

Reading Wisdom Literature

Overview of wisdom

How can I become wise?

Ecc 12:11 *The words of the wise are like goads, their collected sayings like firmly embedded nails – given by one shepherd.*

Discuss

What bits do you enjoy?

How important are the wisdom books for you?

What difficulties do you have with wisdom books?

What is wisdom?

Proverbs 8

Job 28

‘Wisdom is part of the world’s structure. It is there to be found.’ Kirsten Birlett

Wisdom is to be desired

Proverbs 1:1-7

Proverbs 3:13-15

Wisdom can be learnt or taught, but its foundation is not knowledge.

Proverbs 2:1-11

Proverbs 3:5-7

Proverbs 14:26-27

Proverbs 28:14

Wisdom is not law

Proverbs 26:4-5

Wisdom is good for us

Ecc 7:11-12

Wisdom is descriptive and realistic

Proverbs 24:30-34

Proverbs 25:16-17

Proverbs 23:29-35

Wisdom is often given in form of a Proverb

Ecc 9:17- 10:4

Proverbs

1. They have an arresting and individually inspired form (the wit of one).
2. They have a wide appeal and endorsement (of many).
3. Their content comments itself to the hearer as true (wisdom).

Three additional common features of proverbs are:

1. They are usually short.
2. They are easy to remember.
3. They are most frequently transmitted orally.

The role of Wisdom

1. Evangelistic

Proverbs 9:1-6

2. Equips for everyday life.

Proverbs 10:4

Proverbs 10:19

Proverbs 11:13

Proverbs 12:10

The different books

Proverbs

Ecclesiastes

Song of Songs

Job

Psalms

The Psalms

What is your relationship to the Psalms?

When do you use the Psalms?

What are your favourite Psalms?

'The Psalms are never simply to be understood with the mind or the intellect. They are to be felt.' Christopher Ash

How Poetry in Hebrew works

Parallels

- repeats the same idea with new shades - synonymous parallelism
- continues or adds to the meaning of the first line - Synthetic parallelism
- the second line is the opposite or contrasting idea - Antithetic parallelism

Questions to ask of Hebrew poetry

What is the point of the first half?

What does the second half add, develop, or contrast?

What is the relationship between the two halves?

Read Psalm 1

The endings of the books of wisdom

Proverbs 31:10-31

Why does the book end this way?

For further thought

What do you think the benefits are of the wisdom books?

How can we help each other read them more?

How can we pass this wisdom on?

“A Proverb a day keeps the devil away”

Helpful resources

Job: Christopher Ash, *Out of the Storm*
(See also his larger commentary)

Proverbs: Kirsten Birkett, *Proverbs: The Hodder Bible Commentary*

Psalms: Christopher Ash, *Psalms for You*
(See also his 4 volume commentary series)

Ecclesiastes: David Gibson, *Living life backwards*
(See also *The Lord of Psalm 23*)

Song of Songs: Vaughan Roberts talks, Keswick Convention 2019.

<https://keswickministries.org/talk-search-results/?date=&type=0&narrator=Vaughan+Roberts&keyword=Song+>