|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  |  | *The* |
| *Wisdom* |
| *Literature* |
| Dr Paul Hahn  Theology Department  University of St Thomas  Houston TX 77006  © 2021 |

TABLE OF CONTENTS

[Introduction 1](#_Toc499073336)

[Canons of the Old Testament 2](#_Toc499073337)

[Major Events in Old Testament History 4](#_Toc499073338)

[“Wisdom Literature” 7](#_Toc499073339)

[Characteristics](#_Toc499073340) [of Hebrew Poetry 10](#_Toc499073341)

[Parallelism, a Semanic Device in Poetry 11](#_Toc499073342)

[Other Semantic Devices in Hebrew Poetry 15](#_Toc499073343)

[Meter, a Phonetic Device In Poetry 22](#_Toc499073344)

[Other Phonetic Devices in Hebrew Poetry 28](#_Toc499073345)

[Sentence Forms and Wisdom Poems 30](#_Toc499073346)

[Brief Narratives 34](#_Toc499073347)

[The Poetic Books 37](#_Toc499073348)

[Reading the Psalms](#_Toc499073349) [Every One or Two Weeks 38](#_Toc499073350)

[The Psalms](#_Toc499073351): [A Summary Chart 39](#_Toc499073352)

[The Title of the Book of Psalms 44](#_Toc499073353)

[Psalm Superscriptions 46](#_Toc499073354)

[Psalms as Songs, Prayers, and Poems 50](#_Toc499073355)

[Psalm Forms 53](#_Toc499073356)

[Dating the Psalms 58](#_Toc499073357)

[The Growth of Psalms 62](#_Toc499073358)

[The Authors of The Psalms 68](#_Toc499073359)

[Interpretation of Psalms 71](#_Toc499073360)

[The Song of Songs 77](#_Toc499073361)

[The Song of Songs as Wisdom Literature 82](#_Toc499073362)

[Introduction](#_Toc499073363) [to Wisdom Literature 85](#_Toc499073364)

[Wisdom in the Bible 86](#_Toc499073365)

[Outside the Wisdom Literature 86](#_Toc499073366)

[The Vocabulary of the Wisdom Literature 96](#_Toc499073367)

[Development of the Wisdom Literature 102](#_Toc499073368)

[Solomon and Wisdom 111](#_Toc499073369)

[Outline of 1 Kings 1-11 114](#_Toc499073370)

[The Books of the](#_Toc499073371) [Wisdom Movement 118](#_Toc499073372)

[Proverbs 119](#_Toc499073373)

[Tobit 4:5-19 139](#_Toc499073374)

[Job 140](#_Toc499073375)

[Qoheleth 155](#_Toc499073376)

[Three Carpe-Diem Poems 171](#_Toc499073377)

[Sirach 173](#_Toc499073378)

[Book of Wisdom 187](#_Toc499073379)

[Parallels between the Book of Wisdom](#_Toc499073380) [and the New Testament 200](#_Toc499073381)

[Theology of the](#_Toc499073382) [Wisdom Literature 207](#_Toc499073383)

[“Life” 208](#_Toc499073384)

[Wisdom Personified (Lady Wisdom) 211](#_Toc499073385)

[Retribution 231](#_Toc499073386)

[Theodicy 239](#_Toc499073387)

[Social Justice in the Wisdom Literature 242](#_Toc499073388)

[Social Justice in the Prophets 244](#_Toc499073389)

[Criticisms of Sacrifice 247](#_Toc499073390)

[Body and Soul, and Immortality](#_Toc499073391) [in the Book of Wisdom 249](#_Toc499073392)

[The Wisdom Literature and Non-Christian Religions 253](#_Toc499073393)

[Ancient Near Eastern](#_Toc499073394) [Wisdom Literature 254](#_Toc499073395)

[Introduction 255](#_Toc499073396)

[Egyptian Wisdom Literature 256](#_Toc499073397)

[Mesopotamian Wisdom Literature 269](#_Toc499073398)

[Greek Wisdom Literature 277](#_Toc499073399)

[Primary Texts 283](#_Toc499073400)

[The Hymn to the Aton 283](#_Toc499073401)

[Egyptian Love Songs 286](#_Toc499073402)

[The Instruction of Ptahhotep 298](#_Toc499073403)

[Summary of Themes](#_Toc499073404) [in the Instruction of Ptahhotep 311](#_Toc499073405)

[Parallels between](#_Toc499073406) [the Instruction of Amenemope](#_Toc499073407) [and the Book of Proverbs 312](#_Toc499073408)

[The Words of Ahiqar 317](#_Toc499073409)

[Summary of themes in Ahiqar 337](#_Toc499073410)

[Dispute between a Man and His Ba 338](#_Toc499073411)

[I Will Praise the Lord of Wisdom 343](#_Toc499073412)

[The Babylonian Theodicy 356](#_Toc499073413)

[The Satirical Letter of Hori 365](#_Toc499073414)

[The Dialogue of Pessimism 367](#_Toc499073415)

[Songs of the Harpers 372](#_Toc499073416)

[The Satire of the Trades 377](#_Toc499073417)

[Abbreviations 384](#_Toc499073418)

[Bibliography 387](#_Toc499073419)

Scripture quotations, except quotations from others, are from

the New Revised Standard Version, unless indicated otherwise.

# INTRODUCTION

## CANONS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

**HEBREW** **SEPTUAGINT**1 **VULGATE** **CATHOLIC BIBLE**2

*Torah*: *Historical Books*:

Genesis Genesis Genesis Genesis

Exodus Exodus Exodus Exodus

Leviticus Leviticus Leviticus Leviticus

Numbers Numbers Numbers Numbers

Deuteronomy Deuteronomy Deuteronomy Deuteronomy

*Nebi’im*:

Joshua Joshua Joshua Joshua

Judges Judges Judges Judges

Ruth Ruth Ruth

Samuel [1‑2 Samuel] 1 Kingdoms [1 Samuel] Samuel (1‑2 Kingdoms) [1‑2 Samuel] 1 Samuel

2 Kingdoms [2 Samuel] 2 Samuel

Kings [1‑2 Kings] 3 Kingdoms [1 Kings] Kings (3‑4 Kingdoms) [1‑2 Kings] 1 Kings

4 Kingdoms [2 Kings] 2 Kings

1 Paralipomenon [1 Chr] Words of Days [1‑2 Chronicles] 1 Chronicles

2 Paralipomenon [2 Chr] 2 Chronicles

1 Esdras Ezra (1 and 2 Esdras) [Ezra‑Nehemiah] Ezra

2 Esdras [Ezra‑Nehemiah] Nehemiah

Esther Tobit Tobit\*

Judith Judith Judith\*

Tobit Esther Esther

1 Maccabees 1 Maccabees\*

2 Maccabees 2 Maccabees\*

*3 Maccabees*

*4 Maccabees*

*Wisdom Literature*:

Isaiah Psalms [with *Ps 151*] Job Job

Jeremiah *Odes* Psalms Psalms

Ezekiel Proverbs Proverbs Proverbs

Ecclesiastes Ecclesiastes Ecclesiastes

Hosea Song of Songs Song of Songs Song of Songs

Joel Job

Amos Wisdom Wisdom Wisdom\*

Obadiah Sirach Sirach Sirach\*

Micah *Psalms of Solomon*

Jonah *Prophets*:

Nahum Hosea Isaiah Isaiah

Habakkuk Amos Jeremiah Jeremiah

Zephaniah Micah Lamentations Lamentations

Haggai Joel Baruch [with Letter of Jeremiah] Baruch\* [+ Let. of Jer.]

Zechariah Obadi­ah Ezekiel Ezekiel

Malachi Jonah Daniel [with 2 songs, Suzanna, Daniel

Nahum and Bel & Dragon]

*Kethubim*: Habakkuk Hosea Hosea

Psalms Zephaniah Joel Joel

Job Haggai Amos Amos

Proverbs Zechariah Obadiah Obadiah

Ruth Malachi Jonah Jonah

Song of Songs Micah Micah

Ecclesiastes Isaiah Nahum Nahum

Lamentations Jeremiah Habakkuk Habakkuk

Esther Baruch Zephaniah Zephaniah

Lamentations Haggai Haggai

Daniel Letter of Jeremiah Zechariah Zechariah

Ezra‑Nehemiah Ezekiel Malachi Malachi

Chronicles [1‑2] Daniel, with: (1) the Prayer Maccabees [1‑2 Maccabees]

of Azariah between 3:22 and 23,

(2) the Song of the Three Jews

between 3:27 and 28; (3) Susanna NEW TESTAMENT NEW TESTA­MENT

as ch.13, and (4) Bel and the (27 books) (27 books)

Dragon as ch. 14

1 Italics in the Septuagint Appendix to the Vulgate: 2 **PROTES­TANT BIBLE**:

indicate books not in the Prayer of Manasseh Books in the Catholic Bible

Catholic or Protestant 3 Ezra (1 Esdras) marked with an asterisk are

Bibles. 4 Ezra (2 Esdras) not in the Protes­tant Bible.

Psalm 151

Epistle to the Laodiceans

## MAJOR EVENTS IN OLD TESTAMENT HISTORY

**4004 — creation**

The Old Testament (OT) does not give a date for creation, but in ad 1650 Archbishop James Ussher determined that, according to OT chron­ological referen­ces, it must have occurred in 4004 bc (October 23 at 9 a.m., in fact!). The universe actually began about 14 billion years ago, but the 4004 date does help us see that to the ancient Jews, creation was not so far in the past as we now think. The first 11 chapters of Genesis (called the “primitive his­tory”) relate events from creation to Abraham; these events include the creation of the world, the fall in the Garden of Eden, Cain and Abel, Noah, and the tower of Babel.

**1850 — Abraham**

Abraham (Gen 12-25) probably lived c. 1850 bc (“c.” stands for “*circa*,” Latin for “approxi­mately”). God made a covenant (an “agree­ment” or “treaty”) with Abraham (Gen 12) in which God promised that (1) Abra­ham’s descendants will be numerous, (2) they will dwell in Pales­tine, the “Holy Land,” and (3) all nations of the earth will be blessed through him. Abra­ham’s sons were Ishmael and Isaac (Gen 21-26); Isaac’s sons were Esau and Jacob (Gen 25-36); and Jacob’s 12 sons were the forefathers of the 12 tribes of Israel: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Issachar, Zebulun, Joseph, and Benjamin. One of these forefathers, Joseph, became the right-hand man of the Pharaoh in Egypt; when a famine struck the Middle East, Joseph’s relatives, the Israelites, moved to Egypt, where Joseph fed them.

**1250 — exodus**

Over the centuries the Israelites grew in number in Egypt; they were seen as a threat and enslaved. But God used Moses to send ten plagues on the Egyptians, so the pharaoh allowed them to leave (the exodus, Exod 1-14). Moses led the Israelites through the wilderness (the first half of the “wilderness wanderings,” Exod 15-19) to Mount Sinai, where he received 613 laws, many of which he immediately told to the Israelites (Exod 20-Num 10). Afterward Moses led the Israelites through the wilderness (the second half of the “wilderness wanderings,” Num 11-36) to the east bank of the Jordan river; there he delivered the remainder of the 613 laws to the Israelites (Deut 1-33), just before he died (Deut 34).

**1220 — conquest**

Joshua then became leader. He and the Israelites conquered the Canaanites (Josh 1-11), and divided up the land—formerly “Canaan,” now “Israel”—into twelve plots, one for each tribe (Josh 12-24). (Since members of the Levi tribe were priests and lived throughout the tribes, they received no land; but the Joseph tribe split into Manasseh and Eph­raim, so there still remained twelve tribes).

**1220-1020 — judges**

The conquest ushered in the period of the “judges” (Judg 1-21, 1 Sam 1-7). These judges, though they did settle legal disputes, primarily functioned as charismatic military leaders. Whenever one of the six surround­ing nations—Phoeni­cia, Aram, Ammon, Moab, Edom, and Philistia—would attack one of the tribes, the others would send young men to that tribe to form an ad hoc army; then the army would accept someone charismatic as their general. After the Israelite army would fend off the attacking nation, the leader would continue as judge of all the tribes until his death. The book of Judges records the deeds of twelve judges.

**1020 — Saul**

Finally, the tribes decided to form a centralized government so that they would be less suscepti­ble to attack. The first king was Saul (1 Sam 8-21); he consolidated the tribes into a federation, a single nation.

**1000 — David**

The second king, the most glorious Israel ever had, was David (2 Sam 1-1 Kgs 2). He conquered the six surrounding nations; he established a capital at Jerusalem (until then, a Canaanite village in the mountains of Judah); he built a palace; and he intended to build a temple, but God instructed him to let his successor build it.

**960 — first temple**

Solomon, David’s son (1 Kgs 3-11), built the first temple; it was dedicated in 960 bc. He was a wise and good king; under him Israel experienced a cultural flowering.

**922 — division of the kingdoms**

But Solomon’s son, Rehoboam, was a bad king who failed to take care of tribes other than his own, Judah. So the northern ten tribes rebelled against the central government (Simeon, the eleventh tribe, was surrounded by Judah and unable to rebel); they quickly won the civil war (1 Kgs 12-16). Consequently, there were now two kingdoms: Israel in the north, and Judah in the south (Simeon became part of Judah).

**721 — Assyrian exile**

During the 800s and 700s, Assyria waxed powerful; it soon conquered Babylonia (Assyria and Babylonia form present-day Iraq, northeast of Israel) Asia Minor (present-day Turkey, northwest of Israel), and Phoenicia (present-day Lebanon, north of Israel). In 721, Assyria conquered the northern kingdom, the kingdom of Israel (2 Kgs 15-19). Most of the population was de­ported else­where and thus became “the lost ten tribes of Israel”; those that remained became the Samari­tans, whose religion was considered deviant by the Jews of the southern king­dom.

**587 — Babylonian exile**

During the 600s, Assyria waned as Babylonia waxed in power; in 612, Babylonia conquered the Assyrian capital, Nineveh. In 587, the Babylonians defeated the southern kingdom, the kingdom of Judah, and carried off its nobility and scribes to their capital, Babylon (2 Kgs 23-25).

**539 — restoration**

In 539, however, the Persians conquered Babylonia. When King Cyrus of Persia discovered the Jewish exiles living in Babylon, he put forth an edict granting them permission to return to Jerusa­lem (Ezra 1), a return called “the restoration.”

**518 — second temple**

The first thing that the Jews did after their return was to rebuild the temple (Ezra 3-6); it was rededicated in 518. Though little more than a “log cabin” to begin with, it was renovated over the centuries until, by the time Jesus “cleansed” it in ad 30, it was more magnificent than Sol­o­mon’s had been. (The Romans destroyed the second temple in ad 70, and no third temple has ever been erected; pres­ently there stands on Mount Zion an Islamic holy site, “the Dome of the Rock.”)

**332 — Greek domination**

The Jews lived peaceably under the Persians for almost two hundred years, but in 332 Alexander the Great, on his way to take over most of the then-known world, conquered Judah (1 Macc 1). Judah lived under Greek domina­tion for about a century and a half.

**165 — Maccabean kingdom**

The Jews lived peaceably under the Greeks until in 170 there arose a ruler, Antiochus IV Epi­phanes, who believed he was Zeus (he was probably insane). He demanded that all of his subjects wor­ship the Greek gods and goddesses, including himself. In 167 the Jews rebelled and formed a guerrilla army under the leader, Judas Maccabeus (“Maccabeus” means “the hammer”); and, surprisingly, the guerrillas expelled the much larger Greek army. In 165 (for the first time since 587), Israel became independent, with Judas Maccabeus as king. That same year he rededicated the temple (which the Greeks had deliberately profaned), proclaiming that thereafter all Jews were to celebrate the rededication every year; and that is the origin of the Jewish feast of Hanukkah (1-2 Maccabees).

**63 — Roman domination**

The Jews lived independently for about a hundred years, but in 63 bc the Roman general Pompey conquered Judah and made it the Roman province of Judea (Latin for “Judah”). That is why in the gospels the background of Jesus’ public ministry (c. ad 27-30) is the Roman Empire: Caesar Augustus, Pontius Pilate, etc.

## “WISDOM LITERATURE”

Murphy, Roland E. *The Tree of Life: An Exploration of Biblical Wisdom Literature*. Anchor Bible Reference Library. New York: Doubleday, 1990.

1. “**wisdom**”
   1. A proposed definition of “wisdom”: knowledge from experience about religion and morality.
   2. “That’s why God made us grow old, so we could gain the wisdom to find fault with everything he made.” (Grandpa Simpson)
   3. “wisdom” in the *American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*
      1. “The ability to discern or judge what is true, right, or lasting; insight.”
      2. “Common sense; good judgment . . .”
      3. “The sum of learning through the ages; knowledge . . .”
      4. “Wise teachings of the ancient sages.”
      5. “A wise outlook, plan, or course of action.”
      6. “Bible. Wisdom of Solomon.”
2. “**literature**”
   1. “Literature” can mean anything written: you can ask a travel agent for “literature” on a trip to Cancun.
   2. But ordinarily it means what the French call *belles lettres* (“beautiful letters”): writing with artistic merit.
   3. Presently, the principal genres of literature in the latter sense are novels, short stories, plays, poems, and (artistic) essays.
3. “**wisdom literature**” **for biblical texts**
   1. The term “wisdom literature” “is appropriate for certain biblical books.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 1)
   2. These books “frequently employ the term “wisdom” (*ḥokmāh*).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 1)
   3. More important are “the specific literary forms that [set wisdom literature] off from other biblical books.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 1)
   4. More important too is “the typical approach to reality . . . that [sets wisdom literature] off from other biblical books.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 1)
4. **international** “**wisdom literature**”
   1. “. . . the term seems to have been borrowed from biblical scholarship and then applied to similar literary works that were discovered in the twentieth century.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 1)
   2. “It has been suggested that “wisdom literature” is something of a misnomer, at least as it is applied to the comparable literature of ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia . . .” (Lambert, W.G. *Babylonian Wisdom Literature*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1960. 1.) (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 1)

THE EXTENT OF WISDOM LITERATURE

1. **in the Hebrew Bible**: “Within the Hebrew Bible, three books deserve the title “wisdom literature”: Proverbs, Job, and Ecclesiastes.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 1)
2. **in the deuterocanonicals**: “Among the so-called Apocrypha, two more are in the same area and have to be considered in any treatment of biblical wisdom: Ecclesiasticus (or Sirach) and the Wisdom of Solomon.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 1)
3. **five works**: “The aforementioned five works stand out as preeminent examples of biblical wisdom.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 1)
4. **the** “**wisdom literature**” **section of the Old Testament**: in addition to the five wisdom books properly so-called, two others works are included in the wisdom-literature section of the Old Testament: Psalms and Song of Songs. These were included because in the Septuagint—the translation of Jewish sacred books into Greek c. 200-100 bc—the middle section of the Old Testament was thought of as “the poetic books.” Hence, the “wisdom literature,” the books included in the middle section of the Old Testament, is Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Qoheleth (Ecclesiastes), Song of Songs (Song of Solomon), Wisdom (Book of Wisdom, Wisdom of Solomon), and Sirach.
5. **in other biblical works**: “In recent times scholarship has turned to the investigation of wisdom in other [biblical] books. Most would agree that one can speak of a few “wisdom psalms,” but there is considerable uncertainty about the degree of wisdom “influence” on the other books . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 1)

# CHARACTERISTICS

# OF HEBREW POETRY

## PARALLELISM, A SEMANIC DEVICE IN POETRY

Gillingham, S[usan] E. *The Poems and Psalms of the Hebrew Bible.* Oxford Bible Series. Oxford: OUP, 1994.

Lichtheim, Miriam. “The Instruction Addressed to King Merikare.” *Ancient Egyptian Literature: A Book of Readings*. Vol. 1: *The Old and Middle Kingdoms*. 3 vols. Berkeley: U of California P, 1973. 96-109.

1. **parallelism and translation**
   1. Hebrew’s “poetic form consists mainly of balanced expressions of thought which make it relatively easy to translate into line-forms, thus allowing its inner coherence to remain intact. [13] . . . one feature of Hebrew poetry is the way its essence (the binary balancing of ideas) can be retained in translation. . . . this essence is still retained when the Hebrew is presented in English in prose style.” [18] (Gillingham 13, 18)
   2. Stephen Prickett (*Words and the Word* 42): “Whereas contemporary European verse, which [relies] heavily on the essentially untranslatable auditory effects of alliteration, assonance, rhyme, and metre, [is] extremely difficult to render in another language with any real equivalence of tone and feeling, Hebrew poetry [is] almost all translatable.” (Qtd. in Gillingham 73)
2. **theories about parallelism and Hebrew poetry**
   1. Robert Lowth
      1. Robert Lowth delivered 34 lectures on biblical poetry (5 on Psalms) in Latin at Oxford in 1741 (published, 1753; English, 1839). He realized Hebrew poetry had parallelism. (Gillingham 73)
      2. “Lowth proposed . . . synonymous parallelism, where the same idea is repeated in a different way; antithetic parallelism, where the idea is presented in a contrasting way; and synthetic parallelism, where two ideas together comprise one greater idea—without the repetition of ‘A’ and ‘B’. . . . The third type . . . Lowth broke up into a further five categories . . .” (Gillingham 73)
      3. Speaking of Egyptian literature, Lichtheim (1: 98) refers to “parallelism in its several forms, such as similarities, elaborations, and contrasts.” Perhaps these are the same as synonymous, synthetic, and anthetic parallelism, respectively.
   2. James Kugel’s *The Idea of Biblical Poetry*
      1. Parallelism “involves a flexibility (for example, the use of just one line, or of three and four, rather than two) which results in as many exceptions as there are conventions. [Parallelism is] an adaptable rhetorical device used for ‘seconding’ or ‘closing’ poetic units.” (Gillingham 75)
      2. Pss 23, for example, shows “a complete breakdown in [190] parallelism . . .” (Gillingham 190-91)
         1. “. . . how little parallelism there really is.” (Gillingham 76)
         2. “. . . clear parallelism is apparent in verse 2 . . .” (Gillingham 75)
         3. But “The unequal length of the lines [creates] irregularity in the sound as well as the sense . . .” (Gillingham 76)
         4. It is difficult to know “whether the lines should be divided further to make tricola [three lines] (e. g. vv. 2, 3, 5) . . .” (Gillingham 76)
         5. The meter “varies between 3:2 (vv. 1-3) and 2:2 (v. 4) and 3:2 (vv. 5-6).” (Gillingham 63)
      3. “As well as refuting parallelism as a clear criterion of poetry, Kugel shows how confused the issue is by offering several examples from prose accounts which suggest it.” (Gillingham 77)
      4. “The case is clear: [77] . . . parallelism is as common a feature in prose as it is an inconsistent feature in poetry. It is no surprise that Kugel concludes that all that can be said about parallelism is that it pertains to a seconding, or an intensifying, of the meaning, which does not create a clear criterion for identifying poetry.” [78] “By creating similar images with different words, the intensification of meaning is achieved.” [69] (Gillingham 69, 77-78)
      5. “. . . when we add to this the likelihood that the Hebrew poet (as any poet) is most probably seeking to achieve new possibilities within the bounds of formal conventions, we can be less confident still in assuming we know how to define Hebrew verse.” (Gillingham 78)
   3. Gillingham’s “‘three-in-one’ definition of parallelism” (Gillingham 83)
      1. introduction
         1. “. . . *parallelism is of one type only*—a seconding of two lines A and B, used either in terms of straightforward repetition (Lowth’s synonymous parallelism) or contrasting opposites (Lowth’s antithetical parallelism). [This] avoids Lowth’s third and more vague category of synthetic (or incomplete) parallelism.” (Gillingham 78)
         2. “On the other hand, there are nuances within this one structure which suggest at least *three variations of thought*.” (Gillingham 78)
      2. first variation
         1. “The *first variation* of parallelism is where ‘A’ is interchangeable with ‘B’ [A = B] [78] . . . [This includes] both synonymous parallelism (A is the same as B) and antithetic parallelism (A is the opposite of B).” (Gillingham 78-79)
      3. second variation
         1. “The *second variation* is where A is expressed as the most important idea, and B is a qualification of it [A > B], completing more fully the thought expressed in the preceding line. Again, this is achieved either by repetition and echo, or by comparison and contrast, and is a modification of the category of so-called synthetic or incomplete parallelism. It is sometimes a movement from the general (colon A) [“colon” is from the Greek and means “line”; its plural is “cola”—Hahn] to the specific (colon B); at other times it may be a movement from the literal (A) to the figurative (B).” (Gillingham 80)
         2. “An intriguing example is the use of numbers:

If Cain is avenged sevenfold,

truly Lamech seventy-sevenfold. (Gen. 4:24)

Three things are too wonderful for me;

four I do not understand. (Prov. 30:18)” (Gillingham 80)

* + - 1. “Mostly this variation is achieved by a heightening or focusing of phrases, giving the impression of greater precision:

I made the earth,

and created man upon it:

[word-pairs are: “made” and “created,” “earth” and “man”]

it was my hands that stretched out the heavens,

and I commanded all their host.

[word-pairs are: “my” and “I,” “stretched out” and “commanded,” “heavens” and “host”] (Isa. 45:12) [80]

They have made his land a waste:

his cities are in ruins, without inhabitant.

[word-pairs are: “land” and “cities,” “waste” and “ruins”] (Jer. 2:15)” (Gillingham 80-81)

* + 1. third variation
       1. “The *third variation* is where . . . B is seen not only to complement but also to complete A. B is thus given more importance than A [A < B]. This can again be achieved either by way of repetition or contrast. It is thus the converse of our second variation, and so it too is a modification of synthetic/incomplete parallelism. An interesting example is from Isaiah 40:3:

In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord,

make straight in the desert a highway for our God.” (Gillingham 81)

1. **variations within parallelism**
   1. Sometimes, “Instead of moving from the subordinate clause to the main clause, the poet repeats the subordinate clause twice, and similarly twice repeats the main idea. Psalm 114 is a good example. The formula would be AA BB:

A When Israel went forth from Egypt,

A the house of Jacob from a people of strange language,

B Judah became his sanctuary,

##### B Israel his dominion. (vv. 1-2) [69]

The sense is delayed, and consequently the emphasis is placed on the last of the four cola.” (Gillingham 69-70)

* 1. “. . . a similar effect of delay is [achieved] by repeating the subordinate-clause-main-clause formula twice . . . AB AB . . .:

A When Israel went forth from Egypt,

B Judah became his sanctuary;

A the house of Jacob from a people of strange language,

B Israel became his dominion.

In both cases, we may note . . . a tension (A) and a resolution (B).” (Gillingham 70)

* 1. “Within [the third variation, A < B,] there is some evidence of what has been called ‘staircase parallelism’, whereby the ideas proceed in steps. Jeremiah 31:21 (‘Return, O Virgin Israel, return to these your cities’) and Psalm 77:17 (‘When the waters saw you, God, when the waters saw you they trembled’) are illustrations of this device. A more developed example is found in Judges 5, the song of war attributed to Deborah . . .

