

## **David's Heir – The King Who Will Rule the World The Writings (Ketuvim)**

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### **Introduction: The Hero**

Among 'the gifts of the Jews' given to the rest of the world is a hope: A hope for a King who will rule the world with justice, mercy, and peace. Stories and legends from long ago seem to suggest that we are waiting for a special hero. However, it is the larger Jewish story that gives very specific meaning and shape to that hope.

The theme of the Writings is the Heir of David, the King who will rule the world. This section of Scripture is very significant, especially taken all together as a whole. For example, not only is the Book of Psalms a personal favorite of many people for its emotional expression, it is a prophetic favorite of the New Testament. The Psalms, written long before Jesus, point to a King. The NT quotes Psalms 2, 16, and 110 (Psalm 110 is the most quoted chapter of the OT by the NT, more frequently cited than Isaiah 53) in very important places to assert that Jesus is the King of Israel and King of the world. The Book of Chronicles – the last book of the Writings – points to a King. He will come from the line of David, and he will rule the world.

Who will that King be? What will his life be like? Will he usher in the life promised by God to Israel and the world? If so, how? And, what will he accomplish? How worldwide will his reign be? How will he defeat evil on God's behalf? Those are the major questions and themes found in the Writings. As we read these books, we will find ourselves hoping for that King, yearning to see a glimpse of him as best we can through the literature, as if his figure moves behind the words on the printed page. This King will bring the story of Israel to a resolution.

### **The Canonical Context: The Beginnings of the Torah, Nevi'im, and Ketuvim**

There is some variation in Jewish opinion on how to order the books. The Babylonian Talmud (Bava Batra 14b – 15a) gives their order as follows: Ruth, Psalms, Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, Lamentations of Jeremiah, Daniel, Esther, Ezra, Chronicles. Minus Job, that reflects the chronological order of when the books are believed to have been written, according to Jewish tradition. It starts from the origin of David in the story of Ruth, and the implications of the Davidic kingly house in the rest of the books. It proceeds to the Psalms, the majority of which were written by David; so David's name is associated with the entire Book of Psalms. Although beliefs about the authorship of Job are uncertain, David's heir Solomon is associated with Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon. Jeremiah wrote his Lamentations at the fall of Jerusalem to the Babylonians. Daniel ministered and wrote during the Babylonian and Medo-Persian captivity. Esther narrates events that happened during the Medo-Persian Empire. Ezra-Nehemiah narrates the return of the first exiles to Jerusalem. And Chronicles is an invitation for all Jews to return to Jerusalem, framing the promise of restoration around God's covenant with David and the Davidic line of kings.

Some, however, place Chronicles first instead of last, presumably to make the theological point that God's covenant with David is the main point of the Writings. In Tiberian Masoretic codices including the Aleppo Codex and the Leningrad Codex, and often in old Spanish manuscripts as well, the order of the Ketuvim is as follows: Chronicles, Psalms, Job, Proverbs, Ruth, Song of Solomon, Ecclesiastes, Lamentations of Jeremiah, Esther, Daniel, Ezra.

The ordering I prefer is the order found in most common printed versions of the Hebrew Bible today. Historically, this particular order of the books derives from manuscripts written by the Jews of Ashkenaz (medieval Germany). That order is: Psalms, Proverbs, Job, the five Megillot scrolls (Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther), Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah, and Chronicles. I prefer this ordering because the pattern it reflects has a precedent in the Old Testament: Namely, after 'the Teaching' comes the 'wise man' who meditates on it.

After Moses gives the Torah, or 'the Teaching' (also unfortunately called 'the Law' through the Latin translation 'lex,' although this title tends to emphasize the 'commands' and not the narrative and poetic portions), Joshua read it and meditated on it constantly (Josh.1:8). As a result of this deep study of the Torah, Joshua is portrayed as the great wise man reflecting on the Torah. He reflects on what was given before. And Joshua begins the second section of the Old Testament called The Prophets, or the Nevi'im. Interestingly enough, at least in this ordering, when the third section of the Old Testament, the Ketuvim, starts, we find Psalm 1, which praises the person who meditates on

God’s Torah constantly. That person is wise. We always reflect on what was given before. John Sailhamer calls these ‘compositional seams’ linking and holding together books of the Bible.<sup>1</sup>

Torah (Teaching)		Nevi'im (Prophets)		Ketuvim (Writings)	
Moses		Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Treisar (the Twelve Prophets)		Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Megillot (Ruth, Songs, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther), Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah, Chronicles <sup>2</sup>	
'The LORD God <b>commanded</b> the man, saying, 'From any tree of the garden you may eat, but from the <b>tree of knowledge of good and evil</b> you shall not eat...'' (Gen.2:16 – 17)		'Be strong and courageous, for you shall give this people possession of the [ <b>garden</b> ] <b>land</b> which I swore to their fathers to give them... This book of the <b>law</b> shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall <b>meditate on it day and night...</b> ' (Josh.1:8)		'But his delight is in the <b>law of the LORD</b> , and <b>in His law he meditates day and night</b> . He will be like a <b>tree firmly planted by streams of water</b> , which yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither...'' (Ps.1:2 – 3)	

Furthermore, the Torah ('Moses') begins with the garden land (Gen.1 – 2) and ends with the prediction of exile and the hope of restoration (Dt.27 – 33). The Nevi'im ('the Prophets') begins with the garden land in Joshua but ends with the reality of exile and the hope for restoration in Ezekiel. And the Ketuvim ('the Writings') begins with a motif of the garden land (the 'well watered tree' of Psalm 1) but ends with the reality of exile and the hope for restoration at the end of Chronicles. This is one way the entire Old Testament arrangement demonstrates having been intentionally ordered.

