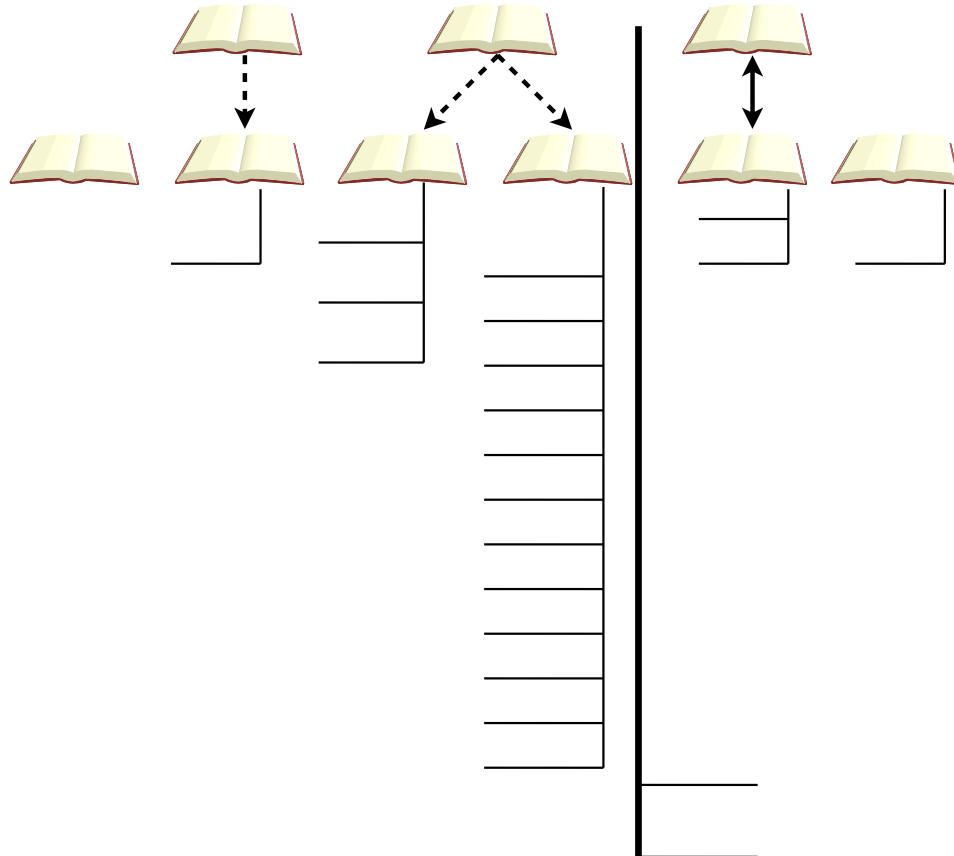


XV. UNIT 15: “Wise And Otherwise” – An Introduction to Wisdom Literature

I. Looking Back – The Monarchy:

II. “WISE AND OTHERWISE” – An Introduction to Wisdom Literature & Solomon’ Writings



A. Wising Up About Wisdom Literature

1. “Wisdom Literature” is NOT Unique to the Bible

a. Solomon’s wisdom is highlighted by _____, *not* uniqueness:

“And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding beyond measure, and breadth of mind like the sand on the seashore, so that Solomon’s wisdom surpassed the wisdom of all the people of the east and all the wisdom of Egypt.” –1 Kings 4:29-30

b. The Old Testament makes numerous references to “wise man” and “wise women”:

- (1) _____ speaks of the “wise princesses” living in Sisera’s hometown (Judges 5:29)
- (2) a “wise woman” from _____ gave counsel to King David (2 Sam. 14:2-20).
- (3) a “wise woman” of Abel gave counsel to _____ (2 Sam. 20:16-22).
- (4) Jeremiah speaks of “prophet, priest and sage” as types of people living in Judah (Jer. 18:18).

c. Archeological finds have revealed a wealth of wisdom literature in the Ancient Near East:

