



**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