

as the early life of David and the time of Elijah. Other portions are fragmentary or sketched only in broad lines, such as the period of the Judges and the reigns of most of the kings.

(3) The Poetical or Devotional books, from Job to the Song of Solomon, also Lamentations.

Like everything else in the Old Testament, the poems are all religious in their subject and thought; but they are by no means all in the same class. They represent four different kinds of poetry. (a) The book of Job is a sort of drama with an approach to the Epic in form. The ancient Jews had no theatrical performances and therefore no real drama. (b) The Song of Solomon is a lyrical dialogue with two leading characters and a chorus. (c) The Psalms are religious songs of praise. (d) Proverbs and Ecclesiastes belong to a class known as Wisdom literature, made up mainly of sententious sayings and short essays on the wise or right conduct of life. Though usually called poetry, it is often hard to distinguish this form from prose.

Hebrew poetry in its form differs greatly from all that we are familiar with as poetry in modern languages. It has no rhyme or regular rhythm, so far as can be made out. For its form it depends mainly on the arrangement of the sentences or clauses in closely related couplets or triplets so that they balance one another. This arrangement is called parallelism. In elevation of sentiment, terseness of phrases, and felicity of figures, Hebrew poetry ranks with the highest in any literature.

In addition to the poetical books there are many poetical passages in the histories and in the prophetic books.

(4) The Prophetical books, from Isaiah to Malachi.

These are usually again subdivided into (a) The Major Prophets—Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and