Lord, when thou didst go forth from Se’ir,

when thou didst march from the region of Edom,

the earth trembled,

and the heavens dropped,

yea, the clouds dropped water.” (Gillingham 81)

1. **conclusions**
   1. “. . . parallelism, as a device to make an aphorism more memorable and repeatable, is a common feature throughout Semitic thinking (whether in Ugaritic, Hebrew, or Aramaic). Furthermore, the ‘one-in-three’ feature (A = B, A > B, A < B) proposed earlier fits not only the Hebrew poetry of the Old Testament but also the Aramaic poetry of the New . . .” (Gillingham 87)
   2. Parallelism “is not so much a fixed technique as a creative art. It is not so much used for its own sake, as to evoke a response . . .” (Gillingham 87)
   3. “. . . Semitic poetry was composed as much to be taught (in recitation) or sung (in cantillation) as it was to be read and studied. Thus, although a literary appraisal is vital in attending to the formal issues, such as genre, style, structure, and syntax, there are nevertheless other aspects of poetic appreciation for which literary analysis alone is an inadequate tool. A more intuitive and [87] imaginative approach is required if we are to take seriously the performative quality of biblical poetry in its various social and cultural life-settings.” (Gillingham 87-88)

## OTHER SEMANTIC DEVICES IN HEBREW POETRY

Di Lella, Alexander A. “Sirach.” *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, ed. Raymond E. Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, and Roland E. Murphy. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1990. 496-509.

Fitzgerald, Aloysius. “Hebrew Poetry.” *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, ed. Raymond E. Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, and Roland E. Murphy. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1990. 201-08.

Guinan, Michael D. “Lamentations.” *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, ed. Raymond E. Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, and Roland E. Murphy. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1990. 558-62.

Lambert, W. G., ed. *Babylonian Wisdom Literature*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1960.

Wahl, Thomas P., Irene Nowell, and Anthony R. Ceresko. “Zephaniah, Nahum, Habakkuk.” *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, ed. Raymond E. Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, and Roland E. Murphy. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1990. 255-64.

1. **formulaic language**
   1. Formulaic language is “good evidence of the cultic background of the psalms: . . . “they are not primarily meant to be personal effusions, but are . . . ritual lyrics.” (Mowinckel, Sigmund. *The Psalms in Israel’s Worship* 1.30-31) (Gillingham 202)
   2. 150 expressions “occur three or more times in the psalms but nowhere else in the Bible.” (Tsevat, M. *A Study of the Language of the Biblical Psalms*.) (Gillingham 202)
   3. “. . . at least twenty-six psalms are up to 40 per cent formulaic.” (Culley, R. B. *Oral Formulaic Language in the Biblical Psalms*.) (Gillingham 202)
   4. Formulaic language is especially common in laments; it is less common but significant in hymns. (Gillingham 202)
   5. Gillingham classifies the psalms’ formulas in six categories. (Gillingham 203)
      1. “*the psalmist’s enemies*” (Gillingham 203)
         1. workers of iniquity (“a term which may be connected with the casting of spells, as in sorcery”)
         2. beasts
         3. liars
         4. schemers
         5. false witnesses
         6. persecutors
         7. murderers
      2. “*the psalmist’s plight*” (Gillingham 203)
         1. actual physical mourning: weeping, aching, groaning
         2. metaphors: caught in the snares of death, drowning in deep waters
      3. “*addresses to God in complaint or praise*” (Gillingham 203)
         1. calling on God’s name
         2. “thanksgivings for refuge and protection”
         3. “pleas for God to hear”
         4. “praise for God’s steadfast love”

“Three further categories are also discernible, although here [203] many of the expressions occur more frequently elsewhere.” (Gillingham 203-04)

* + 1. *instructional advice* (associated with wisdom): “speaking the truth,” “seeking God,” “doing no evil,” “fearing the Lord,” “trusting,” “waiting upon God,” “considering the poor.” (Gillingham 204)
    2. *theophanic descriptions* (much is mythological imagery found in Babylonian and Canaanite hymns): “the earth reeling and shaking, God’s appearing in thunder, on the clouds, in thick darkness, with lightnings, through the seas and deep, God fighting for his people, and his dwelling on his holy mountain.” (Gillingham 204)
    3. *Yahweh judging* (also found in the prophets): “God sitting in the heavens, judging the peoples, seated in his holy temple, looking down from heaven, ruling over the nations, delivering Zion, maintaining the cause of the afflicted, and executing justice for the needy.” (Gillingham 204)

1. **figurative language**
   1. Some of the formulaic language is metaphoric. (Gillingham 204)
   2. God is compared to impersonal things (Gillingham 204):
      1. rock
      2. fortress
      3. refuge
      4. defence
      5. stronghold
      6. dwelling-place
      7. habitation
      8. shield
      9. See Ps 18:2, “The Lord is my rock, my fortress, and my deliverer, my God, my rock in whom I take refuge, my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.”
   3. God is compared to human persons (Gillingham 204):
      1. king
      2. shepherd
      3. farmer
      4. craftsman
      5. father
      6. warrior
      7. mother
         1. Ps 27:10, “If my father and mother forsake me, the Lord will take me up.”
         2. Ps 131:2, “I have calmed and quieted my soul, like a weaned child with its mother; my soul is like the weaned child that is with me.”
         3. Isa 49:15, “Can a woman forget her nursing child, or show no compassion for the child of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you.”
         4. Isa 66:13, “As a mother comforts her child, so I will comfort you; you shall be comforted in Jerusalem.”
   4. Enemies are compared to animals. (Gillingham 204)
   5. The psalmist’s sufferings make him like an animal. (Gillingham 204)
      1. worm (22:6)
      2. owl (102:6-7)
      3. deer (42:1)
      4. grasshopper (109:23)
   6. Creation is personified (these motifs are “often culled from mythological motifs of other cultures of the ancient Near East”). (Gillingham 204)
      1. the sun comes out like a bridegroom (19:6)
      2. mountains are asked to help or bear witness (68:15-16)
      3. floods clap their hands (98:8)
      4. mountains skip like rams (114:4)

These personifications show “the ‘animation’ of creation responding in praise before God.” (Gillingham 204)

1. **word pairs**
   1. in general
      1. Parallelism results in paired words.
         1. Ps 30:5, “For *his anger* is but for *a moment* | and *his favour* is for *a lifetime.* | [24] *Weeping* may tarry for *the night*, | but *joy* comes with *the morning.*” (Gillingham 24-25)
         2. Ps 114:1-2, “When *Israel* went forth from *Egypt* | *the house of Jacob* from *a people of strange language* | *Judah* became his *sanctuary* | *Israel* his *dominion*.” (Gillingham 198)
      2. “. . . evening/morning, light/dark, land/sea, bread/meat [are] an obvious way of expressing ideas in some balanced binary form.” (Gillingham 24)
      3. “Some combinations are so frequent that they are called “word-pairs,” such as “wise / fool,” or “mouth / tongue.”” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 6)
   2. phonic word pairs
      1. Gen 1:2, Jer 4:23, ??tohu / bohu (“waste and void”)
      2. Isa 22:5, ??mebusa / mebuka (“trampling and confusion”) (Gillingham 25)
   3. gender-matched word pairs
      1. Sometimes “the pairing is a deliberate interplay of masculine and feminine nouns.” (Gillingham 25)
      2. At times one gender follows the another. (Gillingham 25)
         1. Job 10:12:

“Thou hast granted me life (m.) and steadfast love (m.)

and thy care (f.) has preserved my spirit (f.)” (Gillingham 79)

* + - 1. Gen. 1:10:

“God called the-dry-land [f. sing.] earth [f. sing.]

and the-gathering-together of-the-waters [m. pl.] he called seas [m. pl.]” (Gillingham 25)

* + 1. At times the genders alternate. (Gillingham 25)
       1. Isa 62:1:

“. . . her vindication (f.) goes forth as brightness (m.),

and her salvation (f.) as a burning torch (m.)” (Gillingham 79)

1. **terse style**
   1. in general
      1. Usually “a maximum of four Hebrew words serves each clause . . .” (Gillingham 21)
      2. An example is Exod 15:12-13, “Thou-dost-stretch-out thy-right-hand, | (the-)earth swallowed-them. | Thou-hast-led in-thy-steadfast-love (a-)people | whom thou-hast-redeemed.” (Gillingham 21)
   2. omission of certain particles
      1. “This feature is a more specific example of the general characteristic of terseness of style.” (Gillingham 23)
      2. “. . . the most frequent [are] the definite article *h*-, the relative pronoun *´asher*, and the sign of the definite object *et*.” (Gillingham 23)
      3. Ps 118:22 (words in brackets are omitted), “[The-]stone [which] the builders rejected | has become [the-]head [of-the-]corner.” (Gillingham 23)
   3. ellipsis
      1. This is “the omission of a word in a second phrase when it is the same as the one used in the first.” (Gillingham 23)
      2. “Again this is related [23] to poetry’s terseness of style.” (Gillingham 23)
      3. Amos 5:12, “For I know how many are your transgressions, and how great are your sins . . .”
2. **unusual word order**
   1. “. . . instead of the normal verb-subject-object sequence, the verb occurs in the middle or at the end of a clause.” (Gillingham 24)
   2. Num 23:7, “From-Aram has-brought-me Balak, | the-king-of-Moab [ ] from-the-mountains-in-the-east.” (Gillingham 24)
3. **unusual vocabulary and archaisms**
   1. Examples include “the ‘enclitic ??*mem*’ (used for emphasis), the ‘vocative ??*lamed*’ (used in address), and the ‘emphatic ??*waw*’ (‘but’ . . .).” (Gillingham 26)
   2. “Another example is the variation of tenses within two balancing lines: the imperfect (incompleted) tense—called the ??*yiqtol*—may occur in one colon, whilst the perfect (completed) tense—called the ??*qatal*—may occur in the other colon. Psalm 38:11 is a good example of this.” (Gillingham 26)
   3. change of voice, e. g. passive to active, as in Ps 24:7 (Gillingham 26)
4. **repetition**
   1. (Repetition is partly a semantic device, partly a phonetic device; but I judge the semantic component to be predominant.—Hahn)
   2. In repetition, “a similar phrase [is] reiterated at the beginning or ending . . .” (Gillingham 192)
   3. “. . . a similar phrase [acts] as an ‘envelope figure’ at the beginning or ending of a sequence . . .” (Gillingham 26)
5. **chiasmus**
   1. Here “each of the lines leads up to one climactic point and recedes back down again . . . One typical pattern might be ABCDCBA.” (Gillingham 27) (Here the reversed units are “lines.”)
   2. “. . . a discernible series of ideas . . . leads up to a climax, which then is inverted so that the ideas follow one another in a reverse way, so that the ending of the psalm matches its beginning.” (Gillingham 201) (Here the reversed units are “ideas.”)
   3. Examples: Pss 7, 15, 29, 30, 46, 51, 56, 59, 72, 95:1-7, 105:1-11, 136:10-15, 137, 139. (Gillingham 27, 201)
   4. Non-psalm examples: Isa 1:21-6; Jer 2:5-9; Amos 9:1-4; Job 32:6-10; Qoh 3:2-8. (Gillingham 27)
6. **acrostics**
   1. (Acrostics are partly a semantic device, partly a phonetic device; but I judge the semantic component to be predominant.—Hahn)
   2. In an acrostic poem, the first letters of units follow an alphabetic sequence. (Gillingham 196) “. . . each unit or half unit begins with the next successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 10)
   3. A “nonalphabetic acrostic” is a poem with 22 units (to match the 22 letters in the Hebrew alphabet) but without successive letters of the Hebrew alphabet at the beginnings of successive units.
   4. acrostic poems in the Bible
      1. Pss 9-10, 25, 33 (nonalphabetic), 34, 37, 111, 112, 119, 145
      2. Prov 2:1-22 (nonalphabetic); 30:10-31
      3. Lamentations
         1. Lam 1-3 “contain 66 lines divided into 22 stanzas, each beginning with a successive letter of the alphabet. In chaps. 1 and 2 only the first line of each stanza begins with the respective letter, whereas in chap. 3 each line of the stanza begins with it.” (Guinan 559)
         2. Lam 4 “is shorter, having 44 lines, 22 stanzas of 2 lines each . . .” (Guinan 559)
         3. Lam 5 (nonalphabetic) “is the shortest with only 22 lines . . .” (Guinan 559)
         4. “For no apparent reason, chaps. 2, 3, 4 reverse the 16th (`*ayin*) and 17th (*pē*) letters.” (Guinan 559)
      4. Sirach “often composed units of 22 lines (. . . or by way of variation 23 lines) to signal the opening or closing of a part of the book, to show the unity of a section, or simply to add elegance . . .” (Di Lella 497)
         1. Sir 1:11-30, on fear of the Lord, “contains twenty-two lines, the number of letters in the Hebrew alphabet . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 70)
         2. Sir 5:1-6:4
         3. Sir 6:18-37 (“the opening of part III”)
         4. Sir 22:1-21
         5. Sir 49:1-16 (“the final unit on Israel’s ancestors”)
         6. 51:13-30 (“an alphabetic acrostic to close the book”) (Di Lella 497)
            1. “For a careful translation based on the Hebrew text from cave 11 at Qumran, see”: Skehan, P., and A. Di Lella. *The Wisdom of Ben Sira*. AB 39. Garden City: Doubleday, 1987. Skehan, P. “The Acrostic Poem in Sirach 51:13-30.” *HTR* 64 (1971): 387-400. (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 81 n. 18)
            2. “. . . the acrostic poem on Wisdom with which the book ends . . . forms an inclusion with 1:11-30. It describes the intensity of Sirach’s pursuit of Lady Wisdom, and it ends on the paradoxical note of human industry and divine beneficence, which Sirach understood so well . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 79) Sir 51:30, “Do your work in good time, and in his own time God will give you your reward.”
         7. “On the several poems in Sirach of twenty-two and twenty-three lines, see Skehan and Di Lella, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira*, 74.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 80 n. 8)
      5. Nahum “contains a partial acrostic poem (1:2-8) . . .” (Wahl, Nowell, and Ceresko 258)
   5. The first letter of every line can be a new letter (Pss 111, 112),

the first letter of every couplet can be a new letter (Pss 25, 37), or

the first letter of every third couplet can be a new letter (Lam 1). (Gillingham 196)

* 1. Ps 9-10 is an incomplete acrostic.
     1. “Psalm 9 starts with the first letter, ??*aleph*, and ends with the second to the last letter, ??*resh* . . .” (Gillingham 197)
     2. “. . . Ps. 10 starts with the tenth letter, *lamed*, but ends on the last letter, ??*tet*.” (Gillingham 197)
     3. It seems that “there is a linking alphabetic structure between the two psalms, which have undergone several disruptions through the process of transmission.” (Gillingham 197)
  2. Ps 33 is “a nonalphabetic acrostic, but with twenty-two lines.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 10)
  3. “Ps 34, a wisdom psalm, illustrates the manner in which the sages played with the alphabet. It consists of twenty-two verses . . . in strict acrostic sequence, except that the *waw* verse is (deliberately?) omitted and a *pe* verse is added after the *taw* (or final) verse. The result is that the consonants beginning the first, middle, and end verses spell out *´lp*, the first letter of the alphabet, and also a verb meaning “to learn,” or “to teach” (*Pi`el*). The middle *lamed* verse (v 12) emphasizes *lmd*, which is also a verb “to teach.”” (Ceresko, A. “The ABCs of Wisdom in Psalm XXXIV.” *VT* 35 (1985) 99-104.) (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 10)
  4. “In Ps 111 individual cola are marked off by the acrostic.” (Fitzgerald 201)
  5. Ps 119 has a more intricate pattern. In the first stanza, all 8 verses start with *aleph*; in the second, all 8 verses start with *beth*; and so on, through all 22 stanzas (all 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet). (Gillingham 196-97)
  6. Ps 145 “has one verse out of alphabetic sequence, so that the acrostic in the middle of the psalm runs as m-l-k, rather than k-l-m: this seems to be deliberate, for the word *melek* means king, and the psalm celebrates the kingship of God.” (Gillingham 197)
  7. “. . . Prov 2:1-22 has twenty-two lines corresponding to the number of letters of the Hebrew alphabet.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 10)
  8. Prov 30:10-31 (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 10)
  9. acrostics in other ancient Near-Eastern texts
     1. “The [*Babylonian*] *Theodicy* is an acrostic poem of twenty-seven stanzas of 11 lines each.” (Lambert 63)
     2. See *ANET* 438 (cited in Guinan 559); Lambert 67 (four Akkadian examples).

1. **polysemy**: “the same word is used with several meanings.” (Gillingham 192)

## METER, A PHONETIC DEVICE IN POETRY

meter in general

1. **meter vs. rhythm**
   1. Meter is a “more rigid form of rhythm . . .” (Gillingham 51)
   2. An analogy is music. A bar of music (say, eight measures) when played has many factors: timbre, pitch, tempo, volume, etc. “Old Lang Syne” can be played by a clarinet or a trumpet, in the octave above middle C or the octave below, slowly or briskly, loudly or softly, etc. Another of these aspects is rhythm: *rhythm* is all the subtle variations in stress and note length that occur over the eight measures. For example, in the first line of “Old Lang Syne” (“Should auld acquaintance be forgot”), “Should” and “auld” fall on beats, but the “a-” of “acquaintance” falls between beats. *Meter* is an abstraction from all the variations: it registers only the beats. For example, in the first full measure of “Old Lang Syne” (i.e., ignoring “Should”), there are four beats: “auld” (two beats), “-quaint-,” and “-ance.” The meter of “Old Lang Syne,” then, has four beats to the measure. (A waltz, by comparison, has three beats per measure.)
2. **feet**
   1. In poetry, the basic unit of meter is the “foot,” a group of an accented (stressed) syllable and its accompanying unaccented (unstressed) syllables. It is equivalent to the measure in music.
   2. There are six common feet. (˘ means unaccented syllable; ˉ means accented syllable.)
      1. iamb ˘ ˉ “to go”
      2. trochee ˉ ˘ “super”
      3. dactyl ˉ ˉ ˘ “black bookcase”
      4. anapaest ˘ ˘ ˉ “to the store”
      5. pyrric ˘ ˘ “to the”
      6. spondee ˉ ˉ “broad waves”
3. **lines**
   1. Lines are made up of feet; they are equivalent to the bar in music.
   2. The names of lines are based on the number of feet they have:
      1. dimeter two feet per line
      2. trimeter three feet per line
      3. tetrameter four feet per line
      4. pentameter five feet per line
      5. hexameter six feet per line

(Lines longer than these, such as septameter or octameter, tend to be broken down by the mind into shorter lines—septameter, for example, tends to be read or heard as a tetrameter line plus a trimeter line).

* 1. One can designate a poem’s meter by combining foot names with line names: “iambic pentameter” means lines with five feet that tend to be iambs; “dactyl#lic tetrameter” means lines with four feet that tend to be dactyls.

1. **tricola**
   1. A fairly common device in Hebrew poetry is the tricola, a set of three lines rather than the usual couplet: “three similar phrases occur one after the other.” (Gillingham 27)
   2. Tricolas “create a dramatic emphasis . . .” (Gillingham 192) Ps 27:14, “Wait for the Lord; | be strong, and let your heart take courage; | wait for the Lord!” (Gillingham 27)
2. **stanzas and strophes**
   1. “. . . two, three, or four line-forms [combine to form] stanzas . . .” (Gillingham 195)
   2. Groups of stanzas form strophes. (Gillingham 195)
   3. “Only very rarely is there clear evidence of [stanzas or strophes], and these are usually created by the use of refrains (e. g. Pss. 42-3, 57) or by the use of an alphabetic/acrostic device (as in parts of Lamentations) rather than by the build-up of regular metrical units [because consistent meter rarely extends] clearly throughout the whole of a poem.” (Gillingham 63-64)
3. **refrains**
   1. Psalms with refrains are: 8, 39, 42, 43, 46, 49, 56, 57, 59, 67, 80, 99, 118, 136. (Gillingham 195-96)
   2. “The refrains give each of these psalms a more ordered structure, not only by way of division into stanzas but also through the repetition of sound.” (Gillingham 196)
   3. Refrains usually occur at the ends of stanzas. (Gillingham 26)
      1. Pss 42:5, 42:11, and 43:5 are a refrain that “brings together the two psalms as one whole poem.” (Gillingham 26) All three verses read, “Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my help and my God.”
   4. But refrains can move beyond stanzas to create strophes. (Gillingham 195)
      1. The “refrain in Isa. 5:25, 9:12, 17, 21, and 10:4 [“For all this his anger has not turned away, and his hand is stretched out still”] . . . creates a clear poetic unit.” (Gillingham 26)

Hebrew meter

1. **introduction**
   1. According to Watson (*Classical Hebrew Poetry* 92), “metrical patterns are never maintained for more than a few verses at a stretch, if even that.” [57] Few psalms “conform to any one clear metrical pattern.” [190] But “we have to account for some regular tonic accent or rhythmic stress in Hebrew poetry in many instances.” [58] (Gillingham 57-58, 190)
   2. “. . . the fact that the psalmists composed with a concern [197] for the *sound* of their poems [e.g., alliteration, assonance, rhyme] may well suggest that there may be a greater adherence to metre than we might suppose; our problem is that we do not have all the rules to assess metre, and in addition, where the psalm is corrupt or composite, any discernible metrical pattern has broken down.” (Gillingham 197-98)
   3. (Gillingham 58)
   4. “The method I have used here is . . . to seek out line-forms, usually on the basis of some parallelism . . .; second, to determine where syllable-stresses are most likely to fall in each composite word-unit in the Hebrew; third, to count how many of these syllable-stresses are found in one line-form.” (Gillingham 58)
2. **Hebrew meters**
   1. Parallelism is the major semantic device in Hebrew poetry, and parallelism creates couplets (two-line units). Since Hebrew poetry is primarily couplets, Hebrew meters are designated by two numbers: the number of beats in the first line and the number of beats in the second line, separated by a colon.
   2. 3:3
      1. Ps 117 (the shortest psalm): “the [following] English translation is set out so that it follows as closely as possible Hebrew construct-words (often called ‘units’); it is clear that each unit has some sort of primary stress, usually on the ultimate, but often on the penultimate syllable in the unit, as is indicated below:

/ / /

###### Praise the-Lord all-nations!

/ / /

??hallu et-’adonay kol-goyim

/ / /

###### Extol-him all-peoples!

/ / /

??sabbehuhu kol-ha’ummim (v. 1)

/ / /

###### For great towards-us [is] his-steadfast-love

/ / /

??ki gabar `alenu hasdo [58]

/ / /

and-the-faithfulness-of-the-Lord [endures] for ever

/ / /

??we’emet-’adonay le‘olam (v. 2)” (Gillingham 58-59)

* + 1. “This 3:3 accentual rhythm is used frequently in the psalms, particularly in psalms of praise, such as Ps. 117 above.” (Gillingham 59)
    2. “The 3:3 pattern is also frequently used in the wisdom literature—for example, in Proverbs, and in much of the poetry in Job:

/ / /

(Shall)-man than-God be-[more]-righteous . . .

/ / /

or-than-his-maker be-[more]-pure a-man? . . . (Job 4:17)” (Gillingham 59)

* 1. 3:2
     1. “. . . the 3:2 rhythm [occurs] throughout much of Lamentations. There is little doubt that this rhythm was used (although not exclusively) to echo the mood of lament, whereby the lack of a third matching accent in the second line brought out a sense of unfulfilled hopes . . .:

/ / /

###### Fallen, no-more to-rise

/ /

(is)-the-virgin Israel . . .” (Gillingham 62)

* + 1. Psalm 23 “varies between 3:2 (vv. 1-3) and 2:2 (v. 4) and 3:2 (vv. 5-6).” (Gillingham 63)
  1. 4:4
     1. “Another common pattern is 4:4. Psalm 46 is interesting, not least because vv. 3, 7, and 11 (two of which form a refrain) are in the 3:3 stress, and by contrast vv. 1-2, 4-6, and 8-10 are in 4:4. For example: [59]

/ / / /

###### God is-in-her-midst she-shall-not-be-shaken

/ / / /

He-will-help-her God at-the-break-of the-morning . . . (Ps. 46:6)” (Gillingham 59-60)

* 1. 2:2
     1. 2:2 meter “is more brisk—what some scholars have called a ‘marching rhythm’. It is not surprising that it occurs in the ancient war poetry of Israel (cf. Judg. 5 and 1 Sam. 1:19ff.), because it has a simple and dramatic binary form. It is a frequent device used by the prophets, often interspersed with the 3:2 rhythm for dramatic effect. [In Isa 1:16-17] the terse 2:2 beat is evident even in the English:

/ /

###### Cease to-do-evil

/ /

learn to-do-good

/ /

seek justice

/ /

correct oppression

/ /

defend the-fatherless

/ /

plead for-the-widow

It is possible . . . to effect a 2 x 4:4 instead of an 8 x 2:2 pattern of stress [but] the staccato and terse style fits the contents better . . .” (Gillingham 60)

* + 1. In Ps 29, “the repetition seems to echo the ‘voice of the Lord’ in its sevenfold cry in vv. 3-9, almost imitating the claps of thunder:

/ /

v. 3: The-voice-of-the-Lord . . .

/ /

[is] upon-the-waters . . .

/ /

The-God-of-glory . . .

/ /

thunders . . .

/ /

The Lord [is] above . . .

/ /

many waters . . .

/ /

v. 4: The-voice-of-the-Lord . . .

/ /

(is) full-of-power . . .” (Gillingham 61)

* 1. 3:3:3
     1. Sometimes “the 3:3 pattern is also developed into a 3:3:3 rhythm. We have noted Ps. 24:7 . . .:

/ / /

Lift-up O-gates your-heads,

/ / /

and-be-lifted-up, O-doors ancient

/ / /

and-shall-come-in [the]-King of-glory.

