

OLD
TESTAMENT
POETRY &
PROPHECY

JAMES L. R. CATRON



Developed as a study course by Emmaus Correspondence School, founded in 1942.

Old Testament Poetry and Prophecy

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STUDENT INSTRUCTIONS

This book is devoted to the survey of the Poetical and Prophetical sections of the Bible. There are five books which are especially labeled as books of poetry. They are Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon. The prophets were foretellers and forthtellers. The author has given many insights that will enable the student to appreciate these rich portions of God's Word.

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Course Components

This course has two parts: this study course and the exam booklet.

How To Study

This study has twelve chapters, and each chapter has its own exam. Begin by asking God to help you understand the material. Read the chapter through at least twice, once to get a general idea of its contents and then again, slowly, looking up any Bible references given.

Begin studying immediately, or if you are in a group, as soon as the group begins. We suggest that you keep a regular schedule by trying to complete one chapter per week.

Exams

In the exam booklet there is one exam for each chapter (exam 1 covers chapter 1 of the course). Do not answer the questions by what you think or have always believed. The questions are designed to find out if you understand the material given in the course.

After you have completed each chapter, review the related exam and see how well you know the answers. If you find that you are having difficulty answering the questions, review the material until you think you can answer the questions.

How Your Exams Are Graded

Your instructor will mark any incorrectly answered questions. You will be referred back to the place in the course where the correct answer is to be found. After finishing this course with a passing average, you will be awarded a certificate.

If you enrolled in a class, submit your exam papers to the leader or secretary of the class who will send them for the entire group to the Correspondence School.

See the back of the exam booklet for more information on returning the exams for grading.

Introduction to the Old Testament Poetic Books

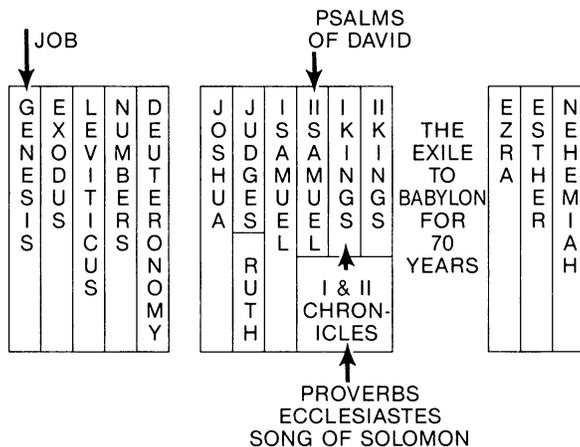
The Old Testament is made up of thirty-nine books. These are divided into the categories of *Law* (Genesis–Deuteronomy), *History* (Joshua–Esther), *Poetry* (Job–Song of Solomon), and *Prophecy* (Isaiah–Malachi). This book is devoted to the survey of the Poetical and Prophetical books. A survey is simply an overview. It does not present each book in detail. It helps the reader to know generally what is in each book, how the book flows, who wrote the book, and when it was written. One value of a survey is that it prepares us to study a book more intelligently in detail later on. Another value is that it helps us to see the Bible as a unified whole. The survey, then, is basic to any diligent study and detailed understanding of God’s holy Word.

Time Location of the Poetical Books

Though one will find poetry here and there in the Law and Historical books and much poetry in the Prophetical books, there are five books which are especially labeled as books of poetry. These are Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon.

The setting of Job was during the time of the Old Testament patriarchs (Genesis 12–50). Many believe that Moses wrote it. The Psalms were primarily written during the era of David, though some were written as early as Moses’ time and others as late as Ezra’s day. Solomon, whose history is given in 1 Kings 1–11 and 2 Chronicles 1–9, wrote Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon.

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Themes of the Poetical Books

Job tells us how to suffer in the will of God (Job 1:20-22; 2:10). The Psalms teach us the art of prayer and praise to our God (Psalms 3 and 150). Proverbs instructs us how to live wisely on earth in the fear of God (Proverbs 1:7). Ecclesiastes teaches us how to have true meaning and joy in life in fear of God (Ecclesiastes 2:24-26; 12:13-14). Song of Solomon tells us how to have genuine love in courtship and marriage as God originally intended it (Song of Solomon 8:6-7).

The Practical Character of the Poetical Books

The Poetical books address many life situations which we face every day. Some of these are: suffering, fear, loneliness, anxiety, anger, hatred, sorrow, stress, disobedient children, confusion, and opposition. These books give sound advice on how to cope with these and a host of other problems.

