

Wisdom Literature

- Multi-year survey of the Bible story
- Rotation of key books
- Break from the narrative this quarter

Wisdom Literature

- James 3:13-17

“But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy”

Wisdom Literature

- 1 Corinthians 3:18-20

“For the wisdom of this world is foolishness before God”


Wisdom Literature

- Sometimes called the “Books of Poetry”
- Predominant style of the Old Testament
- Entire spectrum of man’s existence covered
 1. What it all means...
 2. Finding purpose...
 3. Practical application...

...for the man striving to obey God.

Wisdom Literature

The Law:
sets forth the
consequences of a
rebellious child.



Proverbs:
speaks to the training
up of a child to avoid
one who is rebellious.

Wisdom Literature

The Law:
sets forth the
consequences of
fornication/adultery



Proverbs:
provides practical
advice on avoiding the
temptation

Wisdom Literature

The Law:

“Love the Lord your God
with all your heart...”
Provided for times of
praise and worship.




Psalms:

Gave them the tools and
taught them to praise,
worship, and trust

Wisdom Literature

The Law:
rules governing
betrothal and
marriage



Song of Solomon:
God's wisdom shows the
beauty of love and affection
in relationships he created

Wisdom Literature

The Law:
a covenant relationship
agreed upon by the
people at Sinai



Job:
taught the people what
a true commitment to a
relationship looked like

Wisdom Literature

The Law:
promised blessings
beyond imagination in a
land flowing with milk
and honey



Ecclesiastes: physical
blessings, while from God,
are meant to be enjoyed in
their proper place and
perspective

Wisdom Literature

- Genesis - generations and thousands of years
- Exodus through the conquest - relatively short time and only a couple of generations
- Judges - 300 years
- United Kingdom - lives of three men over 120 years
- This quarter - content possibly spanning millennia, likely assembled over a relatively short period

Wisdom Literature

- The genre flourished during the period of David and Solomon. David called the “sweet psalmist” of Israel. 3000 proverbs and over 1000 songs attributed to Solomon.
- The collection of psalms were penned over a period of nearly 1000 years. (Moses to at least the exile)
- Some of the proverbs of Solomon were copied in their current form under the direction of Hezekiah, 200 years after Solomon.

Wisdom Literature

- Many scholars feel that Job, although likely written earlier, was likely recorded during the period
- I will argue from the perspective that Solomon wrote Ecclesiastes, which places it in the period.
- Song of Solomon is generally considered to be one of the songs attributed to Solomon. Even those who would disagree would concur it was likely written during the period of his reign.

Wisdom Literature

- The books were included (although grouped after the prophets) in the Hebrew bible or “Tanakh” as its came to be known.
- Torah - 5 books of the Law; Pentateuch.
- Nevi'im - “Prophets” (w/1 & 2 Sam. 1 & 2 Kings)
- Ketuvim - “Writings” (w/1 & 2 Chron.)

Wisdom Literature

Job

- Righteous man
- Calamity at the hands of Satan
- Friends/Wife
- Faithful throughout
- Combination of prose and poetry

Wisdom Literature

Psalms

- Jewish hymnal
- A collection
- Window into the heart and mind of faithful men
- Beautiful songs and heartfelt prayers
- No situation in our life outside the realm of content

Wisdom Literature

Proverbs

- “Distilled wisdom of the ages”
- Collection of godly advice like no other
- Young/old, rich/poor, man/woman
- Best way to life’s fullest outcome

Wisdom Literature

Ecclesiastes

- A treatise relevant in our time
- Opportunity abounds for pleasure and pursuits “under the sun”
- Exercise in futility without God
- Another combination of prose and poetry

Wisdom Literature

Song of Solomon

- “Song of songs”
- Desire, affection, romance in a beautifully chaste setting
- Another book relevant in our time
- Benefits for young and old

Wisdom Literature

Hebrew Poetry

- One third of the Old Testament
- English poetry primarily sound based
 - From Greek and Latin
 - Does not translate
- Hebrew poetry primarily thought based
 - Balanced, parallel lines
 - Translates well

Wisdom Literature

Hebrew Poetry

- Tends to be compact
- Truth, feeling, experience through imagery
- Say things otherwise “unsayable”

Wisdom Literature

Parallelism

- General repetition

Psalms 13:1-2

How long, O Lord? Will You forget me forever? **How long** will You hide Your face from me? **How long** shall I take counsel in my soul, Having sorrow in my heart all the day? **How long** will my enemy be exalted over me?