Pss. 60:8; 77:16-19; 103:20; and much of Pss. 99 and 100 use this 3:3:3 pattern. All these examples celebrate (in one way or another) the rule of God in history, a tenet which almost certainly would have been celebrated in liturgy.” (Gillingham 62)

* 1. other meters (Gillingham 63)
     1. 3:4
     2. 4:3
     3. 2:3

1. **correlations between meters and psalm forms** (Gillingham 64-66)

*primary secondary*

*meter meter other discernible meters* *indeterminate*

* 1. hymns
     1. general hymns 3:3 (21 psalms) not 3:3 (5 pss)
     2. historical psalms 3:3 (2)
     3. kingship hymns 3:3 (2) not 3:3 (4)
     4. Zion hymns 3:3 (1) not 3:3 (4)
  2. individual laments 3:3 (12) 3:2 (10) 3:2+3:3 (1), 3:3+3:2 (1), 4:4 (1) variable (14)
  3. communal laments 3:3 (10) 3:2 (1) 2:2 (1), 2:2:2 (1) variable (2)
  4. royal psalms 3:3 (4) 3:2 (1) 2:2+3:3 (1), 4:4:4 (1), 4:4+3:3 (1) variable (2)
  5. individual thanksgivings 3:3 (3) 2:2/3:3 (1) variable (6)
  6. communal thanksgivings 3:3 (3) 3:3/3:2 (1) variable (3)
  7. individual psalms of confidence 3:3 (1) 3:2 (1) 3:2/2:2 (1), 4:4 (1) variable (4)
  8. communal psalms of confidence 3:3 (1) 3:2 (1) variable (2)
  9. liturgies “full of different patterns”
  10. prophetic exhortations 3:3 (5) 3:2 (3) 4:3 (1)
  11. wisdom psalms 3:3 (2) 3:2 (2) 4:4+3:2 (2), 3:3+3:2 (1) variable (2)
  12. totals: 3:3 = 67 3:2 = 21 mixed patterns = 14 indeterm. = 48

Conclusions from the totals:

1. Gillingham’s assertion (190) that hymns are often 3:3 is true.

2. Gillingham’s assertion (190) that laments are often 3:2 is true, but they are more often 3:3.

3. The standard meter of the psalms overall is 3:3; secondarily, it is 3:2.

## OTHER PHONETIC DEVICES IN HEBREW POETRY

??

Gillingham, S[usan] E. *The Poems and Psalms of the Hebrew Bible*. Oxford Bible Series. Oxford: OUP, 1994.

Murphy, Roland E. *The Tree of Life: An Exploration of Biblical Wisdom Literature*. Anchor Bible Reference Library. New York: Doubleday, 1990.

1. **introduction**
   1. “Paronomasia” means a pun, but more generally “word play.” (*American Heritage Dictionary*, 3rd ed., 1996) Murphy and Gillingham use it to mean “plays on words and sounds . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 6)
   2. “. . . many of the [devices of paronomasia] are also to be found in other ancient Near Eastern literature, for example, that of Babylon and Canaan . . .” (Gillingham 198)
   3. “. . . these same phonetic devices were employed also by the prophets . . .” (Gillingham 198)
2. **assonance**: repeated vowel sounds
   1. Assonance is “a form of vowel repetition . . .” (Gillingham 192)
   2. definitions: “1. Resemblance of sound, especially of the vowel sounds in words, as in: “*that dolphin-torn*, *that gong-tormented sea*” (William Butler Yeats). 2. The repetition of identical or similar vowel sounds, especially in stressed syllables, with changes in the intervening consonants, as in the phrase *tilting at windmills*.” (*American Heritage Dictionary*)
3. **alliteration**: repeated vowel sounds
   1. Alliteration is “a form of consonant repetition . . .” (Gillingham 192)
   2. definition: “The repetition of the same consonant sounds or of different vowel sounds at the beginning of words or in stressed syllables, as in “*on scrolls of silver snowy sentences*” (Hart Crane).” (*American Heritage Dictionary*)
4. **rhyme**: repeated end sounds
   1. “Although less frequent in Hebrew, this is usually achieved by the use of suffixes.” [25] Rhyme “is not as common a device in Hebrew poetry as we might expect. It is usually created by the use of the suffixes at the end of the lines: although in themselves these need not be a deliberate use of rhyme, the phonetic effect is nevertheless apparent.” [195] (Gillingham 25, 195)
   2. Examples are repetitions of first person singular -*î*, first person plural –*nû*, and third-person feminine plural -*nâ*. (Gillingham 25)
   3. Jer 12:7, “I-have-forsaken my-house (??`azabtî et-bêtî) | I-have-abandoned my-heritage (??natastî et-nahalatî) | I-have-given the-beloved of-my-soul (??natatî et-yedidût napshî) | into-the-hands of-her-enemies.’” (Gillingham 26)
5. **onomatopoeia**: “the sound of a word imitates its meaning . . .” (Gillingham 192)
6. **homonymy**: “words which are identical in sound are used with different meanings . . .” (Gillingham 192) (“I hear that the hair of a hare is not here.”)

## SENTENCE FORMS and WISDOM POEMS

*American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*. 3rd ed. New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1996.

1. “**proverb**”
   1. “*mashal*”
      1. “Oddly enough, the Hebrew *māšāl*, commonly translated as “proverb,” is far too general in meaning to provide much insight into the wisdom proverbs. . . . the term is used far too widely in the Bible (e.g., the poem in Isa 14:4-20) to be serviceable as a literary term.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 7)
      2. “Even the etymology is disputed; it can be associated with a root meaning “rule” (the power of the word?) and also with the idea of “comparison.”” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 7)
   2. “proverb”
      1. “Of course, the English word “proverb” is not itself very helpful; everyone despairs of giving a definition of it. In the words of Archer Taylor, “The definition of a proverb is too difficult to repay the undertaking. . . . An incommunicable quality tells us this sentence is proverbial and that one is not. . . . Let us be content with recognizing that a proverb is a saying current among the folk.” [*The Proverb and an Index to the Proverb*. 2nd ed. Copenhagen and Hatboro: Rosenkilde & Baggers, 1962. 3.] His last statement is particularly apt. For a saying to be a proverb, it has to gain currency among the people. The people are not properly the author, although they may have played a role in the formation of the saying.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 7)
      2. “It is not helpful to pursue distinctions between proverb, maxim, and aphorism; no unity can be obtained.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 7)
2. **types of aphorisms**
   1. “The two most frequent literary genres in wisdom literature are the saying and the admonition.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 7) (See Murphy, Roland E. *Wisdom Literature*. FOTL 13. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981. 4-6.)
   2. saying
      1. “The saying is a sentence usually expressed in the indicative mood and based upon experience.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 7)
      2. traditional sayings
         1. 1 Kgs 20:11, “One who puts on armor should not brag like one who takes it off.”
      3. experiential vs. didactic sayings
         1. “While all the wisdom sayings are supposedly [7] the fruit of experience and traditional observation, it is helpful to distinguish between those that are almost purely observational or experiential and those that are openly didactic.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 7-8)
      4. experiential sayings
         1. “The experiential saying does not counsel one how to act. It tells the reader “the way it is,” and is thus open-ended and subject to verification.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 8)
         2. Prov 13:12, “Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a desire fulfilled is a tree of life.” “This is a psychological observation. It does not attempt to teach a lesson or make a judgment about life-style. It informs the reader about reality.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 8)
         3. “Any use or application of [of an experiential saying] is a second move. Of course, the context of the Book of Proverbs, where such observations are mixed in with overtly didactic sayings, opens up the applicability of even the most neutral observations to moral formation.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 8)
      5. didactic sayings
         1. “The didactic saying . . . aims to promote a given ideal or value, a course of action.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 8)
         2. “Wisdom is practical above all, urging proper moral (wise/righteous) conduct.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 8)
         3. “The intensity with which the lesson is inculcated may vary.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 8)
            1. “It can be conveyed simply by indicating a relationship with God . . .” Prov 14:31, “Those who oppress the poor insult their Maker, but those who are kind to the needy honor him.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 8)
            2. “Or a value judgment, based on the common standard of righteousness or wickedness, is pronounced . . . There is no choice left for the reader, since it is presumed that one would not follow the path of wickedness.” Prov 10:30, “The righteous will never be removed, but the wicked will not remain in the land.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 8)
   3. admonition
      1. “The second general form is the admonition, which can be either positive or negative.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 8)
      2. commands (positive admonitions)
         1. “The positive admonition, or command, is usually in the form of an imperative or some volitive [“Expressing a wish or permission,” *American Heritage Dictionary*] mood . . .” Prov 16:3, “Commit your work to the Lord, and your plans will be established.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 8)
         2. “. . . a direct command can make explicit what is made only indirectly in a didactic saying . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 8)
            1. Prov 16:20, “happy are those who trust in the Lord.”
            2. Prov 16:3, “Commit your work to the Lord, and your plans will be established.”
      3. prohibitions (negative admonition)
         1. “The negative admonition, or prohibition, can be expressed with varying degrees of emphasis . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 8)
         2. “. . . often motive clauses are added . . .” Prov 22:22-23, “Do not rob the poor because they are poor, or crush the afflicted at the gate; 23for the Lord pleads their cause and despoils of life those who despoil them.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 8)
3. **subtypes within aphorisms**
   1. Murphy, Roland E. *Wisdom Literature*. FOTL 13. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981. 65-67.
   2. “Within these two literary genres of saying and admonition there is a range of expressions that should be noted . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 9)
   3. the “good” saying
      1. “In fact, this is used more often in the phrase “not good.”” Prov 19:2, “Desire without knowledge is not good, and one who moves too hurriedly misses the way.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 9)
   4. the “better” saying
      1. Qoh 7:5, “It is better to hear the rebuke of the wise than to hear the song of fools.”
      2. “This form can be built up into a binary opposition . . .” Prov 15:16, “Better is a little with the fear of the Lord than great treasure and trouble with it.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 9)
   5. the numerical saying
      1. Roth, W. *Numerical Sayings in the Old Testament*. VTSup 13. Leiden: Brill, 1965.
      2. “This consists of a title line with number, and a list of items. The line mentions the features that the items listed have in common . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 9)
      3. “Although two is a common number, three and seven are frequently mentioned in the title line . . .” Prov 6:16, “There are six things that the Lord hates, seven that are an abomination to him . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 9)
      4. “There is a cluster of these sayings in Prov 30.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 9)
      5. Prov 30:24, “Four things on earth are small, yet they are exceedingly wise: 25the ants are a people without strength, yet they provide their food in the summer; 26the badgers are a people without power, yet they make their homes in the rocks; 27the locusts have no king, yet all of them march in rank; 28the lizard can be grasped in the hand, yet it is found in kings' palaces.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 9)
      6. Often “the pattern is x and x plus 1 (e.g., three and four).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 9) The pattern, “x and x plus 1,” occurs four times in Prov 30 (always “three and four”):
         1. Prov 30:15, “Three things are never satisfied; four never say, “Enough” . . .”
         2. Prov 30:18, “Three things are too wonderful for me; four I do not understand . . .”
         3. Prov 30:21, “Under three things the earth trembles; under four it cannot bear up . . .”
         4. Prov 30:29, “Three things are stately in their stride; four are stately in their gait . . .”
   6. the “abomination” saying
      1. “The term “abomination” (*tô`ēbâ*) suggests liturgical language, and it is used in Proverbs to designate wickedness and perversity as “abominations” to the Lord.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 9)
      2. In the nrsv, “abomination” occurs in Proverbs eighteen times (3:32, 6:16, 8:7, 11:1, 11:20, 12:22, 13:19, 15:8-9, 15:26, 16:5, 16:12, 17:15, 20:10, 20:23, 21:27, 24:9, 28:9, 29:27).
      3. “Three times it is also used to describe sharp business practice . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 9)
         1. Prov 11:1, “A false balance is an abomination to the Lord, but an accurate weight is his delight.”
         2. Prov 20:10, “Diverse weights and diverse measures are both alike an abomination to the Lord.”
         3. Prov 20:23, “Differing weights are an abomination to the Lord, and false scales are not good.”
   7. the “blessed” saying
      1. “This is the formula preserved in the New Testament beatitudes as “Blessed is the one [or, “Happy the one”] who . . .”” Prov 28:14, “Happy is the one who is never without fear, but one who is hard-hearted will fall into calamity.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 9)
   8. the *a fortiori* saying
      1. “A conclusion is drawn on the basis of an assertion that is accepted by all . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 9)
      2. Prov 15:11, “Sheol and Abaddon lie open before the Lord, how much more human hearts!”
      3. Sir 10:31, “One who is honored in poverty, how much more in wealth! And one dishonored in wealth, how much more in poverty!”
4. **wisdom poems**
   1. A wisdom poem “is a consecutive piece of poetry, not simply a few lines; but sayings and admonitions (cf. Job 6:5-6; Prov 3:19) can appear within these poems.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 10)
   2. “They partake of the nature of “Instruction,” of which we have many examples from Egypt . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 10)
   3. “They are exemplified particularly in Prov 1-9, in the speeches in Job, and also throughout Sirach and the Wisdom of Solomon.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 10)
   4. Acrostic poems are a subtype. (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 10)
5. **forms in Job**
   1. “The Book of Job contains several genres . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 10)
   2. Some forms are “taken from legal processes . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 10)
   3. Other forms are “taken . . . from wisdom.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 10)
   4. “The general tone of lament (Job 3) is present . . .” [10] But Murphy disagrees with Claus Westermann’s description of Job as, in Westermann’s words, the “dramatization of a lament . . .” (*Der Aufbau des Buches Hiob*. 2nd ed. CTM 6. Stuttgart: Calwer, 1977. 27-39). [13 n. 18] (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 10, 13 n. 18)
   5. “. . . the main type is the disputation speech [Job 4-26].” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 10)
6. **forms in Qoheleth**
   1. “. . . Qoheleth makes use of the saying and admonition . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 10)
   2. But “the most characteristic form is what may be termed “reflection.”” (Murphy, Roland E. *Wisdom Literature*. FOTL 13. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981. 130, 181.) (Murphy, *Tree of* Life 10)
      1. “The development of thought is rather loose, but there is frequent reference to his personal observations and insights.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 10)
      2. examples
         1. In 2:12-17, “Qoheleth proposes as point . . . for reflection the topic . . . of the value of wisdom . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 10)
         2. In 2:18-26, “Qoheleth proposes as point . . . for reflection . . . the value of toil.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 10)

## BRIEF NARRATIVES

Scott, R.B.Y. *The Way of Wisdom in the Old Testament*. London: Collier Macmillan; New York: Macmillan, 1971.

1. **introduction**
   1. There are several “literary characteristics of Hebrew origin . . .” (Scott, *Way of Wisdom* 72)
      1. “One such characteristic is the unstudied directness and sim­plicity of the Hebrew prose sentence . . . Nouns and verbs pre­dominate. Attributive adjec­tives and adverbs are used spar­ingly. [72] There is no multiplying and balanc­ing of subordi­nate clauses . . .” (Scott, *Way of Wisdom* 72-73)
      2. “A second feature is poetic, the parallelism . . .” (Scott, *Way of Wisdom* 73) See above, p. 22.
      3. “A third feature is . . . the luxuriant use of concrete imag­ery, especially of visual imagery, in simile and meta­phor; and con­versely the rarity of abstract expressions.” [73] “The word pictures are painted with remarkable economy of line and color.” (Scott, *Way of Wisdom* 73, 74)
      4. “Finally, there is the supreme Hebrew gift of storytelling . . .” (Scott, *Way of Wisdom* 74) For more on this, see below, p. ?.
2. **parables**
   1. “A parable is an imaginative story or a single scene drawn from daily life, which is intended to suggest by analogy the point the speaker wishes to make.” [78] “The Greek word *parabole*, lit. “what is put beside something,” represents the basic meaning of the Hebrew *mashal*.” (Scott, *Way of Wisdom* 78, 78 n. 8)
   2. “In the Old Testament the full-fledged parable is rare.” (Scott, *Way of Wisdom* 79)
      1. The two best examples are Nathan’s parable (2 Sam 12:1-14) and the “Song of the Vineyard” (Isa 5:1-7). (Scott, *Way of Wisdom* 79)
      2. Two other parables occur in 2 Sam 14:4-17 and 1 Kings 20:35-42. (Scott, *Way of Wisdom* 79 n. 12)
      3. “Hosea’s experiences with his promiscu­ous wife [Hos 1 and 3] became a parable to him and, through him, to Israel.” (Scott, *Way of Wisdom* 79)
      4. “The books of Ruth and Jonah can be read as parables.” (Scott, *Way of Wisdom* 79)
   3. “. . . the single, fully developed wisdom parable appears not in the wisdom books but in the Book of Isaiah. In Isaiah 28:23-29 the prophet casts his oracle into the form and language of the wisdom teachers.” [79] See also Isa 28:9-13, 29:13-16, 30:1-2, 31:1-3. (Scott, *Way of Wisdom* 79, 79 n. 13)
3. **illustrations**
   1. “The distinction between a parable and an illustration must be recognized: the illustra­tion clarifies and reinforces the teaching being given, whereas in a parable the audience is called upon to see the analogy and draw its own conclu­sions. In the first case the hearer is passive. In the second he is actively involved in the search for under­standing. . . . Although the wisdom teachers do not make much use of the parable proper, they do avail themselves of teaching illustrations.” (Scott, *Way of Wisdom* 80)
   2. examples
      1. “The little story in Qoheleth 9:13-16 about the forgot­ten wise man who might have saved his city is sometimes cited as a par­able. It is better regarded as an illus­tration [i.e.,] that the superiority of wisdom over power can be nullified by neg­lect.” (Scott, *Way of Wisdom* 80)
      2. In Prov 7, a graphic description warns against prosti­tutes. (Scott, *Way of Wisdom* 80)
      3. In Prov 23, a graphic description warns against overin­dulgence in wine. (Scott, *Way of Wisdom* 80)
      4. “Qoheleth illustrates one of his proverbs in 4:13-16 by re­fer­ring to an episode of the rise and fall of succes­sive kings. The first part of Job’s final speech of self-de­fense in chapter 29 is [80] a tableau picturing what his life had been like be­fore the blow fell.” (Scott, *Way of Wisdom* 80-81)
4. **fables**
   1. “A fable is, strictly speaking, a short story in which non-human characters are pictured as endowed with human traits, including speech. Often it presents a conflict situation. Marks of this genre appear in the accounts of the talking serpent of Eden [Gen 3:1-13], and the talking donkey of Balaam [Num 22:21-35]. Occasion­ally in the wisdom books a natural object or non-human creature is represented as speaking [e.g., Job 28:14, 22; Prov 30:15]. But these are only incidental figures of speech.” (Scott, *Way of Wisdom* 81)
   2. “The only two fables found in the Old Testament both serve as parables.” They are Judg 9:7-15 and 2 Kgs 14:9. (Scott, *Way of Wisdom* 81)
5. **allegories**
   1. “There are two types of allegory: in one, a story is told or a scene described whose elements are a series of metaphors or representative figures; in the second, a story or scene is developed from a single metaphor.” (Scott, *Way of Wisdom* 81)
      1. “The allegory of the two eagles, the cedar, and the vine in Ezekiel 17 is a good example of the first. The two eagles are the Babylonian king and the Egyptian pharaoh, the cedar twig is the Jewish King Jehoiachin who was exiled in 597 rebelled against Babylon.” (Scott, *Way of Wisdom* 81)
      2. (For an example of the second, see the next item.)
   2. examples: “Both types of allegory appear in the wisdom books.” (Scott, *Way of Wisdom* 81)
      1. The first type occurs in Qoh 12’s allegory of old age. (Scott, *Way of Wisdom* 81)
      2. The second type occurs in the personification of Wisdom. [82] See Prov 3:16-17, 4:6-9, Sir 4:11-19, Wis 6:12-16. [82 n. 20] “The feminine pos­sessive pronouns (pronomi­nal suf­fixes) [82] are used because of the feminine gender of the ante­cedent noun *ḥok­māh*, “wisdom.” From this gram­matical usage it is a short step to the figure of Wisdom as a female person . . .” (Scott, *Way of Wisdom* 82-83, 82 n. 20)
         1. In Prov 1:20-33, “Wisdom appears as a prophetess de­nouncing and threat­ening those who reject her . . . There is no call for repentance, and judg­ment is not pro­nounced in the name of Yahweh. Instead, it is by the inexorable working of the moral law that “The way­wardness of the wicked will be the death of them, and the carelessness of fools will destroy them (1:32, AB).” (Scott, *Way of Wisdom* 83)
         2. In Prov 8, Wisdom appears in “three strophes of equal length, followed by an epilogue. In the first strophe, Wisdom appeals to men to listen to her. The second de­clares her nature, her contributions to the spiritual and moral fiber of society, and the rewards she brings to those who respond to her. The third strophe, verses 22-31, soars into the empyre­an . . . The poet takes his flight from the word *re*`*shith*, “beginning,” the key word in the motto, “The fear of Yahweh is the [83] beginning of knowl­edge.” Now Wisdom affirms that she is . . . the first princi­ple of the cosmic order . . .” (Scott, *Way of Wisdom* 83-84)
         3. “This metaphor of the personified Wisdom recounting her divine origin and cosmic importance recurs in Sirach 24. But the figure has changed significant­ly. Now she is the Creator’s word, “I am the word which was spoken by the Most High, It was I who covered the earth like a mist” (24:3, NEB). The reference to Genesis 1 is clear. Searching for a home among mankind, Wisdom is directed by the Cre­ator, “Make your home in Jacob; find your heritage in Israel” (24:8, NEB).” (Scott, *Way of Wisdom* 84)
         4. In Wis 7:25-26, 8:2, 9, Wisdom is “a pure effluence from the glory of the Almighty, . . . the brightness that streams from everlasting light, the flawless mirror of the active power of God, and the image of his good­ness.” (Scott, *Way of Wisdom* 85)

# THE POETIC BOOKS

## READING THE PSALMS

## EVERY ONE OR TWO WEEKS

To read the psalms every week, consider the following schedule:

Sunday Pss 1-27 *total verses:* 359

Monday 28-48 (Hebrew numbering) 349

Tuesday 49-71 352

Wednesday 72-89 378

Thursday 90-107 364

Friday 108-119 332

Saturday 120-150 326

*grand total:* 2,460

To read the psalms every two weeks, consider the following schedule:

Sunday Pss 1-17 *total verses:* 179

Monday 18-27 (Hebrew numbering) 181

Tuesday 28-36 191

Wednesday 38-49 178

Thursday 50-62 171

Friday 63-72 181

Saturday 73-79 178

Sunday 80-89 180

Monday 90-102 171

Tuesday 103-107 193

Wednesday 108-118 156

Thursday 119 176

Friday 120-138 165

Saturday 139-150 161

*grand total:* 2460

Nothing less than several straight-through readings will give compre-

hensive familiarity.

## THE PSALMS

## A Summary Chart

*Date*: “jgs” is the period of the judges (1220-1020 bc); “pre” is pre-exilic (1020-587); “exile” is the Babylonian exile (587-539); “post” is post-exilic (539 on). *Form*: “i.” is “individual”; “c.” is “communal”; “hist’l.” is “historical”; “proph. exhort.” is “prophetic exhortation.” *Meter*: “variable” means regular meter is hard to discern. The cause may be textual corruptions, borrowings from other psalms, a composite psalm, a dramatic purpose in the ritual, or a troubled state of mind.

