

Instituto Teológico
LA GRAN COMISIÓN

51 Marshall Street
Paterson, New Jersey, 07501



**POETIC AND WISDOM
BOOKS OF THE BIBLE**

Student Manual

AIMS Institute
American Institute for Multicultural Studies
Training & Transforming Lives

POETIC AND WISDOM BOOKS OF THE BIBLE

Course Code
BI-105

Syllabus

Course: Poetic and Wisdom Books of the Bible

Course Code

BI-105

Requirement for candidates to an Associate Degree in Pastoral Theology

Pre-required courses

1. Introduction to the Bible
2. The Old Testament

Sources of material

The following sources have been consulted and utilized as auxiliary texts in preparing this manual: *Poetic and Wisdom Books* by Efrén C. Olivares; *Libros Poéticos y Sapienciales* by Diego Pérez Gondar and Gonzalo Aranda Pérez; *Libros Poéticos de la Biblia* by Instituto Bíblico Ministerial; and *La Biblia Griega: Libros Poéticos y Sapienciales*, Spanish edition (2013) by Natalio Fernández Marcos.

Aranda Pérez, G., and Pérez, Gondar, D., *Libros Poéticos y Sapienciales* (2017),
Fernández N. M., *La Biblia Griega: Libros Poéticos y Sapienciales*, edición en español (2013)
Olivares, E. C., *The Poetic and Wisdom Books* (2016)
Libros Poéticos de la Biblia <https://institutobiblicoministerial.com>

Educational objectives:

1. Understand the most outstanding teachings of poetic and sapiential books.
2. Summarize the themes and purposes of each book, through a synthetic study of Job, Ecclesiastes, and Songs, an analysis and notes of each psalm, and a systematic development of the great themes found in Proverbs.
3. Learn to use the corresponding exegetical rules to perform a correct hermeneutic of Jewish poetry.

Instructive objectives:

1. Acquire general and practical knowledge about Jewish poetry and wisdom and each lesson applicable to our context.
2. Contrast the positive and negative actions of each character in relation to God.
3. Properly use the principles or lessons shown in each of the books.

Practical Objectives

1. Participate in four (4) in-person classes and four (4) virtual classes.
2. Complete a quiz for each class
3. Complete homework and extra assignments as directed by the professor.
4. Write a 500-word essay about the impact of the course in your life.

Grade Rationale

Attendance 10 pts.

Participation 10 pts.

Quizzes 64 pts (8 per lesson)

Essay 16 pts.

Scale

A 90-100 pts.

B. 79-89 pts

POETIC AND WISDOM BOOKS OF THE BIBLE

C. 69-78 pts.

All assignments must be submitted on time. If the student is unable to submit an assignments on time, they must contact the teacher immediately for approval.

Policy of late submission

Late by less than a week: 5% deduction in grade

Late by more than a week: 10% deduction in grade

Assignments not submitted during the term of the course will not be accepted, except in special circumstances (ei. death in the family, health issues, etc.) to be considered, on a case-by-case basis by approval of the teacher.

Course Content

The course is divided into eight lessons, each with a topic to develop and a test of acquired knowledge, to be taken upon completion of the lesson.

Lesson # 1 – What are the Poetic and Sapiential Books of the Bible?

Lesson # 2 - Where do they come from and why are they included in the Bible?

Lesson # 3 – The book of Job

Lesson # 4 – Psalms

Lesson # 5- Proverbs

Lesson # 6 - Ecclesiastes

Lesson # 7 – The Song of Songs

Lesson # 8- What do we learn from the Poetic or Sapiential Books?

Code of Honor

The Great Commission Theological Institute operates based on a Code of Honor shared by the Great Commission Church, board of directors, administration, faculty, and students. This code, a reflection of our doctrinal values, defines the principles by which we are governed. Two essential concepts stand out: God is the source of life, redemption, and value as His creatures; and our task is to reflect His glory in behavior and works.

Although we understand that some may differ with some elements of the Honor Code, we expect our students and faculty to commit to respecting and abiding by the Honor Code of the Great Commission Theological Institute. Adherence to these established principles and precepts, facilitates the success of our students and strengthens the institute.

INTRODUCTION

The Hebrew Bible presents, after the law and the prophets (see Introduction to the Bible), the section called the writings (heb. ketubim). It includes works of various literary genres: there are narrative and historical books (Ruth, 1 and 2 chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther), prophetic (Daniel), and poetic (Psalms, Song of Songs, Lamentations, Job, Proverbs and Ecclesiastes).

In fact, in these books the literary genres intermingle: Many sections of the prophetic books have poetic characteristics (Isaiah 40–55), as do some sections of the Pentateuch (Gen. 49:2–27; Ex 15.2-18,21) on the characteristics of Hebrew poetry.

In poetic literature, various genres of literature are also mixed. Among them, the sapiencial (from the Latin "sapientia", meaning "wisdom"), represented by the books of Job, Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, as well as some psalms and some sections of other books, occupies a prominent place.

The wisdom that these didactic writings try to instill has an eminently practical character. The most important thing is to know how to live, that is, to behave properly in the different circumstances of life and to correctly perform the role that corresponds to each one within the community.

Just as the good craftsman possesses the manual "wisdom" that allows him to work wood, forge metals, set precious stones or weave beautiful fabrics (Ex 35:31-35), so the sage has the skill, sharpness and qualities necessary to successfully face all the contingencies of life.

This wisdom is God's gift and the fruit of experience and reflection. To act wisely it is necessary to have a clear notion of the world in which one lives, and everyday experience is an inexhaustible source of wisdom for those who have their eyes open and do not indulge in their ignorance. Therefore, the sage observes reality, judges what he sees and communicates to his disciples what experience teaches him.

To convey their teaching, the wise often resort to the proverb or saying, which usually takes two different forms: the admonition and the sentence. The latter briefly describes an experiential fact, something that everyone can verify. Such sentences make things look as they are, without pronouncing any moral judgment (as examples of them, cf. Job 28:20; 37:24; Pr 10.12; 14.17; Ec 3:17; Cnt 8.7). Admonitions, on the other hand, warn the disciples about the path they must follow, and it is easy to recognize them because the counsels and exhortations are expressed with imperative verbs (cf. Pr 19:18; 20:13; Ec 7:21).

Other ways in which the sages convey their message are sapiencial poems (Pr 1–9), dialogues (Job 3–31), digressions (characteristics of Ecclesiastes), allegories (Pr 5:15–19), and prayers of praise (Ps 1; 73; 119).

In communicating the results of their experience, the wise men of Israel wish to inculcate in their disciples (whom they often call sons, cf. Pr 1:8) the importance of some practical aspects of life: self-control, especially in speaking (Job 15:5; Pr 12.18; 13.3; Ec 3.7); dedication to work (cf. Job 1:10; Pr 12.24; 19.24; Ec 2:22) and the virtue of humility, which is not

weakness, but the opposite of arrogance and excessive self-confidence (Job 26:12; Pr 15:33; 22:4). They also value sincere friendship (Job 22:21; Pr 17:17; 18:24), condemn lies and false testimony (Job 34:6; Pr 14:25; 19:5) and recommend conjugal fidelity (Pr 5:15-20). In a very special way, they exhort to be generous to the poor (Job 29:12; 31:16; Pr 17:5; 19:17; Ec 5:8) and to practice justice (cf. Pr 10:2; 21:3,15,21; 22:8). If the disciple follows the counsel of his master, he will have life; foolishness (not so much intellectual, but, above all, practical) brings death.

