

Reading Questions for Week 6 (Biblical Interpretation)

NT Seminar: The Jewish World of the New Testament

Fall 2009

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

- *Jubilees* 1-15
- *Pesher Commentary on Habakkuk (1QpHab)* vii-xiii

Jubilees

- What is the narrative framework for the account? Who is the narrator and where/when is he speaking? How seriously do you think this narrative frame is meant to be taken?
- Find and read through the biblical passages that provide the framework for Jubilees 1-15. What differences do you notice between the two versions? What might these suggest about the author and his circle within Judaism?
- Some have suggested that *Jubilees* was meant to replace the Torah, while others have suggested it presumed knowledge of Torah and its authority. What evidence do you see that might help us to decide?
- How does the author of Jubilees understand Torah? What is its place in God's plan? Which commands seem to be most important?
- How does the author distinguish between the righteous and the unrighteous?
- How is sin dealt with? Is there any emphasis on God's grace and forgiveness? If so, how is that grace made available?
- How are the Gentiles viewed in *Jubilees*?
- What kind of future is anticipated in the book?
- How do you think the author wanted readers to understand the book's status? Is it a kind of narrative commentary or is it something else? Do you see any possible implications for our understanding of some biblical books?

Pesher Habakkuk

- Read through the verses of Habakkuk that are interpreted here.
- Why is this called a "*pesher*" commentary?
- What kind of interpretive method is the author of *Pesher Habakkuk* employing? Do you see any principles underlying the interpretation?
- How does the author's contemporary experience relate to the interpretive process? Is this appropriate or problematic?
- What hints do we get here regarding the events surrounding the birth of the Qumran sect (Essenes)? Who do you think might be the historical high-priest identified here as the "Wicked Priest", and how does the author view his leadership?