| *No.* | ***Date*** | ***Contents*** | ***Collection*** | ***Form*** | ***Meter*** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1 | post | happy the man | insertion ps. | wisdom psalm | variable |
| 2 | pre | this day I have begotten you | insertion ps. | royal psalm | 3:3 |
| 3 |  | I lie down in peace | David I | i. lament |  |
| 4 |  | however angry, do no wrong | David I | i. confidence | 4:4 |
| 5 |  | in the morning you will hear me | David I | i. lament | 3:2 |
| 6 |  | set my soul free | David I | i. lament | 3:3 |
| 7 | pre | God has ordered justice | David I | i. lament | 3:2 |
| 8 | post | the work of Your fingers | David I | creation hymn | 3:3 and 2:2 |
| 9 |  | You have rebuked the nations | David I | i. thanksgiving | variable |
| 10 |  | the wicked man is obsessed | David I | i. thanksgiving | variable |
| 11 |  | flee to the mountains like a bird | David I | i. confidence | 2:2 |
| 12 | pre | loyalty is no more | David I | i. lament | 4:4 |
| 13 | exile | how long, O Lord? | David I | i. lament | variable |
| 14 | pre | “there is no God” | David I | proph. exhort. | 3:2 |
| 15 | pre | the man of blameless life | David I | liturgy | variable (an-  tiphons=3:2) |
| 16 |  | at night wisdom comes | David I | i. confidence | variable |
| 17 | exile | no mind to evil | David I | i. lament | 3:2 |
| 18 | pre | the earth heaved and quaked | David I | royal psalm | 3:3 |
| 19:  1-6 | pre  (jgs?) | the heavens proclaim the glory  (praise of God’s order in creation; 4c-6 = the sun) | David I | creation hymn | 4:4 |
| 19:  7-14 | post | praise of God’s order in the Law | David I | wisdom psalm | 3:2 |
| 20 | pre | the Lord grant all you ask | David I | royal psalm | 3:3 |
| 21 | pre | the king rejoices in your might | David I | royal psalm | 1-6 = 2:2,  7-13 = 3:3 |
| 22 | exile | why have you forsaken me? | David I | i. lament | variable |
| 23 | pre | the Lord is my shepherd | David I | i. confidence | 3:2 and 2:2 |
| 24 | pre | the earth is the Lord’s | David I | liturgy | variable |
| 25 | post | God teaches the humble his ways | David I | i. lament | 3:3 |
| 26 | post | I live without reproach | David I | i. lament | 3:3 |
| 27 |  | the Lord is my light | David I | i. confidence | variable |
| 28 |  | do not drag me away | David I | i. lament | 3:2 |
| 29 | pre  (jgs?) | the voice of the Lord  (God’s power in the storm) | David I | creation hymn | 2:2 and 2:2:2 |
| 30 | pre | joy comes in the morning | David I | i. thanksgiving | 2:2 and 3:3 |
| 31 | exile | into your hands I commend my spirit | David I | i. lament | variable |
| 32 |  | happy the man whose sin is forgiven | David I | i. thanksgiving | variable |
| 33 | post | he spoke, and it stood forth | David I | creation hymn | 3:3 |
| 34 |  | the angel of the Lord is on guard | David I | i. thanksgiving | 3:3 |
| 35 | exile | grasp shield and buckler | David I | i. lament | 3:2 |
| 36 |  | sin whispers to the wick­ed | David I | i. lament | 1st ½ = 3:2,  2d ½ = 3:3 |
| 37 | post | do not strive to outdo evildoers | David I | wisdom psalm | 3:3 |
| 38 |  | there is no wholesome flesh in me | David I | i. lament | 3:3 |
| 39 |  | I will muzzle my mouth | David I | i. lament | variable |
| 40 | pre | your purposes are all for our good | David I | i. thanksgiving | 40:13ff.=3:2 |
| 41 | pre | all visit to gather bad news | David I | i. thanksgiving | variable |
| 42 | exile | as a hind longs for running streams | Korah | i. lament | variable |
| 43 | exile | I will wait for God | Korah | i. lament | variable |
| 44 | exile | hurled before the enemy | Korah | c. lament | 3:3 |
| 45 | pre | a princess at your side | Korah | royal psalm | 4:4:4 |
| 46 | pre | God is in that city | Korah | Zion hymn | variable |
| 47 | pre?  exile? | the Lord goes up to trum­pets | Korah | kingship hymn | variable |
| 48 | pre | the earth’s joy is Zion’s hill | Korah | Zion hymn | 3:3 |
| 49 | post | no man can ever ransom himself | Korah | wisdom psalm | 3:3 |
| 50 | pre | shall I eat the flesh of bulls? | Asaph | proph. exhort. | 3:3 |
| 51 | pre | my sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit | David II | i. lament | 3:3 |
| 52 | pre | your tongue is sharp as a razor | David II | proph. exhort. | 3:2 |
| 53 | pre | “there is no God” | David II | proph. exhort. | 3:2 |
| 54 | exile | save me by the power of your name | David II | i. lament | variable |
| 55 | exile | Oh that I had the wings of a dove | David II | i. lament |  |
| 56 |  | store every tear in your flask | David II | i. lament | 3:3 |
| 57 |  | let your glory shine over earth | David II | i. lament | 1-5 = 3:3,  6-11 = 3:2 |
| 58 | pre | rulers, are your judg­­ments just? | David II | proph. exhort. | 4:3 |
| 59 |  | villains run wild like dogs | David II | i. lament | 3:3 |
| 60 | exile | you go not forth with our armies | David II | c. lament | 3:3 |
| 61 | pre | from the end of the earth I call | David II | i. lament | variable |
| 62 |  | my heart waits silently for God | David II | i. confidence | variable |
| 63 |  | I seek you early | David II | i. lament | 3:3 |
| 64 |  | God’s arrow shoots them down | David II | i. lament | 3:2 |
| 65 | pre | the valleys break into song | David II | c. thanksgiving | 3:3 and 3:2 |
| 66 | pre | God’s tremendous dealings with man | David II | c. thanksgiving | 3:3 |
| 67 | pre | God make his face shine upon us | David II | c. thanksgiving | 3:3 |
| 68 | pre  (jgs?) | a dove’s wings sheathed in silver | David II | c. thanksgiving | variable |
| 69 | post | vinegar when I was thirsty | David II | i. lament | 3:3 |
| 70 |  | I am poor and needy | David II | i. lament | 3:2 |
| 71 |  | when old age comes | David II | i. lament | 3:2 |
| 72 | pre | endow the king with your justice | David II | royal psalm | variable |
| 73 | post | sinners roused my envy | Asaph | wisdom psalm | variable |
| 74 | exile | your enemies filled the holy place | Asaph | c. lament | 2:2 |
| 75 | pre | no power can raise a man up | Asaph | proph. exhort. | 3:3 |
| 76 | pre | in Judah God is known | Asaph | Zion hymn | 3:2 |
| 77 | exile | does his arm hang powerless? | Asaph | c. lament | 1-15 = 3:3,  16-20=3:3:3 |
| 78 | pre?  exile? | his wonderful acts | Asaph | narr. hymn  (hist’l. psalm) | 3:3 |
| 79 | exile | Jerusalem in ruins | Asaph | c. lament | variable |
| 80 |  | take thought for this vine | Asaph | c. lament | 3:3 |
| 81 | pre | blow the horn for the full moon | Asaph | proph. exhort. | 3:3 |
| 82 | pre | judgment against the gods | Asaph | c. lament?  proph. exhort.? | 3:3 |
| 83 | pre | your enemies make a league | Asaph | c. lament | 3:3 |
| 84 | pre?  post? | how dear is your dwelling-place | Korah | Zion hymn?  i. confidence? | 3:2 |
| 85 |  | justice and peace join hands | Korah | c. lament | 3:3 |
| 86 |  | no god is like you | insertion ps. | i. lament | variable |
| 87 | pre | Zion a mother of every race | Korah | Zion hymn | variable |
| 88 |  | like the slain who sleep | Korah | i. lament | 3:3 |
| 89 | pre?  exile? | David my servant | insertion ps. | royal psalm | 1-18 = 4:4,  19-37 = 3:3,  38-52 varies |
| 90 | post | you turn man back to dust | insertion ps. | c. lament | 3:3 |
| 91 |  | the noonday devil; an els guard | insertion ps. | i. confidence | 3:3 |
| 92 |  | how fathomless your thoughts | insertion ps. | i. thanksgiving | 3:3 |
| 93 | pre?  exile? | the ocean lifts pounding waves | kingship | kingship hymn | stanza = 2:2 x 4, 3:3 x 1 |
| 94 | pre?  exile? | he that planted the ear can hear | insertion ps. | c. lament | 3:3 |
| 95 | pre | they shall never enter my rest | kingship | proph. exhort. | 3:3 |
| 96 | pre?  exile? | ascribe to the Lord glory and might | kingship | kingship hymn | variable |
| 97 | pre?  exile? | the Lord is king | kingship | kingship hymn | 3:3 |
| 98 | pre?  exile? | rivers clap their hands | kingship | kingship hymn | 3:3 |
| 99 | pre?  exile? | the Lord is king | kingship | kingship hymn | variable |
| 100 | post | enter his gates | insertion ps. | hymn | 3:3 |
| 101 |  | rid the Lord’s city of evil men | David III | royal psalm? | 3:2 |
| 102 |  | like an owl that lives among ruins | insertion ps. | i. lament | 3:3 |
| 103 | post | his love high as heaven | David III | hymn | 3:3 |
| 104 | pre  (jgs?) | you fixed the earth’s foundation | Hallel | creation hymn | 3:3 |
| 105 | exile | make his deeds known | Hallel | narr. hymn  (hist’l. psalm) | 3:3 |
| 106 |  | his mighty acts | Hallel | c. lament | 3:3 |
| 107 | exile | those redeemed by the Lord | insertion ps. | i. thanksgiving | 3:3 (refrain  varies) |
| 108 |  | help against the enemy | David III | c. lament | 1-5 = 3:2,  6-13 = 3:3 |
| 109 |  | the Lord requite my accusers | David III | i. lament | variable |
| 110 | pre | the Lord said to my Lord | David III | royal psalm |  |
| 111 | post | praise the Lord with good men | Hallel | hymn | 3:3 |
| 112 | post | happy the man who fears the Lord | Hallel | wisdom psalm |  |
| 113 |  | he deigns to look down so low | Hallel | hymn | variable |
| 114 | pre | dance, O earth | Hallel | narr. hymn | 3:3 |
| 115 |  | not to us ascribe the glory | Hallel | c. confidence | 3:3 |
| 116 | post | I love the Lord, he has heard | Hallel | i. thanksgiving | variable |
| 117 | post | his strong protecting love | Hallel | hymn | 3:3 |
| 118 | pre | the stone the builders rejected | Hallel | c. thanksgiving | variable |
| 119 | post | your law | insertion ps. | wisdom psalm | 3:2 |
| 120 |  | I sought peace | Ascents | i. lament | variable |
| 121 |  | help comes only from the Lord | Ascents | i. confidence | variable |
| 122 | pre | I rejoiced when they said to me | Ascents | Zion hymn | variable |
| 123 | exile | I lift my eyes to you | Ascents | c. lament | 3:2 |
| 124 |  | they would have swal­lowed us | Ascents | c. thanksgiving | variable |
| 125 |  | those who trust are like Zion | Ascents | c. confidence | variable |
| 126 | exile | bringing home the sheaves | Ascents | c. lament | 2:2:2 (with  some 3:2) |
| 127 | post | unless the Lord build the house | Ascents | wisdom psalm | 1-2 = 3:3,  3-5 = 3:2 |
| 128 | post | your wife like a fruitful vine | Ascents | wisdom psalm | 1-4 = 3:2,  5 = 3:3:2 |
| 129 | post | enemies like grass on the roof | Ascents | c. confidence | 3:2 |
| 130 |  | out of the depths I cry to you | Ascents | i. lament | variable |
| 131 |  | I am not busy with great matters | Ascents | i. confidence | 3:2 |
| 132 | pre | I will renew the line of David | Ascents | royal psalm | 3:3 |
| 133 |  | how pleasant for brothers | Ascents | c. confidence | variable |
| 134 |  | bless the Lord, all you servants | Ascents | liturgy | variable |
| 135 | pre?  post? | whatever God pleases, that he does | Hallel | narr. hymn | variable |
| 136 | pre?  post? | his love endures forever | insertion ps. | narr. hymn | 3:3 |
| 137 | exile | by the rivers of Babylon | insertion ps. | c. lament | variable |
| 138 | post | the Lord will accomplish his purpose | David III | i. thanksgiving | 3:3 |
| 139 |  | you have examined and know me | David III | wisdom psalm | variable |
| 140 | pre | rescue me, Lord, from evil men | David III | i. lament | 3:2 |
| 141 | pre | let my prayer be like incense | David III | i. lament | 3:2 |
| 142 |  | you are all I have in the land | David III | i. lament | 3:3 |
| 143 |  | to you I offer all my heart | David III | i. lament | variable |
| 144 | pre | he puts nations under my feet | David III | royal psalm | variable |
| 145 | post | his care rests on his creatures | David III | hymn | 2 halves and  2 meters |
| 146 | post | the Lord deals out justice | Hallel | Hallel hymn | 3:3 |
| 147 | post | the Lord is rebuilding Jerusalem | Hallel | Hallel hymn | 3:3 |
| 148 | post | praise him, all his host | Hallel | Hallel hymn | 3:3 |
| 149 | post | let Israel rejoice in his maker | Hallel | Hallel hymn | 3:3 |
| 150 | post | praise him with clash of cymbals | Hallel | Hallel hymn | 3:3 |

## THE TITLE OF THE BOOK OF PSALMS

Wansbrough, Henry, gen. ed. *The New Jerusalem Bible*. New York: Doubleday, 1986.

1. **Hebrew titles**
   1. *tehilla*
      1. *Tehilla* means “song of praise.”
      2. *Tehilla* is a feminine singular noun, but the plural is masculine: *tehillim*. Several ancient Hebrew manuscripts of Psalms give it the title, *sepher tehillim*, “Book of Praises.”
      3. Yet the only psalm called a *tehilla* in its superscription is Ps 145, where it means “hymn.” (Gillingham 249). And only about one-fifth of Psalms is hymns. (Gillingham 209)
      4. Perhaps *tehillim* became the title “because the verb h-l-l (meaning ‘praise’) occurs with such frequency throughout the psalms; it may also be that, because most of the hymns of praise are found in the latter half of the Psalter, this was to signify the major note which ends the collection: a paean of praise (see especially Pss. 146-50).” (Gillingham 209)
2. *tepilla*
   * 1. *Tepilla* means “prayer.”
     2. The word is found in the superscriptions of Pss 17, 86, 90, 102, and 142.
     3. A smaller number of ancient Hebrew manuscripts of Psalms give it the title, *sepher tepillot*, “Book of Prayers.” This title was “taken from Ps. 72:20: ‘The prayers of David, the son of Jesse, are ended.’” (Gillingham 233)
     4. The word “is from the root p-l-l, meaning to pray (in terms of request or lament).” (Gillingham 233)
   1. *mizmor*
      1. In the superscriptions, the usual term for a psalm is *mizmor*, “which implies musical accompaniment.” (*New Jerusalem Bible* 809)
      2. *Mizmor* “occurs fifty-seven times, thirty-five of which are in psalms with Davidic headings.” (Gillingham 249)
      3. *Mizmor* is from the verb *zamar*, which occurs over 40 times in Psalms. *Zamar* means “to accompany the singing,” possibly on a stringed instrument. (Gillingham 45)
3. **Greek titles**
   1. *psalmos*
      1. *Psalmos* means “hymn” or “song to music.” (Gillingham 249)
      2. The LXX translates the Hebrew word *mizmor* with the Greek word *psalmos*; so *psalmos* is the usual Greek word for one of the psalms.
      3. Some ancient Greek manuscripts give the book the title, *psalmoi*. (Gillingham 232)
   2. *psaltērion*
      1. Some ancient Greek manuscripts give the book the title, *psaltērion*.
      2. *Psaltērion* is “possibly a translation from the [232] Hebrew n-b-l, meaning ‘stringed instrument’ . . .” (Gillingham 232-33) A *psaltērion* was “the stringed instrument used for the accompaniment of such songs or psalms . . .” (*New Jerusalem Bible* 809)
      3. English “psaltery” and “Psalter” come from *psaltērion*. So the Psalter “is, in brief, a book of praises to be sung to an instrumental accompaniment.” [45] “. . . the word Psalter refers to songs accompanied by a stringed instrument.” [233] (Gillingham 45, 233)

## PSALM SUPERSCRIPTIONS

1. **introduction**
   1. “Clearly there is some interpretative framework—for example, the superscriptions which identify particular psalms with events in the life of King David, and the interrelationship between one psalm and its neighbour within the collection . . .” (Gillingham 173)
   2. “All but twenty-four psalms have some sort of heading in the Hebrew. The LXX (Greek version) adds a heading to each psalm without one, with the exception of Pss. 1 and 2, and makes changes to several other” superscriptions. (Gillingham 245)
   3. “The Greek often appears not to understand some of the Hebrew titles . . . the rendering of ‘Gittith’, and the strange translation of ‘to the choirmaster’ as ‘to eternity’ . . . suggest that the superscriptions derive from an ancient (no longer understood) tradition.” (Gillingham 245)
   4. “However, the fact that the LXX translators effected changes also shows that the headings were not entirely fixed or finalized by the second century bce.” (Gillingham 245)
   5. “. . . that duplicate psalms such as 14 and 53 each have a different superscription shows that the headings do not relate only to content . . .” (Gillingham 245)
   6. “The headings serve more as ascriptions than titles—that is, they ascribe a psalm to a particular collection. This is more in evidence in Books One to Three: . . . the last two books have far fewer superscriptions.” (Gillingham 245)
   7. “Only occasionally do they describe the function of a psalm: exceptions include Ps. 100, ‘A [245] Psalm for the thank-offering’; Ps. 92, ‘A song for the Sabbath’; Ps. 30, ‘A song at the dedication of the Temple’; Ps. 38, ‘for the memorial offering’; and Ps. 102, ‘A prayer of one afflicted, when he is faint and pours out his complaint before the Lord’.” (Gillingham 245-246)
   8. “. . . no psalms are specifically assigned to particular festivals in the Hebrew; and even in the Greek, this is also rare: Ps. 29 is a notable exception—‘for the Festival of Tabernacles’.” (Gillingham 246)
2. **historical superscriptions**
   1. “These all occur within the Davidic Collections (Pss. 3, 7, 18, 30, 34, 51, 52, 54, 56, 57, 59, 60, 63, 142: the LXX adds several more).” (Gillingham 246)
   2. “Each title relates to an event in the life of David . . .” This was similar to Ps 18 being inserted at 2 Sam 22 (the only Davidic instance; see also Hannah’s song, Jonah’s song, etc.). (Gillingham 246)
   3. A good number of psalms associated in their superscriptions with David and Solomon’s time suggest “historical situations and theological ideas long after the time of David and Solomon (for example, Ps. 89B must be exilic) . . . [Therefore the superscriptions] are additions to the psalm.” (Gillingham 248)
   4. “. . . the historical headings in Pss. 51-72 (the second Davidic collection) suggest . . . a separate tradition from the accounts in 1 and 2 Samuel: there are several discrepancies in the details. (For example, in Ps. 34, the Philistine king is Abimelech, whilst in 1 Sam. 21:20 it is Achish; and in Ps. 56, David is supposedly captured, whilst in 2 Sam. 21 he goes to the Philistines on his own initiative.)” (Gillingham 247)
   5. “. . . rather than suggesting Davidic authorship, the superscriptions reflect a literary device (as part of a later process of theological interpretation of the psalms) from a much later period . . .” (Gillingham 247)
      1. Pss 3 and 63 fit after 2 Sam 16:13 (the superscription is, “when David fled from Absalom his son”). (Gillingham 246)
      2. Pss 34 and 56 fit after 2 Sam 21:10 (“when David feigned madness before Abimelech”). (Gillingham 246)
      3. Ps 51 fits after 2 Sam 12:13 (“when Nathan the prophet came to David, after he had gone in to Bathsheba”). “. . . there is also a catchword link in Ps. 51:6 with 2 Sam. 12:13.” (Gillingham 246)
      4. Ps 54 fits after 1 Sam 23:4 (“when the Ziphites went and told Saul, “David is in hiding among us””). A reference to “insolent men” in Ps 54:3 suggested “the Ziphites betraying David to [246] Saul.” (Gillingham 246-47)
      5. Pss 57 and 142: “reference to God as ‘refuge’ in Pss. 57:1 and 142:5 suggests David ‘in the cave’ as in the heading . . .” (Gillingham 246)
      6. Ps 63: “the reference to the ‘dry and thirsty land’ in Ps. 63:1 suggests David ‘in the wilderness of Judah’, again in the heading . . .” (Gillingham 246)
3. **personal superscriptions**
   1. *David*
      1. Seventy-three psalms are ascribed to King David. “. . . the Hebrew preposition *le* (translated ‘to’ David) has a variety of meanings: ‘for’ and ‘of’ and ‘belonging to’ are all equally possible. Thus the psalm could be dedicated to the memory of David, or associated with a tune or royal style from a Davidic tradition, or linked to the ‘Davidic’ guilds of singers.” (Gillingham 247)
      2. “. . . later Hebrew tradition assumed that the titles implied actual Davidic authorship: one of the Qumran Psalms Scrolls, 11 QPsa 2:4-5, 9-10, refers to David as the author of 3,600 psalms (*tehillîm*) and 450 songs (??*shîrîm*).” (Gillingham 247)
      3. “So too in Rabbinic tradition, a Midrash on the Psalms (1:2) clearly affirms David as the author of the Psalter in the same way that Moses was the author of the Law.” (Gillingham 248)
      4. “. . . it is more appropriate to read the ‘To David’ headings as a means of seeing how different psalms are to be read personally: they address not only the life of one of the most important figures in Israel’s history, but also the lives of any who choose to apply the psalm to their own situation. . . . the psalms have been made specific so that, paradoxically, they can also become typical and general for use in other life-settings.” (Gillingham 248)
   2. *Moses*: Ps 90 is “A prayer of Moses,” probably “by fitting various verses with events in the life of Moses—see 90:1/Deut. 33: 27; 90:10/Exod. 7:7; 90:13/Exod. 33:12.” (Gillingham 248)
   3. *Asaph*: twelve psalms are “of Asaph,” “supposedly a contemporary of David . . .” (Gillingham 248)
   4. *Solomon*: two psalms are “of Solomon” (“Ps. 72, whose contents might be associated with the wisdom of this king, and Ps. 127, whose first verse ‘unless the Lord build the house’ might suggest a link with Solomon’s building of the Temple”). (Gillingham 248)
   5. *Korah*: eleven psalms are “of Korah,” “a cultic official known at the time of Jehoshophat [c 873-849 bc].” (Gillingham 248)
   6. *Heman*, *Ethan*: one psalm (88) is “of Heman” and another (89) “of Ethan”—“musicians or wise men associated in different traditions with both David and Solomon.” (Gillingham 248)
   7. *Jeduthun*: three psalms (39, 62, 77) are “to Jeduthun.” In Chronicles (1 Chr 9:16; 16:38, 41-42; 25:1, 3, 6; 2 Chr 5:12; 29:14; 35:15), “this was a musician associated with David and Solomon; however, the dual superscription in Pss. 39 and 62 (‘to Jeduthun’; ‘of David’) and in Ps. 77 (‘to Jeduthun’; ‘of Asaph’) as well as the Hebrew preposition `*al* (rather than *le*) might suggest that this is in fact a musical instrument rather than a person.” (Gillingham 248)
4. **liturgical** **superscriptions**
   1. “The liturgical headings fall into four general categories: the type of psalm; the tune to accompany it; the instruments to be used; and the role of the choirmaster, possibly in leading antiphonally.” (Gillingham 249)
   2. types of psalm
      1. *Mizmôr* (57 superscriptions, 35 in Davidic headings): “The Greek translates this as *psalmos*, meaning ‘hymn’, or ‘song to music’.” (Gillingham 249)
      2. ??*Shîr* (once ??*shîrâ*) (29 superscriptions, 13 with *mizmôr*): “song.” (Gillingham 249)
      3. *Maskîl* (17 superscriptions): “. . . Ps. 32:8 suggests that it refers to the instructional value of a psalm.” (Gillingham 249) Ps 32:8, “I will instruct you and teach you the way you should go; I will counsel you with my eye upon you.”
      4. *Miktām* (6 superscriptions [16, 56-60]): “its root means ‘hidden’.” Perhaps it means a psalm written for a private person rather than for public recitation. (Gillingham 249)
      5. *Tepillâ* (5 superscriptions [17, 86, 90, 102, 142]): “prayer.” (Gillingham 249)
      6. *Tehillâ* (Ps 145): “hymn.” (Gillingham 249)
      7. ??*Shiggayôn* (Ps 7): “its root suggests ‘wail’, ‘howl’” so perhaps meaning “lament.” (Gillingham 249)
   3. tunes of psalms
      1. “the Gittith” (Pss 8, 81, 84): “one meaning is ‘winepress’; hence this possibly refers to some vintage song.” (Gillingham 249)
      2. “Do not destroy” (57-59, 75): “this may be some vintage tune.” (Gillingham 249)
      3. “To the lilies” (or “lilies of testimony”) (45, 60, 69, and 80): perhaps “the words of a song whose tune is an accompaniment to the psalm.” (Gillingham 249)
      4. “On the hind of the dawn” (Ps 22): perhaps “the words of a song whose tune is an accompaniment to the psalm.” (Gillingham 249)
      5. “To the dove on far-off Terebinths” (Ps 56): perhaps “the words of a song whose tune is an accompaniment to the psalm.” (Gillingham 249)
      6. ??`*al-mût labben* (Ps 9): this “may indicate a male soprano, or another cue-word from a song . . .” (Gillingham 249)
      7. `??*al-*`*allamôt* (Ps 46): this “may indicate the accompanying voices of women, or again may serve as a cue-word.” (Gillingham 249)
      8. “In most cases above we may note the link between psalmody and ‘secular’ singing.” (Gillingham 249)
   4. instruments
      1. *Negînôt* (Pss 4, 6, 54, 55, 67, 76) “suggests some stringed instrument (see 1 Sam. 16:16, 23).” (Gillingham 250)
      2. ??*Shemînît* (6, 12) “may refer to an eight-stringed instrument, or even eight voices . . .” (Gillingham 250)
      3. *Māhalat* (53, 88) “may be a wind instrument (see 1 Kgs. 1:40).” (Gillingham 250)
   5. choirmaster’s role
      1. The Hebrew preposition *le* is also found in *la menasse´ah* (55 superscriptions). “One possible root [of *menasse´ah*] is n-s-h—‘to supervise’, suggesting this is to be sung by the leader of the assembly—hence the translation ‘To the choirmaster’. . . . this indicates further that the Davidic psalms are more to do with use than with authorship . . .” (Gillingham 250)
      2. *La menasse´ah* occurs 55 times. (Gillingham 250)
      3. “Its use in Ps. 18 but not in the duplicate psalm 1 Sam. 22 suggests it has to do with the performance of a psalm.” (Gillingham 250)
      4. “The ascription occurs almost entirely in Books One to Three (exceptions are Pss. 109, 139, and 140); thus in every case this is linked with the psalms of Davidic orientation.” (Gillingham 250)
      5. The LXX “did not understand the meaning, translating this *eis to telos*—‘for the end’ or ‘to eternity’.” (Gillingham 250)

## PSALMS AS SONGS, PRAYERS, AND POEMS

1. **introduction**
   1. There are “three different yet interrelated processes which have influenced the composition and transmission of biblical verse.” (Gillingham 276)
      1. *psalms as songs*: “The most significant is a *setting-in-liturgy*—mainly at the Temple but also at less formal, public, cultic occasions.” (Gillingham 276)
      2. *psalms as prayers*: “Important too is a *setting-in-life*, whereby ordinary human experiences (corporate and individual) were ordered and expressed through the poetic medium.” (Gillingham 276)
      3. *psalms as poems*: “Equally critical is the *setting-in-literature*, where the theological concerns of the editors have given us a fixed text and a coherent framework in which to effect our own interpretation.” (Gillingham 276)
   2. “All of these three processes—liturgical, personal, and literary—are complementary ways of enabling the reader to appreciate ancient Semitic verse.” (Gillingham 276)
2. **evidence the psalms were songs**
   1. *shir*
      1. “The noun ??*shir* (‘song’) is found in its various forms nearly forty times in the psalms . . .” (Gillingham 45)
      2. A *shir* “was generally accompanied by music; it has the further nuance of a cultic song, something carried out in the liturgy.” (*Jerome Biblical Commentary* 1.570)
   2. *mizmor*
      1. *Mizmor* occurs in 57 superscriptions. “The Greek translates this as *psalmos*, meaning ‘hymn’, or ‘song to music’.” (Gillingham 249)
      2. *Mizmor* is “from the root ??*zamar* [and means] ‘a song to a stringed instrument’.” (Gillingham 45)
      3. “. . . the verb ??*zamar* (‘to accompany the singing’, possibly on a stringed instrument) occurs over forty times” in the psalms. (Gillingham 45)
   3. ??*Tehilla* (“song of praise,” found in the superscription of Ps 145) for a psalm and its plural ??*tehillim* for the book of Psalms indicate the psalms were songs.
   4. Greek *psalmos* (translating Hebrew *mizmor*, song to a stringed instrument) for a psalm and *psalterion* (book of praises) for the book of Psalms indicate the psalms were songs.
   5. Levitical musicians of the second Temple appear in the superscriptions.
      1. 55 psalms refer to the “choirmaster.”
      2. 12 psalms (50, 73-83) refer to the choir guild of Asaph.
      3. 11 psalms (42, 44-49, 84-85, 87-88) refer to the choir guild of Korah.
      4. 3 psalms (39, 62, 77) refer to Jeduthun.
      5. Ps 88 refers to Heman the Ezrahite.
      6. Ps 89 refers to Ethan the Ezrahite.
      7. Ps 46 refers to the Alamoth—possibly women’s voices.
   6. hymn tunes in superscriptions
      1. 4 superscriptions (57-59, 75) refer to “Do Not Destroy.” (Probably a vintage song. See Isa 65:8, “Thus says the Lord: As the wine is found in the cluster, and they say, “Do not destroy it, for there is a blessing in it,” so I will do for my servants’ sake, and not destroy them all.”)
      2. 3 superscriptions (45, 69, 80) refer to “Lilies.”
      3. 3 superscriptions (8, 81, 84) refer to the “Gittith” (“possibly a vintage tune,” Gillingham 45).
      4. 2 superscriptions (53, 88) refer to “Mahalath.”
      5. Ps 22 refers to “Hind of the Dawn.”
      6. Ps 56 refers to “Dove of the Far-off Terebinths.”
      7. Ps 60 refers to “Shushan Eduth.”
   7. musical instruments (Gillingham 46)
      1. stringed instruments (Pss 4, 6, 54, 55, 67, 76 superscriptions; 61:8)
      2. lyre (or harp?) (33:2 etc.)
      3. trumpet (?) (47:5 etc.)
      4. timbrels (81:2, 149:3, 150:4)
      5. *sheminith* (eight-stringed instrument?) (6, 12 superscriptions)
      6. harp (57:8, 150:3)
      7. flutes (5 superscription)
      8. pipes (150:4)
      9. cymbals (150:5)
   8. concluding remarks
      1. “. . . the previous survey demonstrates that musical accompaniment to psalmody was essentially rhythmic and accentual.” (Gillingham 46)
      2. Probably “on account of the prohibition regarding graven images . . . poetry and music were the most appropriate media for permissible creativity. ‘Art’ in its narrower, representational sense was, of course, not a feature of early Judaism. Instead of art, we find the sacred text becoming the focus for cultural creativity, not only in terms of reading (through the various interpretations of the text, which the rabbis called ??*midrashim*) but also through poetic recitation and through singing.” (Gillingham 47)
3. **the psalms as prayers**
   1. “The language of theology needs the poetic medium for much of its expression, for poetry, with its power of allusion, reminds us of the more hidden and mysterious truths which theology seeks to express.” (Gillingham 278)
4. **the psalms as poetry**
   1. setting in life and setting in literature
      1. “. . . Semitic poetry often has a ‘setting-in-life’ prior to its ‘setting-in-literature’.” (Gillingham 121)
      2. The psalms, for example, have “a particular ‘setting-in-life’ or a ‘setting-in-liturgy’—either that of the public Temple liturgy, or the private lives of individuals. They have a different orientation from other Old Testament poems which are more integrated with narrative, and so have a ‘setting-in-literature’.” (Gillingham 232)
      3. “. . . later adaptation of an ancient poem into a literary framework gives it a very different emphasis . . . ‘Poetry-in-life’, on the one hand, is repeatable [91] . . . ‘Poetry-in-literature’ . . . becomes particularized, as it is adapted by the specific theological interests of the editor . . .” (Gillingham 91-92)
   2. poetry as drama
      1. “. . . Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren [discuss] lit­er­ary narratives as “dra­mas” (*Understand­ing Poetry* 16-18). They do not mean, of course, that all works of literature are plays but that all works of literature have a “dramatic” quality: the reader of any liter­ary work (poem, play, short story, or nov­el) observes—from a vantage point where the fourth wall is mis­sing, so to speak—characters in a situation at the very moment at which the characters are engaged with the situation.” (Hahn)

## PSALM FORMS

1. **hymns**
   1. three-part structure
      1. “The hymns within the Psalter follow, in the most general terms, a very simple threefold form.

