Introduction to Biblical Wisdom Literature

1. Proverbs
   1. Two main sections to the book:
      1. Proverbs 1-9: Lectures from a father to his son
      2. Proverbs 10-31: Wisdom Collections
         1. Proverbs of Solomon (10:1 – 22:16)
         2. Thirty Sayings of the Wise (22:17 – 24:22)
         3. More Sayings of the Wise (24:23 – 34)
         4. Proverbs of Solomon Collected by Hezekiah’s Men (25:1 – 29:27)
         5. Sayings of Agur (ch. 30)
         6. Sayings of Lemuel (ch. 31)
   2. The Retribution Principle
      1. 12:7 "The wicked are overthrown and are no more, but the house of the righteous will stand."
      2. 12:28 "In the path of righteousness is life, and in its pathway there is no death."
      3. 13:21-22 "Disaster pursues sinners, but the righteous are rewarded with good. A good man leaves an inheritance to his children's children, but the sinner's wealth is laid up for the righteous."
      4. 19:16 "Whoever keeps the commandment keeps his life; he who despises his ways will die."
2. Job
   1. Outline
      1. Job 1-2: Prologue
      2. Job 3-31: Dialogue between Job and his Friends
         1. Cycle 1
         2. Cycle 2
            1. Job 15:4-9 you are doing away with the fear of God, and hindering meditation before God. For your iniquity teaches your mouth, and you choose the tongue of the crafty. Your own mouth condemns you, and not I; your own lips testify against you. "Are you the firstborn of the human race? Were you brought forth before the hills? Have you listened in the council of God? And do you limit wisdom to yourself? What do you know that we do not know? What do you understand that is not clear to us?
         3. Cycle 3
            1. Job 22:5-11 Is not your wickedness great? There is no end to your iniquities. For you have exacted pledges from your family for no reason, and stripped the naked of their clothing. You have given no water to the weary to drink, and you have withheld bread from the hungry. The powerful possess the land, and the favored live in it. You have sent widows away empty-handed, and the arms of the orphans you have crushed. Therefore snares are around you, and sudden terror overwhelms you, or darkness so that you cannot see; a flood of water covers you.
         4. Job’s Lawsuit Against God
            1. Job 31:35-37 Oh, that I had one to hear me! (Here is my signature! let the Almighty answer me!) Oh, that I had the indictment written by my adversary! Surely I would carry it on my shoulder; I would bind it on me like a crown; I would give him an account of all my steps; like a prince I would approach him.
      3. Job 32-37: Elihu’s Speeches
      4. Job 38:41: God Answers Job
         1. Job 40:3-9 Then Job answered the LORD: "See, I am of small account; what shall I answer you? I lay my hand on my mouth. I have spoken once, and I will not answer; twice, but will proceed no further." Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind: "Gird up your loins like a man; I will question you, and you declare to me. Will you even put me in the wrong? Will you condemn me that you may be justified? Have you an arm like God, and can you thunder with a voice like his?
      5. Job 42: Epilogue
         1. Job 42:7 After the LORD had spoken these words to Job, the LORD said to Eliphaz the Temanite: "My wrath is kindled against you and against your two friends; for you have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has."
3. Ecclesiastes
   1. Basic Structure
      1. Narrative Frame (Ecc 1:1-2)
         1. The Words of Qohelet
      2. Narrative Frame (Ecc 12:8-14)
   2. Ecclesiastes 1:1-9 The words of the Teacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem. Vanity of vanities, says the Teacher, vanity of vanities! All is vanity. What do people gain from all the toil at which they toil under the sun? A generation goes, and a generation comes, but the earth remains forever. The sun rises and the sun goes down, and hurries to the place where it rises. The wind blows to the south, and goes around to the north; round and round goes the wind, and on its circuits the wind returns. All streams run to the sea, but the sea is not full; to the place where the streams flow, there they continue to flow. All things are wearisome; more than one can express; the eye is not satisfied with seeing, or the ear filled with hearing. What has been is what will be, and what has been done is what will be done; there is nothing new under the sun.