

Waltke, Psalms, Session 26, Resources from Notebooklm

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Study Guide, 4) Briefing Document, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Waltke, Psalms, Session 26, Wisdom Psalms Genre, Ps. 19, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

This lecture by Dr. Bruce Waltke **focuses on Wisdom Psalms**, specifically Psalm 19, within the broader context of the Psalter. He **explains the Hebrew concept of *hokmah* (wisdom)**, connecting it to skill, expertise, and righteous living. Waltke then **analyzes Psalm 19's structure and theological themes**, highlighting the connection between God's revelation in creation and His law. Finally, he **illustrates the importance of comprehensive knowledge** using examples from his own experience and other wisdom literature, such as Job and Proverbs, to show how true wisdom comes from God's complete understanding.

2. 23-minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Waltke's, Psalms, Session 26 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (Old Testament → Psalms → Waltke).



Waltke_Psalms_Session26_Wisdom_Pss.mp3

3. Briefing Document

Okay, here is a detailed briefing document summarizing the key themes and ideas from the provided excerpts of Dr. Bruce Waltke's lecture on Wisdom Psalms, specifically focusing on Psalm 19:

Briefing Document: Dr. Bruce Waltke on Wisdom Psalms and Psalm 19

Subject: Analysis of Wisdom Psalms Genre with Focus on Psalm 19

Source: Excerpts from "Waltke_Psalms_EN_Lecture26.pdf" (Dr. Bruce Waltke, Psalms, Lecture 26)

Date: (Based on the document content, this is likely from 2024)

Overview:

Dr. Waltke's lecture focuses on identifying the characteristics of Wisdom Psalms within the broader context of the Book of Psalms, with particular attention to the structure and logic of Psalm 19. He emphasizes the importance of understanding the concept of "wisdom" (Hebrew: *hokmah*) in its various applications, not only as intellectual prowess, but also as skill in living a righteous life. He also explores the interrelationship between general and special revelation as represented in the dual themes of creation and Torah within Psalm 19.

Key Themes and Ideas:

1. Defining Wisdom (Hokmah):

- *Hokmah* is more than just knowledge; it denotes "masterful understanding, skill, expertise."
- It encompasses technical, artistic, governmental, diplomatic, and even martial skills.
- In Wisdom Literature (Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, some Psalms) it refers to "the skill of living in the way of eternal life," which includes "loving God and loving your neighbor".
- Wisdom is a neutral term, needing righteousness as a correlative to prevent its misuse. "If you have wisdom, you have righteousness. If you have righteousness, you have wisdom."

1. Forms of Wisdom Literature:

- **Admonition and Instruction:** Wisdom literature uses both positive (e.g., trust in the Lord, fear the Lord, do good) and negative (warnings against the perils of wealth, envy, and the triumph of evil) forms of teaching.
- **Warnings and Theodicy:** Addresses the challenges of understanding suffering and the apparent prosperity of the wicked (as seen in Psalms 49 & 73).
- **Emphasis on "The Way":** The central metaphor of wisdom is "the way of eternal life," contrasting with paths that lead to destruction.

1. Context of Psalm 19 in the Psalter:

- Psalms 1 & 2: Introduction to the Psalter.
- Psalms 3-14: Primarily Davidic laments, with a Psalm of praise (8) and one describing the depravity of man (14) included.
- Psalms 15-24: Chiastically structured, with Psalm 19 at the center as a Torah Psalm.
- Psalm 19 serves as a "pivotal point", mirroring Psalm 1 as a Torah introduction.

1. Analysis of Psalm 19:

- **Structure:** Stanza 1: The heavens display God's glory (natural revelation).
- Stanza 2: Praise of the Torah, God's moral excellence (special revelation).
- Stanza 3: A prayer for protection and forgiveness, reflecting the consequences of failing to live by the Torah.
- **Key Elements:**
 - **Natural Revelation:** The heavens are depicted as "declaring the glory of God" and "proclaiming his handiwork." Though silent, their message goes throughout the earth (verses 1-4).
 - **Special Revelation:** The Torah is described as "perfect, reviving the soul...sure, making wise the simple...right, rejoicing the heart...pure, enlightening the eyes" (verses 7-10).
 - **The Fear of the Lord:** This is directly linked to the objective revelation of God's moral will found in the law (Torah) (verse 9).
 - **Prayer for Forgiveness and Protection:** The Psalmist seeks to be declared innocent of "hidden faults" and to be "kept back...from the insolent" (verses 12-13).