A characteristic problem addressed by wisdom is that of retribution (cf. Job 34:11:33; Pr 11.31; 13.13), that is, the way in which the righteous will be rewarded and sinners (the wise and the foolish, opposing figures in this literature) will be rewarded according to their actions. Proverbs holds a more optimistic view than Job and Ecclesiastes.

The Reason for Suffering (Job 11; 22:23-30; 36:7-14; Pr 2; Ec 3:16-18; cf. Rom 11.33; 1 Co 2.6-16) and death (Job 33.9-30; 33.16-18; Pr 18.21; 24.11-12; Ec 8.8) are issues that have always troubled humanity; the wise, therefore, have also contributed their important contributions, especially in Job and Ecclesiastes.

In the wisdom writings we not only hear the voice of the sages of Israel: sometimes we hear the voice of the sages of other peoples (Pr 30:1). Wisdom (personified) also speaks and invites us to receive his teaching, which is a treasure of incomparable value (Pr 8:10-11). Like a housewife, she has prepared a banquet and wants everyone to be her guests (cf. Pr 9:1-6). In front of her is Foolishness, also personified, which tries to attract the inexperienced with its false charms and seductions (Pr 9:13-18).

The proverbial wisdom of ancient Israel contains numerous teachings, valid even today, which read in the light of the gospel take on a much greater depth. But it also has some limitations, which have been pointed out in the Introductions to Job, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes.

Lesson 1

What are the Poetic and Sapiential Books of the Bible?

Hebrew poetry, which makes up most of the Poetic Books, has no rhyme, no quantitative rhythm, no meter in the sense of classical and modern languages. The only thing that distinguishes it from prose is the accent (not always clear), and the rhythm of thoughts, commonly called the parallelism of the members.

They are one of the most beautiful areas because they contain teachings and compositions of poetry that are not subject to what we know in the West, but bring together the knowledge and descriptive beauty of Middle Eastern authors. His writing is attributed to several authors, including Job (one of the patriarchs and, indeed, the oldest book of the Bible), and kings David and Solomon, among others.

They are also known as wisdom or wisdom books; although it may seem that different things are being talked about, the same thing is being referred to.

The five poetic or sapiential books of the Bible, from the evangelical perspective, are: Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and Song of Songs.

Although the poetic texts do not give continuity to the history of the Israelite people, however, they are considered a transition between the Historical Books (Joshua to Esther), to the Prophetic books of the Major Prophets (Isaiah to Daniel).

THEME OF POETIC BOOKS

One of the relevant aspects of the Poetic Books is that it contains a wide range of teachings that contain profound wisdom. This is particularly evident in Job, Ecclesiastes, and Proverbs. The remaining books are a collection of songs (psalms), love stories, and prayers of worship.

There are four pillars we find in most of these books:

- 1.- Suffering
- 2.- Love
- 3.- Wisdom
- 4.- The Nature of God
- 5.- Victory and Defeat

It usually refers to the people of Israel, but because they are children of God—thanks to the redemptive work of the Lord Jesus on the cross, the promises are extended to all of us.

Whether through God's grace with Job, or the allegory found in the Song of Songs, love is God's central message in these Poetic Books. It is God's love that restored Job's life, that

responds to the call of praise and prayer in the Psalms, and that instructs with words of wisdom in Proverbs.

God uses the disappointment of Solomon's life to show us that anything apart from God is vanity and emptiness. And, of course, Song of Songs is the poignant illustration of God's love for us.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF POETIC BOOKS

JOB

It consists of a series of dialogues between God and Satan, God and Job and Job and three friends. This patriarch faced adversity, having had a beautiful family and financial strength. In the end, God restored him, honoring his faithfulness. Some of the ideas we have of God and heaven come from the first two chapters where we see the heavenly Father sitting on a throne and all heavenly beings, including Satan, who have to report to Him. Tradition says that this is the oldest book of the biblical books and that possibly its author was Moses.

PSALMS

The psalms represent a collection of praises, songs, and prayers. King David wrote at least 73 of the 150 psalms. The beauty of the texts lies in the fact that practically every emotion and human situation is represented in their lines. Many, like Psalm 150, are traditional coritos in the worship services of the time. Some of David's compositions include messianic prophecies, and others can be read parallel to the story of his life and reign in 1 and 2 Samuel. The psalms were composed between 1400 and 1375 B.C.

PROVERBS

The book contains practical advice that applies to all areas of our lives, personally, spiritually and family. As the book includes 31 chapters, it is common among Bible readers to devote a month to this book by reading one chapter a day. The main author was King Solomon. Agir and King Lemuel contributed some of the latter parts.

ECCLESIASTES

Reading the book one can conclude that Solomon was a man with a negative attitude. The reason? He begins by saying " *Everything is vanity!*" But Solomon, who was notorious for his wisdom and wealth, did not want the people to lose their sense of purpose. It is a realistic book that confronts the superficiality of human values. The main message of this book is that while everything in this life is temporary, God is eternal, and His truths remain forever.

SONG OF SONGS

This book is an extensive poetry with the characteristics of Hebrew, with its descriptive richness. It narrates, sometimes in sensual language, the love between a young newlywed couple. This book can be read with two points of view. The first, and most traditional, is that Song of Solomon describes God's love for his people. The groom represents God and the bride represents the Jewish people. The second way is to read this as an example of intimacy

between spouses and serves as an example and celebration of marriage. Solomon is the author of Song of Songs.

It should finally be noted that Hebrew poetry has no rhyme, no quantitative rhythm, no meter in the sense of classical and modern languages. The only thing that distinguishes it from prose is the accent (not always clear), and the rhythm of thoughts, commonly called the parallelism of the members.

Parallelism consists in the fact that the same thought is expressed twice, either with synonymous words (synonymous parallelism), or in the form of thesis and antithesis (antithetical parallelism), or even, expanding by one or another addition (synthetic parallelism). Stanzas can sometimes be distinguished.

Most of the prophetic books and some chapters of the historical books also belong to the poetic genre, e.g. the blessing of Jacob (Genesis 49), the song of Deborah (Judges 5), the song of Anna (I Kings 2).

Lesson 1 - Quiz

What are the Poetic and Sapiential Books of the Bible?

[Click following link to take the quiz: https://forms.office.com/r/p4BASs3eTa](https://forms.office.com/r/p4BASs3eTa)

[If the link doesn't work copy and paste it into your browser](#)

Read the verses that are central to the Poetic Books. Try to summarize what teaching brought that portion of Scripture into your life:

Job 1:21 21 _____

Psalms 55:22 _____

Proverbs 3:5 _____

Ecclesiastes 12:13 _____

Song of Solomon 1:2 _____

Song of Solomon 2:4. _____

What are the five (5) themes of the Poetic Books?

1. _____ . 2. _____

3. _____ . 4. _____

5. _____

Give a brief description of the Poetic Books

Job _____

Psalms _____

Proverbs _____

Ecclesiastes _____

Song of Songs _____

Lesson 2

Where do they come from and why are they included in the Bible?

You will undoubtedly wonder, where do *they come from and why are books containing poetry included in the Bible?* Well, the Poetic and Sapiential genre is present in a good number of the books of the Old Testament but, mainly, in the texts of Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Song of Songs, Ecclesiastes and Lamentations.

