

A STUDY IN HEBREW BIBLE WISDOM LITERATURE - PROVERBS AND SONG OF SONGS
ACTS Ministry Bible Study - Part One, Autumn, 2018
Background and Design for Our Bible Study Group

We return to study two books of Hebrew Wisdom Literature - Proverbs and the Song of Songs (or) The Song of Solomon (used interchangeably). The former book, we have not studied before, and the latter, we have. Here is the full list of Hebrew Wisdom appearing in most Protestant bibles - Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and The Song of Songs. Catholic bibles include two other books -The Book of Wisdom and Ecclesiasticus/Ben Sirach. While all these books appear in the New Jerusalem Bible we will study only the first two noted above. They provide a rich and varied representation of them all.

For a good description of The Wisdom Books please consult DK pages 169-193. Please try to read all these articles as we go through the 9 sessions this fall. Some will be assigned as special readings.

The Book of Proverbs and the Song of Songs

The background information for the 31 chapters of Proverbs is to be found in DK pp. 184-185.

The background material for the 8 chapters of the Song of Solomon - see DK pp. 190-191.

Proverbs and the Song of Songs are the core collection of wise sayings in this part of the Bible.

They are both attributed to “wise” King Solomon, son of the major king of Israel, David.

Proverbs are succinct, witty and pungent reflections on life. They seem to have emerged from the heady discussions of the royal court. The vast majority of these sayings have no connection with religion or faith, but are a matter of good common sense. From time to time it is stated that “all wisdom comes from Yahweh.” Other wise selections have been added to this particular collection.

The Song of Songs means “The greatest of all songs” and is love poetry. It has long been interpreted as an allegory describing the love of God for God’s people. In fact, this collection is very secular in nature. The passionate imagery is sometimes startling, but each image expresses a quality of love that still rings true today.

Key Themes of Proverbs and Song of Songs: A Study Design (for sessions one thru five)
September 20th (Introducing Hebrew Wisdom - Discuss especially DK pp. 170-171.)

September 27th (Proverbs chapters 1-9) Instructions, warnings and hymns to wisdom; quite theological (Read the article on Marriage and Family in Ancient Israel DK pp. 186-7)

October 4th (Proverbs chapters 10-22) Wealth and poverty. Wise and foolish behaviour. (Read the article on Life After Death DK pp. 178-179)

October 11th (Proverbs chapters 23-24) Material perhaps borrowed from Egyptian texts.

October 18th (Proverbs chapters 25-29) Wisdom ascribed to Solomon, post-exilic interpretation.

Dates and topics may be adjusted.