Wisdom Literature

Parallelism

- General repetition

Psalm 29

v. 1-2... “Ascribe to the Lord”

v. 3-9... “The voice of the Lord”

Wisdom Literature

Parallelism

- General repetition

Ecclesiastes 3

v. 2-8... **A time to** give birth and **a time to** die;
A time to plant and **a time to** uproot what is
planted...

Wisdom Literature

Parallelism

- General repetition

Proverbs 3:24

When you lie down, you will not be afraid;

When you lie down, your sleep will be sweet.

Wisdom Literature

Parallelism

1. Synonymous parallelism

- Same thought, different words
- Intensifies, zooms in, or sharpens the point

Psalms 11:4

The Lord is in His **holy temple**; the Lord's throne is in **heaven**; His eyes behold, His eyelids test the sons of men.

Wisdom Literature

Parallelism

1. Synonymous parallelism
 - Same thought, different words
 - Intensifies, zooms in, or sharpens the point

Psalms 24:1-2

The **earth** is the Lord's, and **all it contains**,
The **world**, and **those who dwell in it**.

Wisdom Literature

Parallelism

1. Synonymous parallelism
 - Same thought, different words
 - Intensifies, zooms in, or sharpens the point

Psalms 24:5

He shall receive a blessing from the Lord
And righteousness from the God of his salvation

Wisdom Literature

Parallelism

1. Synonymous parallelism
 - Same thought, different words
 - Intensifies, zooms in, or sharpens the point

Proverbs 19:5

A false witness will not go unpunished,
And he who tells lies will not escape.

Wisdom Literature

Parallelism

1. Synonymous parallelism

- Same thought, different words
- Intensifies, zooms in, or sharpens the point

Ecclesiastes 1:9

That which has been is that which will be,
And that which has been done is that which will be
done. So there is nothing new under the sun.

Wisdom Literature

Parallelism

1. Synonymous parallelism

- Same thought, different words
- Intensifies, zooms in, or sharpens the point

Psalms 3-14 even indicate repetition across consecutive psalms. With the partial exception of Ps. 8, the group is a repeated situation and prayer as the wicked prosper in their opposition to the righteous.

Wisdom Literature

Parallelism

2. Antithetical parallelism

- Opposite or contrasting thoughts
- Sometimes with a positive and a negative

Psalms 1:6

For the Lord knows the way of the righteous,
But the way of the wicked will perish.

Wisdom Literature

Parallelism

2. Antithetical parallelism

- Opposite or contrasting thoughts
- Sometimes with a positive and a negative

Psalms 90:6 (speaking of man's existence when compared to God's)

In the morning it flourishes and sprouts anew;
Toward evening it fades and withers away.

Wisdom Literature

Parallelism

2. Antithetical parallelism

- Opposite or contrasting thoughts
- Sometimes with a positive and a negative

Proverbs 10:1

A wise son makes a father glad,
But a foolish son is a grief to his mother.

Wisdom Literature

Parallelism

2. Antithetical parallelism

- Opposite or contrasting thoughts
- Sometimes with a positive and a negative

Proverbs 10:12

Hatred stirs up strife,
But love covers all transgressions.

Wisdom Literature

Parallelism

2. Antithetical parallelism

- Opposite or contrasting thoughts
- Sometimes with a positive and a negative

Proverbs 15:1

A gentle answer turns away wrath,
But a harsh word stirs up anger.

Wisdom Literature

Parallelism

3. Synthetic parallelism

- Succeeding lines developing a thought
- Cause/effect or proposition/conclusion

Psalms 23:1

The Lord is my shepherd, (cause)

I shall not want. (effect)

Wisdom Literature

Parallelism

3. Synthetic parallelism

- Succeeding lines developing a thought
- Cause/effect or proposition/conclusion

Psalms 119:11

Your word I have treasured in my heart, (cause)

That I may not sin against You. (effect)

Wisdom Literature

Parallelism

3. Synthetic parallelism

- Succeeding lines developing a thought
- Cause/effect or proposition/conclusion

Proverbs 3:5-6

Trust in the Lord with all your heart (proposition)

And do not lean on your own understanding. (proposition)

In all your ways acknowledge Him, (proposition)

And He will make your paths straight. (conclusion)

Wisdom Literature

Parallelism

3. Synthetic parallelism

- Succeeding lines developing a thought
- Cause/effect or proposition/conclusion

Psalms 1:1 (Progressive)

How blessed is the man who does not **walk** in the counsel of the wicked,

Nor **stand** in the path of sinners,

Nor **sit** in the seat of scoffers!