Hebrew Poetry Found in the Poetical Books

In Western poetry, we are used to rhyme, but poetry in the Bible does not use this widely. Instead, Hebrew poetry uses *thought parallelism*. After the writer makes a statement in the first line of a verse, it is repeated, enlarged, or balanced by statements in the remaining line or lines. Let us note some examples of this.

1. **SYNONYMOUS PARALLELISM** (same idea, different words)

The second line repeats the *thought* of the first line. “Your mercy, O Lord, is in the heavens, and Your faithfulness reaches to the clouds.” Psalm 36:5

2. **ANTITHETIC PARALLELISM** (opposite idea)

The idea of second line contrasts with the first line. “For the Lord knows the way of the righteous, *BUT* the way of the ungodly will perish.” Psalm 1:6

3. **SYNTHETIC PARALLELISM**

(several ideas drawn together to complete the idea)

The second and later lines *explain*, or *add* something. There are three types of this parallelism:

a. **COMPLETION TYPE** (Psalm 29:1)

“Give unto the Lord, O you mighty ones,
Give unto the Lord glory and strength.”
We see how “glory and strength” complete the thought.

b. **COMPARISON TYPE** (Proverbs 15:17)

Often this type will use the words *better . . . than*.
“Better is a dinner of herbs where love is,
Than a fatted calf with hatred.”

c. **REASON TYPE** (Proverbs 26:4)

“Do not answer a fool according to his folly,
LEST you also be like him.”

4. **EMBLEMATIC PARALLELISM**

(Proverbs 25:25) (Uses *like . . . so is*)

The first line serves as an emblem or illustration of the second line. “*AS* cold water to a weary soul, *SO IS* good news from a far country.”

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Knowing something about thought parallelism makes it much easier to read through the Poetic books and it helps us properly interpret the poetic scripture.

Since the Poetic books are so practical in nature and universal in their appeal, you should read them often. It is unfortunate that these books are so neglected simply because they are written in poetic style. But don't stop with just reading them—memorize them, too. For instance many of the shorter psalms which deal with trust and praise are ideal to hide in your heart through memorization. Then they can become a constant source of strength and encouragement.

The Book of Job How to Suffer in the Will of God

Few people choose to suffer. We take great measures to protect ourselves and avoid suffering. Self-preservation is instinctive in man, yet suffering is a fact of life. Suffering began when our first parents sinned (Genesis 3) and it will remain until we are in heaven (Revelation 21:4).

The problem of pain is one that philosophers, theologians, and the average man have wrestled with from the very beginning. The book of Job is the outstanding book of the Bible that deals with personal suffering.

Job is a long book with forty-two chapters and primarily concerns itself with the calamities which afflicted God's servant, Job. Job was not told why he had to suffer. The *why* of suffering was something he did not understand. God withheld from Job vital information (1:6-12; 2:1-8) which might have defeated God's purposes in this suffering if Job had known it.

We will learn from the book of Job that it is more important that we learn *how* to suffer than to know the reason behind suffering. Faith and submission are the two basic requirements for successful suffering in the will of God. Job brilliantly exercised both faith and submission in the beginning of his suffering (1:20-22; 2:9-10), but became distracted in the process of dealing with his grief (chapters 3-31). He later resumed these attitudes (chapters 38-42), and the story ended on a very bright and positive note (42:7-17).

It is easier to have faith and submit to God when we know the character of God. He is wise, just, and full of compassion. He has our best interests at heart and will never let us be tested beyond what we can bear (1 Corinthians 10:13). We can trust Him (Psalm 55:22).

When Did the Story of Job Take Place?

Scholars have debated when Job lived, and probably the best answer is during the period of the patriarchs (Genesis 12–50). So many things in the book of Job are like the history and culture during the time of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. However, not knowing the exact answer to this question will not prevent us from understanding the message of the book.

Who Wrote the Story of Job?

Bible scholars do not agree totally about who wrote Job. Some believe Moses wrote it during his stay in Midian (1485–1445 B.C., Exodus 2–3) for the purpose of comforting the people of Israel who were suffering in Egypt. Others prefer the time of Solomon (971–931 B.C., 1 Kings 1–11) when so many wisdom books were being produced. Still others think that it was written as late as the seventh century B.C. during the reign of King Manasseh (2 Kings 21). This writer thinks that the authorship of Moses has the least problems. However, not knowing the identity of the author does not affect the interpretation of Job.

Who Was Job? A Character of Fiction, or an Historical Figure?