### The Internal Structure of the Ketuvim

#### *The Book of Psalms*

The Psalms are a group of poems and songs. A plurality of them is written by the warrior-poet-king David, although a few are attributed to other authors. One is even attributed to Moses. But all 150 Psalms are structured into five 'books':

1. Psalm 1 – 41
2. Psalm 42 – 72
3. Psalm 73 – 89
4. Psalm 90 – 106
5. Psalm 107 – 150

The arrangement of the Psalms into five 'books' echoes the structure of the division of the Torah of Moses into five scrolls called the Pentateuch. Just as the covenant established with Israel under Moses forms a 'charter' or 'constitution' document for Israel, so the covenant established with David forms a more specific 'charter' or 'constitution' concerning the Davidic king to come, the Messiah. The placement of a five-part literature at the head of the Davidic Ketuvim material resembles the placement of a five-part literature at the head of the whole Hebrew Scriptures. It speaks of God's covenant promise and hope. The Psalms can be grouped in many different ways. In my opinion, the Psalms correspond to one of two larger categories. (1) The first category is the life experiences of David, and in a sense the whole nation Israel, since David comes to articulate many of the experiences and prayers of the whole nation in many ways, and thus he symbolically stands for the whole nation; the life experiences of David have to do with suffering, being in exile, clinging to God's promises, being restored and vindicated, sin and repentance, and being restored again. (2) The second category of Psalms is God's plan for Israel and the world,

<sup>1</sup> John Sailhamer, *Introduction to Old Testament Theology: A Canonical Approach* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995)

<sup>2</sup> If one follows the Tiberian Masoretic codices and the old Spanish manuscripts, and arranges the Ketuvim with Chronicles first, the pattern still holds and is striking. Chronicles begins with the name 'Adam,' certainly connoting the garden and probably 'wisdom' in the sense that he was the first recipient of God's wise commands. If one follows the Babylonian Talmud, and arranges the Ketuvim with Ruth first, Ruth would seem to serve as an introduction to King David, as well as the theme of exile and restoration to the garden land.

especially because of the covenant God made with David for the house of David to inherit the nations and lead the world in praise of the one true God. Those involve the greater King who will be like David and yet far greater than David. Psalm 78 and 106 are songs that tell that story, the story of God's promise to David to bring forth a King. Psalm 2, 16, 22, and 110 predict this King most explicitly.

What will this king do? And what did this mean for Israel as she waited? The fifth group of Psalms is most suggestive. He will restore Israel from exile (Ps.107), be a priest-king like Melchizedek (Ps.110), in that he will rebuild a new Temple (Ps.118), establish the true law (Ps.119), lead Israel in singing the Psalms of Ascent on the journey back to God's presence (Ps.120 – 134), which included announcing redemption and forgiveness (Ps.130). So, while Israel waited at the incomplete and imperfect Temple sanctuary for Messiah, in other words, while they were still in exile (Ps.135 – 137), they remembered David and God's covenant with David (Ps.138 – 145, a Davidic collection). They concluded with five psalms of praise in which they called the nations to the worship of, and obedience to, the one true God, the God of Israel (Ps.146 – 150). This was Israel's hope. Significantly, Jesus' mother Mary, when visited by the angel who announced her pregnancy, responded with praise involving a quote from Psalm 107 (Ps.107:9 quoted in Lk.1:53). Perhaps this was one place in Scripture in which some hopeful – and wise – Jews were meditating during the time of Jesus. If that is the case, then Zecharias should have considered Psalm 113:9 ('He makes the barren woman abide in the house as a joyful mother of children') before so quickly disbelieving the angel's proclamation that his elderly and childless wife Elizabeth would give birth to the herald and forerunner of the Messiah, John the Baptist. Meditating on that Scripture would have made him wise.

#### *The Book of Proverbs*

Following the Book of Psalms is the Book of Proverbs, a collection of wise sayings attributed mainly to King Solomon, David's son and heir. The Book of Proverbs is written like a letter of wisdom from father to son. Just as wisdom is something God gives to humanity, so we must pass on wisdom to our children. Adam was given a word from God, and he was given the task of meditating on it and living it out, in particular with his wife Eve and then, implicitly, their children. So the picture of humanity in paradise is to be given a word from God to meditate on, to obey, and to pass on. That word then becomes something called 'wisdom.' God's people need God's wisdom to live in His blessing. Not surprisingly, then, 'wisdom' in Proverbs is portrayed as being present from the beginning of the world, from creation itself. The literary pattern found between the three major sections of the Old Testament occurs within this one section itself. David was given a covenant-forming word from God, and Solomon's job was to meditate on it and live it out. As I mentioned earlier, the book of Psalms may symbolically represent the Torah, as both are divided into five parts. What comes after both books? After the Torah comes Joshua, and after the Psalms comes Proverbs. Just as Joshua was a wise man by reflecting on Moses' teachings in the Torah, so Solomon was the quintessential wise man by reflecting on David's teachings in the Psalms. The pattern is: A prophet is followed by a wise man; the covenant teachings are written, and then studied. It happened after Moses, and it happens after David.

In the opening frame of Proverbs, chapters 1 – 9, there are a series of ten admonitions:<sup>3</sup>

1. Proverbs 1:8 – 19
2. Proverbs 2:1 – 22
3. Proverbs 3:1 – 12
4. Proverbs 3:21 – 35
5. Proverbs 4:1 – 9
6. Proverbs 4:10 – 19
7. Proverbs 4:20 – 27
8. Proverbs 5:1 – 23
9. Proverbs 6:20 – 35
10. Proverbs 7:1 – 27

This structure is probably meant to recall the Ten Commandments in the mind of the Jewish audience. Once again, the symmetry is suggestive. Within the covenant God gives commandments. Within the covenant with David (emphasized by Psalms and Chronicles, the beginning and ending books of the Ketuvim), God gives commandments (Proverbs). The proverbs reflect on the 613 commandments of the Torah. They are clever and

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<sup>3</sup> "Frame Narrative," *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Wisdom, Poetry, and Writings* (Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, ), p.243

witty sayings about the same subjects: marriage vs. adultery, family responsibilities vs. irresponsibility, parenting, passing down God's commands, honoring vs. dishonoring God, working the land vs. idleness, justice vs. injustice, contentment vs. greed, caring for the poor vs. treating them unjustly, etc. Reflecting on God's commands constitutes 'wisdom.' There is, however, a deeper point being made by Proverbs. Since God created the world and humanity with His 'wisdom' (Pr.8:22 – 36), God's commands are not arbitrary but are rather directing us to the fulfillment of our nature and purpose as God's creatures. 'Wisdom' in this sense seeks to bridge God's commands with His creation; it asserts that God's commands are not fundamentally foreign to God's creatures, but organically and intrinsically linked. There is a hidden unity in which God's commands are seen as the means by which God shepherds humanity and creation into more life. This will become part of Paul's argument in Romans 2:12 – 16 where the internal witness of the conscience within all human beings functions for each in a similar way that the Mosaic commandments functioned for Israel. Yes, sin has tarnished human nature, but human nature in its origins and in its continued existence, in a limited but persistent way, recognizes the wisdom of God in what God commands.