Location	Title	Description
Egypt	<i>The Instruction of Vizier Ptah-hotep</i>	Fifth Dynasty, (c. 2500-2350 B.C.); an aged counselor instructs his son on how he should conduct his life.
Egypt	<i>The Instruction for Merikare</i>	Tenth Dynasty, c. 2106-2100 B.C.); A pharaoh (apparently Khety III) initiates his son in the principles of proper and effective ruling. This text, reflecting the social turmoil of the First Intermediate period, asserts that Merikare must earn the respect of the nobles through just governance in order to maintain his hold on the throne.
Egypt	<i>The Protests of the Eloquent Peasant</i>	Oldest copy dates to the Twelfth Dynasty, (c. 1963-1786 B.C.); A peasant who has been defrauded of his goods pleads for justice from high officials, eventually winning his case and gaining a high position for himself. The text reflect upon the nature of justice and the importance of eloquent speech.
Egypt	<i>The Instruction of Amenemope</i>	Oldest copy dates to between the 10th and 6th centuries B.C.; This text, which is remarkably similar to Proverbs 22:17-24:22, includes an introduction and 30 sections of teaching on wise behavior.
Mesopotamia	<i>The Book of Ahiqar</i>	Found on a 5th century Aramaic papyrus but the setting is in Assyria and possibly composed originally in Akkadian.); This text describes how Ahiqar overcame the adversity of a scheming and ungrateful nephew, avoided execution on false charges and proved himself to be the wisest man of his age. The story was translated into Armenian and Arabic, and the apocryphal Book of Tobit alludes to it. The motif of the wise man who triumphs over adversity appears repeatedly in the Bible as well.
Mesopotamia	<i>The Babylonian Theodicy</i>	(c. 1100-1000 B.C.); A cynical sufferer enters into a dispute with a man who defends traditional notions of wisdom. The text originally included 27 stanzas each with 11 lines but not all remain intact. This writing is often compared to Job; there are in fact both clear similarities and sharp differences between the two.

2. Types of Wisdom Literature in the Ancient Near East

a. “_____” wisdom — monologues, dialogues, essays and epics about basic problems of human existence:

- (1) the _____ of life
- (2) the problem of _____
- (3) the path to success

*“My god has forsaken me and disappeared
 My goddess has failed me and keeps at a distance
 The benevolent angel who (walked) beside [me] has departed.
 My protecting spirit has taken to flight, and is seeking someone else.
 My strength is gone; my appearance has become gloomy;
 My dignity has flown away, my protection made off.” (Ludlul Bel Nemeqi, 1.43-48)*

*“Behold, I go forward, but he is not there, and backward, but I do not perceive him;
 on the left hand when he is working, I do not behold him;
 he turns to the right hand, but I do not see him.*

G E T T I N G T H E B I G P I C T U R E

*But he knows the way that I take;
when he has tried me, I shall come out as gold.” (Job 23:8-10)*

- b. “_____ wisdom” — short, pithy sayings which state rules for general happiness or distill life principles:

“Do not associate to thyself the heated man, nor visit him for conversation...”

(Teaching of Amenemope, XI.12-14; XV.13-14)

“A man who bears false witness against his neighbor is like a war club, or a sword, or a sharp arrow.”

(Proverbs 25:18)

3. The Key Characteristics of Wisdom Literature

- a. It dealt with the concrete and _____, not the _____ and theoretical.
- b. Was typically _____, not exclusive, in its intended audience.
- c. Was as much the heart of an _____ culture as the “fruit” of it.

4. Uniqueness of Biblical Wisdom Literature

- a. It emanated *from* its _____ but did not shape it.

Biblical Wisdom Literature	Other Near Eastern Wisdom Literature
Education is centered in the family (“listen, my son...”) and has the good of the individual in view.	Greek education was centered in the gymnasium and had the good of the city-state in view.
Education is directed primarily at moral and spiritual virtue rather than merely training for vocational success.	Some wisdom texts from Egypt are principally concerned with preparing a young man for work in the government or as a scribe.
Education in Proverbs does NOT focus on any one “class” of people, especially the upper or ruling class. It’s focus is all the young men (and women) of the Israelite community.	Egyptian literature, was for the most part, directed toward the elite.
Wisdom is often personified, but never deified.	Wisdom is often represented as a god or goddess (E.g. Maat in Egyptian mythology)
Education in Proverbs begins with “fear of the LORD” as both the source and ultimate goal of all wisdom. It begins and ends with Yahweh, because HE is their reason to exist.	There is no parallel to this in any ANE wisdom literature.

adapted from: *Archeological Study Bible*, p. 495

- b. It was founded on “the fear of the LORD”:
- (1) this was a synonym for _____ (cf. 2 Chron. 19:9; Job 28:28; Prov. 8:13).
 - (2) it links wisdom to the _____, and therefore to the Law.
 - (3) for Israel, “wisdom” was understanding and living within the circumference of the stipulations of the covenant

III. The “Writings of Solomon” — Proverbs, Song of Songs and Ecclesiastes

A. Authorship

1. All three books _____ to be written by Solomon (*directly or indirectly*).
2. The books are consistent with the _____ of Solomon given to us in _____. (cf. 1 Kgs. 3:1-28; 4:29-33; 10:1-13).

