

Reading Questions for Week 5 (Prayer and Hymns)

NT Seminar: The Jewish World of the New Testament

Fall 2009

** Be sure to read the sections on this week's texts in VanderKam

- The *Shemoneh Esreh* (*Amidah* or *Eighteen Benedictions*)
- *Psalms of Solomon* 3, 9, 17, 18
- *Hymns of the Community* (1QHa) viii.16-37, ix.1-39
- *Judith*

With each prayer text or hymn (including the prayer and hymn sections of Judith)

- Is this prayer or hymn based on canonical models? If so, which? What is different from the prayers and hymns in our Old Testament?
- What is the primary mode of relating to God? (request, thanksgiving, blessing, complaint, lament, etc.). How would you characterize the quality and emotional tone of this relationship?
- How does this prayer or hymn shape the way its users' picture of a "faithful Israelite"?
- What do these prayers or hymns assume about (a) the worshippers' sin and guilt; (b) the way sin and/or guilt can be dealt with; (c) God's mercy and forgiveness?
- How sectarian are these prayers and/or psalms? How much emphasis is there on distinguishing faithful Israelites from unfaithful ones?
- What role, if any, does the Holy Spirit play?
- Do these prayers and hymns mention the Messiah? If so, what is the figure like and what roles does he play?
- How do these prayers and hymns interpret Israel's history?

In Judith

- What role do prayer and worship play in the narrative? What is the message about these activities?
- How does the narrator demonstrate that Judith is a faithful Jew? What does this tell us about "boundary markers" at this time?
- How does Judith approach gentiles?
- What does Judith (and its great popularity) reflect about the place of women in Second Temple Judaism?
- What does Judith teach the readers about the proper response to foreign oppression? Is its perspective more aligned with 1 Macc or 2 Macc?