



Psalms

What Are the Psalms?

Interpreting the Text:

1. How does the shape of the book of Psalms influence how we approach and read it? How does the number of psalms, or the numbering of the psalms, impact the way we interpret them as a religious text?
2. Does the cultic use of the psalms in Israel's history have any relationship to our own prayer practices? How do the psalms feature in the exercise of your faith? Does a knowledge of their history (or even histories) affect their use for you?
3. Some psalms are used today for specific purposes. For example, Psalm 23 is frequently used at Christian and Jewish funerals. How is this use of Psalms in liturgy like, or unlike, the way ancient Israelites may have used them?

Applying the Text:

1. Does it matter to you whether David authored all of the psalms? Why or why not? How might authorship influence the way we treat the psalms?
2. Do you have a favorite psalm? What is compelling about this psalm for you?
3. The psalms are understood to be particularly human, not of divine origin. How does this affect our understanding or use of them in our lives? Do you find the psalms more relatable or accessible than other parts of the Bible? Why or why not?