Wisdom Literature

Parallelism

3. Synthetic parallelism

- Succeeding lines developing a thought
- Cause/effect or proposition/conclusion

Psalms 29:1-2 (Climactic)

Ascribe to the Lord, O sons of the mighty,

Ascribe to the Lord glory and strength.

Ascribe to the Lord the glory due to His name;

Worship the Lord in holy array.

Wisdom Literature

Parallelism

4. Chiastic parallelism

- Ascending and descending order of thought
- Main point in the middle

Psalm 70

- (A) v. 1... Urgent call for help
- (B) v. 2-3... Curses on the wicked
- (C) v. 4... Blessings on the righteous
- (D) v. 5... Urgent call for help

Wisdom Literature

Chiastic structure across consecutive chapters: Psalms 15-24

- A. “Lord... who may dwell on your holy hill?” (15:1)
- B. “I take refuge in you... In your presence... In your right hand.” (16:1, 11)
- C. Lord, give heed to my cry... for you will answer me.” (17:1, 6)
- D. “He gives great deliverance to His king.” (18:50)
- E. “The heavens declare the glory of God.” In keeping His commandments is great reward. (19:1, 11)
- D. “The Lord saves His anointed.” (20:6) “The king will be glad... in your salvation.” (21:1)
- C. “Oh my God, I cry... You answer me.” (22:2, 21)
- B. “I fear no evil... I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.” (23:4, 6)
- A. “Who may ascend into the holy hill of the Lord?” (24:3)

Wisdom Literature

Parallelism

5. Inclusio

- Repetition “bracketing” major thought
- Often a refrain or chorus in song

Psalm 8:1 & 9

The refrain “O Lord, our Lord, How majestic is Your name in all the earth” bracketing David’s amazement at God’s consideration and blessing of man.

Wisdom Literature

Parallelism

5. Inclusio

- Repetition “bracketing” major thought
- Often a refrain or chorus in song

Psalm 103

As David innumbrates the reasons Jehovah is worthy and deserving of our adoration and praise, he begins and ends the Psalm with “Bless the Lord, O my soul”.

Wisdom Literature

Parallelism

6. Emblematic parallelism (simile)
 - Figure of speech illustrating the content of the next line

Psalms 42:1

As the deer pants for the water brooks,
So my soul pants for You, O God.

Wisdom Literature

Parallelism

6. Emblematic parallelism (simile)
 - Figure of speech illustrating the content of the next line

Proverbs 11:22

As a **ring of gold** in a swine's snout

So is a **beautiful woman** who lacks discretion.

Wisdom Literature

Parallelism

6. Emblematic parallelism (simile)
 - Figure of speech illustrating the content of the next line

Proverbs 26:1

Like **snow in summer** and like **rain in harvest**,
So **honor is not fitting for a fool**.

Wisdom Literature

Parallelism

6. Emblematic parallelism (simile)
 - Figure of speech illustrating the content of the next line

Ecclesiastes 7:6

For as the crackling of thorn bushes under a pot,
So is the laughter of the fool;
And this too is futility.

Wisdom Literature

Parallelism

- 7. Formal parallelism
 - Parallel in form alone
 - One line, one thought

Proverbs 16:6

By lovingkindness and truth iniquity is atoned for,
And by the fear of the Lord one keeps away from evil.

Wisdom Literature

Parallelism

7. Formal parallelism
 - Parallel in form alone
 - One line, one thought

Proverbs 18:3

When a wicked man comes, contempt also comes,
And with dishonor comes scorn.

Wisdom Literature

Parallelism

- 7. Formal parallelism
 - Parallel in form alone
 - One line, one thought

Job 40:7

“Now gird up your loins like a man;
I will ask you, and you instruct Me.

Wisdom Literature

Word Pictures in Hebrew poetry

1. Simile

- Comparison using “like” or “as”

Psalms 5:12

For it is You who blesses the righteous man, O Lord,
You surround him with **favor as with a shield**.

Wisdom Literature

Word Pictures in Hebrew poetry

1. Simile

- Comparison using “like” or “as”

Proverbs 25:14

Like clouds and wind without rain

Is a man who boasts of his gifts falsely.

Wisdom Literature

Word Pictures in Hebrew poetry

1. Simile

- Comparison using “like” or “as”

Song of Solomon 4:1

“How beautiful you are, my darling...