It is a very varied and rich literary production, one of the best that can be found among the peoples of antiquity.

The term Sapiential comes from the Latin *Sapientia*, which translates to *Wisdom*. Then, in addition to poetry, he will find in them knowledge, that is, wisdom.

Among the Jews it was very well received, however it can be seen that the authors were mostly those who had some relationship with the service of God.

The poetic genre is also found in Genesis 49:2-27; Exodus 15:2-18, 21 and Isaiah chapters from 40 to 55.

We could not move on to any other topic without first emphasizing that the construction of the Poetic and Sapiential Books obeyed a slow process, and sometimes of compilation of isolated texts written in various stages of the Hebrew people, until giving them their final form.

TEACHINGS

The Poetic and Sapiential Books teach essentially about practical wisdom, applicable to the various circumstances of life. That is the reason why its authors have as a source of learning, facts that for others go unnoticed, but that throw enriching lessons when they are applied to everyday life.

The sages, to whom the authorship of the texts is attributed, manifest skill, acuity and qualities to draw valid principles to achieve the realization in the performance of the individual in any scenario in which he develops.

Now, you may wonder, where does this wisdom come from? Undoubtedly, as the Poetic and Sapiential Books themselves teach, wisdom is a gift from God that is nourished by the experience acquired on a day-to-day basis and a reflection to identify what can be learned at each stage of life.

We can conclude, then, that one learns from the surrounding reality. Knowledge is transmitted by the *sages* through Proverbs, which in turn are divided into:

- 1.- Warnings
- 2.- Sentences

You may wonder what each of these two divisions mean. It really is very simple.

The Warnings are a collection of warnings about the path to be followed by those who wish to bring out the best in life. Instructions are expressed through *counsels* and *exhortations* with imperative verbs. An example is found in Proverbs 19:18; 20:13 and Ecclesiastes 7:21.

The Sentences are teachings that are shared from everyday facts. They facilitate their assimilation among the hearers, as we find in Job 28:20; 37:24; Proverbs 10:12; 14:17 and Ecclesiastes 3:17.

STRUCTURE OF HEBREW POETRY

The topic we are studying today is very exciting. However, before we move forward, it is important that we take a look at the structure of Hebrew poetry.

As you can see, it is very different from our poetic work of the West. The structuring rules are different. That is the reason why, from the outset, a reader of the Bible does not identify that he is facing a poetic composition of antiquity. It is hardly predictable, because we are used to the structures used by our European and American authors and poets.

The Hebrews in their poetic writings attach importance to the rhythm generated by the accentuation of syllables. Another distinctive feature is the *parallelism in the members*.

"! *Wait a minute!*" you will say. "*What does the parallelism of the members mean?*" Good question. The *parallelism of the members* is a poetic expression that is constructed from two or three parallel sentences. They relate to each other by their form and content. The message they wish to convey is expressed in two successive tenses.

In the following table you will find some forms of parallelism. To identify what its structure is, we suggest you look for the biblical quotes:

PARALLELISM OF MEMBERS IN HEBREW POETRY		
TYPE OF PARALLELISM	STRUCTURE	APPOINTMENT BIBLICAL
SYNONYM	The same idea is expressed twice but in different words.	Psalms 15:1
ANTITHETIC	It is characterized by the opposition or contrast of two ideas or two poetic images.	Psalms 37:22
SYNTHETIC	It is appreciated when the second member prolongs or finishes expressing the thought enunciated in the first member, adding new elements.	Psalms 19:8
PROGRESSIVE	It follows from synthetic parallelism. In some cases he develops the idea by repeating some words from the previous verse.	Psalms 145:18

It is important that you keep in mind these special characteristics of Hebrew poetics, because it will be easier to understand the scope of his works, among which the most inclined are the Christian people of the West to the Psalms and the Proverbs.

OTHER FORMS OF TEACHING

In the Poetic and Sapiential Books we find a diversity of components. It is not, as we might initially think, a single literary line. On the contrary, it has several orientations as we will see below. We also invite you to look for the corresponding quotes in your Bible to facilitate your understanding of each point:

- Wisdom poems (e.g. Proverbs 1-9).
- Dialogues (e.g. Job 3-31).
- Disintegrations and Allegories (e.g., Proverbs 5:15-19).
- Prayers of praise (e.g., Psalm 1; 7; 3; 11).

The barely natural question you'll be asking yourself right now: "*And what topics do they address?*" The theme addressed by the Poetic Books is diverse, but can be summarized in the following points:

- Self-control, usually in speaking (Job 5:15; Proverbs 12:18; 13:3).
- Dedication to work (Proverbs 12:24; 19:24).
- Humility (Proverbs 15:33; 22:4).
- Sincere friendship (Proverbs 17:17; 18:24).
- Condemn lies (Proverbs 14:25; 19:5).
- Conjugal faithfulness (Proverbs 5:15-20).
- Generosity (Proverbs 17:5; 19:17).
- Practice of justice (Proverbs 10:2; 21:3, 15, 21).

INTERSPERSED TEXTS AND THEIR CONTENT

In the Poetic and Sapiential Books, as we have been studying them, it is essential to recognize the changes that occur, by the texts that are interspersed.

Sometimes it is a hymn interspersed in a narrative, such as the songs of Moses (Exodus 15:1–21), Deborah (Judges 5:1–31), Anna (1 Samuel 2:1–10), David (2 Samuel 1:17–27), and Jonah (Jonah 2:2–10). Other times poetic language comprises an entire book (as in the Song of Songs) or most of it (as in the book of Job). The prophets were also great poets, and the same must be said of the psalmists, who found no more suitable means of dialogue with God than the language of poetry. A poem is a structured set of phrases that are, in turn, carriers of meanings. Given the semantic nature of language, words and phrases mean something. But the significance is remarkably reinforced when poetic language is used correctly.

Poets allow themselves often bold grammatical constructions; they alter the order of words, join them in unexpected or surprising ways, and use literary figures that would be strange or shocking in everyday speech. Thus, through the harmonic association of sound, rhythm and idea, poetry manages to express meanings that other forms of discourse fail to convey.

It should be noted, however, that poetry in the Bible *is not an end but a means*. The poets of the Bible did not cultivate art for art's sake. It is true that the prophets expressed themselves poetically and that the psalmists prayed poetically. But poetic language fulfills an instrumental function here.

JUSTICE IN POETIC AND SAPIENTIAL BOOKS

The Poetic and Sapiential Books place particular emphasis on Justice and especially on the following topics that must be taken into account:

- 1.- Retribution, understood as the punishment of sinners and the reward for the righteous (Job 34:11; Proverbs 11:31; 13:13).
- 2.- Reason, that suffering may take place (Job 11; 22:23-30; Proverbs 2).
- 3.- Death (Proverbs 18:21; 24:11-12; Ecclesiastes 8:8).

In the repeated passages in which the poetic and sapiential literature of the Hebrew people addresses justice, he revives their hope that God would come to their aid when they were victims of oppression or foreign domination, without forgetting of course, that these bitter chapters obeyed above all the sin they committed and their estrangement from the Lord.

SPECIAL FEATURES IN JOB, PSALMS AND PROVERBS

We invite you now to consider some special features of Job's texts, the Psalms and Proverbs which, while true, are part of a single set, which are the *Poetic Books* and *Sapienciales*, have some special characteristics.

