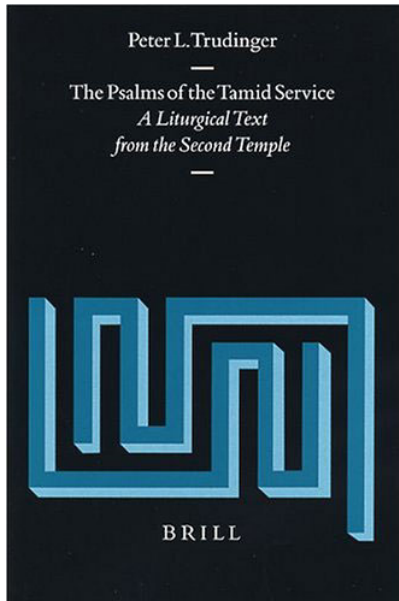


RBL 08/2006



**Trudinger, Peter L.**

***The Psalms of the Tamid Service: A Liturgical Text  
from the Second Temple***

Supplements to Vetus Testamentum 98

Leiden: Brill, 2004. Pp. ix + 321. Hardcover. \$119.00.  
ISBN 9004129685.

Eileen Schuller  
McMaster University  
Hamilton, Ontario, Canada

In the first page or so of his introduction Peter Trudinger sets out the content and the promise of this book. He will study the psalms that were performed by the choir of Levites at the close of the daily Tamid service in the Jerusalem temple from “perhaps even as early as the start of the second century B.C.E.” (1). These psalms, as listed in *m. Tamid* 7:4 and with headings (with one exception) in the Septuagint, were Ps 24 on Sunday, Ps 48 on Monday, Ps 82 on Tuesday, Ps 94 on Wednesday, Ps. 81 on Thursday, Ps 93 on Friday and Ps 92 for the Sabbath. According to Trudinger, these seven psalms, always referred to as the Tamid Psalms,

form a liturgical text from the late Second Temple period ... about which much is known—contents and context can be reliably established and the ritual setting in which they were performed is well-documented. It is rare to possess such extensive information about the setting of a text and there are few works whose origin can be located among the groups who controlled the worship in the Temple. Consequently, the Tamid Psalms have much to offer for an understanding of the period, on their own and in comparison with other material. (1–2)

I quote at length because these opening sentences give some sense of the confidence and enthusiasm that Trudinger brings to his work. Having “discovered” this previously unrecognized liturgical composition of late Second Temple Judaism, he devotes about one-third of the book (52–160) to working through a detailed study of the seven psalms, with particular attention to the literary aspects of structure, imagery, motifs, agents, and the theme of each. Then he does the same type of literary analysis on the “composite text of the Tamid Psalms,” that is, looking at vocabulary, motifs, agents, and theme in the work as a whole. He finds that the Tamid Psalms form “a narrative presentation of the encounter with God at Zion” (226), with a plot, characters (Yahweh and those who seek Yahweh), and a movement from orientation to disorientation to new orientation (using Brueggemann’s categories). In the final section of the book Trudinger examines the “Ritual Context” of the Tamid Psalms in the morning temple service, with some very brief comparisons to Hindu and Mexicano traditions and the promise that such cross-cultural study has great potential for future work. He makes brief comparisons with other liturgical collections (the Psalms of Ascents and 4QDibHam) and argues that the Tamid Psalms offer support for an early, rather than later, stabilization of the Masoretic Psalter. The book concludes with the same enthusiasm with which it began: Trudinger judges that he “has only just scratched the surface” (273) and that there are major contributions to the theology of the late Second Temple period and to New Testament studies which can still be gleaned from “this remarkable literary and liturgical text.”

Before we can share the author’s confidence and delight in what he has discovered, it is necessary to raise a fundamental question: Is there really a “liturgical text” that can be studied in this way so as to draw these types of conclusions? I am afraid I remain somewhat skeptical. I am not so much worried about whether theoretically a text that derives from the reuse of existing material can be a composition, that is, “the intentional product of creative authorial activity” (to use his definition [5]), but whether the model of a “creative and intentional composition” (10) is the one we should be using at all.

Trudinger is not oblivious to the literary and historical problems and the limitations on what we can know about the use of psalms in the temple, and he gives a brief overview of our main sources of information in chapter 2. Although his line of argumentation is not always clearly laid out, Trudinger is convinced that we can know on the basis of the headings in the Septuagint, which correspond to what is found in *m. Tamid*, that from the second century B.C.E. on the seven Tamid Psalms were used in the temple. This, of course, assumes that the headings in the Septuagint are really from the Old Greek, which is precisely what has been contested recently by A. Pietersma, who argued that at least some of the headings are exegetically derived (“Exegesis and Liturgy in the Superscriptions of the Greek Psalter,” in *Xth Congress of the International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies: Oslo, 1998* [ed. B.A. Taylor; SBLSCS 51; Atlanta: Society of Biblical

Literature, 2001], 129–38); Trudinger knows of this article but dismisses it too quickly in a footnote. Trudinger does not pay much to the considerable diversity in style and format in the headings, which again may be evidence against their being Old Greek (see the brief but helpful discussion of Tyler Williams on this point in his website article “Liturgical Notices and the Psalms for the Days of the Week”: <http://biblical-studies.ca/blog/2005/07/lxx-psalm-superscriptions-part-3.html>). Although Trudinger acknowledges the overall problems in using the Mishnah as a straightforward historical source, he marshals arguments to demonstrate that *m. Tamid* “seems to offer credible information on the daily service” (27), but passages such as 1 Chr 16; 23:30–31 and Sir 50 seem to me to offer less confirmatory support than he claims. An important part of his argument, brought up over and over again, is the *ma’amad* as the vehicle through which “knowledge of the Tamid liturgy would have been widespread among priests and laity” (27), so that the Tamid Psalms could exercise the influence and importance that he credits to this composition. But again many (most?) scholars of Second Temple Judaism and Jewish liturgy would want to be much more cautious about what we can say about the *ma’amad* as a historical institution.

If the evidence for the usage of these seven psalms in the temple in the latter part of the Second Temple period is not so clear, much less evidence for widespread knowledge outside of the temple of the seven as a unified group, it becomes more difficult to talk of a literary “composition.” That Trudinger has shown links of vocabulary and theme among these seven psalms cannot be denied, but many of these are so general and generic that one cannot help but wonder if other random combinations of psalms could not yield similar links (especially if commonalities were sought with the same diligence as Trudinger brought to this study). While it would be nice to think that a new liturgical text exercising such an important influence in Second Temple Judaism has been newly discovered by Trudinger, I am afraid that I have not been convinced by the central thesis of this book.