The introduction is a call to praise;

the middle section gives the reasons for the praise; and

the conclusion usually returns to the initial call to praise.” (Gillingham 208)

* + 1. Ps 117, “the briefest psalm in the Psalter, offers a good illustration of [the basic three-part] structure:

Praise the Lord, all nations!

Extol him, all peoples!

For great is his steadfast love toward us;

and the faithfulness of the Lord endures for ever.

Praise the Lord!” (Gillingham 209)

* + 1. “A further clear example is found in Ps. 113: vv. 1-3 are the call to praise; vv. 4-9 the reasons for the praise; and v. 9*c* the conclusion.” (Gillingham 209)
    2. “There are some thirty examples (8, 29, 33, 100, 103, 104, 111, 113, 114, 117, 135, 136, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 47, 93, 96, 97, 98, 99, 46, 48, 76, 87, 122, 78, 105) and all but eight are found in the latter part of the Psalter.” (Gillingham 208)
  1. Themes typical of the hymns are: “God as Creator, sustainer of Israel’s history, king of heaven and earth, protector of Zion . . .” (Gillingham 216)
     1. general hymns: God as creator (8, 19:1-6, 29, 33, 104)
     2. narrative hymns: God in salvation history (78, 105 [the two “historical psalms”], 114, 135, 136)
     3. kingship hymns: celebrate “the kingship of God, enthroned in the heavens, ruling over heaven and earth.” (Gillingham 212) (47, 93, 96-99)
     4. Zion hymns: “God is praised . . . for his specific, particular rule in Zion, ‘the city of God’.” (Gillingham 212) (46, 48, 76, 84, 87, 122)
     5. hallel hymns: have *hallelu* (“Praise the Lord”) at beginning and end (146-50)
     6. other hymns (Pss 100, 145)

1. **laments**
   1. structure
      1. usual sections
         1. “The introduction is usually a call on the name of God.” (Gillingham 214)
         2. “The middle section . . . can comprise [214] some or all of the following parts: (description of need, request for help, reasons why God should answer, affirmation of trust in God)
            1. “a description of need, which serves as the heart of complaint, where the subject is either ‘I’ or ‘We’, or ‘They’ (the enemies) or ‘You’ (God);
            2. “a request for help, often set in the imperative form (e. g. ‘Hear’, ‘Arise’);
            3. “reasons why God should hear and answer the suppliant; and
            4. “affirmation of trust in God—often recalling previous acts of deliverance.” (Gillingham 214-215)
         3. “The conclusion ends with a vow to offer praise or sacrifice once the prayer is answered.” (Gillingham 215)
      2. But the order is not fixed: a lament “contains *some* of the above elements, in *any* sort of sequence.” (Gillingham 215)
   2. The laments have several themes.
      1. “national concerns”
         1. “failure in war (44:9-12; 60:1-3; l08:10-13)”
         2. “the destruction of the sanctuary” in 587 bc (74:3, 7-8; 79:1-4)
         3. “conspiracies by the nation’s enemies (83:5)”
         4. “exile” (137:1-6). (Gillingham 216)
      2. “individual concerns”
         1. “illness (31:9-10; 38:3ff., 10-11; 41:3ff., 8ff.)”
         2. “death (6:4-5; 13:3-4; 22:6-8, 14ff.; 39:4ff.; 69:15; 71:9, 18; 88:4ff.; 143:3)”
         3. “physical dangers of a personal nature (7:1-2; 17:10-12; 25:19-20; 27:2, 12; 35:1ff.; 40:13-15; 54:3; 55:3ff., 10ff.; 56:1ff.; 57:4, 6; 59:3-4; 62:3-4; 64:3ff.; 69:4ff., 22; 71:4; 86:14ff.; 109:2ff.; 140:1-5; 142:1-4).” (Gillingham 216)
2. **other psalm forms** (“derivations of the basic praise and lament forms,” 219)
   1. royal psalms: “. . . the designation ‘royal psalms’ is one made on account of content (because the king is either the speaker, or the focus of attention) rather than form. Gunkel listed ten psalms in this category: 2, 18, 20, 21, 45, 72, 101, 110, 132, and 144. To this we might add the latter part of Ps. 89.” (Gillingham 220)
   2. thanksgiving psalms
      1. “The *thanksgivings* are related . . . to the lament (in so far as a number of the laments often include thanksgivings as examples of prayers previously answered, e. g. 6:9-1; 7:18; 13:6; 31:21-3) . . .” (Gillingham 219)
      2. structure
         1. The introduction reflects their liturgical context.” (Gillingham 222)
         2. “The middle section [tells] how the deliverance occurred.” (Gillingham 222)
            1. “If the crisis was due to unconfessed sin, the [222] thanksgiving often includes some confession of sin (e. g. 32:5; 103:6-14).” (Gillingham 222-223)
            2. “If the innocence of the suppliant was beyond question, the psalmist pleads instead for God’s justice (28:6-7; 92:5-9).” (Gillingham 223)
            3. “Sometimes the middle section also contains didactic elements, so that the congregation might learn from the suppliant’s restoration (34:12-15, 138:6).” (Gillingham 223)
         3. conclusion: “Occasionally the psalm concludes with a call to praise (32:11; 138:8).” (Gillingham 223)
   3. psalms of confidence
      1. “The *psalms of confidence* [are] related to the lament (being expansions of the ‘confessions of trust’ found in the lament psalms, e. g. 17:15; 28:6; 130:5; 140:14).” (Gillingham 219)
      2. “‘Psalms of confidence’ are only evidenced within the Psalter. They are really an integral part of the lament. If the thanksgiving is connected to the lament in that it speaks of an earlier deliverance, the psalm of confidence is an even more intrinsic part of the lament because it speaks of trust in spite of all appearances—a confidence within the present uncertainties, for those caught in the conflict between faith and experience.” (Gillingham 224)
   4. liturgies
      1. “The *liturgies* and *historical psalms* are closely related to the hymns, with their main theme being praise of God.” (Gillingham 219)
      2. “. . . the main criterion [is] their antiphonal features. This, then, includes psalms occurring in other categories.” (Gillingham 225)
   5. prophetic exhortations
      1. “The influence of the prophets [is] seen in the oracular material . . . in the royal psalms (2, 18, 20, 21, 89, 110, 132) and also within the laments (12, 60).” (Gillingham 226)
      2. “The so-called ‘form’ is yet again discernible not so much in terms of structure, as in terms of style and content. The criterion [is] prophetic oracles.” (Gillingham 227)
   6. didactic psalms
      1. The “cultic influence in didactic poetry” can be seen in Job and Proverbs.
         1. Job’s laments: 3, 6, 7, 8, 10, 12, 14, 16-17 (Gillingham 227)
         2. hymns by Job’s friends: 5, 11, [227] 26, 36, 37 (Gillingham 227-28)
         3. hymns by Job: 9, 10, 12 (Gillingham 228)
         4. longer wisdom poems: Job 28, 38-42; Prov 3, 8 (Gillingham 228)
         5. “It is probable that this association took place later in Israel’s liturgical life, probably in restoration times.” (Gillingham 228)
      2. wisdom psalms
         1. “Didactic passages may be found in several other psalm types (e. g. 25:8-14; 32:8ff.; 34:11-22, noting also the acrostic form; 40:4ff.; 62:11ff.; and 102:23-8) . . .” (Gillingham 219)
         2. “. . . we may note here the didactic passages in laments such as Pss. 25:8-14; 31:24-5; and thanksgivings such as Pss. 40:5-6; 92:7-9.” (Gillingham 228)
         3. “. . . wisdom poetry offers no consistent form whatsoever.” (Gillingham 228)
            1. “Several psalms use the acrostic form (e. g. 37, 112, 119) but by no means all.” (Gillingham 228)
            2. “Some incorporate hymnic elements (e. g. 112:1-6; 127:3-5).” (Gillingham 228)
            3. “Most are actually not so much prayer-forms, set as addresses to God, but are rather more like poetic homilies, addressing the congregation.” (Gillingham 228)
            4. “They are discernible on account of their style—their use of comparison, admonition, and proverbial sayings (‘blessed . . .’; ‘better . . .’: see 1:1; 32:1; 34:8) . . .” (Gillingham 228)
            5. They are discernible “also because of their content—

“their concern with ordinary affairs such as piety at work (127:1; 128:1, 2)

“and family life (127, 128),

“and the prosperity of the wicked alongside retributive justice (37, 49, 73, 112),

“and the transience of life (73)

“as well as God’s knowledge of every detail of it (139).” (Gillingham 228)

* + - * 1. “On occasions their mood is orthodox (e. g. 127, 128, 139) and on others more radical and questioning (37, 49, 73). Their orientation is more towards the problems of life itself, rather than the issues of liturgy.” (Gillingham 228)
      1. wisdom poems and liturgy
         1. “Many scholars believe the wisdom psalms were not even used in the cult, but rather served as reflective and didactic poetry (alongside Proverbs and Job) in wisdom schools.” (Gillingham 228)
         2. However, “some sort of later cultic setting seems probable.” (Gillingham 228)

“Psalm 49 [see 49:1-3, 12] is a good example of this, and the attendant audience could just as easily be the congregation assembled for worship (we are reminded here of the prophetic call to listen and obey) as a private school of wisdom . . .” (Gillingham 228)

“The cultic orientation of wisdom is apparent in three other psalms which each focus on the meditation of the law as a means to blessing and wholeness of life: these are Pss. 1, 19B, and 119, known as ‘Torah psalms’.” (Gillingham 229)

“Psalm 1 starts with the classic wisdom motif ‘Blessed . . .’ and introduces into the Psalter the theme of reflective and personal piety.” (Gillingham 229)

“Psalm 19B is a ‘Torah psalm’ added to the creation psalm in praise of the sun: these together reflect on two sorts of order and harmony—creation and the law—in the world.” (Gillingham 229)

“Psalm 119, an acrostic psalm, is almost certainly a literary rather than liturgical composition. Every verse of the psalm contains at least one of ten terms used for the law (for example, commandment; statute; word; judgement; testimony; precept; way) and the psalm as a whole is a complex construction. Like Ps. 1, this is another example of private contemplative piety . . .” (Gillingham 229)

1. **summary of psalm forms** (Gillingham 231)
   1. hymns (total = 32)
      1. general hymns
         1. “creation hymns” (Gillingham 254): 8, 19:1-6, 29, 33, 104 (= 5)
         2. narrative hymns: 78, l05 (historical psalms), 114, 135, 136 (= 5)
         3. Hallel hymns: 146, 147, 148, 149, 150 (= 5) (also Hallel psalms: 104-106, 111-118, 135—Gillingham 241)
         4. other: 100, 103, 111, 113, 117, 145 (= 6)
      2. Zion hymns: 46, 48, 76, 87, 122 (= 5) (pp. 212 and 251 add 84)
      3. kingship hymns: 47, 93, 96, 97, 98, 99 (= 6)
   2. laments (= 56)
      1. individual laments: 3, 5, 6, 7, 12, 13, 17, 22, 25, 26, 28, 31, 35, 36, 38, 39, 42-3, 51, 54, 55, 56, 57, 59, 61, 63, 64, 69, 70, 71, 86, 88, 102, 109, 120, 130, 140, 141, 142, 143 (= 40)
      2. communal laments: 44, 60, 74, 77, 79, 80, 82, 83, 85, 90, 94, 106, 108, 123, 126, 137 (= 16)
   3. other forms (= 63)
      1. royal psalms: 2, 18, 20, 21, 45, 72, 89, 101, 110, 132, 144 (= 11) (pp. 220, 221, 231 include 101; pp. 251, 254 do not)
      2. thanksgivings
         1. individual thanksgivings: 9-10, 30, 32, 34, 40, 41, 92, 107, 116, 138 (= 11)
         2. communal thanksgivings: 65, 66, 67, 68, 118, 124 (= 6)
      3. psalms of confidence
         1. individual psalms of confidence: 4, 11, 16, 23, 27, 62, 84, 91, 121, 131 (= 10) (p. 65 says 91 is a prophetic exhortation) (pp. 212 and 251 say 84 is a Zion hymn)
         2. communal psalms of confidence: 115, 125, 129, 133 (= 4)
      4. liturgies: 15, 24, 134 (= 3) (134 is not included on p. 254)
      5. prophetic exhortations: 14, 50, 52, 53, 58, 75, 81, 95 (= 8) (p. 65 says 91 is a prophetic exhortation) (p. 254 adds 82 [see communal laments]) (p. 251 calls these “prophetic oracles”)
      6. didactic psalms: 1, 19:7-14, 37, 49, 73, 112, 119, 127, 128, 139 (= 10) (Gillingham 231)
2. **addendum: later groupings by “form”**
   1. The seven penitential psalms in Christian tradition are 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, 145. (See: McKay, J. W., and J. W. Rogerson. *Psalms 1-50*. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge UP (*sic*: should be Harvard?), 1977. 144.) This of course is a grouping not so much by “form” as by content.
   2. The fifteen gradual psalms in Christian tradition are 120-134. (See: *The Holy Bible Translated from the Latin Vulgate, Diligently Compared with the Hebrew, Greek, and Other Editions in Divers Languages*. *Douay Version*. Light of the World Edition. New York: Douay Bible House, 1954.)
   3. Christian tradition singles out “fourteen canticles” for special liturgical singing, besides the psalms: Exod 15, Deut 32, 1 Sam 2, Hab 3, Isa 26, Jon 2, Dan 3 (including the Prayer of Azariah and the Song of the Three Young Men), Isa 38, the Prayer of Manasseh, Luke 1:68-79, Luke 1:46-55, Luke 2:29-32, and the Gloria. (Gillingham 50)

## DATING THE PSALMS

1. **period of the judges**
   1. Some non-psalmic hymn fragments “may be traced back as early as settlement times (e.g. Exod. 15; Judg. 5) . . .” (Gillingham 208)
   2. Four hymns may date to period of the judges: Pss 19:1-6, 29, 68, and 104
      1. Some date Pss 19:1-6, 29, 68, and 104 to pre-1000 bc because of borrowings from ancient Near-Eastern cultures. (Gillingham 213, 252)
      2. In Ps 19, “two hymns have been later placed together: 19A (vv. 1-6) is an independent hymn praising God’s order through nature, and 19B (vv. 7-13, 14) is a separate hymn celebrating God’s order by his giving of the law. [209] Part of Ps. 19A (vv. 4*c*-6) is a hymn of praise to the sun; the imagery here (of the sun as a bridegroom emerging out of a ‘tabernacle’, or ‘marriage tent’ to circle the earth in the daylight hours) has many associations with Babylonian hymns praising the sun-god Shamesh (the Hebrew word for sun, ??*shemesh*, suggests further affinities), who was also known as the ‘lordly hero’ or the ‘strong man’ (cf. v. 5). The difference in the Hebrew hymn is that praise is offered to God as Creator of the sun, rather than to the sun itself.” (Gillingham 209-210)
      3. Ps 29 “echoes an ancient Canaanite hymn to Ba`l-Hadad, the weather-god. This psalm celebrates God as Creator through his power and majesty expressed in the storm; the imagery, of the sevenfold voice of God coming through the clouds, and the references to the cedars of Lebanon and Sirion (from which the temple of Ba`l was built) echo the same ideas as the Canaanite hymn.” (Gillingham 209)
      4. Ps 104 “has several correspondences (very clearly in vv. 20-30) with the Egyptian Hymn to Aton (the sun-god), which is attributed to Pharaoh Akhenaten, who in the fourteenth century bce established a new monotheistic cult in Egypt which worshipped only the sun-disc. The difference in Ps. 104 is that God’s providence extends beyond the daylight hours: Israel’s God rules over the night as well.” (Gillingham 210)
      5. Gillingham considers 19:1-6, 29, 68, and 104 to be monarchical. (Gillingham 252)
2. **pre-exilic (monarchical)** (42 psalms are mentioned)
   1. “We may . . . propose a *terminus a quo* for the composition of biblical psalmody from the time of the first Temple in the tenth century bce . . .” (Gillingham 252)
   2. *Royal psalms* (2, 18, 20, 21, 45, 72, 89, 110, 132, 144) reflect the Davidic monarchy.
   3. *Zion hymns* (46, 48, 76, 84, 87, 122) reflect the Solomonic temple. “They appear to borrow from early Canaanite mythology,
      1. “concerning the deity’s dwelling on a mountain [e.g., 48:2],
      2. “with rivers of healing flowing through the city (Ps. 46:4),
      3. “and the appearing of the deity to protect his people and judge the nations (Pss. 46:6; 48:8; 76:8-9).” (Gillingham 251)
      4. “The ‘Zion hymns’ probably were known during the time of the monarchy: during the time of exile, these hymns were apparently sung in the hope of some return . . .” (Gillingham 213)
   4. *Liturgies* (15, 24) reflect the Solomonic temple. (Gillingham 253)
   5. *psalms of northern provenance*
      1. These are mostly in the Asaph collection. (Asaph psalms are 50, 73-83; four are mentioned here.)
      2. They “contain mythological details about God in a heavenly council of divine beings (Ps. 82:1, 6-7) . . .” (Gillingham 251)
      3. They contain “older tribal traditions about land-possession (Ps. 83:2ff.).” (Gillingham 251)
      4. Several “contain prophetic oracles (Pss. 50:5ff.; 81:6ff.).” (Gillingham 251)
   6. “*The Nation and the Land*” (Gillingham 253)
      1. individual
         1. laments (7, 12, 51, 61, 140, 141)
         2. thanksgivings (30, 40, 41)
         3. psalms of confidence (23)
      2. community thanksgivings (65, 66, 67, 118)
   7. “*The Ministry of the Prophets*: psalms with oracles” (Gillingham 253)
      1. the royal psalms
      2. also 50, 75, 81, 82, 95 (Gillingham p. 231 adds 14, 52, 53, 58, 95 as prophetic oracles and does not include 82.)
   8. *salvation-history psalms* (78 [the other historical psalm, 105, is exilic], 114, 135, 136)
      1. “Psalm 78 . . . suggests a preexilic date when the Solomonic Temple was still standing (v. 69) and when the concern with the fate of the northern kingdom was still an issue (v. 67).” (Gillingham 211)
      2. 114, 135, 136 “may well reflect a situation before the restoration, when Israel became increasingly conscious of her own particular history.” (Gillingham 211)
3. **exilic** (Gillingham p. 253 dates this period 587-520 bc) (34 psalms are mentioned)
   1. Some hymn fragments outside Psalms “may be traced back [to] the time of the exile (e.g. the doxologies in Amos, and the hymns of creation in Isa. 40-55).” (Gillingham 208)
   2. “*No Monarchy*: ‘kingship’ hymns (47, 93-9) and ‘creation’ hymns (19A, 104)” (Gillingham 253)
      1. “The kingship hymns . . . could reflect the turbulent times of the monarchy, as they also could the days of the exile, when all that remained of the hope in kingship was the rule of God above . . .” (Gillingham 212)
      2. Why include 19:1-6 and 104 here? Gillingham has already argued for a date during the monarchy (see above).
   3. “*No Temple*: laments on Zion (Pss. 74, 77, 79, 137).” (Gillingham 254)
   4. “*No Nation*: laments of the community (44, 60, 123, 126) and of the individual (13, 17, 22, 31, 35, 42-3, 54, 55, etc.)” (Gillingham 254) (The list of individual laments on p. 231 has 40 psalms. Thirteen are mentioned here. Of those not mentioned here, 7, 12, 51, 61, 140, 141 were dated to the monarchy above; and 25, 26, 39, 69 will be dated to the post-exilic period below. The remaining individual laments mentioned on p. 231 but not on p. 254 are: 3, 5, 6, 28, 36, 38, 56, 57, 59, 63, 64, 70, 71, 86, 88, 102, 109, 120, 130, 142, 143.)
   5. “*The Ministry of the Prophets*: psalms of ‘salvation-history’ (78, 105, 107)” (Gillingham 254)
      1. Gillingham has already included 78 as pre-exilic: see above.
      2. “Psalm 105 . . . suggests a knowledge of the priestly account in Genesis-Exodus, and may thus be much later than Ps. 78.” (Gillingham 211)
   6. Four psalms probably refer to the crisis “between 597 and 587 bce . . .” (Gillingham 252)
      1. 79 refers to “the desolation of the land . . .”
      2. 74 refers to “the destruction of the sanctuary . . .”
      3. 89:38ff refers to “the end of the monarchy . . .” (Gillingham has dated 89, as a royal psalm, to the monarchy above.)
      4. 137 refers to “the life of exile in Babylon . . .”
   7. Ps 130 (“Out of the depths”) was “most likely composed during this period of exile . . .” See Bernard Anderson, *Understanding the Old Testament* 378. (Scotto 167 n. 11)
4. **post-exilic** (Gillingham 252) (30 psalms are mentioned)
   1. “*Theocracy*: adaptation of royal and kingship” psalms (Gillingham 254)
   2. “*Second Temple*: individual songs at temple (25, 84, 116, 138) and hymns of praise (8, 33, 100, 103, 111, 117, 135, 136, 145-50)” (Gillingham 254) (Gillingham already classified 84 among the pre-exilic Zion hymns and 135-136 among the pre-exilic salvation-history psalms.)
   3. “*Persian (then Greek) Rule*: adaptation of earlier communal psalms for future hope” (Gillingham 254)
   4. “Hymnody was also used in the late restoration period, as seen in the Chronicler (?fourth century bce: see 1 Chr. 16) and the wisdom literature (e.g. Prov. 8, 30; and Job 28 . . .).” (Gillingham 208)
   5. wisdom concerns (Gillingham 252)
      1. “*Decline of Prophecy*: influence of wisdom and Torah piety (1, 19[:7-14], 37, 49, 73, 112, 119, 127, 128, 129)” (Gillingham 254)
      2. theodicy (“the prosperity of the wicked and the suffering of the righteous”): 49 and 73
      3. the transience of life: 39 and 90
      4. keeping the Torah: 1, 19, and 119. [Some psalms (1, 19:7-14, 119, etc.) “possess a central theme dedicated to meditation upon and delight in the Torah. Most likely, they were composed in later, post-exilic times, at a period when the synagogue began to exert increasing influence upon Judaic worship.” (Scotto 11)]
      5. a “more spiritualized and internalized attitude to cultic ritual”
         1. “. . . the offering of ‘thanksgiving’ is no longer that of sacrifice (as in Pss. 66:13-15; 107:22; 116:17) . . .” (Above, 66 is dated to the monarchy, 107 to the exile, and 116 to the post-exilic period.)
         2. Instead, it is “the inner attitude of heart (Pss. 26:6-7; 69:30-1).”
5. **late post-exilic**
   1. Biblical psalmody ended “around the late Persian period. . . . There is evidence of Aramaic influence [but no] Greek influence . . .” (Gillingham 252)
   2. “. . . Maccabean psalms (a view upheld by the majority of scholars at the beginning of the twentieth century) is now less compelling.” (Gillingham 252)
      1. See the comments on formation of Psalms in “Growth of Psalms.”
      2. But “The hymnic language used to speak of God’s kingship within Dan. [2:20-3; 4:3; 6:26-7; 7] points also to the use of hymnody as late as the second century bce.” (Gillingham 208)
      3. Also, “samples [of lyric poetry] are to be found in . . . the panegyric of Judas Maccabaeus, 1 M 3:3-9, and of his brother Simon, 1 M 14:4-15 . . .” (*New Jerusalem Bible* 809)
   3. Still, “We may therefore propose [a] *terminus ad quem* for the actual composition of the latest psalms [252] (although not necessarily the final arrangement) as before the Greek period . . .” (Gillingham 252-53)
6. **conclusion**: some of the psalms “may well belong to the early monarchy [c 1020-922 bc]; several may well pertain to the time of the divided kingdom [c 922-587 bc]; and many more clearly come from the time of the exile and restoration [587 and later].” (Gillingham 208) So the psalms, arranged by date, form a triangle: from few at the top, some in the middle, many at the base.

