



Psalms

The Character of God

Interpreting the Text:

Pick a psalm from the 'psalms of YHWH's enthronement' category. These are: 93, 97, and 99.

1. What are the main characteristics ascribed to God in this Psalm? Do any of the characteristics contradict each other?
2. What can we tell about the psalmist(s) from their descriptions of God?
3. Why is hatred portrayed as a virtue in the psalms? How might this have been important to name for the Psalmist or the Ancient Israelites?

Applying the Text:

1. How do you understand the parts of the psalms that attribute to God characteristics we tend to think of as negative (e.g. vengefulness, vindictiveness)? Does this say more about God or more about human beings?
2. Can we, as the psalms do, ask God to destroy our enemies? How does this relate to Jesus' teaching to turn the other cheek (Matthew 5:39)? How do we wrestle with these depictions of violence in our sacred texts?
3. Should we read the psalms as expressions of human feelings or as moral instruction? Are these two readings mutually exclusive?