- **Insolent Men:** Waltke argues that the term "zadim" (often translated as "presumptuous sins") should be understood as referring to proud, arrogant people who disregard God, the wise, or truth. This translation is based on a thorough examination of the word's usage throughout the Old Testament.
- **Logic of the Psalm:** Waltke explores how the seemingly disparate themes of creation and law are interconnected. While not agreeing completely with interpretations of others (like Fishbane or Meinhold), he builds upon their observations and offers his own view:
 - He uses Kant's observation of awe in relation to the stars above and the moral law within, as well as his own background in Wisdom literature to connect the two.
 - He uses the analogy that, "you do not know anything with certainty until you know, or absolutely until you know something comprehensively" in order to connect the two. He believes the Psalmist sees creation as a demonstration of God's holistic knowledge, which then allows him to speak definitively through the Torah.
 - He notes the contracting movement of the Psalm, moving from the vastness of the heavens, to the focused law, then to the individual worshiper. He also observes a contracting movement in the names of God as they are invoked in the poem, moving from El (creator of all) to I Am or the Lord (covenant God of Israel) to My Rock and Redeemer (Personal saving God).
 - The key argument is that because God has comprehensive knowledge of all things (as evident in his creation), his law, rooted in that comprehensive knowledge, is ultimately in our best interest, being given from a holistic perspective.

1. **Connection to Wisdom Literature:**

- Waltke emphasizes that Psalm 19 embodies the core logic of wisdom literature, highlighting that true wisdom (or skill for living) derives from God's comprehensive understanding, which He reveals through creation and especially through His Torah.
- He draws parallels to Job 28, which explores the inaccessibility of wisdom apart from God's revelation, where God possesses all knowledge because He sees the ends of the earth.

- He connects this to Agur's confession of ignorance and reliance on God's revealed word in Proverbs 30, emphasizing that only God possesses complete knowledge and that this knowledge is revealed through the law.

Quotes:

- “The word means to be skillful. It's used of all kinds of skills...it denotes masterful understanding, skill, expertise.” (Defining *hokmah*)
- “If you have wisdom, you have righteousness. If you have righteousness, you have wisdom.” (Correlative relationship between wisdom and righteousness)
- “In wisdom literature...wisdom refers to the skill of living in the way of eternal life. This entails social skills, namely loving God and loving your neighbor.”
- “The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul.” (Psalm 19:7)
- “The fear of the Lord always entails this objective revelation of God's holy moral will. The fear of the Lord means you submit to that revelation because you fear God who holds life and death in his hands.”
- “The word I say, the root of the word *zadim* is *zade*... In all the uses, it refers to proud, arrogant, insolent people who disregard God or the wise or truth.”
- “You do not know anything with certainty until you know, or absolutely until you know something comprehensively.”
- “Only God has true wisdom because only God sees everything.”

Conclusion:

Dr. Waltke's analysis of Psalm 19 sheds light on the rich tapestry of Wisdom literature and the unique place of the Torah within the Psalms. He connects the grandeur of the cosmos with the precision of God's revealed law, emphasizing that true wisdom is found in embracing both of these revelations and understanding them in the light of God's comprehensive knowledge. He argues that the Psalmist is not simply juxtaposing two kinds of revelation, but demonstrating a specific connection through the lens of Wisdom. This understanding deepens our appreciation for Psalm 19, and in extension, much of the wisdom literature found in the Old Testament.

4. Psalms Study Guide: Session 26, Wisdom Psalms Genre, Ps. 19

Psalms: A Study Guide

Quiz

Instructions: Answer each question in 2-3 sentences.

1. What does the Hebrew word *hokmah* mean, and what are some of its applications beyond "wisdom"?
2. How are wisdom and righteousness related in the context of wisdom literature?
3. Describe the two main forms of wisdom literature.
4. According to Waltke, what is the main problem that the psalmist wrestles with in Psalm 73?
5. What is the function of Psalm 19 in the overall structure of the Psalter?
6. How does the psalmist describe the heavens in Psalm 19:1-6?
7. List some of the attributes given to the "law of the Lord" in Psalm 19:7-10.
8. What does the phrase "fear of the Lord" entail in Psalm 19?
9. Why does Waltke translate "zadim" as "insolent people" rather than "presumptuous sins" in Psalm 19:13?
10. What is the connection between God's comprehensive knowledge and his Law, as explained in Waltke's analysis?

Answer Key

1. The Hebrew word *hokmah* means "skill" or "expertise." Beyond wisdom, it applies to technical, artistic, governmental, diplomatic, and military skills.
2. Wisdom and righteousness are correlative terms; where one is, the other is also present. They are used interchangeably, like two positions held by one person.
3. Wisdom literature takes the form of admonition and instruction, which can be positive (encouraging good behavior) or negative (warning against negative behavior or circumstances).

