

UNIT 6: INTRODUCTION

The aim of this unit is to give you a general overview of the Wisdom Literature and the Psalms. This is a short unit as the primary emphasis in this module is on the narrative sections of the Hebrew Bible – the Pentateuch and the Deuteronomistic History - rather than on the poetic books of the Hebrew Bible.

Overview: For a general overview of the richness and subtleties of Hebrew poetry, there are two classic works. The first is Robert Alter's *The Art of Biblical Poetry* and the second is Jan Fokkelman's *Reading Biblical Poetry*. Unfortunately, these volumes are not available in the University's online library, although I have added links to two reviews of these volumes and you will find large sections of Jan Fokkelman's book by going on GOOGLE ADVANCED SEARCH.

For a general, very readable introduction to the Wisdom Books and the Psalms, there is no better place to start your reading than in the *Oxford Handbook of English Literature and Theology*. Alistair Hunter presents an excellent brief introduction to the *Psalms* in this volume, Cheryl Exum looks at the *Song of Songs*, and Kirsten Nielsen covers *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and Psalms*.

Recommended reading: You will find that **Carol Newsom's book on Job** provides a very sensitive and insightful reading of some of the linguistic and literary riches of this enigmatic book. **Heaton's Education in Wisdom** provides a more traditional approach to the wisdom schools of Ancient Israel.

Two other scholars deserve special mention as they are key scholars today working in the area of Wisdom and Psalm literature and both have very many publications in these areas, though unfortunately not all available as e-resources.

Stuart Weeks has worked for many years on Wisdom literature; see, for example, his volume *Instruction and Imagery in Proverbs 1-9*. You will find many other articles of his by searching the online journals listed at the beginning of this module.

Susan Gillingham has worked for very many years on the Psalms; see, for example, *Poems and Psalms of the Bible*. This is not available as an e-book, but you can find many sections of the book by going on GOOGLE ADVANCED SEARCH. You will also find many journal articles by her on the Psalms.