Wisdom is brought to its fullest revealing and fulfillment in Jesus, in how Jesus gives radical commands, which, though they went far above and beyond anything ever taught in the Old Testament, must still nevertheless be understood as fitted to and appropriate for all humanity; and also in how Jesus restores and fulfills the *Imago Dei* – and hence the wisdom of God – in his own humanity to fully reconcile God and humanity in his own physical, resurrected body (Col.1:22), so that he could share the Spirit of his new humanity with others. It is no coincidence that Paul describes Jesus in Colossians with Adamic and wisdom language: as the 'image of the invisible God' (Col.1:15, 3:10), which is parallel to Adam in Genesis 1; as the one through whom and for whom all things were created (Col.1:16 – 17), which is parallel to 'wisdom' in Proverbs 8; and as the source of a new humanity where human boundaries are transcended (Col.3:8 – 15).<sup>4</sup> With this language, Colossians portrays Jesus as not just a new Adam and a new wisdom, but the true Adam and the true wisdom of God. As always, what God creates and what God commands are joined by God's 'wisdom.'

Once again, the cultivation of 'wisdom' as a special responsibility of the Kings of Israel from the House of David fits a pattern Israel discerned. They saw symmetry between the Davidic King and Adam. David built the Temple sanctuary, a new Eden from which the presence of God was made known to all Israel, and indeed the world. In that sense, David and each of his heirs are seen as a recurrence of Adam, the original man who was specially charged with being in the original Eden, from which the presence of God would have been made known to the world. To reflect on God's wisdom was a uniquely Davidic task because it was an Adamic task, as is the task of explaining and expositing it. True 'wisdom' is the gift of God through the Davidic kings to the rest of the world. It is no surprise that the New Testament writers saw Jesus as the fulfillment of David, of God's Temple presence now dwelling in the human person of Jesus, and of course God's wisdom personified.

### *The Book of Job*

At first glance, placing the Book of Job within a Davidic framework seems odd. Thematically, there is no mention of David within Job. Chronologically, Jewish tradition says that Job was written long before David; whether or not Job should be associated with Jobab (Gen.10:29), the book of Job might have preceded even the Torah as a whole. However, we can nevertheless consider what the meaning of retaining Job in the canon of Hebrew Scripture must have meant to Israel, as well as the meaning of placing Job in the Ketuvim.

The character Job seems to me to be a representation of Israel as a whole. Job certainly behaves as an ideal Jew – offering bountiful offerings to God, praying and interceding for others, etc. Just as God had blessed Job with fruitful land and fertile family, God had brought Israel into the 'garden land' to enjoy the fruits of His gardening and to become a fruitful people. Moreover, Job was targeted by Satan, just as Israel was, as a bearer of God's praise and prophetic hope. The question of whether Job would love God without material and relational blessing was a question very pertinent to Israel, especially during its exile in Babylon. And God's response to Job emphasizing His wisdom – not His justice – was part of God's reply to Israel. Thus, it seems relatively easy to see the place of Job in Israel's Scriptures. Job's theodicy raised the same questions that Israel asked: Is this what it means to be God's covenant partner?

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<sup>4</sup> See also N.T. Wright, *Climax of the Covenant* (Grand Rapids, MI: Fortress Press, 1993), p.99 – 119.

Because I believe Job represents Israel, I believe Job shares a similar role with the Messianic King, who would also represent Israel. It is not too difficult to see, not a perfect one to one correspondence, but a categorical similarity between Job and Jesus. Jesus was the ideal Jew; he prayed and interceded for others. Jesus' supreme test was to forego the material and relational blessings of his Jewish heritage and ultimately give up his very life while still remaining committed to God. Jesus was targeted by Satan, but in a way that even Job was not: whereas God prevented Satan from taking Job's life, such protection was not extended to Jesus. Finally, the vindication of Jesus through his death and resurrection is seen as God's supreme demonstration of His wisdom (Rom.11:33, 1 Cor.1:22 – 24). Hence Job is a Davidic figure because he sums up Israel's experience and questions in himself. Therefore, difficult questions about the character of God raised by the book of Job (does God cause or allow evil) can be reframed. Job is focused on the question of being God's covenant partner. Who does Job represent? Job does not represent 'any person.' It is not appropriate to generalize that God causes or allows evil for everyone, or that God causes or allows evil in general. Rather, God makes a covenant with a human partner – represented by Job – which exposes that human partner to Satanic attack, because Satan desires to stop God from redeeming humanity through this human covenant partner. God nevertheless maintains and protects His chosen humanity, for the sake of all humanity. It is painful and costly to be God's covenant partner, which Israel and, supremely, Jesus, discovered. Yet there is blessing and hope involved, for this is God's wise way of unfolding His plan to redeem the world.

### *The Song of Songs*

The sequence of five short wisdom books in the 'Megillot' ('the scrolls') examines Davidic and wisdom themes from various angles. Many readers are, of course, aware that Song of Songs is interpreted allegorically by Jews to mean the marriage of YHWH and Israel, and subsequently by Christians to mean the marriage of Christ and the church. I see the parallel, but would prefer not to approach it as an allegory. Seeing Solomon in the place of God or Christ requires that he be flawless in his relational conduct, and I find it debatable whether he is portrayed as flawless in the Song. In fact, I believe the allegorical interpretation blinds interpreters to a subtle mistake committed by the character Solomon in the fourth section of the Song, which the married couple must then process and resolve (Song 5:2 – 8:4). Rather than see it as an allegory, I see a thematic connection that functions as a literary and conceptual allusion. It is not so much that Solomon is a perfect parallel to God or Christ, but that human marriage, at its best and as a whole, is an allusion to something much greater than itself. It opens a window of insight. In those moments when marriage is fully what God intended it to be, especially when it recovers from a mistake or miscommunication, marriage opens a spiritual connection to the original design of God in the Edenic garden, when the husband and wife were naked and unashamed. It is no coincidence that when Solomon and the Shulamite undress and consummate their union sexually, both husband and wife describe the wife's body as a 'locked garden' that is now open to him (Song 4:12 – 5:1). Metaphorically, her body is the garden to which he is now granted access. Metaphorically, sexual union in marriage unlocks a memory of God's garden paradise – this is what human life prior to sin was always meant to be.