Your eyes are like doves behind your veil;

Your hair is like a flock of goats

That have descended from Mount Gilead.”

Wisdom Literature

Word Pictures in Hebrew poetry

2. Metaphor

- Comparison as literal, without “like” or “as”

Psalms 84:11

For the Lord God **is a sun and shield...**

Wisdom Literature

Word Pictures in Hebrew poetry

2. Metaphor

- Comparison as literal, without “like” or “as”

Psalms 91:4

He will cover you with His pinions,
And under His wings you may seek refuge;
His faithfulness is a **shield and bulwark**.

Wisdom Literature

Word Pictures in Hebrew poetry

2. Metaphor

- Comparison as literal, without “like” or “as”

Proverbs 16:24

Pleasant words **are a honeycomb**,

Sweet to the soul and healing to the bones.

Wisdom Literature

Word Pictures in Hebrew poetry

2. Metaphor

- Comparison as literal, without “like” or “as”

Song of Songs 5:14

“His hands **are rods of gold**
Set with beryl;
His abdomen **is carved ivory**
Inlaid with sapphires.

Wisdom Literature

Word Pictures in Hebrew poetry

3. Hyperbole

- exaggerated statements or claims not meant to be taken literally

Psalms 6:6

I am weary with my sighing;

Every night I **make my bed swim,**

I dissolve my couch with my tears.

Wisdom Literature

Word Pictures in Hebrew poetry

3. Hyperbole

- exaggerated statements or claims not meant to be taken literally

Psalms 78:27

When He rained **meat** upon them **like the dust**,
Even **winged fowl** like the sand of the seas,

Wisdom Literature

Word Pictures in Hebrew poetry

3. Hyperbole

- exaggerated statements or claims not meant to be taken literally

Song of Songs 5:10

My beloved is dazzling and ruddy,

Outstanding among ten thousand.

Wisdom Literature

Word Pictures in Hebrew poetry

4. Anthropomorphism

- Ascribing human form or attributes to a being or thing not human, especially to a deity.

Psalms 31:2

Incline Your **ear** to me, rescue me quickly;

Be to me a rock of strength,

A stronghold to save me.

Wisdom Literature

Word Pictures in Hebrew poetry

4. Anthropomorphism

- Ascribing human form or attributes to a being or thing not human, especially to a deity.

Psalms 11:4

His **eyes** behold, His **eyelids** test the sons of men.

Wisdom Literature

Word Pictures in Hebrew poetry

4. Anthropomorphism

- Ascribing human form or attributes to a being or thing not human, especially to a deity.

Psalms 89:10

You Yourself crushed Rahab like one who is slain;
You scattered Your enemies with Your **mighty arm**.

Wisdom Literature

Word Pictures in Hebrew poetry

4. Anthropomorphism

- Ascribing human form or attributes to a being or thing not human, especially to a deity.

Job 37:10

From the **breath** of God ice is made,
And the expanse of the waters is frozen.

Wisdom Literature

Word Pictures in Hebrew poetry

5. Personification

- Thing or idea is given human attributes

Proverbs 4:6, 8 (speaking of wisdom)

Do not forsake **her**, and **she** will guard you;

Love **her**, and **she** will watch over you... Prize her, and **she will exalt you; She will honor you** if you embrace her.

Wisdom Literature

Word Pictures in Hebrew poetry

5. Personification

- Thing or idea is given human attributes

Psalms 96:11-12

Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice; Let the sea roar, and all it contains; Let the field exult, and all that is in it. Then all the trees of the forest will sing for joy...

Wisdom Literature

Word Pictures in Hebrew poetry

5. Personification

- Thing or idea is given human attributes

Job 12:7-8

But now ask the **beasts**, and let them **teach** you;
And the **birds** of the heavens, and let them **tell** you. Or
speak to the **earth**, and let it **teach** you;
And let the **fish** of the sea **declare** to you.

Wisdom Literature

Approach to Hebrew poetry

- Look past the repetition for the message. (especially psalms)
- Opening lines which often convey the writers intent
- Conflict needing resolution or call for justice or to faithful living may be key to message.
- Closing lines/renewed call to original focus or purpose

Wisdom Literature

Schedule

- Overview of the books other than Psalms
- Introduction to Psalms
- God in the Psalms
- God's lovingkindness for His covenant people
- Jesus (Messiah) in the Psalms
- Five "books" of the Psalms
- Topical studies