B. PROVERBS – Background

1. Three times in the book of Proverbs, Solomon is clearly stated to be the _____ (Prov 1:1; 10:1; 25:1).
2. The Book of _____ is clearly an “_____” of worship _____, designed to draw the individual or the whole community into honest _____ with God, Proverbs is more of a “_____” schooling young men (and women) on right _____.
3. The Proverbs are *not* _____ or _____. Instead they are “_____ truths” that must be carefully weighed against the _____ and the type of _____ they are describing. For example:

*“Answer **not** a fool according to his folly, lest you be like him yourself.” – Prov. 26:4*

*“Answer a fool **according** to his folly, lest he be wise in his own eye.” – Prov. 26:5*
4. Biblical wisdom literature is very similar to other Ancient Near Eastern writings, such as the *Teaching of Amenemope* from around 1000 BC:

The Proverbs of Solomon	The Teaching of Amenemope
<i>“Incline your ear and hear my words, and apply your mind to my teaching.” (Prov. 2:2)</i>	<i>“Give thy ears, hear what is said, Give thy heart to understand them. To put them in thy heart is worth while...” (ch I)</i>
<i>“Do not remove the ancient landmark that your ancestors set up... Do not remove an ancient landmark or encroach on the fields of orphans...” (Prov. 22:28;23:10)</i>	<i>“Do not carry off the landmark at the boundaries of the arable land, nor disturb the position of the measuring-cord; be not greedy after a cubit of land, nor encroach upon the boundaries of a widow...” (VII. 11-14)</i>
<i>“Do not wear yourself out to get rich; be wise enough to desist. When your eyes light upon it, it is gone, for suddenly it takes wings to itself, flying like an eagle toward heaven...” (Prov. 23:4-5)</i>	<i>“Do not strain to seek an excess, when thy needs are safe for thee if riches are brought to thee by robbery, they will not spend the night with thee; At daybreak they are not in thy house: Their places may be seen, but they are not. The ground has opened its mouth... that it might swallow them up, and might sink them into the underworld. (Or) they have made themselves a great breach of their (own) size and are sunken down into the underworld. (Or) they have made themselves wings like geese and are flown away to the heavens...” (X.4-5)</i>
<i>“Make no friends with those given to anger, and do not associate with hotheads...” (Prov. 22:24-25)</i>	<i>“Do not associate to thyself the heated man, nor visit him for conversation...” (XI.12-14; XV.13-14)</i>
<i>“Do not eat the bread of the stingy; do not desire their delicacies; for like a hair in the throat, so are they... You will vomit up the little you have eaten, and you will waste your pleasant words.” (Prov. 23:6-8)</i>	<i>“Be not greedy for the property of a poor man, nor hunger for his bread. As for the property of a poor man, it (is) a blocking to the throat... The mouthful of bread (too) great thou swallowest and vomitest up, and art emptied of thy goods...” (XV.9-12)</i>
<i>“When you sit down to eat with a ruler, observe carefully what is before you, and put a knife to your throat if you have a big appetite. Do not desire the ruler’s delicacies, for they are deceptive foods.” (Prov. 23:1-3)</i>	<i>“Do not eat bread before a noble, nor lay on thy mouth at first. If thou art satisfied with false chewings, they are a pastime for thy spittle. Look at the cup which is before thee, and let it serve thy needs...” (XXIII. 13-20)</i>

The Proverbs of Solomon	The <i>Teaching of Amenemope</i>
<p><i>“Have I not written for you thirty sayings of admonition and knowledge, to show you what is right and true, so that you may give a true answer to those who sent you?” (Prov. 22:20-21)</i></p>	<p><i>“See thou these thirty chapters: They entertain, they instruct: they are the foremost of all books; they make the ignorant to know. If they are read out before the ignorant, then he will be cleansed by them.” (XXX)</i></p>