## THE GROWTH OF PSALMS

1. **introduction**: the superscriptions indicate collections that were compiled to create the book of Psalms. (Gillingham 238)
2. **Pss 3-41**
   1. largest collection
   2. Each is “a psalm of David.” (Two exceptions: 10 [but it’s the second half of 9] and 33 [a later addition?]).
   3. 3-41 was a finished collection by the time of the LXX (100s bc): in the LXX 9-10 are united, and 33 has a Davidic superscription.
   4. The psalms are in no discernible order.
   5. They are mostly individual laments. Exceptions:
      1. hymns (8, 19, 29, 33)
      2. liturgies (15, 24)
   6. smaller groupings by content
      1. 3-5: “laments against enemy oppression” (Gillingham 238)
      2. 18, 20-21: royal psalms
      3. 26-28: “laments of one unjustly accused” (Gillingham 238)
      4. 38-41: laments in illness
3. **Pss 42-89**
   1. second largest collection
   2. divine names in 3-41 and 42-89
      1. 3-41: “Yahweh” > 270 times, “Elohim” < 50.
      2. 42-83: “Yahweh” > 40 times, “Elohim” > 240.
      3. 84-89: “Yahweh” 31 times, “Elohim” 7.
      4. So “42-83 is often called the ‘Elohistic Psalter’ within the collection overall.” (Gillingham 238)
      5. duplicate psalms
         1. 14:2, 4, 7: “Yahweh”; 53:2, 4, 6: “Elohim”
         2. 40:13-17a: “Yahweh” (17b, “Elohim”); 70:1-5 (except 1b and 5b): “Elohim”
         3. Exod 20:2: “Yahweh”; Ps 50:7: “‘Yahweh’ is changed to ‘Elohim’” (Gillingham 239)
         4. Num 10:35 and Judg. 5:4-5: “Yahweh”; Ps 68:1, 7, 8: “‘Yahweh’ is changed to ‘Elohim’” (Gillingham 239)
      6. “The collectors clearly had their own reasons for limiting the use of the more particular Israelite term for God, preferring ‘Elohim’ instead.” (Gillingham 239)
   3. smaller collections in the Elohistic Psalter (42-83)
      1. 42-49: “the sons of Korah” (a guild of Temple singers)
         1. These “are mainly preoccupied with the theme of God’s protective presence in Jerusalem—a pre-exilic theme, the subject of the attention of the eighth- and seventh-century prophets such as Micah, Isaiah, and Jeremiah.” (Gillingham 239)
         2. But Gillingham classifies as Zion hymns only 46, 48, 76, 87, 122.
         3. Perhaps “the psalms of Korah came from the pre-exilic Jerusalem cult . . .” (Gillingham 239)
      2. 51-72: a “Davidic” collection. “The concluding verse [72:20], ‘The prayers of David, the son of Jesse, are ended’, probably referred to this collection, not the earlier Davidic collection [3-41] as well.” (Gillingham 239)
      3. 50, 73-83: “the sons of Asaph” (a guild of Temple singers)
         1. These refer “to the tribes of the northern kingdom . . .” (Gillingham 239)
         2. They “are more concerned with God’s judgement, whether on Israel or on her enemies . . .” (Gillingham 239)
         3. There are “several instances of the use of oracular material . . .” (Gillingham 239)
         4. They make “greater use of the Exodus and settlement traditions.” (Gillingham 239)
         5. Perhaps they “came from prophetic circles in a northern provenance.” (Gillingham 239)
      4. 84-89 is an appendix.
         1. 84-85, 87-88 are Korahite psalms.
         2. 84-85, 87-88 generally use “Yahweh.”
      5. “The lack of evidence of the Korahite and Asaphite guilds of singers before the writing of the Chronicler (e. g. ‘sons of Asaph’; 1 Chr. 25:1ff.; 2 Chr. 5:12; 29:13; 35:15) suggests that the actual collecting together of these psalms under their particular superscriptions was a post-exilic process.” (Gillingham 239)
   4. “. . . single psalms [were] added to these collections as ‘frames’.” (Gillingham 239) (See also 244, “other psalms [were] brought in to ‘frame’ the collections . . .”) But the only psalms in 3-89 that she has not mentioned are:
      1. 86 is a psalm “of David.”
      2. 89 is a psalm of “Ethan the Ezrahite.”
4. **Pss 120-134** (each a “song of ascents”)
   1. “Song of ascents” (??*shîr ha(la)-ma‘alôt*) could mean
      1. the “ascent” of pilgrims to Jerusalem (this is most likely)
      2. going up the temple steps
      3. the return from exile
      4. “the ‘graded rhythm’ within each psalm” (Gillingham 241)
      5. a “‘sequence’ of songs, whereby the ending of one psalm is linked to the beginning of another.” (Gillingham 241)
   2. The common theme is trusting God.
   3. Since “‘bless’, ‘keep’, ‘be gracious’, and ‘peace’ occur throughout several psalms,” they may have been edited according to the Aharonic blessing (Num 6:24-26, “The Lord bless you and keep you; | 25the Lord make his face to shine upon you, | and be gracious to you; | 26the Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace”). (Gillingham 241)
5. **Pss 90-150**
   1. A “scattered Davidic collection” is discernible by the superscription, “to David”: 101, 103, 108-110, 138-145 (13 psalms). (Gillingham 241)
   2. Another collection is discernible by the theme of praising Yahweh’s kingship: 93, 95-99.
      1. On 231 Gillingham classifies as kingship hymns 47, 93, 96, 97, 98, 99: no 95.
      2. But on 244 she refers to “the collection of kingship hymns in 93, 95-9. . .”
   3. Another scattered collection is discernible by *hallel,* “the word used for the praise of God”: 104-106, 111-118, 135, 146-150 (17 psalms). They are called “the ‘Alleluia’ (‘Praise God’) psalms.” (Gillingham 241)
6. **five** “**books**” **in Psalms**
   1. Four doxologies (literally, “words of praise”) divide Psalms into five sections, called “books.”
   2. The doxologies are:
      1. Ps 41:13
         1. “Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, | from everlasting to everlasting. Amen and Amen.”
         2. concludes underlying Davidic collection 3-41
      2. Ps 72:18-19
         1. “Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, | who alone does wondrous things. | 19Blessed be his glorious name forever; | may his glory fill the whole earth. Amen and Amen.”
         2. concludes the underlying Davidic collection 51-72
      3. Ps 89:52
         1. “Blessed be the Lord forever. | Amen and Amen.”
         2. concludes the underlying Elohistic Psalter 42-83 + appendix 84-89
      4. Ps 106:48
         1. “Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, | from everlasting to everlasting. | And let all the people say, “Amen.” | Praise the Lord!”
         2. cuts through the underlying collection of scattered Davidic and Hallel psalms
   3. The resulting books are:
      1. Book 1: Pss 1-41
      2. Book 2: 42-72
      3. Book 3: 73-89
      4. Book 4: 90-106
      5. Book 5: 107-150
   4. The first three doxologies conclude sub-collections within Psalms (see below); the fourth cuts through a sub-collection. (Gillingham 241)
   5. date: “This last doxology is also found in 1 Chr. 16:36; it may indicate that the doxologies were fixed by the time of the Chronicler in about the fourth century bce.” (Gillingham 242)
   6. purpose
      1. “The effect of the doxologies is to separate the Psalter into five books (although, as we have noted, the last one cuts across an existing collection). This creates the structure of the ‘Five Books of the Psalms of David’ rather like that of the ‘Five Books of the Laws of Moses’.” (Gillingham 242)
      2. “It could also be that this fivefold structure enabled the psalms to be used in the synagogue lectionary alongside the readings of the law, but the evidence for this is inconclusive.” (Gillingham 242)
7. **growth of the entire book**
   1. “It is likely . . . that the first three books evolved first; the psalms in this section almost all have headings (or multiple headings), reflecting a different process from that in Books Four and Five, where the greater proportion of psalms are without headings.” (Gillingham 242)
   2. “It is also possible that the first edition of the Psalter began with Pss. 1 and 2 (added later to 3-41), and ended at Ps. 119. This would give the Psalter a wisdom/Torah introduction (Ps. 1) and conclusion (Ps. 119), thus illustrating its reflective/didactic use at that time.” (Gillingham 242)
   3. “The addition of the Songs of Ascent (Pss. 120-34) and the inclusion of other Hallel psalms and Davidic psalms, with the creation of a doxology after Ps. 106, thus in time resulted in five clear books.” (Gillingham 242)
   4. a summary of the growth of Psalms

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Book 1:  1, 2  3-41 (David)  Book 2:  42-49 (Korah)  50 (Asaph)  51-72 (David)  Book 3:  73-83 (Asaph)  84-85 (Korah)  86 (“of David”)  87-88 (Korah)  89 (“of Ethan the Ezrahite”) | Book 4:  90, 91, 92  93, 95-99 (kingship)  94  100  101 (*David*)  102  103 (*David*)  104-106 (Hallel)  Book 5:  107  *108-110* (*David*)  111-118 (Hallel)  119  120-134 (Ascents)  135 (Hallel)  136, 137  *138-145* (*David*)  146-150 (Hallel) |

So eight earlier collections can be discerned in Psalms:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| three different David collections  3-41  51-72  101, 103, 108-110, 138-145  a Korah collection  42-49  84-85  87-88  an Asaph collection  50  73-83 | a kingship collection  93, 95-99  a Hallel collection  104-106, 111-118, 135, 146-150  an Ascents collection  120-134  (This leaves fourteen “insertion psalms” [p. 244]: 1, 2, 86, 89, 90, 91, 92, 94, 100, 102, 107, 119, 136, 137) |

1. **formation of the canonical book**
   1. “The fact that the LXX at least uses the same number and the same order of psalms indicates that the Hebrew text itself (albeit not the superscriptions) was in some final form by this time.” (Gillingham 252)
   2. “The use of Ps. 79:2-3 in 1 Macc. 17 may be [an] indication of the use of the Psalter in different Jewish communities by the time of the second century bce.” (Gillingham 252)
   3. “. . . psalms scrolls in [Qumran] Cave 4 reveal that Books One and Two of the Psalter were on the whole in the same form and order as in the Hebrew Psalter.” (Gillingham 252)
   4. “11 QPsb contains many psalms in Books One to Three, and most of these follow the order of the MT.” (Gillingham 260)
   5. “. . . the Psalter received its final formation at the hands of the staff of the second Temple of Jerusalem . . .” (Scotto 10)
   6. See Anderson, Bernard. *Understanding the Old Testament*. 467.
   7. See Vincent, L.H. “The Temple of Jerusalem.” *Guide to the Bible*. 87-90.
2. **composite psalms**
   1. “Many of the single psalms are also likely to be composite works; as the editors/­com­pil­ers drew more psalms into the collections, it seems that they often added parts to existing psalms. . . . What was happening to the Psalter on the larger scale, in terms of various psalms being linked up, and other psalms being brought in to ‘frame’ the collections, would have happened also on the smaller scale, with individual psalms being similarly adapted . . .” (Gillingham 244)
   2. Ps 19 is composite: 1-6 are a creation hymn, 7-14 extol the law.
   3. Ps 108 reconstructs 57:1-11 and 60:5-12.
   4. 18 and 144 suggest borrowing between them.
   5. 115 and 135 suggest borrowing between them.
   6. expansions in individual laments: 22:23-31 and 51:18-19 “suggest additions, concerned more with the affairs of rebuilding the community.” (Gillingham 244)
3. **placement of psalm forms in Psalms**
   1. Individual laments are almost all in the three Davidic collections: 3-41, 51-72, 138-145. (Exceptions: 42-43, 86, 88, 102, l09, 120, 130.)
   2. Communal laments are almost all the Asaph collection (74, 77, 79, 80, 82, 83). (Exceptions: 44, 60, 85, 90, 94, l06, l08, 123, 126, 137.)
   3. “By contrast, the hymns of praise occur mostly after Ps. 90. Hymns often conclude the collections: Ps. 100 follows Pss. 93, 95-9; Ps. 118 concludes the Hallel psalms; Ps. 134, the Songs of Ascents; and Ps. 145, the Davidic collection.” (Gillingham 244)
   4. “. . . the *individual* psalms cluster at the beginning of the Psalter, within Books One and Two; and the *corporate* psalms are found more towards the end of the Psalter, some in Book Three, but especially in Books Four and Five. Consequently, the laments and prayers [“the *tepillôt* (prayers),” 245] are found predominantly in Books One to Three (Pss. 1-89), whilst the hymns and praises [“the *tehillîm* (hymns),” 245] are found almost entirely within Books Four to Five (Pss. 90-150). . . . perhaps the psychological move [is] from prayer to praise, a progression found also in many single psalms . . . within the Psalter as a whole.” (Gillingham 245)

## THE AUTHORS OF THE PSALMS

1. **introduction**
   1. The psalms are “ambiguous because they are devoid of a particular context . . .” As T. H. Robinson wrote (*The People and the Book* 175), “for the most part internal evidence—the tone, language and theological outlook of the individual poems—is practically the only criterion on which critical judgements can be based, and it leaves the door wide open for subjectivity.” (Gillingham 177)
   2. “. . . theories regarding not only the purpose of the psalms but also the identity of the psalmists [abound] . . . Since the early part of the nineteenth century, five emphases have emerged . . .” (Gillingham 173)
2. **individual poets** (1820s on)
   1. “. . . a type of personal autobiography was assumed from the allusions within a psalm.” (Gillingham 174)
   2. “The psalmists are . . . individual poets, reflecting on their experiences of life . . .” (Gillingham 181)
   3. The interpreters agreed with exegesis prior to c 1800 “that the psalmists were writing out of personal circumstances—in sickness, exile, defeat, . . . recovery from illness [etc.].” (Gillingham 175)
   4. So who were these “individual poets”?
      1. “the Davidic king” (as exegesis before 1800 had said “David”) (Gillingham 175)
      2. “a prophet or cultic official in the court of the king” (Gillingham 175)
      3. “scribes or wisdom writers working in the post-exilic period” (Gillingham 175)
      4. various individuals in the Maccabean period (Gillingham 175)
3. **poets serving the community** (1880s on)
   1. The psalms are “representative expressions of the experiences of the entire community. . . . the ‘I’ form is read in a representative, corporate light.” (Gillingham 176)
      1. The psalms are “corporate biographies by representative poets.” (Gillingham 176)
      2. The psalmists “wrote only on behalf of their people, in good times and bad.” (Gillingham 181)
   2. The psalms were associated with political and national events (military victory or defeat). (Gillingham 176)
4. **liturgical poets serving the royal cultus** (1920s on)
   1. Hermann Gunkel “associated [the psalms] with liturgy, in other words, with the affairs of the Temple cult and its festival worship.” (Gillingham 177)
   2. Sigmund Mowinckel
      1. Sigmund Mowinckel became “convinced that well over half of the Psalter could be loosely termed ‘royal psalms’, written for the king to use at an annual festival.” This festival was a New Year’s festival, in autumn, celebrated in Israel much as it was in Babylonia: it celebrated God’s imposing order on chaos, God’s protection from foreign nations, and the relation between God’s kingship and the king’s kingship.) (Gillingham 180)
      2. “. . . the psalmists are, quite simply, professional poets, gifted in the conventions of liturgy, working for the king in the royal cult.” (Gillingham 181)
   3. “. . . the psalmists were not only gifted poets but also gifted dramatists. They were highly capable of writing poetry to be performed publicly in liturgy.” (Gillingham 184)
5. **liturgical poets serving a private cultus** (1960s on)
   1. “. . . other scholars . . . redefined the meaning of the cult, so that it . . . was in part attached to the Temple, but also to outlying local sanctuaries, and catered for the needs of individuals rather than for the entire nation. Furthermore, instead of this cult presupposing a pre-exilic setting (in that it involved the court of the king), . . . it pertained not only to pre-exilic local sanctuaries but also to post-exilic synagogue-type communities. The psalmists are still seen as professional poets, composing ritual texts. However, instead of these being used only [184] for public annual festivals, [the psalmists] also composed poetry which served as prayers for individuals . . .” (Gillingham 184-185)
   2. “. . . the category of individual lament cannot be subsumed (as proposed by Mowinckel) into a more public enthronement festival, on the grounds that the ‘I’ is a poetic means of [185] personi­fying the cultic community. It is more than likely that, on the analogy of our own hymn-books and prayer-books, we can suppose the psalmists wrote for various kinds of cultic occasions—public and private—for use at all times in the liturgical year . . .” (Gillingham 185-186)
   3. Isa 38:9 (“A writing of King Hezekiah of Judah, after he had been sick and had recovered from his sickness”) immediately precedes a psalm. (Gillingham 249)
6. **poets of life**
   1. “The previous four emphases were each concerned with ‘historicizing’ or ‘particularizing’ the psalms [186] . . . as ancient texts, with a relevance only to the liturgical life of ancient Israel.” (Gillingham 186-187)
   2. “. . . any alternative reading should . . . allow for the way in which a poem resonates with meaning beyond its original one.” (Gillingham 187)
   3. “Scholars who have attempted to write a ‘theology’ of the psalms have recognized and even partly overcome this problem . . . H.-J. Kraus’s *Theology of the Psalms* (1979; tr. 1986) is a good example of the work of a scholar with a predominantly cult-historical bias who nevertheless wrestles with the problem of the ‘life-centredness’ of the poetry . . .” (Gillingham 187)
   4. Claus Westermann, “from the 1950s, has written several books and articles on this issue [187] . . . According to Westermann, the psalms are not only important literary poems about the individual or the nation (as presupposed in the historical-critical approaches); nor are they simply cultic texts applicable only to a pre-exilic cult (as understood in the cult-functional interpretations); they are also examples of prayerful reflection on life, and as such, they represent the two basic experiences of prayer—praise and lament.” (Gillingham 188)
   5. “The American scholar W. Brueggemann maintains a similar view. Taking up terms used by a French scholar, Paul Ricoeur, Brueggemann classifies the psalms according to ‘the flow of human life’ which is evident in each of them. Instead of Westermann’s two poles of human experience, Brueggemann proposes three: first, poems of disorientation (mainly the laments, where the experience is of loss and oppression); second, poems of reorientation (mainly the thanksgivings, where the experience is of restoration and recovery); third, poems of orientation (the hymns, which centre on wholeness and well-being in the presence of God). Even where the psalmists have included more than one life-experience in a single psalm, one overall theme usually predominates. In his *Message of the Psalms* (1984), Brueggemann seeks . . . the meaning of the poetry in a life-setting which is relevant also today.” (Gillingham 188)

## INTERPRETATION OF PSALMS

1. **introduction**: early interpreters of Psalms mostly see them as (a) Davidic and (b) prophetic.
2. **Qumran**
   1. 11QPs “names David as [261] the composer of 3,600 hymns and songs . . . [It] ends: ‘All these he uttered *through prophecy* which was given him from before the Most High.’” (Gillingham 261-262)
   2. “The ??*pesher* (meaning commentary) on particular psalms brings out this interpretation most clearly. 4 Q 171, on Ps. 37, for example, reveals that the community thought itself to be living ‘in the last days’, so that David’s words are prophecies now fulfilled in the ‘community of the poor’. To illustrate:

“‘The wicked borrows and does not repay, but the righteous is generous and gives. Truly, those whom He [blesses shall possess] the land, but those whom He curses [shall be cut off].’ (37:21-2)

“Interpreted, this concerns the congregation of the Poor, who [shall possess] the whole world as an inheritance. They shall possess the High Mountain of Israel [for ever], and shall enjoy [everlasting] delights in His sanctuary. [But those who] shall be cut off, they are the violent [of the nations and] the wicked of Israel: they shall be cut off and blotted out for ever. (‘Commentary on Psalms’ (4 Q 171), in Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls*, 291-3.)

“This [is] Davidic/prophetic interpretation . . .” (Gillingham 262)

1. **rabbinic writings**
   1. In “The greatest Rabbinic commentary on the psalms, *Midrash Tehillîm* [ad 200-1300] . . ., the psalms are given a Davidic orientation as part of their *historical* [263] exegesis; and second, they are given a prophetic orientation, as prayers now fulfilled in the life of the present community, as part of the *contemporary* exegesis.” (Gillingham 263-264)
   2. “For example, in the ??*midrash* (meaning ‘interpretation’) on Ps. 2, a verse is taken as of David’s time, and related to other verses from the law and prophets to give it a historical orientation. The fulfilment theme follows: the promises once made to the king (vv. 7, 8) are now to be fulfilled in the life of the people (they, like the king, are adopted ‘sons of God’) yet await ultimate fulfilment through a coming Messiah.” (Gillingham 264)
2. **New Testament**
   1. Davidic/prophetic interpretation is also found in early Christian exegesis. In the New Testament, “the Psalter is used more than any other book for a prophetic purpose (Isaiah, Deuteronomy, and Exodus are also used very frequently, but well over a third of the 360 OT references are from Psalms).” (Gillingham 264)
   2. The royal psalms after the exile “would either have been democratized, whereby the people identified themselves with God’s promise once made to the king; or they would have become part of a future idealized [figure] . . . the royal psalms in particular have been viewed [as messianic prophecies].” (Gillingham 222)
   3. The obvious difference between rabbinic and Christian interpretation is Christ: for Christians, “David, the royal figure whose life encompassed both suffering and victory, . . . is but a type, prefiguring Christ.” (Gillingham 265)
   4. In early Christian interpretation a “psalm is no longer fundamentally about David, but about Christ . . .” (Gillingham 265)
   5. “. . . the psalms are now [265] *prayers of Christ*. The Gospel writers show in some detail how the psalms were indeed prayers of Christ, not least in the last day of his life . . .” (Gillingham 265)
      1. Matt 26:24//Luke 24:25 cites Ps 41:9 at the Last Supper. (Gillingham 266)
      2. Matt 26:30//Mark 14:26 “implies the singing of some of the Passover Hallel (from Pss. 113-15) before the ascent to Olivet . . .” (Gillingham 266)
      3. Matt. 26:38//Mark 14:34 “refers to Ps. 42:3, 11-43:5 as part of the prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane . . .” (Gillingham 266)
      4. John 19:28 (“I thirst”) “takes up expressions of suffering found, for example, in Pss. 22:15 and 69:21 . . .” (Gillingham 266)
      5. Matt 27:46//Mark 15:34 is the cry of dereliction: “My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?” (Ps 22:1). (Gillingham 266)
      6. Luke 23:46 is the cry of commitment: “Into your hand I commit my spirit” (Ps 31:5).
   6. The psalms “are also *prayers to Christ*.” (Gillingham 266)
      1. “He is ‘the LORD’ [*sic*] referred to in Ps. 110:1 [“The Lord says to my lord, “Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool””]—in a paradoxical sense, the giver of the promises once made to David as well as the recipient of them. In this way, the metaphorical language used to describe the God of Israel in the psalms now becomes transferred to Christ himself.” (Gillingham 266)
      2. “He is the King, the Judge, the Redeemer of his people, the Deliverer, the Protector, the Teacher; and when the psalmists address God as their Rock, Fortress, Shepherd, Way, Truth, and Life—these now become focused towards Christ.” (Gillingham 266)
      3. “One example from the psalms may be found in the use of Pss. 42-3. Contrasting images of water (thirsting, and drowning) are particularly vivid in the first half of the psalm. The suppliant appeals first to God who, in metaphorical terms, quenches thirst in a dry and parched land (vv. 1-3): this makes an ideal focus for Christian interpretation, for Jesus Christ, according to John, is the ‘living water’ (John 4:13-15; 7:37). The same suppliant speaks later to God who sets his steadfast love on him, even when ‘the thunder of the cataracts’ and ‘waves and billows’ threaten (vv. 7-8). A Christian interpretation, using the story of Jesus according to Mark 4:35-41, would recall that during [266] the storm on the lake, Jesus rebukes the wind and says to the sea, ‘Peace, be still.’ This represents a theological approach to the psalms, in that it moves from the metaphorical imagery in the poetry to the literal fulfilment of the metaphor in the narratives in the Gospel stories.” (Gillingham 266-267)
   7. “The psalms are now *prophecies about Christ*.” (Gillingham 267)
      1. example: Ps 16. Acts 2:14-36 “is a speech of Peter, establishing that the resurrection of Christ was foretold in the Hebrew Scriptures.” Verses 25-28 quote Ps 16:8-11; verse 27 says, “For you will not abandon my soul to Hades, or let your Holy One experience corruption.” Verse 29 continues, “Fellow Israelites, I may say to you confidently of our ancestor David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. 30Since he was a prophet, he knew that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would put one of his descendants on his throne [this quotes Ps 132:11, which refers to 2 Sam 7:12-16]. 31Foreseeing this, David spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah, saying, ‘He was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh experience corruption.’ 32This Jesus God raised up, and of that all of us are witnesses.”
         1. Note that “It is assumed that these are David’s words [264] . . .: the psalms are prayers composed by David in 1000 bce . . .” (Gillingham 264-265)
         2. Note too “the unmistakable prophetic emphasis . . . The psalms possess a certain promissory element, and because the interpreters (from Jewish and Christian traditions alike) believed they were living in the ‘last days’, they also believed that the promises to David were about to be fulfilled—for example, promises about the breaking-in of a new kingdom of God’s rule on earth, promises of inheriting the land, of defeat of the enemies, of victory through suffering . . .” (Gillingham 265)
      2. “The promises to David are indeed fulfilled in these ‘the latter days’. This prophetic emphasis is achieved by taking two dominant themes in the psalms . . .” (Gillingham 267)
      3. “The first theme is that of royal victory, and is usually found in the hymnic forms. This theme anticipates the bringing in of the Kingdom (Kingship) of God.” (Gillingham 267)
         1. The kingship hymns are used in this connection. (Gillingham 267)
         2. Also, “the royal psalms become the obvious focus of attention in this respect, and Pss. 2, 10, and 118 in particular are used in this way.” (Gillingham 267)
            1. “The royal decree in Ps. 2:7 ‘You are my son, this day have I begotten you’ becomes part of a different sort of decree spoken both at the baptism and transfiguration of Christ: ‘This is my Beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.’” (Gillingham 267)
            2. Ps 110:1

“. . . this was originally a psalm inviting the king to ascend to his throne. Through an oracle, God promises him victory: “The Lord says to my lord: ‘Sit at my right hand, till I make your enemies your footstool’” . . . This is now seen to be God’s conferment of victory on Christ . . .” (Gillingham 265)

In the New Testament, 110:1 is found in Matt 22:41-46; Mark 12:35-37; Luke 20:41-44; Acts 2:34-35; Heb 1:13, 10:12-13. (Gillingham 265)

“. . . in confrontation with the Pharisees, Ps. 110:1 (‘The LORD [*sic*] says to my lord, sit at my right hand . . .’) is used to show that Christ is the speaker, whose royal, God-given authority surpasses that of David.” (Gillingham 267)

* + - * 1. “The most graphic example is found in Ps. 118, in part implying a thanksgiving song to be offered by the king after some national victory. [On] Palm Sunday, the Gospel writers use this psalm to depict Christ as the coming deliverer [Matt 21:9 = Ps 118:22, 26] . . .” (Gillingham 267)
    1. “. . . a second theme is found in another group of psalms, mainly lament in form, whose main concern is that of *human suffering and despair*. A number of psalms used in this way in the Passion narratives . . . include Pss. 22 and 69.” (Gillingham 268)
       1. “. . . the mockery of the onlookers at the crucifixion, the casting of lots for Christ’s robe, and the offering of vinegar for drink are all supported by references from these two psalms (Pss. 22:7, 8, 18 and 69:21; cf. Matt. 27:39, 43 and John 19:24, also Matt. 27:34).” (Gillingham 268)
       2. “The most evocative examples are the cries of anguish from the cross, taking up the prayers of distress in the psalms, and hence showing Christ identifying with the pain of humankind . . .” (Gillingham 268)
    2. victory through suffering
       1. “. . . the psalms of ‘royal victory’ and the psalms of ‘human suffering’ necessarily complement one another: Jesus achieves a kingdom not through power of military victory for his people but through the pain of suffering with his people.” (Gillingham 268)
       2. “. . . poetry in the prophets was used along the same lines: the ‘songs from the royal court’ in Isa. 9 and Isa. 11 are used in the Christian tradition to take up the ‘royal victory’ theme, and the Songs of the Servant in Isa. 42, and 53 in particular, are used to serve as part of the suffering theme.” (Gillingham 268)

