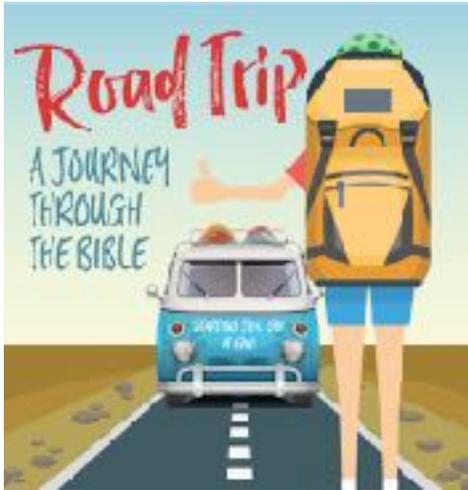


SESSION FOUR: “Feelings Finding Words”



- An Introduction to “The Writings”
- Introduction to the Poetic Books
- Job: What Is the Meaning of Faith?
- Psalms: “O Lord, How Majestic Is Your Name!”
- Proverbs: “Pursue Wisdom; Get Understanding”
- Ecclesiastes: “Everything Is Meaningless!”
- Song of Songs: “Your Love Is Sweeter than Wine”

AN INTRODUCTION TO “THE WRITINGS”

English Bibles and the Hebrews Scriptures differ on the classification of the Poetic Books. Our Poetic Books are within the Jewish genre known as “The Writings.”

English Bibles: Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Songs (Song of Solomon). The Writings are divided into three sections:

Poetry

Psalms
Proverbs
Job

The Five Scrolls

Song of Songs
Ruth
Lamentations
Ecclesiastes
Esther

Remaining Books

Daniel
Ezra-Nehemiah
1-2 Chronicles

THE POETIC BOOKS

By placing these books in this order of the Canon, they serve as a transition from the History Books to the Prophetic Books of the Old Testament.

Some Rabbis, while accepting the inspiration and authority of the Writings (and Poetic Books) regard them as less important than the Torah (first) and/or the Prophets (second).

The term “poetry” is used differently in the Hebrew Scriptures. English poetry is sound based (rhyming or lyrical). Hebrew poetry is thought and image based, with an emphasis on balance instead of cadence.

JOB: WHAT IS THE MEANING OF FAITH?

Timing: Likely set during the time of the Patriarchs, post-flood but before or during the times of Abraham

Author: Unknown. The book may be from an Edomite story originally, with Egyptian influences

Characters: Job, the main protagonist
Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar
Elihu

Themes: Theodicy and the existence of evil, Lex Talionis, Suffering, Perseverance

Key Verses: Job 1:21 - "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return there; the Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

Job 38:4-7 - "Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Tell me, if you know so much. Who determined its dimensions and stretched out the surveying line? What supports its foundations, and who laid its cornerstone as the morning stars sang together and all the angels shouted for joy?"

Job 42:3 - "Surely, I spoke of things I did not understand."

An Outline: The Prologue (1:1-2:13)
A Discussion Among Friends (3:1-31:40)
The Angry Young Man (32:1-37:24)
God Answers (38:1-41:34)
Job Responds (42:1-6)
Epilogue (42:7-17)

PSALMS: "O LORD, HOW MAJESTIC IS YOUR NAME!"

Timing: The Psalms were written over the long course of Israel's history, from the Exodus to the return of the Babylonian exiles

Author: There are multiple authors. Note:
David (73)
Asaph (12)
Sons of Korah (11)
Solomon (2)
Heman (1)
Ethan (1)
Moses (1)
The remainder are anonymous

Characters: David looms large in the Psalms, as would be expected (mentioned 84 times); there is an entire category of Psalms known as “Royal” Psalms specifically about him or his heirs

Themes: There are five major “types” of Psalms

Psalms of Lament (60+)
Psalms of Praise or Hymns (30+)
Psalms of Thanksgiving (30+)
Royal Psalms (16)
Torah Psalms (3)

Key Psalms: Psalm 1 - “He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season. His leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper.”

Psalm 23 - “The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.”

Psalm 46 - “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.”