THE BOOK OF JOB

In Job the author is a poet, a Hebrew language he knows fully, and he experiences a deep mastery of the thought and life of his people. His writings went through several stages until their apparent final drafting in the fifth century B.C. Scholars consider it to be the first book to be written.

In its content it includes prose stories (Chapters 1 and 2 and, 42:7-17) and the rest, it is a well-elaborated poetic composition. The author possibly used a very old story, passed down from generation to generation. Proof of this is Elohú's speech, which seems like a later addition.

The vocabulary used is rich and the poetic style it uses brings together the syntactic and sound resources of the Hebrew language.

THE PSALMS

In addition to their richness in religious content, the Psalms reveal an exceptional culture, developed, as it was – without a doubt – among the Hebrew people in their different stages.

They were used in temple worship, but also by those who developed the Levitical priest and in his animal sacrifice ceremonies.

In fact, the psalms, known as part of the Hebrew word *Tehillim*, which translates to "songs of praise," were initially independent songs that were later compiled into presenting them as in their current form, in a single book.

THE PROVERBS

The book of Proverbs comes from several collections of sayings and other wisdom sentences that were preserved for generations among the people of Israel. In the first chapters it is noted that there is a common thread in the topics it addresses but, in other chapters, a succession of sayings is observed without a perceptible logical order.

Its applicability was universal, that is, it was not only for internalization among the Jewish people, because other cultures could well use them. This universality determined that several of the sayings had significance in various peoples such as those of Mesopotamia, Egypt and other territories of the ancient East.

Lesson 2 - Quiz

Where do They Come From and Why Are They Included in the Bible?

[Click following link to take the quiz: https://forms.office.com/r/3Urbk0k91y](https://forms.office.com/r/3Urbk0k91y)

[If the link doesn't work copy and paste it into your browser](#)

Proverbs is divided in:

1. _____
2. _____

The Poetic and Sapiential Books place particular emphasis on Justice and especially on the following topics that must be taken into account:

- 1.- _____, understood as the punishment of sinners and the reward for the righteous (Job 34:11; Proverbs 11:31; 13:13).
- 2.- _____, that suffering may take place (Job 11; 22:23-30; Proverbs 2).
- 3.- _____ (Proverbs 18:21; 24:11-12; Ecclesiastes 8:8).

The Poetic and Wisdom Books contain a variety of writing styles. Read the following passages and identify the writing style used:

- _____ (Proverbs 1:1-9)
- _____ (Job 3: 4-31)
- _____ (Proverbs 5:15-19)
- _____ (Psalms 1; 7; 3; 11)

Lesson 3

Book of Job

After the narrative texts, the series of poetic writings begins with the book of Job (=Job). The prose narrative in this book is reduced to the prologue (chs. 1–2) and the conclusion (42.7–17). The rest is poetry, characterized by the rhythm and sonority of language, by an extraordinary abundance of poetic images and by the use of parallelism (see Introduction to the Psalms [2]).

The narrative section features a man of impeccable conduct, named Job, who lived in the region of Us, outside the territory of Israel. Job enjoyed great prosperity, surrounded by a large family, until in the most unforeseen way he was subjected to a terrible test: he lost all his assets, became childless, and contracted a horrible disease. But in the midst of so many misfortunes he did not fail to bless the name of the Lord (1:21): If we accept the goods that God gives us, why should we not also accept evils? (2.10).

After this prose prologue, which introduces the characters of the drama, comes the poetic part. There Job's attitude changes completely. It no longer manifests itself as the prototype of the patient and submissive person (cf. James 5:11), but gives free rein to his pain and exposes, in a passionate tone, his anguish and bitter questions. His most pressing question is why God sent him such a great calamity, since he had always been his faithful servant and had done nothing wrong.

To this question answer in turn three friends of his, who supposedly came to comfort him. His answer is always the same: misfortune is the punishment of sin; if Job suffers such painful sufferings, some sin will have been committed; May he be converted to the Lord and be happy again. But that answer does not reassure Job's tormented spirit; he knows that he is innocent, and he expresses his desire to meet God face to face in order to give him an account of his incomprehensible way of acting (cf. Job 31:35-37).

Once this series of dialogues is over, a fourth character, named Elihu, unexpectedly appears, who does not hide his displeasure at Job's daring and the answers of his three friends (chs. 32–37). The style of this section is more diffuse, repetitive and emphatic, and the discourses, announced as the impartial exposition of a master of wisdom, often become an accusation (cf. 34:7-9,34-37). Elihu exalts divine justice, wisdom, holiness and greatness, and emphasizes, in a particular way, the pedagogical value of suffering: God can use it to call for reflection and make the sinner convert from his wickedness: Through suffering, God saves the one who suffers; through pain, it makes him understand (36:15).

Finally, God Himself intervenes, in the midst of the storm (38.1; 40.6). Job had complained many times about the inexplicable divine silence, and at last he gets the Lord to manifest himself to him and give him an answer. This answer is at first glance surprising because it says nothing about Job's sufferings. Rather, it is a long series of questions that leave no doubt

about the unfathomable greatness of the Creator and about the wisdom with which he rules the universe. In this way, the divine word produces the effect willed by God: when confronted with a power and wisdom that infinitely exceed his capacity for understanding, Job is forced to confess his daring and ignorance. He had talked about things he did not know, but at last he recognizes that man has no right to hold God to account. The reason for suffering remains a mystery to him, but he is satisfied that he has seen God with his own eyes (38:1–42:6).

The conclusion (42:7-17), like the prologue, is a brief prose narrative. God rebukes the three visitors, approves of Job's faithfulness, and returns to him, multiplied, his former prosperity.

The book of Job is not a theoretical treatise on the mystery of the suffering of the righteous. It is, rather, an admirable polyphony, where several voices express diverse points of view. On the one hand there is Job, the aching man, who expresses the anguish of every human being in the face of the suffering of the innocent and who does not accept that his pain can be explained as a divine punishment. On the other side are its visitors, sad comforters who do not allow themselves to be moved by the spectacle of human suffering and only know how to offer the person who suffers the consolation of a doctrine. Finally, the voice of the Lord is heard: before it, Job has no choice but to acknowledge his smallness and his inability to comprehend God's mysterious designs.

But this encounter with the Lord, by confronting him with his own limits, gives him a lesson in humility and introduces him to a deeper wisdom.

Author and date

The book does not provide very definite indications. In tradition he mentions Moses as the author. Suggestions in date range from post-exilic times (up to III B.C.) to patriarchal times (sixteenth century B.C.). Some have placed it in the days of Solomon (tenth century B.C.).

Recipients

They are not indicated, but it is a magnificent story for posterity. Key verses 2:21-22: "And he said, Naked I came out of my mother's womb, and naked I will return there. Jehovah gave, and Jehovah took away; let be the name of Jehovah blessed. In all this Job did not sin, nor did he attribute to God any nonsense."

Purpose and theme

The Book of Job, poetic in large part, presents the harrowing struggle with the age-old problem of why the righteous suffer. Job himself is a righteous man, but he suffers almost the full range of misery, losing health, family and material goods. His four "friends" discuss with him the reasons for his sufferings. They suggest sin, hypocrisy, lies, pride, and general perversity as causes. But Jehovah does not accuse Job of any perversity as a cause of his tribulations; what it affirms is that finite man is not able to know or comprehend the ways of the infinite God. The book concludes by noting that precisely by going through his terrible

affliction, he penetrates into a richer experience of God. The tribulation has been a test and not a punishment.