1. **later Christianity** develop into full hdt: use Smalley.
   1. Origen (ad 180-254), Augustine (354-430), and Aquinas (1225-1274) “have contributed much on an allegorical and typological Christianized reading of the psalms, looking at them not only in terms of prayers and prophecies, but also as poems with a profound theological content.” (Gillingham 269)
   2. “. . . Luther (who wrote commentaries and works on the psalms between 1513 and 1533) and Calvin (who in 1557 also published a sizeable commentary on the psalms) similarly viewed the psalms . . . in typological and allegorical terms.” (Gillingham 269)
2. “**towards a theological interpretation of Psalms**” (Gillingham 270)
   1. introduction: over the period in which the psalms were written, “Several vast cultural changes are evident: the movement from monarchy to theocracy; the change from the influence of prophecy (at the royal court) to the influence of ‘the wise’ and the scribes of the law; and the growing questions of theodicy, represented in the change in the people from nationhood to vassaldom. True, the human responses at times of sickness, death, loss of friends, slander, persecution, exile, good or bad harvest, and military defeat or victory would have been a constant, and the expressions of faith or despair, couched in the traditional language of the cult, similarly provided a continuity; but the vast changes . . . resulted in various paradoxical beliefs [which] might be classified under six broad headings.” (Gillingham 270)
   2. diversity in Psalms
      1. “the *God of Israel* [and] the *God of all nations*” (Gillingham 270)
         1. “This tension is between . . . nationalism and universalism, or exclusivism and inclusivism . . .” (Gillingham 270)
         2. “The royal psalms, the Zion hymns, and the historical psalms all testify to the more nationalistic concerns: Pss. 2, 18 (royal psalms), 46, 48 (Zion hymns), and 78 and 105 (historical psalms) are all good examples. There is a good deal of patriotic pride in these psalms . . . which has often created difficulties of appropriation when set within other, non-Jewish cultural contexts.” (Gillingham 270)
         3. “This [is offset by] psalms which speak of God’s cosmic rule, and of his concern for all creation and hence for all nations. The kingship psalms (e. g. Pss. 47 and 93) and the hymns of praise (e. g. Pss. 8 and 104) are good examples . . .” (Gillingham 270)
      2. “the *God of the powerful*—in other words, the kings, priests, and prophets—[and] the *God of the powerless*—the oppressed, . . . those termed frequently in the psalms ‘the poor and needy’ and ‘the saints’ and ‘the righteous’” (Gillingham 271)
         1. The “royal psalms (e. g. 45, 72, 110) are examples of the first category . . .” (Gillingham 271)
         2. “. . . the communal and individual laments and the wisdom psalms (i. e. often the later post-exilic psalms) bear witness to the second type (e. g. Pss. 86, 109, 140, 37). This second emphasis [is relevant] in liberation theology and feminist theology. If this concern for freedom and justice is set alongside that for warfare and power, it may be seen as another expression of the tension between the exclusivist and inclusivist views of the nature of God, this time expressed within the community of Israel.” (Gillingham 271)
      3. “what ‘pleases’ God: . . . *cultic worship* [or] *inner devotion*” (Gillingham 271)
         1. “. . . these are differences in emphasis, and need not be diametrically opposed.” (Gillingham 271)
         2. “. . . the royal psalms and liturgies [refer to] ritual, sacrifice, processions, and festal occasions (e. g. Pss. 68, 118, 132).” (Gillingham 271)
         3. “By contrast, the individual laments and thanksgivings and the wisdom psalms put greater store . . . on ethical obedience. Relevant psalms include Pss. 26, 32, 51, and 139 . . .” (Gillingham 271)
         4. “. . . Pss. 15 and 24, for example, combine [271] both” emphases. (Gillingham 271-272)
      4. “a *God of judgement* [and] a *God of salvation*” (Gillingham 272)
         1. “The judgement motif is mostly found in the lament form, where the experience of distress is seen as permitted, if not caused, by God, and where the judgement is either accepted as deserved (in which case, the lament form also includes some confession of sin) or fought against as undeserved (in which case, the psalm includes a long protest of innocence). Psalms 74, 77, and 89 all testify to the judgement of God; the confessions and protests interestingly mix in each.” (Gillingham 272)
         2. “The motif of God as one who saves and redeems is the common theme of the thanksgivings (e. g. Ps. 40) and hymns (e. g. Ps. 100).” (Gillingham 272)
      5. “the *God of the living* [and] the *God of the dead*” (Gillingham 272)
         1. “. . . blessings and rewards are to be found in this life alone [272] . . . The result is seen in the vindictive curses found in many laments [e. g., 109, 137] and wisdom psalms [e. g., 37], which cry out for justice to be done . . .” (Gillingham 272-273)
         2. “. . . a few psalms appear to move beyond this earth-bound belief: God’s power extends beyond the grave, for he can indeed ‘redeem’ from ‘the pit’ [e. g., Pss 88:4-5, 11; 49:15] . . .” (Gillingham 273)
      6. “the *God of the individual* and the *God of the community*.” (Gillingham 273)
         1. “The God of warfare, of the affairs of the royal court, and of the official Temple cult (seen e. g. in Pss. 44, 66, 121) can be very different from the God of personal and domestic affairs (compare Pss. 3, 4, 42-3, 54, 55). Official theology and private devotion are indeed complementary, but they each focus on different attributes of God and of his activity in the world.” (Gillingham 273)
         2. “The ‘Davidic’ titles help in part to bridge this gap, for they unite together the two concerns of the public (royal) figure with the personal (human) details . . .” (Gillingham 273)
   3. unity in Psalms
      1. One can minimize the differences and focus on a unifying theology. (Gillingham 274)
      2. “One unifying [theme] could be . . . *God’s covenant with David*, inaugurated (Pss. 1-72), broken (Pss. 73-89), and restored (Pss. 90-150). This is explored in the works of J. H. Walton and G. H. Wilson.” (Gillingham 274)
      3. “A different [theme is] the *everlasting kingship of God*, first . . . through the reigning king, and developed in the later psalms [as] God’s heavenly rule. This is basically the view of B. S. Childs. It is also shared by H.-J. Kraus, but . . . here, the movement of thought within the Psalter would be from expressions of God’s presence in the earthly city, [to] his presence more universally in the whole of creation.” (Gillingham 274)
      4. Psalms is a “*witness to the distinctive monotheistic faith of Israel*: this view is proposed by J. Day (see *Psalms*, pp. 123-5).” (Gillingham 274)
      5. C. Westermann: “the Psalter’s unity is in its movement *from lament* (basically found in Books One to Three) *towards praise* (expressed mainly in Books Four and Five) . . .” (Gillingham 274)
      6. W. Brueggemann: “the Psalter’s unity is its movement *from the Torah-Psalms*, which affirm a relationship with God through obedience to the law (Ps. 1), *to the Hymns*, which live in that relationship, expressing it in terms of praise of God (Ps. 150).” (Gillingham 274)
      7. “According to G.T. Sheppard, its unity lies in its being a *didactic guide to righteousness*; similarly, K. Seybold understands the theology of the Psalter to cohere in its being a *reflective guide to prayer and right living*.” (Gillingham 275)
      8. “In brief, the Psalter has not arisen out of any self-conscious creation of systematic doctrine; it has emerged from the experiences of life and of liturgy, and has been shaped dynamically by the various literary and theological concerns of the collectors and editors: hence its theological tensions, and its paradoxical views of life and God.” (Gillingham 275)

## THE SONG OF SONGS

Cosby, Michael R. *Sex in the Bible: An Introduction to What the Scriptures Teach Us about Sexuality.* Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1984. Ch. 4, “Song of Songs: A Celebration of the Sensuous,” pp. 53-81. BS 680 .S5 C66 1984

1. **structure**
   1. “The Song of Songs . . . is a collection of poems of unknown origin . . .” (Cosby 54)
   2. “This book comprises about twenty-five lyric poems, collected together around the third century bce.” (Gillingham 111)
      1. “Some are clearly literary creations, . . . a dialogue between two lovers . . . interspersed with a commentary by a chorus.” (Gillingham 111)
      2. “Some smaller fragments could well have had an earlier setting-in-life: the descriptive wedding procession song in 3:6-11 has some correspondences with the marriage song of Ps. 45, for example, and the antiphonal sections in some of the poetry (e.g. in 1:12-17 and 2:1-4) may suggest a wedding liturgy between bride and groom.” (Gillingham 111)
   3. “Song is a composite work. However, like the book of Job, its final form is a dramatic unity, being performative poetry of a literary nature.” (Gillingham 111)
   4. “The interchange of voices between the female and male lover also allows the whole poetic unit to be stylized like a drama.” (Gillingham 111)
      1. “In a way which is impossible to depict in the English translation, the Hebrew often indicates when the man or woman is being addressed . . .” (Gillingham 111)
      2. “. . . the voice of the woman both opens and closes the dialogues at the beginning and end of the book.” (Gillingham 111)
   5. “The Hebrew depicts three parts, or three voices.” (Gillingham 111)

1:2-4ab woman

1:4cde chorus

1:5-7 woman

1:8 chorus

1:9-11 man

1:12-14 woman

1:15-17 man

2:1 woman

2:2 man

2:3-6 woman

2:7 chorus

2:8-10a woman

2:10b-14 man

2:15 chorus

2:16-17 woman

3:1-5 woman

3:5 [*sic*] chorus

[3:6-11 unassigned]

4:1ef chorus

4:1-7 man

4:8-15 man

4:16 woman

5:1 man

5:2-8 woman

5:9 chorus

5:10-16 woman

6:1 chorus

6:2-3 woman

6:4-10 man

6:10 [*sic*] chorus

6:11-12 woman

6:13 chorus

7:1-9 man

7:10-13 woman

8:1-4 woman

8:5a chorus

8:5bcd woman

8:6-7 woman

8:8-12 woman

8:13 chorus

8:14 woman (Murphy)

* 1. The chorus’s “role is to incite the couple in the consummation of their love . . .” (Gillingham 112)

1. **Song’s original meaning**
   1. eroticism
      1. The songs display “unashamed eroticism . . .” (Gillingham 112)
      2. “The overtly sexual nature of the poems, in which the characters speak of strong physical passion, desire, and fulfillment, proclaims unashamedly the joys of the erotic aspects of life.” (Cosby 55)
      3. “. . . physical beauty and mutual longing, desire, and fulfillment; it [Song] devotes virtually its entire contents to these matters.” (Cosby 60)
      4. Most modern exegetes recognize “the vividness and vitality of its celebration of the joys of human love . . .” (Cosby 60)
      5. “Except for a few instances, such as when a man calls his lady “my bride” (for example, 4:9, 10, 11, 12; 5:1), the poems do not even specify that the loving couples are married, although in light of Jewish cultural norms we might reasonably expect that this is presupposed.” (Cosby 54)
      6. “The interplay of imagery, whether of landscape or of bodyscape, offers an immediacy which is both literal and figurative: the human body evokes pictures of the fertility of the land, and the land speaks of the sensuality of the human body.” (Gillingham 112)
         1. “The erotic imagery offers sensuous and suggestive allusions to a couple enacting ancient myths of the love between a god and goddess, whose consummated passion creates the fertility throughout all nature.” (Gillingham 111)
      7. “It is in Song, more than anywhere else in the Hebrew Scriptures, that we hear the distinctive voice of female love—a theme often scorned elsewhere, not least in other wisdom writings—and its capacity for endurance [8:6-7, “love is strong as death . . . Many waters cannot quench love”] . . .” (Gillingham 113)
   2. theological content
      1. Song 8:6-7 might be seen as theological. (Cosby 79 n. 1)
         1. Song 8:6-7, “Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm; for love is strong as death, passion fierce as the grave. Its flashes are flashes of fire, a raging flame. 7Many waters cannot quench love, neither can floods drown it. If one offered for love all the wealth of his house, it would be utterly scorned.”
         2. “. . . it is possible to see in this [“love is strong as death”] a religious affirmation that sexual love, and the resulting procreation of new life, is the way that life triumphs over death. Viewed in this way, 8:6 could provide a religious foundation for the Song as a whole . . . Yet this interpretation is very questionable. Although it is true that having chil­dren was viewed by the ancient Hebrews as the way a man lived on in his [79] children . . ., it is doubtful that the Song is concerned with this issue. The strength of love in 8:6-7 is merely an intensify­ing of the descriptions of passion revealed throughout the Song. Verse 6 gives the positive dimension of love, and verse 7 [*sic*, sc. “6d”] gives the dark side of love: “Jealousy is cruel as the grave.” (Cosby 79-80 n. 1)
      2. “There is no concern here to explore questions of ethics.” (Cosby 54)
      3. “. . . God’s name is never mentioned in the Song . . .” (Cosby 54)
      4. “. . . there is no theological reflection at all.” (Cosby 54)
2. **later interpretations**
   1. “What does one do with such open eroticism in Scripture? Unfortunately many people down through the centuries have allegorized the Song and thereby removed what some would view as offensive.” (Cosby 60)
   2. “. . . for centuries allegorical interpreta­tion of the Song prevailed as the dominant method of exposition by both Jews and Christians.” (Cosby 60)
   3. Jews’ allegorizations
      1. God and Israel
         1. “. . . many Jewish people have seen in the Song an allegory of God’s love for Israel.” (Cosby 60)
         2. The rabbis interpreted Song “as a theological analogy of the love between God and Israel.” (Gillingham 113)
         3. “Various passages in the Old Testament employ the imagery of Israel as the wife of God . . .” [60] See Isa 54:5-7; 62:4-5; Hos 2:16, 19-20. [80 n. 6] (Cosby 60, 80 n. 6)
         4. “. . . this is far from how Song was used and understood by the people, as seen in the following quotation from Rabbi Akiba: ‘He who trills his voice in the chanting of the Song and treats it as a secular song, has no share in the world to come’ (Tosefta).” (Gillingham 114)
         5. “Presumably because of his high regard for the Song, Akiba elsewhere strictly forbids using it in a secular manner in places like a banquet hall (presumably under the influence of a little too much wine). [Tosefta, *Sanhedrin* 12:10; see *TB Sanhedrin* 101a.—80 n. 9] This would indicate that there was some problem with common people who did not read it allegori­cally!” (Cosby 61)
      2. God and God
         1. *kaballah*: “By the Middle Ages, Song was part of the literature used in the Jewish mystical tradition (called the *kaballâ*) which contemplated the divine glory (called the ??*shekinâ*). The *shekinâ* represented the female elements of the Deity; a procreative fusion with the male elements of the godhead released divine power and life. Song was seen as ideal in rehearsing this drama within the godhead, whereby the male/female voices were no longer those of human lovers, but those of God. In this way, Song was received not so much as love poetry about God and Israel, as about the inner nature of God Himself.” (Gillingham 114)
         2. “Others have even identified the woman in the Song with the personified Wisdom of Proverbs 8.” (Cosby 60)
            1. Marvin Pope (*Song of Songs*. AB 7C. Garden City: Doubleday, 1977. 110): “In the late sixteenth century a new idea was proposed by the celebrated Don Isaac Abravanel who saw the protagonists of the Song of Songs as Solomon and Wisdom rather than God and Israel. . . . This line of interpretation . . . was adopted and adapted in the present century by Gottfried Kuhn (1926), who identified the Bride with Wisdom, but saw the Bridegroom as a type of the seeker after wisdom rather than as the historical Solomon.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 110 n. 30)
   4. Christians’ allegorizations
      1. Christ and the Church
         1. “. . . Christians have tended to interpret the Song as a description of the love between Christ and the Church.” (Cosby 60)
            1. Eph 5:23-25, “For the husband is the head of the wife just as Christ is the head of the church, the body of which he is the Savior. 24Just as the church is subject to Christ, so also wives ought to be, in everything, to their husbands. 25Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her . . .”
            2. Passages in Revelations depict the Church as the bride of Christ.

Rev 19:7-8, ““the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready; 8to her it has been granted to be clothed with fine linen, bright and pure”—for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.”

Rev 21:2, 9, “I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. . . . 9Then one of the seven angels . . . said to me, “Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb.””

Rev 22:17a, “The Spirit and the bride say, “Come.””

* + - * 1. In “the early Christian Fathers . . . Song was understood as an expression of the mystical bond between Christ and his Church.” (Gillingham 114)
    1. Christ and the soul
       1. Origen traced “a spiritual pilgrimage through the struggle against human passions (following the teaching of Proverbs) into a perception of the world’s transience (as found in Ecclesiastes) which ended with the soul’s rapturous contemplation of God (using Song).” (Gillingham 114)
       2. “Gregory of Nyssa also adhered to this view: Song for him represented the final stage of the soul’s ascent to and unification with the love of God. This type of exegesis was most fully explored in the writings of Bernard of Clairvaux.” (Gillingham 114)
    2. “Medieval Christian scholastics . . . saw in the Song the marriage between the active and passive aspects of the human intellect.” (Cosby 60)
  1. conclusion
     1. “So varied have been the approaches to and interpretations of the Song of Songs that Marvin Pope, in his massive commentary on this biblical text, devotes 140 pages to summarizing them.” (Cosby 60) (Pope, Marvin. *Song of Songs*. AB 7C. Garden City: Doubleday, 1977. 89-229.)
     2. “There are some biblical scholars who still endorse allegorical in­terpretation of the Song, but their number is dwindling toward extinc­tion.” (Cosby 60)

1. **Song and the canon**
   1. People wonder “why a collection of love poetry was ever included in Scripture.” (Cosby 60)
   2. “The Song was included in the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures, so we know that it was considered part of the sacred collection before the first century a.d.” (Cosby 61)
   3. “. . . at Jamnia in a.d. 90, rabbis openly debated whether or not the acceptance of . . . the Song into the holy writings was proper. Our knowledge of this debate is limited to a few brief statements in rabbinic literature . . .” (Cosby 61)
   4. “From this debate comes the now-famous pronouncement of Rabbi Akiba: “The whole world is not worth the day on which the Song of Songs was given to Israel, for all the Scriptures are holy, but the Song of Songs is the Holy of Holies.” [Mishnah, *Yadayim* 3:5] (Cosby 61)
   5. “Perhaps the allegorical interpretation of the Song by rabbis in the first century was a result of its status as sacred Scripture . . . Or perhaps the rabbis affirmed the canonical status of the Song because they had for some time interpreted it allegorically. The fact is that allegory was “in the air” during the first century . . . [Probably] the Song was part of Scripture prior to the application of allegory to its contents by Jewish rabbis.” (Cosby 61)
   6. “. . . Christians adopted from their Jewish heritage both the canonical status of the Song and an allegorical approach to interpret­ing it.” (Cosby 61)

## THE SONG OF SONGS AS WISDOM LITERATURE

1. **introduction**
   1. “Needless to say, the Canticle is not a wisdom book; it is a collection of love poems.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 106)
   2. “However, *as edited*, do these poems have a sapiential character on another level of understanding? E. Würthwein thinks that the Song derived from wisdom circles, and B. Childs argues that “the Song is to be understood as wisdom literature.”” (Würthwein, E. “Das Hohelied.” *Die fünf Megilloth*. HAT 18. Tübingen: Mohr/Siebeck, 1969. 31. Childs, Brevard. *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979. 574 [see 571-79].) (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 106)
2. **proofs**
   1. association with Solomon
      1. “. . . that ancient Jewish tradition . . . attributed the work to Solomon . . . suggests a sapiential interpretation of the work . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 106) Song 1:1, “The Song of Songs, which is Solomon’s.”
      2. “. . . the ancient canonical lists . . . rank the Canticle among the (wisdom) books of Solomon along with Proverbs and Ecclesiastes.” (Audet, J.-P. “Le Sens du Cantique des Cantiques.” *RB* 62 (1955): 197-221 [esp. 202].) (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 106)
      3. “All this does not constitute proof of the book’s wisdom character. But it does indicate that the Canticle was read as a work in the Solomonic (wisdom) tradition.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 106)
   2. probably sages preserved the Song of Songs
      1. “. . . it is eminently reasonable to look upon the sages as the ones responsible for the preservation and handing down of these songs. The Canticle upholds the values of fidelity and mutuality in love between the sexes, which are a concern in the training of youth (see Prov 1-9; esp. 5:15-20). Thus the sages would have interpreted the Song in the literal historical sense as love poetry that promoted the same ideals they nourished. Perhaps the mention of marriage (Solomon’s) in Cant 3:11 was a factor in such thinking.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 106)
   3. “. . . there is an affinity between wisdom and eros in the wisdom literature . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 106)
      1. von Rad, Gerhard. *Wisdom in Israel*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1972. 166-69.
      2. Murphy, Roland E. “Wisdom and Eros in Proverbs 1-9.” *CBQ* 50 (1988): 600-3.
      3. M. Pope (*Song of Songs*. AB 7C. Garden City: Doubleday, 1977. 110): “In the late sixteenth century a new idea was proposed by the celebrated Don Isaac Abravanel who saw the protagonists of the Song of Songs as Solomon and Wisdom rather than God and Israel. . . . This line of interpretation . . . was adopted and adapted in the present century by Gottfried Kuhn (1926), who identified the Bride with Wisdom, but saw the Bridegroom as a type of the seeker after wisdom rather than as the historical Solomon.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 110 n. 30)
      4. “. . . the quest for wisdom is a quest for the beloved. . . . the language and imagery used to describe the pursuit of Lady Wisdom . . . are drawn from the experience of love. Although the Canticle speaks of love between man and woman in the literal historical sense, it is by that very fact open to a wisdom interpretation.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 106)
         1. “Wisdom is to be “found” (Prov 3:13; 8:17, 35), just as one “finds” a good wife (Prov 18:22; 31:10).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 106)
         2. “In verses that are remarkably parallel, Wisdom and wife are termed “favor from the Lord” (Prov 8:35; 18:22).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 106)
         3. “The sage advises the youth to “get Wisdom,” to love and embrace her (Prov 4:6-8).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 106)
         4. “The youth is to say, “Wisdom, you are my sister” (Prov 7:4), just as the beloved in the Song of Songs is called “sister” (Cant 4:9-5:1).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 106)
         5. “. . . Sirach tells his students to take hold of Wisdom and not to “let her go” (Sir 6:27), just as the woman in the Song found her lover and would not let him go (Cant 3:4).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 107)
         6. “The one who pursues Wisdom is one who “peeps through her windows” (Sir 14:23), much in the style of the lover in Cant 2:9.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 107)
         7. “Wisdom is compared to a young bride who will nourish the youth with her food (Sir 15:2-3; cf. Prov 9:5) just as the woman in Cant 7:14-8:2 offers food to her lover.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 107)
         8. Sirach (51:13ff.) “speaks with passion of his pursuit of beloved Wisdom, just as “Solomon” describes his love affair with Wisdom in Wis 8:2, “I sought to take her for my bride.”” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 107)
         9. ““Solomon” loved Wisdom beyond all else (Wis 7:10), and he discovered that she responded in like manner; one would find her “sitting by his gate” (Wis 6:14).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 107)
   4. Song contains a didactic passage.
      1. Song 8:6, “Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm; for love is strong as death, passion fierce as the grave. Its flashes are flashes of fire, a raging flame.” Murphy’s translation (nab?): “Strong as Death is love, hard as Sheol is ardor, Its darts, fiery darts, a flame of Yah.”
      2. “Within the Canticle itself is a passage that is didactic—different in style from the warm exchange of sentiments between a man and a woman. It is reflective in nature, making a statement about human love . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 107)
      3. “Love is directly described here, and in terms of the great force that the ancient Israelite experienced as unconquerable: the dynamic power of Death and Sheol, which seek out their human victims without fail. Even during life, Death and Sheol pursue every human being. To the extent that the Israelite experienced nonlife, he or she was in the grip of Sheol . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 107)
         1. Ps 30:3, “O Lord, you brought up my soul from Sheol, restored me to life from among those gone down to the Pit.”
         2. Ps 49:15, “God will ransom my soul from the power of Sheol, for he will receive me.”
         3. Ps 89:48, “Who can live and never see death? Who can escape the power of Sheol?”
      4. “Moreover, love is declared to be a “flame of Yah.” This can be understood, as many translations render it, as a superlative, “a most vehement flame.” However, Yah (the short form of the sacred name, *yhwh*) can refer to the Lord, as in the *NJB*, “a flame of Yahweh himself.” This is the supreme compliment to the power of (human) love—it has some mysterious relationship to the Lord. The relationship is not spelled out further . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 107)
3. **conclusions**
   1. “. . . the link between eros and wisdom . . . opens the Song of Songs to another level of understanding.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 107)
   2. “While it is not wisdom literature, its echoes reach beyond human sexual love to remind one of the love of Lady Wisdom—a “flame of Yah.”” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 107)

# INTRODUCTION

# TO WISDOM LITERATURE

## WISDOM IN THE BIBLE

## OUTSIDE THE WISDOM LITERATURE

1. **introduction**
   1. “. . . on the presence of wisdom throughout the Old Testament,” [97] see: Morgan, D. F. *Wisdom in the Old Testament Traditions*. Atlanta: Knox, 1981. 167-73. “. . . with copious bibliography . . .” [108 n. 1] (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 97, 108 n. 1)
   2. “. . . from beginning to end of the Hebrew Bible . . . the “influence of” or “borrowings from” wisdom have been alleged.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 97)
   3. “It will soon become apparent that the problem is the establishment of adequate criteria for such judgments.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 97)
   4. “. . . sapiential stylistic features (and ideas as well) are mixed with other parts of the Bible. The mixture itself is not surprising. Reciprocal influence is at work among all the Old Testament traditions. No one lived sealed off from other writers and traditions. From this point of view the influence of one area upon another can be seen as something perfectly natural. But the claims call for analysis and some kind of clear evidence.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 108)

wisdom characteristics (criteria)