Psalm 51 - “Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness...Blot out my transgressions.”

Psalm 90 - “So teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.”

Psalm 136 - “Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for He is good! His mercy endures forever.”

An Outline: Book 1 (Psalms 1-41)
Book 2 (Psalms 42-72)
Book 3 (Psalms 73-89)
Book 4 (Psalms 90-106)
Book 5 (Psalms 107-150)

PROVERBS: “PURSUE WISDOM, SEEK UNDERSTANDING!”

Timing: The majority of the Proverbs would have been chronicled under Solomon, but editorialized and collected as late as 300 BCE

Author: There are multiple - see the Outline below

Characters: Solomon, as primary author; “Sophia,” the personification of wisdom, the “fool”

Themes: Getting wisdom, the dangers of “leaving the path;” the contrast between wisdom and folly, the “fear of the Lord”

Key Verses: Proverbs 1:7 - "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction."

Proverbs 3:5-6 - "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths."

Proverbs 4:23 - "Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it."

Proverbs 14:12 - "There is a way that appears to be right, but in the end, it leads to death."

Proverbs 15:1 - "A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger."

Proverbs 31:10 - "A wife of noble character, who can find? She is worth far more than rubies."

An Outline: The Proverbs of Solomon, Book 1 (Proverbs 1:1-9:18)
The Proverbs of Solomon, Book 2 (Proverbs 10:1-22:16)
The Proverbs of the Wise (Proverbs 22:17-24:34)
The Proverbs of Solomon, Book 3 (Proverbs 25:1-29:27)
The Proverbs of Agur (Proverbs 30:1-33)
The Proverbs of King Lemuel (Proverbs 31:1-31)

ECCLESIASTES: "EVERYTHING IS MEANINGLESS!"

Timing: Traditionally ascribed to Solomon, late in his reign (c. 950 BCE)

Author: The "Preacher" or "Teacher" in Jerusalem, Son of David

Characters: See Themes below

Themes: Absurdity and futility; Mortality and time; Wisdom and foolishness

Key Verses: Ecclesiastes 1:2 - "Meaningless! Meaningless!" says the Teacher. "Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless."

Ecclesiastes 2:11 - "When I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve, everything was a chasing after the wind; nothing was gained under the sun."

Ecclesiastes 2:24-25 - "A person can do nothing better than to eat and drink and find satisfaction in their own toil. This too, I see, is from the hand of God, for without him, who can eat or find enjoyment?"

Ecclesiastes 3:1 - "There is a time for everything, and a season for every purpose under heaven."

Ecclesiastes 12:13 - "Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the duty of all."

An Outline: An Introduction to Meaninglessness (Ecclesiastes 1:1-2)
The Futility of Living, Effort, and Nature (Ecclesiastes 1:3-4:3)
The Life of Frustrated Wisdom (Ecclesiastes 4:4-6:12)
The Life of Wisdom (Ecclesiastes 7:1-9:16)
Epilogue (Ecclesiastes 9:17-12:14)

SONG OF SONGS: "YOUR LOVE IS SWEETER THAN WINE"

Timing: Written in the Northern Kingdom of Israel before the Assyrian destruction

Author: Unknown, though the writer uses Solomon's name; older English Bibles entitled the book "Song of Solomon," but modern translations do not

Characters: A Young Maiden
A Shepherd Boy
A Choir - The Daughters of Jerusalem

Themes: Love, Marriage, Sensuality

Key Verses: Song of Songs 2:1-2 - "I am the Rose of Sharon, the lily of the valley. Like a lily among thistles is my darling among young women."

Song of Songs 7:10 - "I am my beloved's, and his desire is for me."

Song of Songs 8:6-7 - "For love is as strong as death; many waters cannot quench love, nor can rivers drown it."

An Outline: Stanza One (Song of Songs 1:1-2:7)
Stanza Two (Song of Songs 2:8-3:5)
Stanza Three (Song of Songs 3:6-5:1)
Stanza Four (Song of Songs 5:2-6:3)
Stanza Five (Song of Songs 6:4-8:7)
Conclusion (Song of Songs 8:8-14)