Song of Songs is a reflection on God's ideal for human marriage, which of course is part of God's wisdom and bestowed upon humanity as a gift. His commands concerning marriage and sexuality are seen as drawing out what already is part of human nature; hence His commands are not foreign to His human creatures, but perfectly appropriate for them. After all, He created them and commanded them through His wisdom. The fact that the Song of Songs has been attributed to Solomon, and even contains Solomon as a character, is poetically beautiful in its theological point. Solomon is here either a young and faithful king prior to his later polygamy and apostasy, or, depending on how one interprets the couple as being significantly older or not in the fifth section (Song 8:5 – 16), an idealized king who lives onto old age still cherishing the bride of his youth. Solomon is also seen as the man in his Davidic role reflecting on God's wisdom and enjoying it – and his bride – to the full. What better man – and woman – to do so?

### *The Book of Ruth*

The short, memorable narrative of Ruth, Naomi, and Boaz is charming in its own right. But it is also a genealogy of King David. David is the last name and word in the book (Ru.4:21). As a genealogy, Ruth may be a defense of David's full status as an Israelite who had Canaanite blood by Judah's union with Tamar (Gen.38). Judah's child Perez was illegitimate. According to the Mosaic Law, an illegitimate child could not enter the worship assembly of the Lord until the tenth generation (Dt.23:2 – 4). The author of Ruth, at the end of the story, recounts exactly ten generations: Perez, Hezron, Ram, Amminadab, Nahshon, Salmon, Boaz, Obed, Jesse, David. Thus, David, a son of Judah by ten generations, is qualified for full membership in Israel. Through Ruth, Boaz continues his family line,

connecting Judah to David. David's lineage also contains hints of Jesus, who will, like Boaz, restore Israel's widows and be a great kinsman-redeemer who redeems his people.

### *The Lamentations of Jeremiah*

Historically, the sack of Jerusalem by the Babylonians in 586 BC triggered Jeremiah's lament. Jerusalem and the Temple were intricately bound up with David and all his heirs, and all suffered a disgraceful setback. The following verse demonstrates eloquently how intertwined were city ('Zion'), Temple ('His tabernacle'), and Davidic heir ('king'):

And He has violently treated His tabernacle like a garden booth;  
He has destroyed His appointed meeting place.  
The LORD has caused to be forgotten  
The appointed feast and sabbath in Zion,  
And He has despised king and priest  
In the indignation of His anger. (Lam.1:6)

The link between city, Temple, and king was both institutional and theological. Damage done to one rippled through to the others, in particular with the Babylonian invasion. All was not lost, however. Jeremiah continued to look forward to and envision a restored city and rebuilt Temple. In the Lamentations, while he did not specifically name a new Davidic heir to the throne as king, he nevertheless assumed it, for in the much larger Book of Jeremiah, Jeremiah expected such a Davidic king (Jer.23). The true king would rebuild both city and Temple, once again linking king, city, and Temple institutionally and theologically.

### *Ecclesiastes*

Always a bit mysterious and perhaps never exhaustively understood, Ecclesiastes stands out as an anomaly in the Bible as a whole. What is this book doing in the canon, and in the Ketuvim? The latter Ketuvim books – Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah, and Chronicles – all describe in various ways Israel's experience of exile. While the other books do in some ways also, especially Ruth, Job, and certain Psalms, these particular books seem to explore that experience quite thoroughly and concretely, making it their point to do so. As such, Ecclesiastes is an anti-wisdom tract. If true wisdom is found in right relationship with God and enjoying God's good garden, then the opposite of wisdom (antiwisdom) is found outside of conscious relationship with God and outside God's garden land. Ecclesiastes is an exploration of that kind of life, which is not much life at all.

The parallel to Adam is once again significant. Once the sacred sanctuary of Eden was gone, Adam and Eve experienced pain and sorrow; Adam in particular experienced the mind-numbing and meaningless circularity of his life, that he would pass 'from dust to dust' (Gen.3:17 – 19). His life would end as it began. Such circularity placed a rather large question mark over the meaning of his life. This same question mark is explored from all possible angles by Solomon, the imputed author of Ecclesiastes. Solomon is the king who came to symbolize an ironic greatness, filled with promise and wisdom from the beginning of his reign, but diminished by apostasy, greed, and lust by the end. He was a fallen Adam, indeed. Having had limitless financial resources, who better to indulge in every kind of experience and tell us what he found. He is the perfect 'investigative reporter' trying first hand to test the limits of the iron circle of death circumscribing human existence. If anyone could break out of this circularity, it was King Solomon.

Yet Solomon did not. Instead, he felt the circularity of the heavens, the water cycle, the seasons, etc. (Ecc.1:1 – 11) and concluded that everything 'under the sun,' i.e. without God directly involved in one's life, was meaningless. For if everything goes back to the way things were, then why do anything? And what meaning do our lives have? Solomon also saw that time is a pendulum swinging between oppositions (Ecc.3:1 – 10). The conclusion repeated over and over again is the same: 'For the fate of the sons of men and the fate of beasts is the same. As one dies so dies the other; indeed, they all have the same breath and there is no advantage for man over beast, for all is vanity. All go to the same place. All came from the dust and all return to the dust' (Ecc.3:19 – 20). The only 'wisdom' to be found here was to turn back to God in hope that He will perhaps break through the iron cycle of dust to dust (Ecc.2:25; 3:11; 12:1). Perhaps with Him, we will find new hope, meaning and joy in a life that is not simply and purely 'under the sun.' This is wisdom, indeed.