4. The psalmist in Psalm 73 struggles with the apparent prosperity of the wicked while he suffers. He defines God by his problem instead of the other way around.
5. Psalm 19 serves as a pivotal Torah Psalm in the middle of the Psalter, much like Psalm 1 functions as an introduction. It emphasizes the importance of God's law.
6. The psalmist describes the heavens as declaring the glory of God through the firmament. Day and night pour out speech and reveal knowledge, though no words are actually spoken out loud.
7. The law of the Lord is described as perfect, reviving the soul, sure, making wise the simple, right, rejoicing the heart, pure, and enlightening the eyes.
8. The "fear of the Lord" entails submission to God's revealed holy and moral will, recognizing that he holds life and death in his hands. It involves conforming to God's law, with the promise of eternal life for obedience.
9. Waltke translates "zadim" as "insolent people" based on a concordance study of its various uses, where it consistently refers to proud, arrogant people who disregard God or truth, not just "presumptuous sins."
10. God has comprehensive knowledge because he sees the entire world and therefore his law is complete, absolute, and in humanity's best interest. He can speak with certainty because of his comprehensive view of creation.

Essay Questions

Instructions: Answer each question in a well-structured essay format, drawing from the provided source material.

1. Analyze the structure of Psalm 19, paying particular attention to how the different sections (creation, law, prayer) connect to each other. What does the psalm's structure reveal about the relationship between natural and special revelation?
2. Discuss the concept of "comprehensive knowledge" as presented by Waltke. How does this concept help us understand the nature of God's wisdom and the importance of divine revelation?
3. How does Psalm 19 contribute to the overall themes and messages of the Wisdom Psalms genre as described by Waltke? Consider elements such as admonition, instruction, and the relationship between wisdom and righteousness.

4. Compare and contrast how the concept of fear of the Lord is presented in Psalm 19 with how it is presented elsewhere in scripture. What does this concept reveal about the importance of obedience to God's Word?
5. Explain the significance of Waltke's translation of "zadim" as "insolent men" in Psalm 19. How does this translation impact your understanding of the Psalm, and what are its implications for our approach to biblical interpretation?

Glossary

Admonition: A gentle or friendly reproof or warning, typically given in the context of teaching or instruction.

Correlative Terms: Terms that are related in such a way that one implies or depends on the other; in this context, wisdom and righteousness.

Firmament: The vault of heaven; the sky, perceived in ancient cosmology as a solid dome above the earth.

Hokmah: The Hebrew word for wisdom, which means skill, expertise, or masterful understanding; applicable to various fields of knowledge and craftsmanship.

Insolent: Displaying rude and disrespectful behavior, marked by arrogance and a disregard for truth.

Janus (verse): A verse or section of text that looks both forward and backward, connecting two different parts of the text.

Liturgy: A prescribed form or set of forms for public religious worship.

Omniscience: The quality of knowing everything; an attribute of God that signifies unlimited knowledge.

Presumptuous sins: Deliberate acts of disobedience against God, often committed with arrogance or a sense of self-importance.

Righteousness: Moral uprightness, being in accordance with what is right and just. In this context, the quality is tightly linked to wisdom and obedience to God.

Theodicy: The attempt to reconcile the existence of an all-good, all-powerful God with the existence of evil and suffering in the world.

Torah: The first five books of the Hebrew Bible; often used to refer to the Mosaic Law or divine instruction in general.

Wisdom Literature: A genre of literature found in the Bible, exemplified by Job, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes, that deals with the nature of wisdom, the meaning of life, and how to live a righteous life in response to God.