Sketch

PROLOGUE (chapters 1—2)

Job a righteous man suffers the destruction of his material property and his family, all with Jehovah's permission (chapter 1).

Then Job's health is broken; Job refuses to curse God; his three friends remain silent for seven days out of respect for their great suffering (chapter 2).

JOB AND HIS THREE FRIENDS DISCUSS AND SCRUTINIZE THE PROBLEM OF SUFFERING AFFLICTING THE FORMER (Chapter 3—41).

First cycle of discussion (chapters 3—14)

Job complains; wishes I wasn't born and longs to die (chapter 3)

Eliphaz's First Discourse: Job Suffers for His Sins and God Punishes Him (chapters 4—5)

Job answers Eliphaz: What is the sin of my life? (chapters 6-7)

Bildad's First Speech: Job Suffers as a Hypocrite (Chapter 8)

Job responds to Bildad: Job is disoriented: How to effectively draw near to God and declare his innocence? (Chapters 9—10)

Zofar's First Discourse: Job's presumed innocence does nothing but accumulate sin upon sin; even greater sufferings should befall him (Chapter 11)

Job responds to Zofar: His friends give Job no soil; he fails to understand their sufferings, and yet he puts his trust in God (chapters 12—14).

Second cycle of discussion (chapters 15—21)

Eliphaz's Second Discourse: Repeats that Job suffers for his wrongdoing, and that he should confess his sins (chapter 15)

Job responds to Eliphaz: His so-called friends do not bring him comfort; they are "annoying"; he has the feeling of having been abandoned by God and by men (chapters 16-17)

Bildad's second discourse: Not only God, but also nature opposes evil, which is why Job suffers: it is in the nature of things that the wicked suffer (chapter 18).

Job responds to Bildad: Although everyone criticizes him and even mocks him, his faith is stirred to exclaim "I know that my Redeemer lives..." (Chapter 19)

Zofar's second discourse: Do you accuse God of being unjust to you? Terrible is the End of the Wicked (chapter 20)

Job responds to Zofar: Your "reasoning" is not based on experience, for the wicked tend to prosper (chapter 21).

Third cycle of discussion (chapters 22–41)

Eliphaz's third discourse: Suffering cannot come from holiness, and therefore must come from sin; recommends repentance (chapter 22)

Job replies to Eliphaz: Ouch! Where can I find God? Sometimes suffering does not come to the wicked (chapters 23–24)

Bildad's third discourse: No matter what the experience seems to reveal, Job is arrogant; must have sinned (chapter 25)

Job responds to Bildad: He clings to his original statement: he has not sinned (chapters 23-31) Eliud, and not Zofar, speaks this time, a series of speeches): Suffering is not always the fruit of sin; God sometimes scourges the righteous; God does not always explain his actions (chapters 32-37)

This time Jehovah answers and not Job: Man is finite and therefore cannot explain the mysteries of the infinite God and his providence (chapters 38–41).

EPILOGUE: NEW RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE AND SUBSEQUENT BLESSING THROUGH SUFFERING (chapter 42)

Lessons from the book of Job:

1. The purpose and causes of suffering are not always clear.
2. Suffering can be beneficial; it can strengthen character and enrich personality.
3. Finite man cannot fully comprehend the righteousness of God; justice will be completed and perfected in eternity.
4. The righteous who suffer may be misunderstood, but not by God.
5. God gives sustaining grace for times of tribulation: this, to the letter.

Lesson 3 - Quiz

Book of Job

[Click following link to take the quiz: https://forms.office.com/r/z9E4BL3vWr](https://forms.office.com/r/z9E4BL3vWr)

If the link doesn't work copy and paste it into your browser

1. Who is the recipient of the Book of Job?

2. What is its purpose and theme? _____

3. What's your favorite passage? Why? _____

4. What's your least favorite passage? Why? _____

Lesson 4

Book of Psalms

Introduction

All Old Testament institutions and practices that have to do with worship—the temple in Jerusalem, the Levitical priesthood, and ritual sacrifices—were abolished after the coming of Christ, whom the church confesses as the true temple (John 2:21). the only high priest of the new covenant or covenant (Hebrews 8:1-6) and "the Lamb who was sacrificed" (Revelation 5:12) "once and for all" (Hebrews 10:10) for the sins of the whole world (John 1:29).

However, the same did not happen with the hymns and prayers of the book of Psalms (=Ps). From the very beginning of its history, the Christian Church continued to recite and sing them, as the people of Israel had done before in the liturgy of the temple and Jesus himself during his earthly life (cf. Mt 26:30; 27:46; Luke 23:46).

Hebrew tradition gave the book of Psalms the name Tehillim, which means "songs of praise" or simply "praises." On the other hand, the Greek translation of the Seventy (LXX), gave it the title of Psalmoi and Psalterion, expressions from which our terms Psalms and Psalter derive. The Greek word psalmos originally designated a poem to be sung to the sound of stringed instruments, and the psalterion was one of those instruments. But these meanings were gradually lost, and now the word Psalter is usually used as a synonym for the book of Psalms, while the term psalm designates each of the poems that make it up.

Formation of the Book of Psalms

The formation of the book of Psalms, like that of almost all other books of the Old Testament, had a long and complex history. It is no longer possible to reconstruct that story in all its details, but the "Hebrew titles" in the heading of a good number of psalms offer some valuable indications. These titles show that the psalms, before being part of a single book, were grouped in various independent collections, which were formed at different times to respond, above all, to the needs of worship in the temple of Jerusalem.

Author and Date

The headings thus suggest the traditional opinion regarding the author: 73 Psalms attributed to David 12 Psalms to Asaph, musician 11 Psalms to the sons of Korah, Levites who officiated in the temple in David's day 2 Psalms to King Solomon 1 Psalm to Etam, perhaps musician in David's time 1 Psalm to Moses 1 Psalm to Herman 49 Psalms called "Orphans" (Psalms without indication of author).

The Greek version (Septuagint) points to Haggai and Zechariah as authors of five Psalms. The Psalms were written over an extended period of time, from Moses to the Exile, but most were completed back in 1000 B.C., although time should be left for additions and revisions. author).

Recipients

Written for the worship of the Jewish people, they serve today and have served as the basis for the private and public worship of Christians and Jews.

Key verses

Psalms 1:1-2: "Blessed is the man who did not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor was he in the way of sinners, nor in the chair of mockers has sat down; but in Jehovah's law is his delight, and in his law he meditates day and night."

Purpose and Theme

The psalms were the hymnal of the temple. As such, they were a guide to prayer and praise (the Hebrew title, Tehillim, means "song of praise"). The Psalms contain the melancholy, doubts, joys and hopes of every human heart. There are Psalms of faith for adversity (90;91), praise (8;113—118), holiness (1), repentance (51), and nature (19). There are also Psalms of the king to be used at the coronation or in palace ceremonies (110;21). The Messianic psalms (2;8;16; 22; 31; 40; 41; 45; 68; 102; 110; 118) are of special importance to Christians. The historical Psalms (78; 81; 105; 106) have special significance for the Hebrews, for they speak of faithfulness to their Covenant. The National Psalms (129;137) also hold great meaning for the Jews.

Some subtitles refer to musical instructions (Psalm 4); others have no known meaning, for example, the "masquil," Psalm 69. The "Gradual Songs" (Psalm 120-134) or the Ascension may be songs of pilgrims who sang as they ascended to Jerusalem and the temple. The strange and repeated "Sela" perhaps indicates the right point for a musical intermission.