C. PROVERBS – Purpose of the Book

1. This is the only book in the Bible that was _____ specifically for _____ (i.e. the young).
2. The stated purpose of this book is to help children “_____” all of life from God’s _____ of _____. This perspective is called “_____,” and it is based on what Proverbs calls, “the _____ of the Lord.”
3. The responsibility of instruction in the “*fear of the LORD*” (i.e. wisdom) within the covenant community, fell to the _____, particularly the _____ (cf. Prov. 1:8,10,15; 2:1; 3:1; 4:1-4; 5:1; 6:1, 20; 23:22; 7:1; 23:26)
4. The purpose of the Book of Proverbs is given in the first seven verses: “...*gaining wisdom*”
 - a. **1:2** - Wisdom is not “_____”; it must be _____.
 - b. **1:3** - Wisdom has to do with _____, not just “_____.”
 - c. **1:4** - Wisdom is actually “_____” for the _____.
 - d. **1:5** - Wisdom is _____, it should keep growing (One may *know* too much, but one can never be “too wise”)
 - e. **1:7-8** - Wisdom can be _____ or embraced; kept or _____.

SUMMARY: Wisdom can be _____ and learned. Unlike _____, one is not born with it, or endowed with it by God. It can be, and must be, _____.

5. The Book of Proverbs covers an extremely wide range of _____, including:
 - *wisdom & folly*
 - *words & speech*
 - *the family*
 - *parents & children*
 - *servants & rulers*
 - *friends & friendships*
 - *rich & poor (51x)*
 - *laziness & diligence*
 - *fear of God*
 - *righteous & the wicked*
 - *planning & decisions*
 - *anger & self-control*

D. ECCLESIASTES – The “Journal” of Solomon’s Journey Away From God

1. The opening verse of the book fits the description of _____ that we have from the book of 1 Kings.
2. The Hebrew word, (קֹהֶלֶת *Qoheleth*), translated “_____” in our NIV Bibles, only _____ in this book, out of the entire Old Testament. (cf. 1:1,2,12; 7:27; 12:8-10)
3. In the _____ version of the Old Testament, a word is used to translate it (εκκλησιαστου, *ekklesiastou*), from which we get our _____ for the book, “Ecclesiastes.”
4. The word “_____” appears over 6,800 times in the Old Testament, 87x in Proverbs, but never in Ecclesiastes. “_____” is used instead.
5. Unlike Proverbs, which was written for “*anyman*,” this book appears to have been written for the _____ elite. (cf. 8:2-3; 10:4).
6. The book of Ecclesiastes is the “_____” of King Solomon’s journey to find an answer to life’s most penetrating _____, “What’s the _____?”:

“What does man gain by all the toil at which he toils under the sun?” (Ecc. 1:3, ESV)

7. Solomon tried to find _____ in life, “*under the sun*” (in other words, without _____), by looking in all the _____ places:

“Then I considered all that my hands had done and the toil I had expended in doing it, and behold, all was vanity and a striving after wind, and there was nothing to be gained under the sun.” (Ecclesiastes 2:11, ESV)

8. **Solomon’s “Dead End” Streets on His Quest For Happiness “Under the Sun”:**

Reference	The “Street” Solomon Traveled
2:15-16	wisdom – what he _____
2:19-21	work – what he could _____ “under the sun”
2:26	money – what he could _____ that others couldn’t
4:4	status – what others _____ of him
4:7-8	self-reliance – how little he needed _____
4:16	fame – how much he was _____ by others
5:10	possessions – what he _____ & what it “_____”
6:6	long life – prolonging the _____
6:7	partying – “forgetting” life’s _____, with others
6:9	passion/desire – doing what “_____ good”

9. Solomon finally realized that he could not separate _____ purposes *for* him from his own _____ for himself:

“The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil.” (Ecclesiastes 12:13,14, ESV)

10. Solomon realized the truth of 2 Kings 17:15, that we become like what we _____:

*“They rejected His statutes and His covenant which He made with their fathers and His warnings with which He warned them. **And they followed vanity and became vain**, and went after the nations which surrounded them, concerning which the LORD had commanded them not to do like them.”*

E. Song of Songs

1. This piece of Scripture stands alone in its _____ and characteristics:
 - a. No other book of the Bible has been _____ so differently from one age to the next.
 - b. It was a “_____ book” in Medieval times; excommunication was threatened!
 - c. The name of _____ is never mentioned (like Esther)
 - d. It contains references to 21 species of plants, 15 species of animals and 15 different geographical locations (including Tirzah in the North and Jerusalem in the South)
 - e. It contains a multitude of descriptions of human anatomy and love-making
 - f. Jewish allegorists see it describing the covenant “marriage” of _____ and Israel.
 - g. Christian allegorists see it describing the covenant “marriage” of Jesus Christ and the Church.
 - h. It comes close to a portrait of sexual love prior to the _____ (the “garden” is a key theme in this book.)

