

# THE WRITINGS: PSALMS AND WISDOM LITERATURE

## I. POETICAL LITERATURE

### A. Characteristics of Hebrew poetry

1. Form of Hebrew poetry (stich = line)
  - a. **Parallelism:** Balance between successive members of a poem
    - 1) Synonymous: same idea repeated
    - 2) Antithetic: opposite idea presented
    - 3) Synthetic/Climactic: second stich completes thought of first
    - 4) External and Internal: balance within and between distiches
  - b. There appears to be no meter in Hebrew poetry
  - c. Strophic arrangement
2. **Techniques of Hebrew Poetry**
  - a. Alliteration: repeating of first letter in a series (Ps 93:4; 122:6-7)
  - b. Acrostic Patterns: 1<sup>st</sup> letter of successive lines = alphabet (Ps 34:1-21; 119; Lam 1-4)
  - c. Assonance: repeating of vowel sounds at the end of words (Ps 90:17)
  - d. Onomatopoeia: use of words which sound like the thing being named
  - e. Puns/Plays on Words (Ps 93:4; Judg 5:22; Amos 8:12)

### B. The Psalms

1. A Collection of the hymns of ancient Israel
  - a. All are written as poetry; musical settings have not survived
    - 1) Some Pss have specified music in the title (Ps 22, 80)
    - 2) Unknown words in text may be musical instructions
  - b. Form criticism: Study in functional, not literary terms
  - c. Various authors: David (73); Asaph (12); Sons of Korah (11); Solomon (2); etc.
2. Divisions of the Psalms
  - a. Types of Psalms
    - 1) **Hymns:** Victory songs (Ps 68), processional hymns (84, 122), Zion songs (46, 48, 76), enthronement songs (47, 93, 96-99)
    - 2) **Communal laments:** (12, 44, 58, 60, 74, 79-80, 83, 85, **137**)
    - 3) **Individual laments:** Most common type (6, **22**, **51**)
    - 4) **Individual songs of thanksgiving:** (**23**, 30, 138-139, etc.)
    - 5) **Royal Psalms:** About Israel's king, applied to Messiah (**2**, 20-21, 72, **110**, 144)
    - 6) **Wisdom Psalms:** (**37**)
  - b. Five sections: Pss 1-41; 42-72; 73-89; 90-106; and 107-150

### C. **Song of Solomon** (The Song of Songs, Canticles)

1. An erotic love song or collection of such
2. Traditionally attributed to Solomon; probably later
3. Symbolic or allegorical interpretations
  - a. The LORD's love for Israel (cf. Hosea 2:16-19)
  - b. Christ's love for the church (cf. Rev 21:2, 9)
4. Perhaps a parable or object lesson on the wonders of human love

## II. WISDOM LITERATURE

### A. Wisdom literature

1. Common in Near East and Egypt as a type of literature
2. Two types: a) Proverbial; b) Speculative or contemplative

### B. Proverbs

1. Similarities with wisdom literature of Mesopotamia and Egypt
  - a. Egyptian *The Teaching of Amenemophet* and Prov 22:17-23:14
  - b. Set apart by the foundational principle of Prov 1:7
2. A collection of collections
  - a. Introduction to the book (Prov 1:1-7)
  - b. Wisdom poems (Prov 1:8-9:18)
  - c. Proverbs of Solomon (Prov 10:1-22:16)
  - d. Words of the wise (Prov 22:17-24:22)
  - e. Sayings of the wise (Prov 24:23-34)
  - f. Collection of the "Men of Hezekiah" (Prov 25-29)
  - g. The words of Agur (Prov 30)
  - h. The words of Lemuel (Prov 31:1-9)
  - i. The virtuous wife (Prov 31:10-31)

### C. Ecclesiastes (Qoheleth)

1. Authorship and date
  - a. *Qoheleth* is usually translated "Preacher"
  - b. "Son of David, king of Jerusalem" (1:1); traditionally = Solomon
  - c. Later date in Old Testament period is more likely
2. A collection of thoughts; an unconventional book
  - a. A melancholy outlook; "All is vanity" (passim)
  - b. A supplement to the simple moral wisdom of Proverbs
  - c. Slender faith in the face of the world's harsh realities

### D. Job

1. Explores the question: "Why do the righteous suffer?"
  - a. Author and date unknown
  - b. A masterpiece of literature
2. Outline of Job
  - a. Prologue in prose story form (Job 1-2)
  - b. The arguments in exalted poetry (Job 3-41)
    - 1) Job's lament (Job 3)
    - 2) Dialogue between Job and his three friends (Job 4-27)
    - 3) A poem on wisdom (Job 28)
    - 4) Job's complaint (Job 29-31)
    - 5) Elihu's speeches (Job 32-37)
    - 6) The LORD's reply (Job 38-42:6)
  - c. Epilogue in prose story form (Job 42:7-17)

## III. THE WRITINGS: THE MEGILLOTH

A. Megilloth = "Scrolls"; 5 books read at Jewish festivals

B. The books: 1) Ruth; 2) Lamentations; 3) Song of Solomon; 4) Esther; 5) Ecclesiastes