Sketch

The book of Psalms is too extensive and varied to allow it to be sketched as such. But it should be noted that it is divided into five smaller books. Psalm 1 is an introduction to the entire book of Psalms; each of the five sections concludes with a doxology, and Psalm 150 is the doxology of the entire book, as well as the fifth section.

BOOK I: Psalm 1—41

BOOK II: Psalm 42—72

BOOK III: Psalm 73—89

BOOK IV: Psalm 90—106

BOOK V: Psalm 107—150

Lesson 4 - Quiz

Book of Psalms

[Click following link to take the quiz: https://forms.office.com/r/NXshx7jc98](https://forms.office.com/r/NXshx7jc98)

If the link doesn't work copy and paste it into your browser

1. Who is the recipient of the Book of Psalms?

2. What is its purpose and theme? _____

3. What's your favorite passage? Why? _____

4. What's your least favorite passage? Why? _____

Lesson 5

Book of Proverbs

Introduction

The book of Proverbs (=Pr) brings together several collections of sayings, poems, and other wisdom sentences from ancient Israel. The book, as a whole, has been attributed to Solomon, the son and successor of David on the throne of Jerusalem (cf. Pr 1.1), king famous for his wisdom, and author, according to 1\$4.32, of three thousand proverbs and one thousand five poems.

However, the reader immediately notices that the composition of the book is more complex than it might seem at first glance. The cap.\$10, in effect, brings a new heading, and the same happens in Pr 22.17; 24.23; 25.1; 30.1; 31.1. Moreover, among the authors and compilers of proverbs and wisdom sayings, not only King Solomon is mentioned, but also other sages such as Agur, Lemuel and the scribes who fulfilled their functions in the court of Hezekiah, king of Judah.

Autor

La tradición antigua dice que no fue una sino varias personas las que escribieron los Proverbios. En los títulos de los Proverbios leemos que Salomón (1.1; 10.11; 25.1), Agur (30.1) y Lemuel (31.1) escribieron secciones (22.17; 24.23). Probablemente algunos de esos proverbios se transmitieron primero por tradición oral y con el tiempo se copiaron por escrito.

Date

Impossible to determine. Solomon lived in the century XA.C.; some of the Proverbs were copied or written in the time of Hezekiah (25.1), who lived in the eighth century B.C. Proverbs grew over a long period of Jewish history and their final form was fixed at an unknown date.

Recipients

Apparently, Solomon's son (possibly Rehoboam) (1.8; 2.1, etc.); all the children of Israel (4.1); all the Jewish people; indeed, Proverbs are very helpful to all mankind.

Key verses

Proverbs 3:5-6: "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not rely on your own prudence. Recognize him in all your ways, and he will straighten your paths."

Purpose and theme

Proverbs is a highly practical book. What comes closest to him in the New Testament is the epistle of James. The proverbial form penetrates deep into man's thinking and

provokes reactions. It touches all aspects of life, human and derives moral and ethical consequences. Bad company, immorality, intemperance, murmuring, falsehood, dubious ethics in business, laziness, selfishness, are treated in Proverbs with a sharpness unmatched in universal literature. Generosity, reverence for God, careful education of children, the value of influence (of men and women), and youth are the fields of positive instruction. As a whole, the book of Proverbs is a genuinely useful manual for everyday life. Wisdom (knowledge and ability to use knowledge well) is exalted throughout the book and is a key word in it. Note that in Proverbs wisdom begins with God and God at the center.

Sketch

Like psalms, the book of Proverbs is too broad and heterogeneous to allow for a thorough sketch. The following is but a shallow division of the material:

INTRODUCTION (Chapter 1.1-7)

FIRST COLLECTION OF SAPIENTIAL POEMS - Wisdom Against Foolishness (chapters 1.8–9.18)

SECOND COLLECTION: "SAYINGS OF SOLOMON" (chapters 10.1–22.16)

TERCERA COLECCIÓN: "DICHOS DE LOS SABIOS" - Diversos proverbios sobre la responsabilidad humana, y normas para vivir rectamente (capítulos 22.17–24.22)

CUARTA COLECCIÓN: "OTROS DICHOS DE LOS SABIOS" (capítulo 24.23-34)

QUINTA COLECCIÓN: "DICHOS DE SALOMÓN" Recopilados por la gente de Ezequías, Rey de Judá (capítulos 25–29)

SEXTA COLECCIÓN: "DICHOS DE AGUR" (capítulos 30)

SEVENTH COLLECTION: "SAYINGS OF KING LEMUEL" (chapter 31.1-9)

APPENDIX: PRAISE OF THE VIRTUOUS WOMAN (chapter 31.10-31)

Lesson 5 - Quiz

Book of Proverbs

[Click following link to take the quiz: https://forms.office.com/r/ZcC5FYtqNT](https://forms.office.com/r/ZcC5FYtqNT)

If the link doesn't work copy and paste it into your browser

1. Who is the recipient of the Book of Proverbs?

2. What is its purpose and theme? _____

3. What's your favorite passage? Why? _____

4. What's your least favorite passage? Why? _____

Lesson 6

Book of Ecclesiastes

Introduction

The book of Ecclesiastes is the shortest of the sapiential writings of the Old Testament, but also the one with the greatest number of enigmas. Its author was a "sage" like many others in the people of Israel and, as such, he put all his efforts into seeking the truth and finding the right words to communicate it (Ec 12:9-10). He was, at the same time, a profoundly original thinker, who was not content to accept ideas already made, to repeat school aphorisms or to pass without prior examination the postulates of a tradition. As a consequence, this book has a set of characteristics that assign it a special place among all the other writings of the Bible.

Already the name of the sage is quite enigmatic. In the book it is given the name Qohelet, a term derived from the Hebrew word qahal ("assembly") and which probably designates an office or function. Hence Qohelet means something like "in charge of gathering the assembly and addressing it".

This sense is confirmed by the Greek version of the OT called septuagint (LXX): in it, the name Qohelet is translated by Ecclesiastes. This word is linked to the word ekklesia, which in Greek means "assembly"; therefore, Ecclesiastes is roughly equivalent to "public speaker" or "preacher." De hecho, El Predicador es el título que se suele dar a este libro en algunas lenguas modernas, si bien es preciso notar que en la Biblia hebrea el término Qohelet aparece unas veces con artículo y otras sin él, es decir, como designación profesional (12.8; cf. 7.27) y como nombre propio (1.12; 12.9) respectivamente. En la presente versión no se hace tal distinción.

However, more than a speech delivered before an assembly, the book resembles a dialogue of the author with himself. In that kind of inner debate, he often contrasts opposing realities, such as life and death, wisdom and foolishness, wealth and destitution, despotism and absolute lack of power. What is most accentuated in this contrast is the negative aspect of reality, but it never goes so far as to totally deny what life is positive about. Thus, Ecclesiastes recognizes that in every sphere of human existence and experience – whether in work, pleasure, family, property and even in wisdom – there are many aspects of the utmost importance (2:11,13).

All these things have a very relative value, since none of them, and not even all together, are capable of completely fulfilling the deepest longings of the human heart (see 1.18). The question that most worries Ecclesiastes is that concerning the meaning of life. He asks concretely what benefit man derives from all the work he does in this world (1.3) and what he must know and do to live a fully accomplished life. And it is

not content with partial answers but seeks to form a total and definitive judgment about the value and meaning of human existence on earth.

