

## Wisdom Literature II

Proverbial Wisdom—Sayings of Solomon, Especially the Antithetical Collection; Sayings of Agur; Ode to a Capable Wife. Retribution Theology and the Alternate View of Ecclesiastes; Introduction to Job.

Proverbs 10–15, 29–31; Ecclesiastes 1–5, 7:15, 8–9, 11–12.

### Proverbial Wisdom in Proverbs 10–31

- Above all, characterized by **retribution theology**
  - God **punishes the wicked** and **rewards the righteous with long life and prosperity**
  - Divides humanity into two groups: **the wise (righteous)** and **the foolish (wicked)**
- Examples (see Bandstra, 428)
  - **Industry and laziness** (10:4)
  - **Rich and poor** (10:15)
  - **The righteous and the wicked** (10:30)
  - **Humility and pride** (11:2)
  - **Wisdom and folly** (16:22)

## Structure of Proverbs 10–31

single sentence statements (in 2 or 3 lines) arranged in more-or-less random order

- **Proverbs of Solomon (10:1–24:34)**
  - **Proverbs which contrast righteous and wicked lives (10:1–15:33; the antithetical collection)**
  - Proverbs which encourage godly lives (16:1–22:16; The “Royal” Collection, more thematic with synonymous parallelism)
  - Sayings of the Wise (22:17–24:22; intended to educate, either real children or more probably young civil servants for court)
    - Proverbs which concern various practices (22:17–23:25)
    - Proverbs which concern various people (24:1–34)
- **Proverbs of Solomon Copied by Hezekiah’s Men (25:1–29:27; 110 lines = number of Hezekiah’s name)**
  - Proverbs concerning relationships with others (25:1–26:28)
- Kings (25:1–7)
- Neighbors (25:8–20)
- Enemies (25:21–24)
- Yourself (25:25–26:2)
- Fools (26:3–12)
- Sluggards (26:13–16)
- Gossips (26:17–28)
- Proverbs concerning actions (27:1–29:27)
  - Life (27:1–27)
  - Law (28:1–10)
  - Wealth (28:11–28)
  - **Stubbornness (29:1–27)**
- **Words of Agur (30:1–33)**
  - Personal words (30:1–14)
  - **Numerical proverbs (30:15–33)**
- **Words of King Lemuel, as taught by his mother (31:1–9)**
  - **Ode to a Capable Wife (31:10–31)**

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## Ecclesiastes

- Hebrew title: **Qoheleth**, perhaps “teacher in the assembly”
  - Title for the character or narrator, whom the later title (1:1) identifies as the son of David, king in Jerusalem
    - As always, because of wisdom associations, he is identified as Solomon
  - Greek translation: *ekklēsiastēs*, “assembly man,” gives the English title
- Despite the Solomonic literary posture, **the text seems to be late**
  - Contains Aramaic words and the Hebrew itself is late
  - **Persian loanwords date it after 539 B.C.**
- **Posture or philosophies**
  - An **utter realist** who **nevertheless will not forsake God** (always Elohim, never YHWH)
  - **Somewhat gloomy about the prospect for an afterlife**
    - **Vanity = “emptiness”** (breath metaphor, “chasing after wind”)
    - everything from **an earthly perspective**, “**under the sun**”
  - **Wisdom comes from understanding the limits and contradictions of life**
  - **Embrace life and its goods as gifts from God** (some similarity to Greek Epicureanism)
- Ecclesiastes serves as **a control or a balance on the sometimes naïve retribution theology of Proverbs**

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## Structure of Ecclesiastes

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- **Title (1:1)**
- **Opening Frame and Thesis: Vanity of Vanities (1:2–3)**
- The Thesis Demonstrated (1:4–2:26)
- God's Design for Life (3:1–22)
- The Futility of the Various Circumstances (4:1–5:20)
- The Futility of Riches (6:1–12)
- Counsel for Living (7:1–12:7)
- **Closing Frame and Thesis Restatement: Vanity of Vanities (12:8)**
- **Epilogue (12:9–14)**
  - **First Conclusion (12:9–12, disciple affirms Qohelet's wisdom)**
  - **Second Conclusion (12:13–14; final editor's conservative summary)**

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## Demonstration of the Thesis that All Is Vanity (1:4–2:26)

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- Futility of the cycles of life (1:4–11)
- Futility of Human wisdom (1:12–18)
- Futility of pleasure, wealth, and self-indulgence (2:1–11)
- Futility of materialism (2:12–23)
- **Conclusion: enjoy and be content with the providences of God (2:24–26)**
  - “*There is nothing better for a man, than that he should eat and drink, and that he should make his soul enjoy good in his labour. This also I saw, that it was from the hand of God.*” (2:24)

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## God's Design for Life (3:1–22)

- **God gives life's order of events** (3:1–8)
  - “To every *thing there is* a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven . . .”
- **Nevertheless God's Work is Inscrutable** (3:9–11)
- **Still God gives the good gifts of life** (3:12–13)
- **Judgment and the Future Belong to God** (3:14–21)
- **Conclusion** (3:22)
  - “Wherefore I perceive that *there is* nothing better, than that a man should rejoice in his own works; for that *is* his portion: for who shall bring him to see what shall be after him?”

