

Biblical Wisdom

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Mondays, 7:30 p.m. October 2 - November 6

The Wisdom books, Proverbs, Qoheleth and Job, constitute as distinct category in the Hebrew Bible. They make no claim of divine revelation, and they barely refer to the history of Israel, and show little interest in history at all. The predominant literary form is direct address, but they lack the passionate hortatory tone of the Prophets. Proverbs especially resembles instructional literature for other parts of the ancient Near East, especially Egypt.

The later Wisdom books of Ben Sira and the Wisdom of Solomon, which are regarded as “deuterocanonical” in the Catholic tradition and Apocryphal by Protestants, differ from the earlier ones insofar as they do address the history of Israel and use it as a source of examples. The Wisdom of Solomon was written in Greek around the time of Christ and is influenced by Greek philosophy

Syllabus

1. October 2. What is wisdom? Illustrations from Proverbs 10–31.
1 Kings 3–14; 4:29ff. Proverbs 23 –27; 30:1–4.
2. October 9. Wisdom instructions in Proverbs 1–9; 31.
3. October 16. Skeptical wisdom. Qoheleth or Ecclesiastes.
Read chaps 1–3; 9, 12.
4. October 23. Job and the problem of theodicy.
Read the Prologue, chaps 8–9, 13, 38–42.
5. October 30. Ben Sira. Wisdom and the Law.
Read the prologue, chaps. 15 and 17; 24–26; 39–42.
6. November 6. Wisdom of Solomon. Wisdom and Hellenistic Culture.
Read Wisdom 1:1– 3:9; 7:22–8:1; 10; 13.

Bibliography

The essential readings for the course are the biblical and deuterocanonical books. The bibliography is provided as a resource for those who want to read further.

See also.

<https://yalebiblestudy.org/courses/wisdom-literature/lessons/what-is-wisdom-literature-further-reading/>.

General

- S. L. Adams and M. J. Goff, eds., *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Wisdom Literature* (Hoboken, N. J.: Wiley, 2020).
- J. J. Collins, *Introduction to the Hebrew Bible* (3rd ed.; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2016).
- J. J. Collins, *Jewish Wisdom in the Hellenistic Age* (Louisville: Westminster, 1997).
- J. L. Crenshaw, *Old Testament Wisdom: An Introduction*. Old Testament Library. (Louisville: Westminster, 2010).
- W. Kynes, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Wisdom and the Bible* (New York: Oxford, 2021).
- G. von Rad, *Wisdom in Israel* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1972).

Commentaries

Proverbs:

- R. J. Clifford, *Proverbs*. OTL (Louisville: Westminster, 1999).
- M. Fox, *Proverbs 1–9*. Anchor (NY: Doubleday, 2000).
- M. Fox, *Proverbs 10–31*. Anchor (New Haven: Yale, 2009).

Qoheleth

- J. L. Crenshaw, *Ecclesiastes*. OTL (Louisville: Westminster, 1987)
- C. L. Seow, *Ecclesiastes*. Anchor (NY: Doubleday, 1997)/

Job

- C. A. Newsom, “Job,” *New Interpreter’s Bible* 4:319–637.
- C.-L. Seow, *Job 1–21*. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013).

Ben Sira

- P. W. Skehan and A. A. DiLella, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira*. Anchor (Garden City: Doubleday, 1987)

Wisdom of Solomon

- D. Winston, *The Wisdom of Solomon*. Anchor (Garden City: Doubleday, 1979).