Though there are some who claim that Job was not a real person, there is ample evidence from both the Old and New Testaments to prove that he was. The prophet Ezekiel, for instance, considered Job an historical person (Ezekiel 14:14, 20) by linking him with Noah and Daniel. James, in the New Testament, leaves no doubt that he believed Job was a real person by linking Job with the Old Testament prophets (James 5:10–11). If Job were simply a fictional character, the message of the book would be far less forceful and much less effective in comforting those who suffer. May Job's life story be a source of great comfort and encouragement to you!

Who Are the Characters of Job?

1. JOB

Job was an incredible person of high character whom God commended to Satan as the greatest moral and spiritual man on the earth (1:8). Like so many others in the Bible, Job is a model for us.

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2. **THE LORD**

The Lord allowed Job to be severely tested. Job lost his wealth, his family, and his health. But God praised him for his faithfulness in the end (42:7-17). God uses testings in our lives to build into us character and endurance (James 5:11). If you are suffering, don't give up!

3. **SATAN**

Satan means *adversary*. He is the chief of fallen angels. He hates God and hates God's people. Satan had a very strong hatred for Job and wanted to destroy him. Satan hates any believer who lives totally for God. All of Job's problems can be traced to Satan (chapters 1-2). We must, like Job, take up the "shield of faith" against him (Ephesians 6:16; Job 1:20-22; 2:9-10).

4. **JOB'S WIFE**

She is a minor character mentioned in 2:9-10. Obviously she suffered because of the loss of her children and Job's suffering. However, she had a very negative influence since she advised Job to "curse God and die!" Her emotions ruled her words.

5. **ELIPHAZ, BILDAD, ZOPHAR**

These men were three friends of Job who came to comfort him in his great suffering (2:11-13). Unfortunately, they turned out to be tools of the Devil, falsely accusing Job that he suffered because he sinned (chapters 3-31). Be careful what you counsel!

6. **ELIHU**

Elihu was a young man who sought to help Job when the three other friends became frustrated and gave up (chapters 32-37). He did have some helpful things to tell Job, but it was only God (38:1-42:6) who brought Job back to submission and faith (40:1-5; 42:1-6).

How Does the Story of Job Develop?

1. **THE DRAMATIC ASSAULT OF SATAN UPON GOD'S SERVANT, JOB** Chapters 1–2

Are you looking for a hero to admire? Job is your man! In his economic, social, and domestic status, he was the greatest man of the East (1:3). In terms of morality and spirituality, he had no rivals in all the earth (1:1, 8; 2:3).

Satan hated Job. In fact, he hates anyone who lives like Job—“blameless, upright, fearing God, and turning away from evil” (1:1). Satan wants to destroy those whom he hates. Chapters 1–2 record two assaults on Job by Satan (1:6-19; 2:1-8). He accused Job of being a self-centered, selfish hypocrite (1:9-10; 2:4). Job served God for what he could get from Him, said Satan. If God were to remove His favor from Job, Job would curse God to His face (1:11).

God allowed Satan to afflict Job severely, taking all his wealth and his children. But instead of cursing God, Job worshiped (1:20-22). Satan attacked again by afflicting Job with a serious and painful disease (2:7-8) but Job still retained his integrity (2:9-10). Satan was wrong about Job. Job did not serve God for gain. Job is a marvelous example from the Old Testament that our faith can be exceedingly strong even in disaster. Faith is not dependent on circumstances. Is this the kind of faith you have?

Three of Job's friends came to comfort him (2:11-13) and were absolutely shocked by what they saw (2:12). They sat with him seven days and seven nights without uttering a word (2:13). Their coming forms the prelude to the next major section of Job (chapters 3–31) in which they will seek to help their friend.

2. **JOB'S LAMENT AND HIS DEBATE WITH THE THREE FRIENDS** Chapters 3–31

This section is tedious for the beginning student studying this great book. It contains Job's lamentation (chapter 3) and a debate between Job and his three friends as to the cause of his sufferings (chapters 4–31).

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Seven days and nights of silence end, and Job breaks forth with an anguished cry in which he wishes three things. He wishes he had never been born (3:1-10), he wishes he had died at birth (3:11-19), and he wishes he could now die (3:20-26). For seven days he has struggled over his grief and he could not reconcile his blameless life with his suffering. Remember that Job did not know what went on in the heavens when Satan went into the presence of God. The three friends, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar, lacked that information, too.