In order to obtain an answer to this fundamental question, he systematically analyzes the different activities that could ensure the achievement of that goal, such as, for example, the pursuit of pleasure (2.1), the acquisition of much wisdom (1.13), or the performance of great works (2.4). But this survey is ultimately disappointing, since at the end of his many efforts the only thing he can say is that everything is vain illusion (1.1-2; 12.8) and how to want to catch the wind (2.11); for the "work" that God does in the world is an impenetrable mystery to human beings, and wisdom offers a very precarious help when one tries to lift the veil of mystery (3:11).

Ecclesiastes wanted to decipher the enigma of existence and discover the meaning of things with total independence of judgment, relying exclusively on their own experience and their own reasoning. This critical attitude led him to distance himself from the serene optimism of the book of Proverbs, and prevented him from sharing the great hope of the Hebrew prophets, or from coming to faith in the resurrection (Daniel 12:1-13).

However, it must be recognized that the Bible would be impoverished if it lacked this extraordinary book. The relentless honesty with which Ecclesiastes analyzes facts and criticizes platitudes is the necessary corrective of any immature or unreflective faith. He compels his readers to look without illusion at the darkness in which they are immersed and to examine with great freedom of spirit the foundations of their beliefs. In this sense, the reading of Ecclesiastes offers a good opportunity to grow and mature in the faith.

The text does not provide sufficiently precise data to allow the exact date on which it was drafted to be set. Solomon's name does not appear in the book, but he is alluded to in expressions such as son of David (1:1) and king of Israel in Jerusalem (1:12). This reference to the sage of Israel par excellence conferred authority on the text. But the Hebrew used by the author and the ideas he expresses seem to indicate that the work was written around the middle or end of the third century B.C., when Hellenistic culture was beginning to spread widely throughout the Near East. In any case, as with the book of Job, it is not essential to know the date of composition to appreciate in depth the content of the work.

Author

Unknown. An ancient tradition attributes it to Solomon.

Recipients

They are not clear in the text; possibly young Jewish males (11.9; 12.12).

Key verses

Ecclesiastes 2:11,13: "I then looked at all the works that my hands had done, and the work I took to do them; and behold, all was vanity and affliction of spirit, and profitless under the sun. And I have seen that wisdom surpasses foolishness, like light surpasses darkness." Ecclesiastes 12:13-14: "The end of all the discourse heard is this: Fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole of man. For God will bring every work to judgment, together with every covert thing, whether good or bad."

Purpose and theme

The word "Ecclesiastes" means "preacher" or "delegate to the assembly" (Hebrew Qoheleth) and is an office title. The purpose of the preacher is to make it clear that the things of this world are simple vanity, without any value of depth. The satisfaction of the human heart is achieved by wisdom and not by foolishness. The book's conclusion indicates its evangelical emphasis: "... Fear God and keep His commandments; for this is the whole of man. For God will bring every work to judgment, together with every covert thing, whether good or bad" (12:13-14). Without God, life and creation are meaningless. In God are meaning and satisfaction; apart from Him everything is foolishness and deep boredom. To that conclusion came a man who had tried everything, as an attempt to forge a healthy philosophy of existence and life.

Sketch

PROLOGUE (1.1-11)

Heading (1.1)

Introduction to the topic: Vanity of all that is mundane (1.2-11)

VANITY OF ALL THINGS MUNDANE (1:12—6:12)

Vanity of seeking merely human wisdom (1:12-18)

Vanity of pleasures (2.1-11)

Vanity of human wisdom and wealth (2:12-23)

Vanity of human effort (2.21-3.15)

Vanity of the wicked and oppressors (3.16—4.6)

Vanity to seek triumph on its own; the work is easier between two (4.7-12)

Vanity of foolishness and riches compared to wisdom and poverty (4:13-16)

Vanity of empty words (5.1-7) Vanity of riches (5.8-6.12)

OBSERVATIONS ON WISDOM AND FOOLISHNESS (7.1—12.8)

The orderly life in contrast to the human mass living in sin (chapter 7)

In reality, the wicked do no better than the righteous: it is only a matter of appearance (chapters 8–9).

Excellence of Wisdom (chapters 10–11)

Remember God in your youth (12:1-8)

EPILOGUE: RESPECT GOD; KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS (12:9-14).

Lesson 6 - Quiz

Book of Ecclesiastes

[Click following link to take the quiz: https://forms.office.com/r/xYFbK54cJs](https://forms.office.com/r/xYFbK54cJs)

If the link doesn't work copy and paste it into your browser

1. Who is the recipient of the Book of Ecclesiastes?

2. What is its purpose and theme? _____

3. What's your favorite passage? Why? _____

4. What's your least favorite passage? Why? _____

Lesson 7

Song of Songs

Introduction

Cantar de los cantares (=Cnt) is the literal translation of a Hebraism that properly means "the most beautiful of the songs" or "the song par excellence". In the poems that make up the book, two young lovers do not cease to manifest their mutual and passionate feelings. COMMANDMENTS (12:9-14). But these poems are not written in a simple popular language, but in the highest poetic style and with a dazzling profusion of images and metaphors. Thus, the vineyard, the fountain and the garden symbolize the young woman (Cnt 1:6; 2:15; 4:12-13; 8:12) and the fruits and flowers, wine, milk and honey are poetic resources that describe the beauty of lovers (4.3; 5.13; 6.7; 7.7-8) or the delights and joys of love (4.11; 5.1; 6.2; 8.2). De este modo encuentran su expresión, en el lenguaje de la más depurada poesía lírica, los afectos y sentimientos más diversos: angustia por la ausencia de la persona amada (1.7; 3.1-3; 5.8), felicidad en el momento del encuentro (2.8-14; 3.4) y, sobre todo, deseos de entrega recíproca y de mutua posesión (1.2-4; 8.1-2).

From the first poem to the last, this book is a song to the love of man and woman. Both among the shepherds' flocks (1.8) and in the streets of the city (3.2), in the gardens, vineyards, fields and houses (1.16; 2.4; 3.4; 7.12), love is the irresistible impulse that inspires the words of lovers and determines their actions. And it is not only the man who takes the initiatives, but also the young woman openly manifests her desires and makes her voice heard: Run, my beloved...! (8.14). Give me a kiss from your lips! (1.2). Take me with you soon! (1.4).

The transparency of the language used in El Cantar leaves little doubt about the meaning and purpose of these songs to human love. However, the literal interpretation has been rejected many times, by both Jewish and Christian interpreters. The reason given for this rejection is that in a sacred book such as the Bible there would be no place for a set of profane songs, dedicated exclusively to celebrating the excellences of love between man and woman.

This objection has conditioned for centuries the interpretation of The Song of Songs, but a simple observation is enough to highlight its inconsistency. Because it is enough to go through the first pages of the Bible to discover that love and sexuality, in addition to being a gift from God, play a fundamental role in the realization of the divine plan for creation.

According to the first chapter of Genesis, in fact, humanity created in the image of God has as one of its essential characteristics the division and complementarity of the sexes (Gen 1:27-28); and according to the account of Gen 2, when Adam awakens from his sleep and meets the woman for the first time, he discovers that perfect "help" that

he had not found before in any other creature: This one is of my own flesh and of my own bones! (Gen 2:23). Therefore, it is not at all risky to affirm that The Song of Songs is an expansion and a development of that first song of love born at the dawn of creation.

