



Understanding Wisdom Literature: Conflict and Dissonance in the Hebrew Text

David Penchansky

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Israelite wisdom, literature, David Penchansky argues, records the disputes of ancient sages over basic human questions: What is the purpose of life? Is God just? Why do we suffer? Does God even exist? Penchansky sees conflicting answers to these questions in Proverbs, Job, Ecclesiastes, Ben Sira, and the Wisdom of Solomon -- and does not try to harmonize them. Instead, he finds meaning in the very dissonance and contradiction within these texts.

Employing the latest scholarship yet remaining accessible to nonspecialists and students, Penchansky strikingly focuses on the "big picture" behind wisdom literature -- making it easy for readers to follow and appreciate these challenging texts -- without undermining each book's distinctive features. In the process, Penchansky opens up this rich and fertile vein of Israelite thought and demonstrates the renewed relevance of ancient Hebrew wisdom for today.

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