### *The Book of Esther*

Another story, beautifully told in its own right, describes Israel in exile: the Book of Esther. This time, our attention is drawn to the Jewish community in the Persian Empire. While of course the character of Esther is the main protagonist, the adversarial relationship between Mordecai and Haman evokes memories of a conflict between kings and peoples from long ago. Mordecai was a descendant of Kish, the father of King Saul, the first king of Israel. Haman was a descendant of Agag, the king of the Amalekites during the time of Saul (1 Sam.15:8), whom Saul failed to execute. The much older conflict between the Amalekites and Israel resurfaces here in the Book of Esther. Will the house of Kish now vanquish the house of Agag? Or will the defeat be repeated?

Mordecai's reminder to Esther surely draws upon his reflection on the Scriptures, and the many times God preserved Israel and delivered Israel from harm. 'For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place and you and your father's house will perish. And who knows whether you have not attained royalty for such a time as this?' (Est.4:14) Mordecai could say this because his faith and hope had been shaped by the promises of the God of Israel and the actual historic events of deliverance He brought about, including those by the paradigmatic figures of Joseph, Moses, and perhaps Daniel. Esther did not know what larger purpose surrounds her sudden entrance into the house of the Persian king Ahasuerus. But since Joseph, Moses, and Daniel were, in fact, indications for Esther, God's purpose was to preserve many lives.

Through Esther's courage and Mordecai's wisdom, Haman's plot is foiled, and Haman is hung on the wooden gallows of his own construction. The death visited on the house of Agag and the redemption of the lineage of Kish strikes another note as well, because King Saul was a fallen Adamic figure. He had been found 'hiding himself among the baggage' (1 Sam.10:22), which is similar to how Adam had hid himself from Eve behind fig leaves, and from God among the trees of the garden (Gen.3:7 – 8). If Mordecai is meant to evoke memories of Saul and in some ways redeem the story and lineage of Saul, then Mordecai's position as 'second only to King Ahasuerus, and great among the Jews and in favor with his many kinsmen, one who sought the good of his people and one who spoke for the welfare of his whole nation' (Est.10:3) is an allusion to the pre-fallen Adam, ruling in creation. Mordecai's wisdom – really his clinging onto God's wisdom – was rewarded with an Adamic position. Surely that was a lesson for all Jewish readers of the Book of Esther: God will, mysteriously but eventually, reward with Adamic authority those who hold to His wisdom in faith and hope, including those who previously failed to do so. If He works this way while Israel is still in exile, how much more will the fullness of His restoration be? And He will work thus not just for the sons of Adam, but the daughters of Eve as well.

#### *The Book of Daniel*

The Adamic – Davidic – Messianic theme emerges powerfully in the Book of Daniel. This book discusses the coming 'kingdom of God,' which would follow on the heels of several Gentile world empires. The kingdom will be ushered in by the King of Israel, by Daniel titled the 'Son of Man.' His kingdom is seen as the fifth kingdom that sequentially follows four other Gentile kingdoms. This sequence is seen from two perspectives. When Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon sees the sequence of Gentile kingdoms (Dan.2:31 – 47), he sees portions of one enormous statue made out of various important metals signifying different kingdoms: gold for Babylon, silver for Medo-Persia, bronze for Greece, and iron and clay for Rome. However, when Daniel sees those same four Gentile kingdoms in a vision (Dan.7:1 – 8), he sees them, not as precious metals in the shape of a human statue, but as terrible, deformed beasts: a lion with wings for Babylon, one resembling a bear for Medo-Persia, a leopard with four wings and four heads for Greece, and a dreadful animal with ten horns for Rome.

In the second perspective, the true perspective, Daniel uses the concepts and language of Genesis 1. In Genesis, animals had distinct characteristics and reproduced 'after their own kind.' The boundaries between those animals were strict. However, Daniel's vision mixes the body parts of animals; this is because the Gentile empires were political combinations of multiple people-groups held together by inappropriate military power, and as such were inappropriate. Daniel shows that this world is a world gone mad, in defiance of the will of God. These empires, like the animals representing them, are twisted and deformed. Into this vision comes the 'Son of Man' being called up to take a throne offered by God (Dan.7:9 – 14). This is an Adamic picture, where God's true humanity rises above the beasts in the order of creation to rule over them once again, as the first Adam did. Once again, the tie between Adam, David, and David's final heir, the Messiah, is linked thematically. God has determined that His true humanity would emerge triumphant over the wild forces in a creation gone wrong. And as such, this will be God's way of setting the world back to rights.

Surprisingly, Daniel predicts that the Messiah will be ‘cut off’ or killed, and that Jerusalem and its Temple will be destroyed again soon afterwards (Dan.9:25 – 27). In fact, Frank Holbrook argues that the death of the Messiah predicted in 9:26 is at the center of a chiasm.<sup>5</sup>

Language	Content
Hebrew	Historical Prologue (Dan.1)
Aramaic	A. Kingdom Prophecies: Statue of Precious Metals (Dan.2) B. Trials of God’s People: Worship Image, Fiery Furnace (Dan.3) C. King’s Prophecy: Nebuchadnezzar, Tree Cut Down (Dan.4) C’. King’s Prophecy: Belshazzar, Writing on the Wall (Dan.5) B’. Trials of God’s People: Worship King, Lion’s Den (Dan.6) A’. Kingdom Prophecies: Wild Beasts (Dan.7)
Hebrew	A. Kingdom Prophecies: Sacrificial Animals (Dan.8) B. Trials of God’s People: Prayer of Forgiveness (Dan.9:1 – 24) C. Decree to Restore the Temple (Dan.9:25) D. Death of the Messiah (Dan.9:26) C’. Destruction of the Temple (Dan.9:27) B’. Trials of God’s People: Mourning the Temple (Dan.10) A’. Kingdom Prophecies: King of North, King of South (Dan.11:1 – 12:4)
Hebrew	Prophetic Epilogue (Dan.12:5 – 13)

Many scholars, due to historical and interpretive challenges found in Daniel, see Daniel’s prophecies about Gentile empires not as prophecies but as reporting after the fact; they now place the date of the composition of this book in the time period of the Greek invasion of Palestine. Hence they believe that the book of Daniel was written or redacted sometime between 167 and 164 BC during the persecution of Antiochus Epiphanes. However, to my knowledge, such scholars have offered no explanation for why Daniel differs with all the other Jewish literature of that time period concerning king, city, and Temple. The four Books of Maccabees, for example, argue for the physical restoration of Jerusalem and the Temple, and offers bodily resurrection as a reward for holy war (e.g. 2 Mac.7). Judas Maccabeus himself provided a Davidic ‘model’ of sorts when he reconquered Jerusalem; he then functioned as a sort of king by cleansing the Temple and installing priests. Not only did this occasion begin the Jewish tradition of Hanukkah, Judas Maccabeus also provided a model for many other would-be Jewish ‘messiahs’ to follow – many men would try to liberate Jerusalem and cleanse the Temple, failing utterly until Rome crushed the Jewish rebels at Masada in 135 AD.

