Wisdom in the Hebrew Scriptures: the Problem of Evil

Proverbs 3

1 My son, do not forget my teaching, but let your heart keep my commandments;
2 for length of days and years of life and abundant welfare will they give you.
3 Let not loyalty and faithfulness forsake you; bind them about your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart.
4 So you will find favor and good repute in the sight of God and man.

5 Trust in the LORD with all your heart, do not rely on your own insight.
6 In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.
7 Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD, and turn away from evil.
8 It will be healing to your flesh and refreshment to your bones.
9 Honor the LORD with your substance and with the first fruits of all your produce;
10 then your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will be bursting with wine.

11 My son, do not despise the LORD's discipline or be weary of his reproof,
12 for the LORD reproves him whom he loves, as a father the son in whom he delights.
13 Happy is the man who finds wisdom, and the man who gets understanding,
14 for the gain from it is better than gain from silver and its profit better than gold.
15 She is more precious than jewels, and nothing you desire can compare with her.
16 Long life is in her right hand; in her left hand are riches and honor.
17 Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.
18 She is a tree of life to those who lay hold of her; those who hold her fast are happy.
19 The LORD by wisdom founded the earth; by understanding he established the heavens;
33 The LORD's curse is on the house of the wicked, but blesses the righteous.

Job 1

1 There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was blameless and upright, one who feared God, and turned away from evil.
2 There were born to him seven sons and three daughters.
3 He had seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen, and five hundred she-asses, and very many servants; so that this man was the greatest of all the people of the east.

6 Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them.
7 The LORD said to Satan, "Whence have you come?" Satan answered the LORD, "From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking on it."
8 And the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil?"

9 Then Satan answered the LORD, "Does Job fear God for nought?
10 Hast thou not put a hedge about him and his house and all that he has, on every side? Thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land.
11 But put forth thy hand now, and touch all that he has, and he will curse thee to thy face."
12 And the LORD said to Satan, "Behold, all that he has is in your power; only upon himself do not put forth thy hand." So Satan went forth from the presence of the LORD.

13 Now there was a day when his sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house;
14 and there came a messenger to Job, and said, "The oxen were plowing and the asses feeding beside them;
15 and the Sabe'ans fell upon them and took them, and slew the servants with the edge of the sword; and I alone have escaped to tell you."
18 While he was yet speaking, there came another, and said, "Your sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house;
19 and behold, a great wind came across the wilderness, and struck the four corners of the house,
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and it fell upon the young people, and they are dead; and I alone have escaped to tell you."

20 Then Job arose, and rent his robe, and shaved his head, and fell upon the ground, and worshiped.
21 And he said, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return; the LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD."

10:1 "I loathe my life; I will give free utterance to my complaint; I will speak in the bitterness of my soul.
2 I will say to God, Do not condemn me; let me know why thou dost contend against me.
3 Does it seem good to thee to oppress, to despise the work of thy hands and favor the wicked?

Ecclesiastes

I the Preacher have been king over Israel in Jerusalem.
13 And I applied my mind to seek and to search out by wisdom all that is done under heaven; it is an unhappy business that God has given to the sons of men to be busy with.
14 I have seen everything that is done under the sun; and behold, all is vanity and a striving after wind.
15 What is crooked cannot be made straight, and what is lacking cannot be numbered.
17 And I applied my mind to know wisdom and to know madness and folly. I perceived that this also is but a striving after wind.
18 For in much wisdom is much vexation, and he who increases knowledge increases sorrow.

2:1 I said to myself, "Come now, I will make a test of pleasure; enjoy yourself."
2 I said of laughter, "It is mad," and of pleasure, "What use is it?"
3 I searched with my mind how to cheer my body with wine -- my mind still guiding me with wisdom -- and how to lay hold on folly, till I might see what was good for the sons of men to do under heaven during the few days of their life.

4 I made great works; I built houses and planted vineyards for myself;
5 I made myself gardens and parks, and planted in them all kinds of fruit trees.
6 I made myself pools from which to water the forest of growing trees.
7 I bought male and female slaves, and had slaves who were born in my house; I had also great possessions of herds and flocks, more than any who had been before me in Jerusalem.
8 I gathered for myself silver and gold and the treasure of kings and provinces; I got singers, both men and women, and concubines, man's delight.
9 So I became great and surpassed all who were before me in Jerusalem; also my wisdom remained with me.
10 And whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them; I kept my heart from no pleasure, for my heart found pleasure in all my toil, and this was my reward for all my toil.
11 Then I considered all that my hands had done and the toil I had spent in doing it, and behold, all was vanity and a striving after wind, and there was nothing to be gained under the sun.
12 So I turned to consider wisdom and madness and folly; for what can the man do who comes after the king? Only what he has already done.
13 Then I saw that wisdom excels folly as light excels darkness.
14 The wise man has his eyes in his head, but the fool walks in darkness; and yet I perceived that one fate comes to all of them.
15 Then I said to myself, "What befalls the fool will befall me also; why then have I been so very wise?" And I said to myself that this also is vanity.
16 For of the wise man as of the fool there is no enduring remembrance, seeing that in the days to come all will have been long forgotten. How the wise man dies just like the fool!
17 So I hated life, because what is done under the sun was grievous to me; for all is vanity and a striving after wind.