



Series: Bible Survey

Lesson: 23. Hebrew Poetry & Job

- **Introduction to Hebrew Poetry**

- The 'poetic books' (Job–Song) are a combination of Hebrew poetry AND _____ literature from the 'Writings' section of the Tanakh.
- Hebrew poetry is found all over the Old Testament, not just in these books.
- Understanding Hebrew poetry starts with applying some common sense from what we know of poetry in general:
 - Poetry is making _____ using words.
 - Even when poetry is conveying truth, it still uses conventions like _____ language to convey that truth in unique ways.
 - Biblical poetry is generally not trying to express theological propositions; it's trying to deepen our understanding of that theology by expressing it in creative ways.
- Hebrew poetry does use conventions that are difficult to translate, but it mostly relies on 'rhyming ideas,' mainly in three ways:
 - Repetition – Line B restates the point of Line A in a different way.

*Job 38:7 – When the morning stars sang together
And all the sons of God shouted for joy?*

*Ps. 19:2 – Day to day pours forth speech,
And night to night reveals knowledge.*

- Contrast – Line B is the opposite of Line A.

*Prov. 15:1 – A gentle answer turns away wrath,
But a harsh word stirs up anger.*

*Prov. 15:32 – He who neglects discipline despises himself,
But he who listens to reproof acquires understanding.*

- Escalation – Line B is parallel to Line A on a different scale.

*Job 2:2 – Drought and heat consume the snow waters,
So does Sheol those who have sinned.*

*Ps. 58:10 – The righteous will rejoice when he sees the vengeance;
He will wash his feet in the blood of the wicked.*

- Poetic literature in the Bible should do two things for us:
 - Help us to appreciate the value of using all things, including artistic expression, for the glory of God
 - Drive the theology we know deeper into our hearts by contemplating not just *what* is expressed but *how* it is expressed.

- **Introduction to Job**

- Author: Unknown (Jewish tradition says Moses)
- Date: Unknown, but probably occurs sometime between the Tower of Babel and the Exodus; probably written sometime before Ezekiel (cf. Ezek. 14:14, 20)
- Main themes:
 - The suffering of the righteous
 - How we respond when we experience OR witness suffering
 - The sufficiency of God
 - The Creator-creature distinction

- **How to Read Job**

- The inspired author of the book is trying to emphasize the _____ of their arguments by conveying them through poetry, rather than give an exact transcription of their debate.
- It is an _____ to assume everything Job says is right and/or everything his friends say is wrong: Both parties mostly say true things about God, and both parties have some wrong attitudes that need to be corrected.

- It is noteworthy that _____ is the only one involved in the dispute who isn't corrected by God at the end.
- How should we read it then?
 - Job should open our eyes to the fact that _____ is a much more complicated subject than we like to think.
 - WHEN we suffer, we should see ourselves in Job's shoes as we lament and learn from his experience, and WHEN our brothers/sisters suffer, we should see ourselves in Job's friends and learn from their mistakes.
 - This is poetry designed to relate the emotions we feel in life to the theology we know.

Discussion:

1. What are you most likely to assume when you see people suffer? What should you also consider?
2. What's the main difference between Job's complaints and the lament psalms?

FOR REFLECTION: What time(s) in your life have you most related to Job? How does this book help you in those times of life?

Blanks: wisdom, art, figurative, substance, oversimplification, Elihu, suffering