The mysterious element is this: Daniel prophesies the destruction of the city and Temple, and the death of the true Messiah. Other Jewish literature, especially Maccabees and the apocalyptic 4 Ezra, countered the predictions of Daniel regarding king, city, and Temple to promote a more ethnocentric, nationalistic Jewish agenda. Hence, the Jews had plenty of other literature to choose from to place in their canon. In theory, they could have ignored Daniel. Yet if Daniel first emerged in Jewish life in 167 BC, then what explains the widespread interest in and acceptance of Daniel as canonical literature when the dominant political mood of Israel was against it?<sup>6</sup> Skeptical scholars offer no explanation for why the Book of Daniel is completely at variance with other Jewish non-canonical literature written in the Maccabean period about the fate of the king, city, and Temple: the dominant political and religious institutions of Jewish national life. Thus, one begins to sense that the scholars who argue for a late date for the Book of Daniel – in part because they think the Gentile history it records must have been written after the fact – are trying to evade one miracle (prophecy) but are creating another, more difficult one (acceptance and canonization). Even

<sup>5</sup> Frank Holbrook, ed., 1986, “The Seventy Weeks, Leviticus, and the Nature of Prophecy,” *Daniel and Revelation Committee Series*, Vol.3, Review and Herald Publishing Association.

<sup>6</sup> By the first century BC, the Book of Daniel already had a rich textual history. There were at least three versions extant: 1) the Hebrew/Aramaic version on which the Masoretic Text and most of the Dead Sea Scrolls copies are based; 2) Th-Dan (the so-called Theodotion version); 3) OG-Dan (the so-called Septuagint version). OG-Dan itself was based upon another Hebrew/Aramaic version, which differs from the MT. In addition to these textual variants, there were also extant many para-Danielic stories, such as those found at Qumran and the apocryphal additions to the Greek versions. At Qumran, eight copies of the Book of Daniel were found in Caves 1, 4, and 6. They are 1Q71-2, 4Q112-116, and 6Q7pap. The Hebrew and Aramaic sections are preserved. Generally the texts follow the Masoretic tradition, but there are some important differences (Charlesworth, *The Bible and the Dead Sea Scrolls*, Vol.1, p.161). The oldest of these has been paleographically dated to around 125 BC. None of the other Daniel fragments outside of Qumran have been carbon dated yet.



considering the other uncertainties about Daniel's complete historical accuracy about Babylonian and Medo-Persian facts, I find it equally plausible, if not more so, that Daniel was written at a much earlier date, and that the Jewish people were forced to accept it because they watched Daniel's prophecies concerning the Gentile empires unfold. They had to – perhaps grudgingly – accept Daniel 9:25 – 26 into the canon as well.

It does appear that the correct interpretation of Daniel was given by Jesus. Jesus was indeed 'cut off' (executed) by the Romans, who shortly thereafter, in 70 AD, swept in to destroy the city and the Temple just as Daniel had said. But in his resurrection, Jesus inaugurated a new type of kingdom, as a new type of king, with a new type of Temple – a Temple people in whom dwelled the Spirit of God. A lesser typological connection can be made between the Adamic – Davidic – Messianic theme and Daniel as a character, not just with his kingdom visions. The first connection occurs around the motif of ruling; whereas Daniel and his three friends endured persecution and threats in Babylon (e.g. his three friends survived the fiery furnace in Dan.3 and Daniel survived the lion's den in Dan.6), the 'Son of Man' figure endures and overcomes the beast kingdoms. Hence Daniel as a character evokes minor echoes of Adam and David, ascending and ruling. Daniel's own personal experience in Babylon seems somehow organically linked with the content of his 'Son of Man' prophecies: both ascend to a place of rule.

The second connection occurs around the motif of wisdom; the prophet Daniel himself is portrayed as another 'wise man,' meditating on the prophetic Scriptures that came before him. In this case, he explicitly studied the writings of the prophet Jeremiah (Dan.9:2), although he probably had much more than that. Daniel was concerned about the restoration from exile on the other side of the Babylonian Captivity, and sought wisdom and understanding in the scroll of Jeremiah. Daniel's dependence on Jeremiah opens fruitful paths of inquiry. Daniel would have learned from Jeremiah that the Temple was not a magical talisman and guarantee of protection (Jer.6 – 7). And Jeremiah had prophesied that, as part of a new covenant, God would write His law on people's hearts, not tablets of stone (Jer.31:31 – 34). Rather than write the law on stone tablets enshrined in the Ark of the Covenant in a Temple building, God would write the law on human hearts. This meant that God would make His people into a new living Temple, calling into question the necessity of the old Temple set in stone. If Daniel had Ezekiel's prophecy as well, which is possible given that he had Jeremiah, and also given that Ezekiel also used the 'Son of Man' title in a way that was set against the stone Temple, Daniel might have considered the possibility that the new heart and new spirit prophecy of Ezekiel (Ezk.36) made the old Temple obsolete as well. Perhaps the 'heart of stone' to be replaced by the 'heart of flesh' was actually Ezekiel's way of speaking about the stone Temple in Jerusalem? The Torah as well views the Tabernacle as God's 'Plan B'; encountering Israel face to face was God's 'Plan A,' not coming veiled in a tent.<sup>7</sup> Thus, Daniel might have had the spiritual insight about the destruction of the Temple not only from direct divine revelation, but as a wise man who studied the Scriptures. If this is so, then Daniel's placement as part of the Ketuvim (the Wisdom Writings) and not the Nevi'im (the Prophets) is more readily understood. Daniel as a character is modeling for the reader the importance of carefully meditating on the word of God – the source of the wise man's wisdom.