## The Futility of the Various Circumstances (4:1–5:20)

- Oppression (4:1–3)
- Work (4:4–8)
- **The Value of a friend** (4:9–12)
- Political Success (4:13–16)
- **Insincere Worship** (5:1–7)
  - “Keep thy foot [guard your steps] when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear, than to give the sacrifice of fools: for they consider not that they do evil. Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter *any* thing before God . . .” (5:1–2)
  - “When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it . . . **Better is it that thou shouldst not vow, than that thou shouldst vow and not pay.**” (5:4–5)
- **Hoarded riches** (5:8–17)
  - “As he came forth of his mother's womb, naked shall he return to go as he came, and shall take nothing of his labour, which he may carry away in his hand.” (7:15)
- **Conclusion** (5:18–20)

## Counsel for Living (7:1–12:8)

- Disillusioned view of life (7:1–14)
- The riddles of life (7:15–29)
  - **Against retribution theology:** “All things have I seen in the days of my vanity: *there is a just man that perisheth in his righteousness, and there is a wicked man that prolongeth his life in his wickedness.*” (7:15)
- Obey the king and enjoy yourself (8:1–9)
- **God’s ways are inscrutable (8:10–17)**
  - **Again against retribution theology:** “There is a vanity which is done upon the earth; that *there be just men, unto whom it happeneth according to the work of the wicked*; again, *there be wicked men, to whom it happeneth according to the work of the righteous*: I said that this also is vanity.” (8:14)
- **Take life as it comes (9:1–12)**
  - “Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart; for God now accepteth thy works . . . *Live joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest all the days of the life of thy vanity . . .*” (9:7–9; cf. Proverbs 5:18)
  - “Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for **there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest**. I returned, and saw under the sun, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill; but time and chance happeneth to them all.” (9:10–11)

## In Conclusion . . .

- **Closing Frame: Vanity of Vanities** (12:8, original ending, balances 1:2--3)
- **Epilogue** (12:9–14; added to original text)
  - First Conclusion (12:9–12, disciple affirms Qohelet's wisdom)
  - Second Conclusion (12:13–14; final editor's conservative summary)
    - “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: **Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.**” (12:13–14)

# The Book of Job

- **The problem of dating**
  - The character and his setting are early (patriarchal)
  - The text is late (probably the Persian era)
  - Job 19:26 quoted by 2 Nephi 9:4 (c. 559–545 B.C.)?
    - The final text could be a reworking of earlier material
- **Job's historicity**
  - Ezekiel 14:14, 20; James 5:11; D&C 121:10
- **Genre**
  - **A didactic (teaching) poem in a prose framework**
- **Themes**
  - Understanding suffering, particularly as it afflicts the righteous
  - The possibility of "disinterested righteousness"
  - Being able to trust God, even when not able to understand
- **Job and other wisdom literature**
  - Proverbs vs. Job: "and intercanonical dialogue on retribution theology"
  - Development: Dtr > Proverbs > Ecclesiastes > Job
- **Tensions**
  - Prose and poetry
  - Patient and yet defiant hero
  - YHWH in prose; El, Eloah, and El Shaddai in poetry

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# Overview of Job

- **Narrative Prologue: Disasters of Job (1:1–2:13)**
  - Job and his Family Circumstances (1:1–5)
  - Job's Calamities (1:6–2:10)
  - Job's Comforters (2:11–13)
- **Poetic Core: Dialogues with Job (3:1–42:6)**
  - Job's Lament: he curses the day he was born (3:1–26)
  - First Cycle: Job alternates with Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar (3:1–14:22)
  - Second Cycle: Job alternates with Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar (15:1–21:34)
  - Third Cycle: Job alternates with Eliphaz and Bildad (22:1–26:14; Zophar's third speech missing)
  - Job maintains his integrity (27:1–31:40)
  - Elihu's Speeches (32:1–37:24; a later insertion?)
- **Poetic Theophany: God's Speeches (38:1–42:6)**
- **Narrative Epilogue: Deliverance of Job (42:7–17)**

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