

**Poetic Literature**

- God inspired large portions not merely of prose, but of poetic form (often influenced by surrounding cultures)
- This is for our understanding (Lewis) and enjoyment (imaginative capacity)
- Only about 5 of the OT books are without poetry – approx. 1/3 of the Bible is poetic in nature
- This indicates the premium the Lord sets on the use of poetic/metaphorical language
- Unlike “line-break” poetry convention in English, Hebrew runs on without breaks (until Medieval Jewish scribes)
- Poetry commonly has rhythm and rhyme, but Hebrew poetry rhymes in thought, using parallelisms or “seconding sequences” – thought and meaning are supreme

**Kinds of Hebrew Parallelisms**

- 1.) *Synonymous* (Psalm 49:1) – same thing said in another way 
- 2.) *Antithetical* (Proverbs 15:1) – 2<sup>nd</sup> statement contrasts (but proving same thing) 
- 3.) *Synthetic* (Proverb 4:23) – 2<sup>nd</sup> statement fills out, expands, or gives reason 

- Within the language they were able to use *sound, syntax, and semantics* in this framework – though these devices mostly lost in translation
- This is expression of artistic expression, not plain statements
- These were carefully and thoughtfully crafted words, not the mere spontaneous overflow of feelings
- Examples of songs, prayers, laments, dirges, proverbs, riddles, burdens (or oracles)
- The majority of prophets from Isaiah to Malachi are poetic, showing the prophetic preference in this written form

**Particular Poetic Forms**

- 1.) *Acrostic* – first line begins with consecutive letter of the alphabet
- 2.) *Assonance* – use of words that sound alike
- 3.) *Alliteration* – repetition of the first sounds in words

**Kinds of Symbolic Language**

- *Image* – statement of something un-literal – “He leads me beside the still waters” (Psalm 23:2)
- *Metaphor* – implied comparison (without use of “as” or “like”) – “I am the door” (John 10:9)
- *Simile* – comparison (using “as” or “like”) – “He shall be like a tree” (Psalm 1:3)
- *Hyperbole* – purposeful exaggeration for emotional effect – “Look, the world has gone after Him” (John 12:19)

**Wisdom Literature**

- Wisdom = “skill in the art of godly living”
- *Proverb* (Proverbs), *philosophical sermon* (Ecclesiastes), *story* (Job), and *erotic poetry* (Song of Solomon)
- Common social contexts of wisdom literature are literate, wealthy, and often nobility (David, Solomon, Job)
- These forms are not unique to Israel in near East, but other extant examples of very similar forms
- There is some so similar (including myth stories) that there is a clear connection of some kind
- How to respond? (1.) plug ears (2.) reject as deceptive counterfeit (3.) recognize echoes of God’s Truth
- I deeply respect and understand the 2<sup>nd</sup> option
- If the 3<sup>rd</sup> option is embraced, then things are read with prayerful discernment with the Scriptures as the touchstone
- Even in reading something like Job there is the recognition of both truth and error that has to be sorted
- These examples show how biblical literary form both accommodate (or incarnate) themselves while also challenging or correcting
- Hebrew (and Christian) cultures were not isolated settings unaffected by surroundings, but both influenced and were influenced

**Common Themes in Poetic/Wisdom Literature**

- 1.) *The fear of the Lord* – Job 1:1; Psalm 2:11; Proverbs 1:7; Ecclesiastes 12:13
- 2.) *Two contrasting kinds of people* – the righteous/wise/godly and wicked/fool/ungodly (very black and white)
- 3.) *The dilemma of the suffering righteous and prospering wicked* – Job, Psalm 73