Chapters 4–31 consist of three cycles of speeches by the friends and Job. Observe how these are laid out:

FIRST CYCLE 4–14

Eliphaz speaks and Job answers 4–7
Bildad speaks and Job answers 8–10
Zophar speaks and Job answers 11–14

SECOND CYCLE 15–21

Eliphaz speaks and Job answers 15–17
Bildad speaks and Job answers 18–19
Zophar speaks and Job answers 20–21

THIRD CYCLE 22–31

Eliphaz speaks and Job answers 22–24
Bildad speaks and Job answers 25–31

Though Job could not understand why he was suffering, he never once considered that his suffering was because of sin in his life. We know from chapters one and two, of course, that sin was not the problem. However, the three friends persistently accused Job of sin. There was no doubt in their minds: sin was the cause of Job's disaster (see 4:7; 8:6, 20; 11:3-6). Job's suffering would stop only when Job confessed his sin and repented before God (5:8; 8:5-7; 11:13). The three friends became more dogmatic as the debate continued, and they became exasperated with Job because he would not agree to their interpretation of his tragedy. They thought they had the answers to a problem which in reality they knew nothing about! Their example is a warning to all would-be counselors: Counsel on the basis of knowledge and understanding, not preconceived notions or systems.

We are glad that Job never agreed to their approach to suffering. However, Job lost his composure and in the process of denying that he had sinned, he accused God of being unjust (9:17; 32:2) and unwise (23:3-7; 31:35-37) in handling his painful situation. We are glad that in the process of all this anger and frustration, Job never lost his positive, long-range trust in God as his redeemer and vindicator (19:25). Let us be like Job. Never give up hope no matter how dark the hour. Our Redeemer lives!

But this is not the end of the story. Another person, Elihu, has been listening to the debate. He believes he can help Job where the three friends have failed.

3. THE INTERVENTION OF ELIHU Chapters 32–37

Elihu was angry. He was angry at the three friends because they condemned Job, but had not solved the problem. He was angry with Job because he justified himself at the expense of blaming God (32:2-3). After Elihu introduced himself (chapter 32), he proceeded to give four messages to which Job did not respond. The first three (chapters 32–35) are similar in form. Elihu made an *appeal* to listen to him, followed by a *quote* from Job's speeches to the three, and then *criticized* Job's reasoning. The last message (chapters 36–37) is a declaration by Elihu of the righteousness and greatness of God, which Job had doubted.

Were Elihu's messages effective in helping Job? We don't know since Job never responded. Elihu did rebuke Job for his rash words against God during the debate, but he did not fall into the trap of the three friends by blaming Job's problem on some unknown sin. From a positive point of view, Elihu thought suffering was for our discipline and education (33:17-30). Certainly that applied to Job.

We can learn from Elihu. He was a young person who had a burden to help Job, who felt he could make a contribution, and who got involved. Young men and women today can make a difference in the lives of others by following the courageous example of Elihu.

But the story doesn't end with Elihu. It is only God that can help Job in his suffering. Job has been crying out for God to show Himself. Now is the time (chapters 38–42).

4. **GOD'S DEALING WITH JOB AND JOB'S RESPONSE**
38:1–42:6

God's dealings with Job are somewhat surprising. We would expect Him to tell Job all that happened in the heavens between God and Satan (chapters 1–2). From what we are told, He never did. God appeared to Job in a storm (38:1; 40:6) signifying that He was coming to judge Job. Judge him for what? For his arrogant, self-justifying accusations against God. Job had said that God was unwise and unjust in His dealings with him. God now holds Job accountable. His judgment is for the purpose of bringing Job back to the kind of submission he had at first (chapters 1–2). It was not so important that Job know *why* he was suffering as it was that he learn *how* to suffer. God wants humble submission to Him in every situation in life.

a. **GOD'S FIRST APPROACH TO JOB FROM THE WHIRLWIND** 38:1–40:5

Job had pretended to be wiser than God, so God took the place of the student and told Job to instruct Him (38:3). God questioned Job about the animate and inanimate world. The questions, of course, were intended to humble him. If Job cannot by his own wisdom fathom the created world, what right does he have to insult the Creator by saying He is unwise! The response from Job is gratifying (40:3–5). He repented and submitted himself to the Lord.

b. **GOD'S SECOND APPROACH TO JOB FROM THE WHIRLWIND** 40:6–42:6

God spoke again from the whirlwind. This time He took up Job's claim of God's injustice in ruling the world, and especially ruling Job's life (9:17). So in ironical language, God challenged Job to play God for a day (40:8–14): "Let us see how you will handle the governing of the world." Job must clothe himself with divine attributes and assume divine power (40:9–10). Job was challenged to fulfill the ministry of a judge, of humbling the proud and destroying the wicked. If he could do this successfully, then God would confess that Job is self-sufficient (40:11–14). To narrow it down, God said, "Let's see what you can do with just two animals, the Behemoth (40:15–24) and the Leviathan (41:1–34)." Why, Job doesn't have either the strength

or the wisdom to govern these two animals, let alone the universe. Job's inability to govern the universe makes him inadequate and unable to criticize God's actions as ruler either of the universe or of Job personally (9:17). Job has no righteous grounds, then, to call God's justice into question. The response from Job was once again gratifying (42:1-6). He repented and submitted to the Lord. His trial was over, and now it was time for restoration.

