אדם?
Vs. 10 – On staircase parallelism see Ps. 77:17; 93:3; how do you understand the connection between vs. 8 and vs. 10?
Vs. 11 – What is the image of the רמא here? What does the word בליטה mean here?
Vs. 12 – What is the meaning of הבורי here? What the connection between vs. 10 and vs. 12?
Vs. 13 – On the image of the cedars of Lebanon see the article by Fisch. On the image of the righteous see Jer. 17:7-8; Ps. 1.
Vs. 14 – On trees in the temple area see Ps. 52:8; Ezek. 47:12.
Vs. 15 – What is the sense of the word להגדה here and how does it connect with vs. 1?

Psalm 114 – Nov. 11
Read Geller’s article on the psalm.
Vs. 1 - What is the meaning of לעז מעם here? Cf. Is. 25:3; 28:11; 33:19; Deut. 28:49-50; Jer. 5:15.
Vs. 2 - Cf. Exod. 19:6; on ממשלותיו - Gen. 1:16; Ps. 136:8-9; Ps.145:13; Jer. 34:1; II Kg. 20:10; II Chron. 32:9.
Vs. 3 - On the rebellious waters see Ps. 77:17; Hab. 3:10; Ps. 104:6-9; on נ帅哥 and 넛 - Ps. 66:5-6; Is. 11:15-16; Ps. 74:12-15; Ps. 93:1-5; Look at Josh 3:16-17.
Vs. 4 - Ex. 19:18; cf. Jud. 5:4; Ps. 68:8; Ps. 29:6.
Vs. 7 - What is the meaning of הורים א שאין?
Vs. 8 - Cf. Deut. 33:16; Lam. 1:1. On תلومה see Deut. 8:15; 32:13; Is. 50:7; Job 28:9.

Psalm 126 – Nov. 18
Vs. 1 - How should the expression be understood? Which of the explanations in Crow best fits psalm 126? How should the expression be understood? Look at Hos. 6:11; Amos 9:14; Pss. 14:7, 85:2; Job 42:10; Lam. 2:14.
In what sense were the Israelites חלמים? What is the sense of dreaming in the Bible – see the article by Beyerlin and look at the following texts: Deut. 13:2-6; Is. 29:7-8; Joel 2:1; Num. 12:6; Jer. 23:25; 27:8-9; 29:8; Daniel 1; Job 20:8; 33:15; Qoh 5:2.

Vs. 2 – Does ימלא אז speak about the past or the future? Look at the imperfect form with a past sense in Exod. 15:1; I Kg. 3:16; 8:1; Is. 35:5-6; Micah 3:6; Lev. 26:41.

On the phrase להגדיל הנור see Joel 2:21; Jud. 13:19.

Vs. 3 – Who says this verse – Israel or the nations?

Vs. 4 - What are אפיקים בנגב? See Ps. 18:16; Ezek. 34:14.

Vs. 6 – What is מים הזורע? Why is the sower of seed crying as he works? How does this image work in the psalm?