In fact, the placement of Daniel after the five 'scrolls' of the Megillot mirrors the placement of Joshua after the five scrolls of the Torah. Just as Joshua was portrayed as the 'wise man' who meditates on the Torah (Josh.1:8), Daniel is portrayed as the 'wise man' who meditates on the word of God that been handed down to him. Is there a connection between the Megillot and the Torah? On the one hand, the symmetry may be seen between the 'scrolls' or books themselves. The similarities are faint:

1. Song of Songs describes a human marriage that is as close to ideal as possible, reflecting something about the original creation and marriage covenant in Genesis and, from that, the covenant between God and His people, the ancestors of Israel;
2. Ruth describes a return of Israelites back to the garden land, and a redemption, which is similar to Exodus, though of course in Exodus, the journey just begins;
3. Lamentations describes the destruction of the sanctuary; Leviticus describes the establishment of the sanctuary but also its limitations and its nature as God's 'Plan B', not 'Plan A';
4. Ecclesiastes describes a wandering in search of wisdom and meaning, which is a conceptual counterpart to the physical journey of Numbers, where Israel wandered in the wilderness yearning for a return to the garden land with God's presence;

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<sup>7</sup> See John Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995)

5. Esther describes Israel's trust in God despite being in exile, which Deuteronomy, especially in its last section, exhorts Israel to do; and both are meant to give Israel hope that God will protect Israel and one day restore Israel's fortunes.

I would be quick to concede the weaknesses of this particular comparison. However, it is also possible to see a similarity between the sequence of God's creation and response to human sin with the five scrolls of the Megillot. In my opinion, this is the stronger comparison to make.

1. God blesses human marriage (Song of Songs), much as He did in the original creation (Gen.2);
2. Ruth and Boaz marry and continue the line of Judah to David (Ruth) mirroring the promise of God to bring the 'seed of the woman' Savior through human marriage and procreation (Gen.3:15);
3. Israel's expulsion from the sanctuary of the Temple (Lamentations) mirrors Adam and Eve's expulsion from the sanctuary of Eden (Gen.3);
4. The limitations of human wisdom in the cycles of vanity (Ecclesiastes) expounds on the implications of the cycles of 'dust to dust' which started at the Fall (Gen.3:17 – 19); and
5. The story of God's protection of Israel in exile (Esther) mirrors God's activity to protect a line of faithful witnesses to Himself while humanity was in exile, through Seth, Noah, Shem, and the chosen mothers and fathers of Israel (Gen.4 – 50); notice the special similarity between Esther and Joseph, who rise to power and save their people from destruction.

God interacts with humanity and Israel in patterns. I would argue for at least a basic conceptual relationship between the symbolic meaning of the five scrolls of the Megillot, the meaning of each scroll's content, and the meaning of the five scrolls of the Torah taken as a whole: God promises a deliverer for His people, which is a promise given in the context of His covenant, so that His people can return to the fullness of His presence. In placing Daniel after the Megillot and portraying him as the 'wise man' who meditates on the Scriptures, especially as the man who searches for the coming of the great Messianic deliverer, the final redactor(s) of the entire Old Testament canon as a whole seems to have demonstrated significant theological finesse.

#### *The Book of Ezra-Nehemiah*

These two very similar stories regarded as one book by Israel tell the story of God beginning to restore Israel from exile. The exile has not yet ended, but the initial steps are underway. A remnant of Israel has returned from captivity to their homeland. Under the leadership of Ezra and Nehemiah, they begin to rebuild the altar, Temple, and priesthood (Ezra), and the city wall (Nehemiah). However, the endings of both sections reveal that the people of the covenant had not been spiritually changed. Israelite men had married foreign wives and began to worship their wives' false gods (Ezra 9 – 10). An Israelite official had taken a room for himself in the Temple (Neh.13:6 – 9), the Levites had not been financially supported and had therefore left the Temple vacant (Neh.13:10 – 11), some Israelites were violating the Sabbath (Neh.13:15 – 21), more Israelite men married foreign women (Neh.13:23), and even forgot the Hebrew language (Neh.13:24). Clearly, the radical transformation of the heart predicted by Moses (Dt.30:6), David (Ps.51:10), Jeremiah (Jer.31:31 – 34), and Ezekiel (Ezk.36:26 – 36) had not yet occurred, which meant that God had not yet brought about the new covenant. Israel was still waiting for the full restoration.

In the meantime, God was reminding Israel to read the Scriptures again, and again. Ezra did things according to Scripture: Israel's leaders built an altar and sacrificed burnt offerings 'as it is written in the law of Moses, the man of God' (Ezra 3:2); 'they celebrated the Feast of Booths, as it is written' (Ezra 3:4); the priests wore raiments and the singers sang 'according to the directions of King David of Israel' (Ezra 3:10). In addition, 'Ezra had set his heart to study the law of the LORD and to practice it, and to teach His statutes and ordinances in Israel' (Ezra 7:10). This leads him to weep and confess the sins of himself and his people, especially the remnant that had returned (Ezra 9), which leads to most of the Israelites confessing and repenting as well (Ezra 10). Nehemiah records that on the first day of the seventh month, Ezra read the book of the law of Moses to a great assembly of Israel (Neh.8). Then, they assembled again on the twenty-fourth day of that month, read the law of Moses again, and confessed their sins (Neh.9). This is the hallmark of 'wisdom': meditating on the 'teaching' (Torah).