5. CONCLUSION TO THE STORY OF JOB 42:7-17

Everyone loves a story that ends well. Job ends with God rebuking the three friends and making provision for their restoration (42:7-9). Though God was angry with the friends, He loved them and wanted them reconciled to Himself and to Job.

Job's prosperity was restored "*when* he prayed for his friends." He received twice as much as before except for the number of his children. The author of Job recorded that Job's relatives and friends returned as well when they found out about Job's new prosperity (40:10-17).

We are glad that God honored Job with this return of fortune, but we must remember that God nowhere promises this to the Christian. If He does, praise Him for it. If He does not, praise Him still.

OLD
TESTAMENT
POETRY &
PROPHECY

EXAM BOOKLET

AK '05

STUDENT NAME

ADDRESS

CITY, STATE, ZIP

COURSE GRADE: _____

INSTRUCTOR



Exam developed by Emmaus Correspondence School, founded in 1942.

A NOTE ON THE EXAMS

Each exam contains both Multiple Choice and What Do You Say? questions. The exams are designed to check your knowledge of the course material and the Scriptures. After you have studied a chapter, review the exam questions for that lesson. If you have difficulty in answering the questions, re-read the material. Complete the questions without using the course or your Bible unless the exam instructs you otherwise.

MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

Each exam has multiple-choice questions to be answered. You will be asked to write in the letter of the correct answer. Here is an example:

The color of grass is

- A. blue C. yellow
B. green D. orange

 B

In questions that contain a Scripture reference, you may use your Bible to help you answer them. If your instructor has provided a single page Answer Sheet, record your answer on that sheet.

WHAT DO YOU SAY? QUESTIONS

Questions headed this way are designed to help you express your ideas and feelings. You may freely state your own opinions in answer to such questions.

RETURNING THE EXAM

See the back of this booklet for instructions on returning your exam for grading.

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CHAPTER 1 EXAM

**INTRODUCTION TO THE POETIC BOOKS
AND THE BOOK OF JOB**

_____ **EXAM GRADE**

Before starting this exam, write your name and address on the front of this Exam Booklet.

Directions: Read each question carefully and write the letter of the correct answer in the blank space on the right. Use the separate answer sheet if provided.

1. The Old Testament is made up of _____
 - A. 23 books
 - B. 27 books
 - C. 32 books
 - D. 39 books

2. In synonymous parallelism _____
 - A. the second line is in contrast to the first
 - B. the second line is the same thought as the first
 - C. the second line adds something to the first
 - D. the second line is an illustration of the first

3. Job is a long book consisting of _____
 - A. 22 chapters
 - B. 32 chapters
 - C. 42 chapters
 - D. 52 chapters

4. The events of Job took place during the time of _____
 - A. the patriarchs
 - B. the Egyptian bondage
 - C. the judges' period
 - D. the kings' period

5. Job was a genuine character of history as evidenced by _____
 - A. Isaiah and Matthew
 - B. Jeremiah and Romans
 - C. Ezekiel and James
 - D. Daniel and Revelation

CHAPTER 1 EXAM CONTINUED

- 6. Satan's first assault was against
 - A. Job's person
 - B. Job's possessions and children
 - C. Job's wife
 - D. Job's three friends_____

- 7. Chapters 4-31 contain
 - A. two cycles of debate
 - B. three cycles of debate
 - C. four cycles of debate
 - D. five cycles of debate_____

- 8. In chapters 4-31, Job's three friends explained his suffering as
 - A. the result of Job's sin
 - B. the work of Satan
 - C. God's love in disguise
 - D. an act of fate_____

- 9. What was Elihu's view of Job's suffering?
 - A. He suffered for some unknown sin
 - B. Job had not sinned at all
 - C. The three friends were correct in their evaluation
 - D. Job's sufferings were disciplinary and educational_____

- 10. Job accused God during his debate with the three of being
 - A. unwise and unjust
 - B. unloving
 - C. unfaithful to His promises
 - D. callous to his pain_____

WHAT DO YOU SAY?

What have you discovered in the Bible about suffering that has been helpful to you?
