

## Lesson 4: The Poetic Books

OT503 OA/OB Reading the Old Testament-David Emanuel

By Brooke Witterman

- I read the books of Job for 2 hours.
- I read 100% of the assigned reading carefully and took notes from it.
- I watched all the videos from Hill and Watson and the Bible Project.

There are five Poetic books in the Old Testament and they are almost entirely made up of poems, songs and wise sayings. While the Historical books were focused on the nation of Israel these books are concerned with individuals and the human heart and relates to Israel's spiritual life. This section of the Bible looks at questions about love, wisdom, suffering and the characteristics of who God is. It also looks at practical, daily living and the relationships people have with each other. These books show us the nature of God, help us better understand his love for us and the purposes that he has for our lives. These are messages that can be easily applied to our lives today.

In the book of Job we find that we can trust God's wisdom when we are suffering rather than looking for the reason for our suffering. If we search for reasons, we like Job's friends, will simplify God or, like Job, accuse God with limited evidence. The main theme of the book of Psalms is God's kingship. The book reveals to us how God's kingship works in the world and how we acknowledge that kingship. We find the book of Proverbs to be a book on wisdom, understanding and discernment. This wisdom is to be passed along to the next generation. In the book of Ecclesiastes we find the idea that we should not expect all to go right, but we are to enjoy a God-centered life and should accept the good and the adversity as well. Fullness of life

is found in God alone. In Song of Songs we find a book focused on the virtue of the human love of a man and a woman. It shows the goodness and rightness of physical love. This book reflects back to the garden of Eden and shows men and women are made in God's image and marriage is ordained by God.

When reading Job and studying the details, an interesting principle that was at work was the retribution principle, which says that the righteous prosper while the wicked suffer. This principle is seen in some of the other Poetic books as well. I wrongly thought that Job was the one on trial, but I now have come to see that what was actually on trial was God's principles and policies. This is good to keep in mind as we look at how Job's three friends wanted to say that Job was wicked and that was why he is suffering, which we find is not truth at all.

A question that might be good to research further would be, in looking at the book of Job, "Are God's policies flawed?" It would be helpful to look at the details of God's character that are unveiled to Job at the end of the book and how we can apply them to our lives. Another question to study further from the Poetic books would be looking at the Psalms and asking, "How do confused people's prayers in the Psalms become words in which we can hear God speaking into our own lives?" Finally, another question that I was thinking about was the comparison of the book of Proverbs to the words from Micah 6:8 – "And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God."