5. FAQ on Themes from Dr. Bruce Waltke's Psalms, Session 26, Wisdom Psalms Genre, Ps. 19

FAQ on Wisdom Psalms and Psalm 19

- **What is meant by the term "wisdom" in the context of the Psalms, and how does it relate to the concept of righteousness?**
- In the Psalms, "wisdom" (Hebrew: *hokmah*) signifies masterful understanding, skill, and expertise in all aspects of life. It's not limited to intellectual knowledge, but encompasses technical, artistic, governmental, diplomatic, and even martial skills. Crucially, in wisdom literature, wisdom is the skill of living in the way of eternal life. This involves social skills like loving God and neighbor. Wisdom is inherently linked to righteousness; they are correlative terms. If you possess true wisdom, it necessarily entails righteousness, and vice versa. They are inseparable. So true wisdom always entails living according to God's moral will.
- **What are the typical forms and functions of wisdom literature, as found in the Psalms?**
- Wisdom literature often takes the form of admonition and instruction. It can be positive, encouraging actions such as trusting in the Lord, fearing the Lord, doing good, avoiding sin, and confessing sin. These positive instructions often come with a promise, introduced with "for". Negatively, it serves as a warning against succumbing to the allure of material possessions, which can lead one astray from the way of eternal life. Wisdom literature also deals with theodicy – questioning why the wicked prosper while the righteous suffer. It is designed to prevent believers from being disheartened by the seeming triumph of evil, or from envying the wealthy and godless. The overall purpose is to guide individuals towards a life aligned with God's will.

- **What is the significance of the "fear of the Lord" in the context of Wisdom Psalms?**
- The "fear of the Lord" in Wisdom Psalms isn't mere terror, but a profound reverence and awe for God, rooted in the recognition of his holy moral will. It involves submitting to God's revealed truth, understanding that our lives are in his hands, and acknowledging that obedience to His law, now understood through Christ and the Spirit, leads to eternal life, while rejection of it leads to eternal death. The "fear of the Lord" equates to this recognition, a deep seated understanding of God's authority. The term often acts as a shorthand for the entirety of God's law and teaching.
- **How does Psalm 19 function within the larger structure of the Book of Psalms?**
- Psalm 19 is strategically placed at the center of a chiastic structure in Psalms 15-24, making it a pivotal psalm. It's significant because it presents itself as a Torah psalm praising God's law and wisdom which acts as a focal point and sets the tone for the surrounding psalms. Just as Psalms 1 and 2 serve as the introduction to the Psalter, Psalm 19 stands as a Torah psalm in the middle of a larger structure, emphasizing the importance of God's law, and serving to encourage keeping Torah.
- **What are the main themes and structure of Psalm 19, and how do the stanzas relate to one another?**
- Psalm 19 is structured into three main stanzas: The first section praises God for revealing his glory through creation, particularly the heavens and the sun. The second praises God's moral excellence, as revealed in the law, and highlights its benefits: revival of the soul, making wise the simple, rejoicing the heart, and enlightening the eyes. The third stanza is a prayer for forgiveness, and protection from hidden sins and from the influence of insolent people. The stanzas are linked by the idea of revelation - from God's general revelation through creation, to his special revelation in the Torah, culminating in the psalmist's response to both. The psalm progresses from the vastness of the heavens to the intimacy of the worshiper's heart.

- **What is the logic behind the connection between the praise of creation and the praise of the Torah in Psalm 19?**
- The connection is rooted in the idea that only God possesses comprehensive knowledge, as He sees and understands the entirety of creation. The heavens reveal His knowledge, demonstrated by the sun's path that encompasses the whole earth, meaning God's perspective is both universal and complete. Because of this comprehensive knowledge, God can speak absolutely through his law and give commands that are in humanity's best interest. This idea is developed in wisdom literature like Job 28, which highlights the inaccessibility of wisdom apart from God's revelation, or Proverbs 30 where Agur explores the source of truth and knowledge.
- **Why does the Psalmist pray to be kept from "insolent men" in Psalm 19 rather than "presumptuous sins," and what does this reveal about the Psalmist's perspective?**
- The translation "insolent men" is a more accurate rendering of the Hebrew word *zadim*, which refers to individuals characterized by pride, arrogance, and disregard for God, wisdom, or truth. The traditional translation "presumptuous sins" stems from a contrast with "hidden faults," implying sins done knowingly. However, contextual analysis of the word *zadim* shows it always refers to a particular *type* of person, not a sin itself. Therefore, the psalmist isn't merely requesting forgiveness, but asking for protection from the influence of those who actively oppose God. This prayer shows a profound humility and awareness of his own vulnerability to being led astray by such people. He recognizes that these individuals pose a significant spiritual danger.
- **How does Psalm 19 reflect a wisdom perspective on the relationship between God's revelation and human understanding?**
- Psalm 19 embodies a core wisdom theme: the pursuit of true knowledge and understanding must begin with God, who possesses a comprehensive view. This knowledge is revealed in two main ways: natural revelation through creation, and special revelation through the Torah. The Psalm demonstrates that human understanding is limited and flawed, therefore we require divine revelation to make wise choices. Ultimately, the psalm links God's comprehensive knowledge, shown through creation, to the absolute truth revealed in the Torah. This connects to the wisdom perspective that all actions need to be viewed holistically and through the eyes of God.