

Reading Questions

Josephus, *JW* book 1; 1 Macc; 2 Macc 2-8

Week 2, Sept. 22nd

Here are some more specific questions to keep in mind as you do your reading this week. You don't need to hand in answers to these, but you should come to class with some specific thoughts on as many of them as possible. As you are reading, look for specific passages that relate to the questions and jot those down so that you can draw our attention to them in the seminar discussion. We want to base our seminar times as much as possible on the details of the text, even when we're trying to understand broad themes in Jewish life and practice.

The One God

- How do we see Jews expressing their monotheism in this week's readings? Do any of these Jews compromise their monotheism?
- How is the worship of Gentiles depicted?

and the Gentiles

- What is God's stance toward the Gentile world in this week's readings? Do the Jews depicted agree on the position of these other nations?
- What different attitudes do we see toward Hellenistic culture during the period leading up to the edicts of Antiochus IV?
- What aspects of Hellenistic culture are seen as dangerous for Jews, and what aspects are seen as neutral or beneficial? Do the three authors agree about this?
- In 1 Macc and 2 Macc, which Jews take on Greek names and what does this suggest about them?

One covenant people

One just judge

- In 1 Macc, what is presented as the cause of the anti-Jewish edict of Antiochus IV? What is presented as the cause in 2 Macc? What does this comparison suggest about the different aims, political allegiances, and theology of the two books?
- In 2 Macc 4, what is said to be the motive of the Hellenizing Jewish elites? Do Josephus and 1 Macc depict them in the same way?
- How does the author of 2 Macc maintain God's justice in the face of unjust suffering (see esp. 2 Macc 8)? How does this compare with the approach to innocent suffering in Josephus and 1 Macc?

One law

- Both 1 Macc and 2 Macc tell the story of a group of Jews slaughtered on the sabbath because they will not fight. How do the two authors differ in their interpretation of that event? What does this suggest about their approaches to Torah?
- Which particular observances of Torah are emphasized as necessary for all faithful Jews in this week's readings? Do the authors all emphasize the same ones? Why do these authors single out these practices?

One future

- In 1 Macc, what do the Jews need to do in order to bring the Antiochian crisis to an end? How is this different from the solution to the crisis put forward in 2 Macc? What responses do these

books imply the reader should adopt to future oppression?

- How prominent is future eschatological hope in each of this week's readings? Do any of them involve hope for an intermediary to deliver Israel?
- What awaits people after death in each of this week's readings?