By their literary expression and by the subject matter they deal with, the poems gathered in this book are undoubtedly related to the songs that were sung at wedding feasts (cf. Jer 25:10), feasts that used to last seven days (Gen 29:27-28; Thu 14:10:17) and in which the songs of the bride and groom were heard (Jer 33:11).

It is important to note, however, that when the Song was included in the canon of the holy books, it had already been placed under the name of Solomon, the king considered by Jewish tradition as the prototype and model of the sage (cf. 1\$R 3.10-12; 4.29-34). This does not necessarily mean that Solomon was the author of the book, since the final part of the title (Cnt 1:1) can mean the same of Solomon as dedicated or concerning him. But the link with the sage par excellence assigned The Song of Songs a well-defined place among the sapiential writings of Israel. This assignment meant that in the reading of the poems, above all, those qualities of human love that the teaching of the wise men valued and recommended as the most excellent were highlighted: not mere erotic passion, but that unwavering love such as death (8.6), which is manifested in the mutual gift of the spouses and in their fidelity to the marriage commitment (cf. Pr 5:15-19).

But on the other hand, the union of spouses is one of the symbols that the Bible uses to express God's relationship with his people. In the OT there are frequent references to Israel as the lord's wife (Hos 1-3; Jer 2:1-3; Ez 16), and the New Testament presents the church as the bride of Christ (Eph 5:23-32; Rev 21:2,9). Hence, The Song could have been interpreted as an allegory or chain of metaphors intended to celebrate the covenant of the Lord with Israel, of Christ with the church, and even of the soul with God. The biblical text does not offer any sure key to substantiate such an interpretation. But these nuptial songs could not have been interpreted in this sense, if the love of man and woman had not been seen as a reflection and a beautiful symbol of God's love.

Almost all contemporary exegetes agree that the arrangement of the poems in The Song of Songs does not obey a certain plan. The unity and coherence of the book, in fact, does not come from such a scheme, but from the common theme and the sustained beauty of poetic language. Therefore, the best way to read The Song is not to impose a more or less arbitrary scheme on the whole book, but to let yourself be carried away by the simplicity, naturalness and transparency so characteristic of these love songs.

Author and date

An ancient tradition holds that Solomon was the author of the book (v. 1.1) in the tenth century B.C.

Key verse

Song of Songs 8:6-7: "Put me as a seal on your heart, as a mark on your arm; for as strong as death is love; hard as the tomb jealousy; its embers, embers of fire, strong flame. The many waters could not be extinguished, nor will the rivers drown it. If man were to give all the goods of his house for this love, they would certainly look down on him."

Purpose and theme

This ancient oriental song or poem presents the sacred and pure of human love. It describes the loves and marriage of King Solomon ("the beloved") to a young peasant woman ("the Sulamite"). Genuine love is loyal and noble, and this is expressed in a series of conversations and speeches, primarily by Solomon and the young peasant woman. Although the poem celebrates the beauties of love It also suggests the intensity of God's love for his children. It is a parable of divine love, the source of human love. The book can also be regarded as a symbol of Christ's love for his bride, the Church.

Sketch

MEETING OF THE BRIDE AND GROOM; DELIGHT EACH OTHER RECIPROCALLY (1.1—3.5)
WEDDINGS (3.6—4.16)

SEPARACIÓN TEMPORAL; LA ESPOSA ANHELA AL ES- POSO (5.1—6.3)

EXPRESIÓN DELAMOR RECÍPROCO (6.4—8.14)

Lesson 7 - Quiz

Song of Songs

[Click following link to take the quiz: https://forms.office.com/r/xgwdjegDZx](https://forms.office.com/r/xgwdjegDZx)

If the link doesn't work copy and paste it into your browser

1. Who is the recipient of the Book of Song of Songs?

2. What is its purpose and theme? _____

3. What's your favorite passage? Why? _____

4. What's your least favorite passage? Why? _____

Lesson 8

What do We Learn From The Poetic and Sapiential Books?

Whether through God's grace with Job, or the allegory found in the Song of Songs, love is God's central message in these Poetic Books. To discover the nature of God is to understand love and discover His purpose for us.

It is God's love that restored Job's life, that responds to the call of praise and prayer in the Psalms, and that instructs with words of wisdom in Proverbs. God uses the disappointment of Solomon's life to show us that anything apart from God is vanity and emptiness. And, of course, Song of Songs is the poignant illustration of God's love for us.

Finally, there is no greater display of love from the Father than the gift of salvation through Christ. It is only through Him that our sins are forgiven and we become His Bride. God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that everyone who believes in Him may not perish but have eternal life John 3:16.

It is interesting to discover all the literary richness and wisdom contained in the Poetic and Sapiential Books, and the practical and easy to assimilate form, which they used in their literary construction.

It is not enough to remember the importance of reviewing what has been learned to this day in order to have a greater and better appreciation of the structure of the Old Testament.

The following table offers a synthesis of the Poetic and Sapiential Books:

SYNTHESIS OF POETIC AND SAPIENTIAL BOOKS	
BOOK	OUTSTANDING EVENTS
JOB	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – It is the oldest Book of the Bible, written in the land of Uz. – The main theme he addresses in Job's affliction. – It contains poetic and pictorial descriptions through which they shed light on Satan's siege on the life of the believer. – The book raises suffering as part of the process of formation in the life of the believer, perfection his character.
PSALMS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – It consists of 150 songs and spiritual poems that were used in the cults and devotionals of the Jewish people. – It is considered that, during the priestly ministries in the second temple of Jerusalem, he acted as a hymnal. <p>The predominant themes are prayer and praise.</p> <p>Most of the psalms are attributed to David, but their authorship is shared by the sons of Korah, Asaph, Eman, Etam, Solomon, Moses, Haggai, Ezra, Hezekiah, and Zechariah. A few are the fruit of an anonymous writer.</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Some psalms known as Misanics stand out that address, among other aspects, the sufferings of the Messiah; his resurrection, the ascension and Christ as King. – If we were to make a synthesis of the themes addressed by the 150 songs and poems, we would say that it includes matters related to man, the worldly and the temple, religious experiences, the symbolized church, the word of God, the duty of the rulers, the attributes of God and the experience of Israel accumulated through many years of history.
<p>PROVERBS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – It is a collection of moral and religious maxims that included various instructions applicable to daily practical life. – Addresses topics such as wisdom, discipline to children, friendship, generosity, fear of God, prudence, pride, mastery of the language, self-control, work and purity of the believer. – It shows a constant contrast between wisdom and foolishness, justice and sin. – Its authorship is attributed to King Solomon but also some passages to Agur and Lemuel. <p>Its essential goal is to provide moral instruction, especially for young people.</p>
<p>ECCLESIASTES</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – In the Hebrew Bible it is called <i>Kohelet</i>. Associated with "the one who teaches" or "the preacher". – Its authorship is attributed to King Solomon. A close reading of the text reveals a philosopher who reflects on life and concludes: – That there is time for everything. – Advice on religious duties. – Sayings of the wise.
<p>SONG OF SONGS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Tradition attributes its authorship to King Solomon. – It is an oriental poem with all its characteristics. – Some experts pretend to find an allegory between Christ (the Bridegroom) and his Church (the Bride).

POETIC AND WISDOM BOOKS OF THE BIBLE

AIMS Institute
American Institute for Multicultural Studies
Training & Transforming Lives