#### *The Book of Chronicles*

In one ordering of the books of Scripture, Chronicles rounds out the Ketuvim. It is thoroughly Adamic, Davidic, and Messianic, emphasizing that theological thread with very selective narration. Right at the start, the book begins with Adam, reminding us of the Edenic paradise that was once the meeting place of God and humanity. It quickly traverses through some of the key descendants of the twelve tribes of Israel, focusing on the inhabitants of Jerusalem

(1 Chr.9:3ff.), the eventual capital of the Davidic king. Chronicles reduces the story of Saul to a short chapter, and for a full seventeen chapters, focuses on David's reign as king, his decision to bring the ark of God to Jerusalem, and his laying the plans for the Temple, the new meeting place of God and humanity. The author of Chronicles is surely aware of David's personal and kingly failings, but edits out David's sin with Bathsheba and murder of Uriah, for example, showing his interest in streamlining the story and simply highlighting David's unique role in building the Temple. Chronicles is Temple-centric in its story-telling. Since the Temple is a new type of Eden, it only makes sense that Israel is being portrayed as a type of God's new humanity, dwelling in a new garden land. And the hinge figure is David, with whom God first made the covenant to dwell in the Jerusalem Temple. Small wonder that Chronicles lingers so long on King David.

Chronicles then narrates select events from the lives of David's heirs, once again centering on the relationship between King, Jerusalem, and the Temple. In fact, another, complementary theme is how the kings often resorted to building other cities, which represent military fears and forces, in contrast to Jerusalem and the Temple, which represents the presence of God, trust, and prayerfulness. This could be a not-so-subtle encouragement from the author of Chronicles to other Jews that they return to the garden land and worship in Jerusalem in particular; other cities – even within the scope of Israel's land, and especially fortified cities – are simply not the same as Jerusalem. Hence, Solomon built the Temple in Jerusalem and spoke forth God's wisdom (2 Chr.1 – 9); Rehoboam abandoned the sole worship of God in Jerusalem, built cities and fortresses, and worshiped on high places (2 Chr.11); Abijah challenged the northern kingdom of Israel to return to the worship of God in Jerusalem, with proper priests and worship, and, when the northern kingdom attacked, God protected the southern kingdom of Judah (2 Chr.13); Asa restored proper worship in Jerusalem and God blessed him for it (2 Chr.15); Jehosaphat turned to the Lord and rallied the Levites and people in Jerusalem to pray, and God ambushed the Moabites and Ammonites (2 Chr.20); Joash repaired the Temple and restored proper worship once again, ending a short sequence of wicked kings, and God blessed Joash and the people until Joash lost his chief advisor and listened to corrupt advisors and forsook the Temple, whereupon God caused the small Aramean army to defeat the larger Judean one (2 Chr.24); Hezekiah interrupted another sequence of corrupt kings, renewed proper Temple worship (2 Chr.29), invited northern Israelites to worship at Jerusalem (2 Chr.30), and when confronted by Sennacherib of Assyria and the vast Assyrian army, prayed to God in Jerusalem; in response, God sent a destroying angel against Assyria, completely humiliating Sennacherib (2 Chr.32). The author of Chronicles is trying to highlight one basic theme: Worship God properly in Jerusalem, in a cleansed Temple, organized by a proper Davidic king and Levitical priests, and God will pour out His favor. Fail to do this and God would pour out His judgment.

The book ends with the invitation from Cyrus of Persia to the Jews to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the Temple (2 Chr.36:23). Chronicles leaves Israel waiting for another heir of David who will walk in the ways of David, rebuild the Temple, and regather Israel from the corners of the world. The immediate encouragement and challenge to any Israelite reading Chronicles is to remember God's promise to David, respond to Cyrus the Persian's invitation to return to the Israelite homeland and rebuild the city and the Temple, and thereby become God's agents in remaking the only physical representation that the world has left of Eden, that place where Adam and Eve once walked with God. Chronicles modeled wisdom: It reflects on and summarizes all of the Scripture that came before it. Chronicles offered wisdom: It distills the Scriptures into a clear and discernable hope, in which it called the Jewish people of that time to live. And Chronicles pointed to the return of wisdom: It hopes for the return of the presence of God, and a return of humanity to its place of living in the wisdom God originally gave. Jesus fulfilled this hope. He was the presence of God embodied in human flesh; he was a new Temple, the true Temple.

### The Canonical Context: The Endings of the Torah, Nevi'im, and Ketuvim

If one accepts the ordering of the Ketuvim as starting with Psalms and ending with Chronicles, a powerful pattern emerges in the canon. Not only does the beginning of each of the three main sections begin with the garden land and wisdom reflecting on God's word, but the ending points to a restoration of that ideal.

Torah (Teaching)		Nevi'im (Prophets)		Ketuvim (Writings)	
Moses		Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Treisar (the Twelve Prophets)		Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Megillot (Ruth, Songs, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther), Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah, Chronicles	
'The LORD God commanded the man, saying, 'From	Ending: God will restore Israel from	'Be strong and courageous, for you shall give this	Ending: God will restore Israel from exile (seen	'But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His	Ending: God is restoring Israel from exile

any tree of the garden you may eat, but from the <b>tree of knowledge of good and evil</b> you shall not eat...’’ (Gen.2:16 – 17)	exile (Dt.30 – 32)	people possession of the [ <b>garden</b> ] <b>land</b> which I swore to their fathers to give them... This book of the <b>law</b> shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall <b>meditate on it day and night...</b> ’ (Josh.1:8)	especially in Jer.31ff., Ezk.36ff., Zech.9 – 14, Mal.4)	<b>law he meditates day and night.</b> He will be like a <b>tree firmly planted by streams of water</b> , which yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither...’ (Ps.1:2 – 3)	(2 Chr.36).
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This arrangement suggests why Jesus could so easily refer to ‘Moses, the Prophets, and the Writings’ (Lk.24:27, 44) as a story pointing beyond itself, crying out for resolution, a resolution he accomplished. In fact, these themes would appear even if we ordered the books of the Ketuvim in other ways that other parts of the Jewish community did, so in any case, the ordering of each major section (Torah, Prophets, Writings) contains a theological message in itself.<sup>8</sup> Thus, not just the Ketuvim, but the final structure of the entire Old Testament gives the appearance of being intentionally ordered. It looks ahead to the restoration of both wisdom and humanity through the Messianic Heir of David.

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<sup>8</sup> Even if one orders the Ketuvim with Ezra-Nehemiah ending the section, following the Tiberian Masoretic codices and the old Spanish manuscripts, one can still see the pattern. Ezra-Nehemiah makes the complementary point that the exile is not yet over, and God’s renewal of the covenant and His transformation of Israel (and humanity) has not yet taken place.