F. Wisdom Literature and the _____ Testament

1. Ecclesiastes and Song of Solomon are never _____ in our New Testament.
2. There are six clear citations from Proverbs in our NT:

Romans 12:20.....*Proverbs 25:11-12*
Hebrews 12:5-6*3:11-12*
James 4:6*3:34*
1 Peter 4:18*11:31*
1 Peter 5:5*3:34*
2 Peter 2:22*26:11*

3. The Book of _____ is wisdom literature (It's also most likely the first NT book penned.)

G. Solomon and the Christian

1. Proverbs and Ecclesiastes from the same pen, testify that our biggest battles are _____, not intellectual. (“*Wisdom doesn’t make me bullet-proof!*” – Dr. Allen Ross)
2. Ecclesiastes is a sobering reminder in an _____ culture.
3. The _____ is the place where wisdom is most effectively taught because it has to do with how to *live*, not how to _____ a *living*.
4. The Song of Solomon is a sobering reminder of how much of our view of sexual love is shaped by _____ rather than Scripture.

KEY INFORMATION – THE WRITINGS OF SOLOMON

Item	Proverbs	Song of Songs	Ecclesiastes
Key Word			
Key Idea			

THE BOOKS OF ECCLESIASTES AND SONG OF SONGS

Arguments <i>Against</i> Solomonic Authorship	Arguments <i>in Favor</i> of Solomonic Authorship
The author of Proverbs uses “Yahweh” 87x and “Elohim” 5x but the author of Ecclesiastes uses “Elohim” 40x and never uses “Yahweh.” (<i>Song of Songs never mentions God!</i>).	Scholars now know that <i>Aramaic</i> influence of Hebrew is much older than Solomon, and what has been considered <i>Aramaic</i> here may in fact be an unusual dialect of Hebrew.
There appear to be a high number of <i>Aramaic</i> words in Ecclesiastes, leading some to posit a <i>postexilic</i> date.	These words are actually <i>older</i> that Persian or Greek, going back to Sanskrit. Also, Solomon’s numerous international trade agreements would have certainly put him in contact with other languages and cultures, and given him something of an “international vocabulary.”
Some words in both books are allegedly said to be borrowed from Persian or Greek (cf. “park,” “orchard,” “carriage” in Ecc. 2:5; SS 4:13; 3:9).	This statement can just as easily be interpreted to be a “retrospective” statement such as, “ <i>I have been king over Israel.</i> ”
The “Teacher” of Ecclesiastes says of himself, “ <i>I, the Teacher, was king over Israel.</i> ” (1:12) is seen as evidence that the author was no longer the king.	We must remind ourselves that Jerusalem (aka <i>Salem</i> and <i>Jebus</i>) had a long history of kings “before” Solomon (e.g. Melchizedek was one, and the Jebusites before David had kings as well).
The statement, “ <i>I have grown and increased in wisdom more than anyone who has ruled over Jerusalem before me.</i> ” is understood to point to a time when there had been many Judahite kings.	The books (especially <i>Song</i>) contain copious references to flora and fauna of the region, which is consistent with Solomon’s keen interest in natural sciences (cf. 1 Kg 4:33).
	The author of <i>Song</i> was very familiar with exotic spices, vegetation, gold, alabaster, and jewels. This is a lifestyle consistent with Solomon’s excessive tastes. It also points to a time in Jerusalem’s history characterized by wealth, leisure, and peace. The tiny little settlement which was Judah <i>after</i> the exile hardly fits this description.
	<i>Song</i> mentions the city of Tirzah in parallel with Jerusalem seems to reflect a time <i>before</i> Tirzah was selected as the early capital of the Northern kingdom, sometime after Solomon’s death. Also, the city of Tirzah did <i>not</i> exist after the exile, when many thing these books were composed.
	Both books speak without qualification, of locations like En Gedi, Jerusalem, Heshbon, Carmel, and Hermon, and others suggests a time <i>prior</i> to the divided kingdom of 931 B.C.

Adapted from, “The Authorship of Ecclesiastes and Song of Songs,” in *The Archaeology Study Bible*, page 1021.