1. **author was sage**
   1. “. . . “wisdom” in historical or prophetic books [may] mean that the piece in question was written by a sage, just as Job or Qoheleth are clearly the productions of a professional wise man . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 98)
      1. “Such a contention cannot be proved, and indeed the anonymity of authorship for many biblical works suggests that it is futile to deal in such hypotheses.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 98)
      2. “Hence the claim of J. Fichtner that Isaiah was a professional sage before he became a prophet does not have sufficient foundation.” (Fichtner, J. “Isaiah Among the Wise.” *Studies in Ancient Israelite Wisdom*, ed. J. L. Crenshaw. New York: KTAV, 1976. 429-38.) (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 98)
      3. “There is more substance in”: Whedbee, J. W. *Isaiah and Wisdom*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1971. (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 108 n. 10)
      4. “There is more substance in”: Jensen, J. *The Use of tôrâ by Isaiah: His Debate with the Wisdom Tradition*. CBQMS 3. Washington: Catholic University of America, 1973. Esp. 122, 135. (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 108 n. 10)
2. **vocabulary**
   1. “There is a limited range of terminology that is characteristic of wisdom. Admittedly the whole spectrum of Hebrew vocabulary remained open to any Israelite writer. But when certain wisdom terms appear in rather concentrated fashion, this may be a sign of wisdom influence.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 98)
   2. “R. N. Whybray has submitted a list of nine words that are “apparently” exclusive to the wisdom tradition.” (Whybray, R. N. *The Intellectual Tradition in the Old Testament*. BZAW 135. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1974. 142-49.) (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 98)
   3. A. Hurwitz (“Wisdom Vocabulary in the Hebrew Psalter: A Contribution to the Study of ‘Wisdom Psalms.’” *VT* 38 (1988): 41-51) “singled out terminology that is indicative of “wisdom psalms” (Pss 30 and 37). For example, he shows that the word *hôn* (riches) is a typical term: eighteen of twenty-six occurrences are in Proverbs. Moreover, comparable texts in the Torah and Psalms use a synonym (*kesep*), not *hôn*. In addition to the repeated occurrences in Proverbs, *hôn* appears in Pss 112 and 119, which have been associated with wisdom for other reasons.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 98)
   4. “The advantage of this kind of argument is that it is relatively independent and autonomous. It does not have the weakness of hypothetical arguments derived from an alleged wisdom [98] setting or worldview. At the same time, it is to be admitted that our knowledge of Hebrew vocabulary and its distribution is relatively meager; the argument needs support from other sources.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 98-99)
3. **literary forms**
   1. “It is not surprising that the broad area embraced by wisdom should inevitably be reflected in the various literary genres of the Bible (exhortation, lament, [107] story, etc.). [But] Wisdom developed its own peculiar genres (saying, parable, etc.), and these serve as typical signs.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 107-8)
   2. “The sayings (and their various kinds) and admonitions appear in the books commonly recognized as “wisdom” (Proverbs, etc.), and there is no dispute about such a characterization.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 99)
   3. “The issue becomes somewhat cloudy when an accepted sapiential form is used in books that are clearly of another genre. Is the presence of a saying, an admonition, a parable or comparison, to be taken as a sure sign of wisdom influence?” [99] . . . the sages had no monopoly on specific literary forms.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 99-100)
      1. True, the sages “favor short sayings and admonitions . . . [But] To demand wisdom influence for every admonition would be a stultifying division of literary analysis and an unreal compartmentalization of human beings.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 100)
      2. Similarly, “comparisons, parables, stories, and the like . . . can hardly be singled out as proofs of wisdom influence.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 100)
         1. If such forms were unique to the wise men, then “the language of the sages would have been a jargon, relatively unintelligible to their audience.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 100)
         2. Such forms “belong to the common cultural inheritance . . . There was a broad range of intelligence and education that was common to prophet and people.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 100)
4. **content**
   1. “Content . . . is a rather slippery criterion.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 101)
   2. references to wisdom
      1. “. . . the Wisdom of Solomon, which is short on typical forms, is long on the emphasis on wisdom (chaps. 6-10) and fits into the category of wisdom literature.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 99)
      2. Here Murphy accepts references to wisdom as a criterion of wisdom literature or its influence.—Hahn
   3. right living
      1. “The sages were concerned in a broad way with (right) living, but they were not ethicists or framers of the law. Because human conduct is the common denominator between wisdom and law, it is sometimes difficult to separate the two and to determine the direction of influence . . .” (Compare Prov 22:28, “Do not remove the ancient landmark that your ancestors set up,” with Deut 19:14, “You must not move your neighbor’s boundary marker, set up by former generations.”) (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 101)
   4. retribution
      1. “One of the most frequent topics in wisdom literature is the problem of retribution: the prosperity of the good, and the fate (punishment) of the evil. One need merely recall the sayings about the righteous/wise and wicked/foolish in Proverbs, the central problem of Job’s suffering, the denial of retribution by Qoheleth (8:14; 9:1-2; etc.). One is tempted to think that the issue was exclusive to the sages. But of course it was not, as the “confessions” of Jeremiah (“Why does the way of the godless prosper?” 12:1) demonstrate. The problem of divine justice is widespread, and it appears in such disparate writings as Habakkuk (1-2), Lamentations (chap. 3), and Ps 89. Hence the motif of retribution must be used carefully in determining a wisdom writing, as with Ps 73. Retribution is not sufficient of itself to constitute a definitive criterion. Other characteristics have to be advanced in addition to the alleged “retribution.”” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 101)
   5. personification of Wisdom
      1. “Even the presence of a poem on the personification of Wisdom . . . does not necessarily affect the rest of the composition, as the presence of the poem in Bar 3:9-4:4 demonstrates. The issue of “wisdom influence” is more subtle than that.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 101)
   6. “These difficulties also occur with respect to the social concerns of the prophets: It is commonly accepted that these spring from the law codes and also from cultic demands (Pss 15, 24) rather than from wisdom preoccupations. But the sages were also sensitive to the plight of the poor and the oppressed (e.g., Prov 14:31; Job 24:4-12; 29:12-17). Here again is a thin line of separation.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 101)
5. **didactic purpose**
   1. Since priests and prophets also reflected on their experience, “one might speak of wisdom only [101] where there is a didactic purpose, where teaching is going on. Such is clearly the case in the five books that all recognize as wisdom.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 101-2)
   2. “A didactic purpose is not explicit in other parts of the Old Testament.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 102)
   3. “Even where it is explicit, as in the final verse of the Book of Hosea (14:10 [= nrsv 14:9, “Those who are wise understand these things; those who are discerning know them. For the ways of the Lord are right, and the upright walk in them, but transgressors stumble in them”]), it does not change the nature of the book. It is merely an additional remark that calls the reader to a more attentive reading and broader appropriation.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 102)
6. **reference to tradition**
   1. “A wisdom thrust is also apparent when recourse is made to tradition: this is what one has always said or done. The argument from tradition is used in an effort to persuade someone to accept a given point. We are in the realm of motivation, as when Bildad tries to convince Job by pointing out the harmony of his doctrine with that of the “fathers,” or past generations (8:8).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 102)
7. **cumulative evidence**
   1. “. . . the determination of “wisdom influence” has to be based on cumulative arguments, none of which alone suffices.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 102)
8. **the main problem**
   1. The main problem with using wisdom characteristics (vocabulary, forms, content) as criteria for wisdom influence is that these characteristics were not unique to the sages.
   2. “Instead of characterizing certain passages as examples of wisdom influence, almost as if they were deviant from the broad interests of priest or prophet, we should recognize them as part of the mainstream of Israelite thought. These literary forms reflect simple reality, not the views of a particular school or group, and hence can be used universally.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 100)
   3. “There is often a kind of circular reasoning involved in the arguments that are advanced to show “wisdom influence.” The wisdom writings make statements about the way things are. If a historical narrative also reflects reality, it can conclude to the same points as the wisdom writing, without any “influence.” . . . Wisdom insights result from observation and experience, and hence they reflect real life—the same is true of stories.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 100)
   4. “One might . . . claim that certain examples of elevated speech and diction, of powerful stories, bespeak [100] a refined cultural level of both writers and readers. One thinks of the literary quality of Nathan’s parable to David (2 Sam 12:1-7) or of Isaiah’s parable of the vineyard (Isa 5:1-7). This kind of literature presupposes a high cultural level that made such achievements possible.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 100-1)
      1. But “It is not meaningful to speak of “wisdom influence” in such instances. Rather, the literature of Israel, priestly, prophetic, and sapiential, arose from a cultural matrix that was broadly gauged.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 101)
   5. “Instead of considering “wisdom influence” as an outside factor impinging on priest or prophet, one should perhaps regard it as reflecting the outlook of any human being who tries to draw a lesson from human experience. From this point of view, the “influence” comes not from without but from within: from the reflections of individuals on their experience.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 101)

purported instances of wisdom elsewhere in the bible

1. **historical books** (**Gen**-**2 Macc**)
   1. John L. McKenzie (“Reflections on Wisdom.” *JBL* 86 [1967]: 1-9): “Evidently I have identified the wise men of Israel with the historians, and thus effectively designated the historical books as wisdom literature.” This is an “admittedly extreme statement . . . J. L. McKenzie had no criteria for this, but only broad presuppositions, such as the conviction of the sages about the validity of collective as well as individual experience, and their role as scribes who collected the memories of the people.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 97)
2. **Garden of Eden** (**Gen 2-3**)
   1. “L. Alonso Schökel detected specific wisdom ingredients in Gen 2-3:
      1. “the sapiential motif of “knowledge of good and evil”;
      2. “the “shrewdness” of the serpent;
      3. “Adam as sage;
      4. “the discussion of the four rivers.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 97)
   2. “The sage attempted to answer the origin of sin by the Genesis story, with sapiential and mythical motifs.” (Alonso Schökel, L. “Sapiential and Covenant Themes in Genesis 2-3.” *Studies in Ancient Israelite Wisdom*, ed. J. L. Crenshaw. New York: KTAV, 1976. 468-80.) (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 97)
3. **Joseph story** (**Gen 37-50**)
   1. “One of the first efforts (1953) to find wisdom in the Old Testament was Gerhard von Rad’s analysis of the Joseph story.” (“The Joseph Narrative and Ancient Wisdom.” *Studies in Ancient Israelite Wisdom*, ed. J. L. Crenshaw. New York: KTAV, 1976. 439-47 [esp. 447].) (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 97)
   2. “. . . Joseph is smarter than the Egyptian sages (Gen 41:8) . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 97)
   3. “. . . he gives solid advice . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 97)
   4. “. . . he is finally called by the Pharaoh a “man intelligent and wise” (41:33, 39) . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 97)
   5. In von Rad’s view, the story of Joseph illustrates the rise of a wise courtier, and in fact it is designed as “a didactic wisdom-story” influenced by the Egyptian educational ideal.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 97)
   6. But “Why should the Joseph story be characterized as a wisdom tale? Yes, it concerns the rise of a courtier (Joseph) in Pharaoh’s court; it underlines Joseph’s cleverness, his self-control, his love of peace, and these are all desirable virtues that can be documented in the Book of Proverbs. But why were they singled out for attention by the sages? Because they are real factors that reflect the way things are (people are clever; they are virtuous; they receive blessings). Hence one is justified in concluding that the story itself [without wisdom influence] reflects the reality that the wisdom sayings in Proverbs are also dealing with, and that it is not a “wisdom tale.”” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 100)
4. **Deuteronomy**
   1. introduction to Deuteronomy
      1. structure: “It presents itself in its final form as a series of discourses, a valedictory oration, given by Moses shortly before his death: 1:1-4:40; 4:44-11:32; 12:1-26:19 ([the latter] containing the Deuteronomic code, or book of the law). The final section (chaps. 27-34) contains various elements, including another speech of Moses, chaps. 28-30.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 104)
      2. “The entire book is characterized by a unity of diction and purpose. It is clearly a theological interpretation of history and law, composed with an intensity and fervor that make it stand out within the Pentateuch. It is not a work of one or a few years. It was composed over a period of at least two centuries, with a high point coming during the reign of Josiah in 621, when “the book of the law” (some form of Deut 12ff.) was found in the Temple (1 Kgs 22-23).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 104)
   2. “Obviously, Deuteronomy is not a book of wisdom. . . . Deuteronomy seems at first sight not to be a prime choice to illustrate wisdom influence.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 104)
   3. The Israeli scholar Moshe Weinfeld (*Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomic School*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1972) in a “massive study of Deuteronomy has pointed to the “wisdom substrata” in this work and in the Deuteronomist history (Joshua to 2 Kings) . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 98)
      1. Moshe Weinfeld (*Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomic School*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1972. 297 [see 244-319]): “the book of Deuteronomy was influenced by the ancient sapiential ideology that found expression in the book of Proverbs and the wisdom literature of the ancient Near East.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 104)
      2. “Weinfeld is convinced that there are “wisdom substrata in Deuteronomy and Deuteronomic literature.” (“. . . so runs the title of the section”: Weinfeld, Moshe. *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomic School*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1972. 244 [109 n. 25]) (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 105, 109 n. 25)
   4. proofs
      1. life; retribution
         1. “A theme common to wisdom and Deuteronomy is life. . . . the goal of wisdom and the promise of Deuteronomy are basically the same.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 104)
         2. “Life is the kerygma of the Book of Proverbs, . . . and it is the great promise of wisdom: the good life, longevity, a large family, prestige, joy, and (inheriting the) land.” (Murphy, Roland E. “The Kerygma of the Book of Proverbs.” *Int* 20 (1966): 3-14.) (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 104)
         3. “The same vision permeates Deuteronomy, and perhaps the most vivid presentation is the choice laid out in Deut 30:15-19 . . . [Deut 30:15-19, “See, I have set before you today life and prosperity, death and adversity. 16If you obey the commandments . . ., by loving the Lord your God, . . . you shall live and become numerous, and the Lord your God will bless you in the land that you are entering to possess. 17But if your heart turns away . . . 18you shall perish . . . 19I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Choose life so that you and your descendants may live . . .”] In Deuteronomy this emphasis arises out of the covenant that is at the heart of Deuteronomic preaching, not from the wisdom perspective.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 104)
         4. But “this perspective is not absent from the promises [104] of the prophets (e.g., Amos 5:6, 14), or from the ideals of the ancient Near Eastern cultures.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 104-5) Amos 5:6, “Seek the Lord and live . . . 14Seek good and not evil, that you may live; and so the Lord, the God of hosts, will be with you . . .”
      2. fear of the Lord
         1. “Fear of the Lord/God is another ideal that is common to wisdom and Deuteronomy.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 105)
         2. “One need merely consult a concordance to verify the many times the phrase appears in both areas.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 105)
         3. “. . . there are different nuances . . . covenant devotion is the point of sentences like Deut 10:12 [“So now, O Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you? Only to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul”]. Covenantal love and fear are joined together. This precise nuance does not appear in wisdom until Ben Sira (e.g., Sir 2:15-17; cf. Eccl 12:13). Likewise the collective nuance is missing from the individualistic emphasis of the wisdom teacher. But one should not draw a hard-and-fast line in terminology that develops through a book and a culture. Thus Weinfeld comments, “Fearing God ‘all the days’ means constant awareness of God. No wonder, then, that the author of Deuteronomy exhorts the Israelites not to forget the Lord (6:12; 8:11, 14, 19). The causes of such forgetfulness are the pride and arrogance which come with material wealth and satiety (6:10-11; 8:12-13; 17:16-20; cf. 31:20; 32:13-15). The notion that affluence and satiety bring one to deny and forget God also belongs to wisdom ideology.” [Weinfeld, Moshe. *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomic School*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1972. 280.] The mixture of covenantal and wisdom fear is thus illustrated [I don’t see how—Hahn].” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 105)
      3. similar legal stipulations
         1. “Perhaps the most outstanding is the prohibition to remove the neighbor’s landmark set up by past generations (Deut 19:14; cf. 27:17; Prov 22:28; 23:10; and Amenemope 6 [*ANET*, 422]).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 105)
            1. Deut 19:14, “You must not move your neighbor’s boundary marker, set up by former generations, on the property that will be allotted to you in the land that the Lord your God is giving you to possess.”
            2. Deut 27:17, “Cursed be anyone who moves a neighbor's boundary marker.”
            3. Prov 22:28, “Do not remove the ancient landmark that your ancestors set up.”
            4. Prov 23:10, “Do not remove an ancient landmark or encroach on the fields of orphans . . .”
         2. “Similarly there is an emphasis on honest weights (Deut 25:16; Prov 11:1; 20:10, 23; and Amenemope 16 [*ANET*, 423]).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 105)
            1. Deut 25:15, “You shall have only a full and honest weight; you shall have only a full and honest measure . . .”
            2. Prov 11:1, “A false balance is an abomination to the Lord, but an accurate weight is his delight.”
            3. Prov 20:10, “Diverse weights and diverse measures are both alike an abomination to the Lord.”
            4. Prov 20:23, “Differing weights are an abomination to the Lord, and false scales are not good.”
         3. vows (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 105)
            1. Deut 23:22-24, “But if you refrain from vowing, you will not incur guilt. 23Whatever your lips utter you must diligently perform, just as you have freely vowed to the Lord your God with your own mouth. 24If you go into your neighbor's vineyard, you may eat your fill of grapes, as many as you wish, but you shall not put any in a container.”
            2. Prov 20:25, “It is a snare for one to say rashly, “It is holy,” and begin to reflect only after making a vow.”
            3. Qoh 5:1-5, “Guard your steps when you go to the house of God; to draw near to listen is better than the sacrifice offered by fools; for they do not know how to keep from doing evil. 2Never be rash with your mouth, nor let your heart be quick to utter a word before God, for God is in heaven, and you upon earth; therefore let your words be few. 3For dreams come with many cares, and a fool's voice with many words. 4When you make a vow to God, do not delay fulfilling it; for he has no pleasure in fools. Fulfill what you vow. 5It is better that you should not vow than that you should vow and not fulfill it.”
            4. Sir 18:22-23, “Let nothing hinder you from paying a vow promptly, and do not wait until death to be released from it. 23 Before making a vow, prepare yourself; do not be like one who puts the Lord to the test.”
         4. “. . . impartiality in judgment . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 105)
            1. Deut 1:17, “You must not be partial in judging: hear out the small and the great alike; you shall not be intimidated by anyone, for the judgment is God's. Any case that is too hard for you, bring to me, and I will hear it.”
            2. Deut 16:19, “You must not distort justice; you must not show partiality; and you must not accept bribes, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and subverts the cause of those who are in the right.”
            3. Prov 24:23, “These also are sayings of the wise: Partiality in judging is not good.”
            4. Prov 28:21, “To show partiality is not good—yet for a piece of bread a person may do wrong.”
         5. “. . . the pursuit of justice . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 105)
            1. Deut 16:20, “Justice, and only justice, you shall pursue, so that you may live and occupy the land that the Lord your God is giving you.”
            2. Prov 21:21, “Whoever pursues righteousness and kindness will find life and honor.”
      4. “. . . the didactic mood of Deuteronomy is matched in many places by the intensity of speech in Proverbs . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 105)
         1. Deut 6:7-9, “Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise. 8Bind them as a sign on your hand, fix them as an emblem on your forehead, 9and write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.”
         2. Deut 11:18-20, “You shall put these words of mine in your heart and soul, and you shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and fix them as an emblem on your forehead. 19Teach them to your children, talking about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise. 20Write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates . . .”
         3. Prov 6:20-22, “My child, keep your father’s commandment, and do not forsake your mother’s teaching. 21Bind them upon your heart always; tie them around your neck. 22When you walk, they will lead you; when you lie down, they will watch over you; and when you awake, they will talk with you.”
         4. Prov 7:3, “bind them [commandments] on your fingers, write them on the tablet of your heart.”
         5. Prov 8:34, “Happy is the one who listens to me, watching daily at my gates, waiting beside my doors.”
      5. “Words like listen, heart, teach, and discipline are frequent in both Deuteronomy and the wisdom literature.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 105)
      6. “. . . one can point to Deut 32 as a hymn that betrays wisdom concerns . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 102)
      7. Deuteronomy contains “sapiential humanism . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 98) (E.g., kindness to animals and to aliens?—Hahn)
   5. conclusions
      1. “It is difficult to determine the direction of influence.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 105)
      2. “Perhaps the view of J.-P. Audet is more objective and realistic [than Wienfeld’s assertion of direct influence]. He pushed the question back beyond the monarchy and the class of sages. He advanced the hypothesis that the wisdom tradition is rooted in pre-school and pre-city civilization, in the family . . . [Audet, J.-P. “Origines comparées de la double tradition de la loi et de la sagesse dans la proche-orient ancient.” *Acts of the International Orientalists’ Congress*. Moscow, 1960. 1.352-57. Couturier, Guy. “La vie familiale comme source de la sagesse et de la loi.” *Science et Esprit* 32 (1980): 177-92.] Out of these [family] insights grew a certain family ethos that [105] sustained the social fabric. [Gerstenberger, E. *Wesen und Herkunft des* “*apodiktischen Rechts*.” WMANT 20. Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1965. Richter, W. *Recht und Ethos*. SANT 15. Munich: Kösel, 1966.] This undifferentiated mode of living gradually separated into what we call wisdom instruction and also what came to be called law.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 105-6)
5. **succession narrative** (**2 Sam 9-20, 1 Kgs 1-2**)
   1. R. N. Whybray (*The Succession Narrative*. SBT 9. Naperville: Allenson, 1968. 72): the author of the succession narrative “has consciously created his characters and situations as [97] concrete examples, in narrative form, of the teaching we find in Proverbs.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 97-98)
6. **Esther**
   1. S. Talmon (“Wisdom in the Book of Esther.” *VT* 13 (1963): 419-55): Esther presents a “generalizing wisdom-tale and traditional wisdom-motifs in a specific historical setting.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 98)
   2. S. Talmon (“Wisdom in the Book of Esther.” *VT* 13 (1963): 453): “Thus both the Joseph-story and the Esther-narrative represent the type of the ‘historicized wisdom-tale.’” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 108 n. 9)
7. **wisdom psalms**: for wisdom influence in the Book of Psalms, see “Wisdom Psalms.”
8. **Song of Songs**: for wisdom influence in the Song of Songs, see “The Song of Songs as Wisdom Literature.”
9. **prophets**
   1. “Individual prophets have been studied for evidences of wisdom—for example, Amos and Isaiah.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 98)
      1. *Amos*: Wolff, H. W. *Amos the Prophet*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1973.
      2. *Isaiah*: Whedbee, J. W. *Isaiah and Wisdom*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1971.
      3. *Isaiah*: Whybray, R. N. “Prophecy and Wisdom.” *Israel’s Prophetic Tradition*, ed. R. Coggins et al. (Peter Ackroyd Festschrift.) Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1982. 181-99.
   2. Isaiah
      1. “The Book of Isaiah begins with an indictment of disobedient people and immediately uses a comparison that some would claim is a wisdom parable [Isa 1:3] . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 99)
         1. Isa 1:3, “The ox knows its owner, and the donkey its master’s crib; but Israel does not know, my people do not understand.”
         2. See Jer 8:7, “Even the stork in the heavens knows its times; and the turtledove, swallow, and crane observe the time of their coming; but my people do not know the ordinance of the Lord.”
         3. “As regards Isa 1:3, it is simply not meaningful to speak of wisdom influence. One does not have to be a sage or be directly indebted to the wisdom tradition before one can use a simple comparison, such as that of the people and dumb animals.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 99)
      2. Isaiah contains “the parable of the farmer.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 99)
         1. Isa 28:23-29, “Listen, and hear my voice; pay attention, and hear my speech. 24Do those who plow for sowing plow continually? Do they continually open and harrow their ground? 25When they have leveled its surface, do they not scatter dill, sow cummin, and plant wheat in rows and barley in its proper place, and spelt as the border? 26For they are well instructed; their God teaches them. 27Dill is not threshed with a threshing sledge, nor is a cart wheel rolled over cummin; but dill is beaten out with a stick, and cummin with a rod. 28Grain is crushed for bread, but one does not thresh it forever; one drives the cart wheel and horses over it, but does not pulverize it. 29This also comes from the Lord of hosts; he is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in wisdom.”
         2. “This passage is couched in typical wisdom language (listen, learn, teach, counsel, wisdom [*tušiyyâ*]). The observation is based on the farmer’s experience, and it claims that his agricultural skills come from God. It makes no difference how this parable of the farmer is used by Isaiah (probably an *a* [99] *fortiori* argument in defense of the Lord’s wise action in history); the prophet is pointing up a lesson from nature.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 99-100)
         3. “. . . the extended parable of the farmer (Isa 28:23-29) can probably be claimed as an example of wisdom. The prophet analyzes the way farmers operate and establishes an analogy between that and the Lord’s activity in history. This is not a casual comparison, but an elaborate literary analogy . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 100)
         4. J. W. Whedbee (*Isaiah and Wisdom*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1971. 63): “Isaiah, arguing like a wise man, saw a fundamental affinity between agricultural activities and historical events: both bore the stamp of Yahweh’s wisdom and counsel.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 100)
10. **other**
    1. “More [purported locations of wisdom influence outside the wisdom literature] could be added to this list of claims . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 98)

## THE VOCABULARY OF THE WISDOM LITERATURE

1. **definitions**
   1. **of “wise” and “wisdom”**
      1. Generally speaking, “wisdom” means “prudent . . . re­flection on the lessons of experience . . .” (Vawter, Bruce C.M. *On Genesis: A New Reading*. Garden City: Doub­leday, 1977. 73.) But “*ḥokmāh* (“wis­dom”) and *ḥākām* (“wise”) are used in different con­texts in the Old Testa­ment.” (Scott 6) Wisdom “could not and did not mean the same thing in”: (Scott 5)
         1. “the wise wo­man’s bargain with Joab . . .” (Scott 5) 2 Sam 20:15-22, “Joab’s forces came and besieged him in Abel of Beth-maacah; they threw up a siege-ramp against the city, and it stood against the rampart. Joab’s forces were battering the wall to break it down. 16Then a ***wise*** woman called from the city, “Listen! Listen! Tell Joab, ‘Come here, I want to speak to you.’” 17He came near her . . . 18Then she said, “They used to say in the old days, ‘Let them inquire at Abel’; and so they would settle a matter. 19I am one of those who are peaceable and faithful in Israel; you seek to destroy a city that is a mother in Israel; why will you swallow up the heritage of the Lord?” 20Joab answered, “Far be it from me, far be it, that I should swallow up or destroy! 21That is not the case! But a man of the hill country of Ephraim, called Sheba son of Bichri, has lifted up his hand against King David; give him up alone, and I will withdraw from the city.” The woman said to Joab, “His head shall be thrown over the wall to you.” 22Then the woman went to all the people with her ***wise*** plan. And they cut off the head of Sheba son of Bichri, and threw it out to Joab. So he blew the trumpet, and they dispersed from the city, and all went to their homes, while Joab returned to Jerusalem to the king.”
         2. “Ahith­o­phel’s coun­sel to Absalom . . .” (Scott 5) 2 Sam 16:20-23, “Then Absalom said to Ahithophel, “Give us your counsel; what shall we do?” 21Ahithophel said to Absalom, “Go in to your father’s concubines, the ones he has left to look after the house; and all Israel will hear that you have made yourself odious to your father, and the hands of all who are with you will be strengthened.” 22So they pitched a tent for Absalom upon the roof; and Absalom went in to his father’s concubines in the sight of all Israel. 23Now in those days the counsel that Ahithophel gave was as if one consulted the oracle of God; so all the counsel of Ahithophel was esteemed, both by David and by Absalom.”
         3. “Solo­mon’s en­cyclopedic knowl­edge [1 Kgs 4:29-34 (see Heb 5:9-14)] and his clever solution of a court case [1 Kgs 3:16-28] . . .” (Scott 5)
            1. 1 Kgs 4:29-34 God gave Solomon very great wisdom, discernment, and breadth of understanding as vast as the sand on the seashore, 30so that Solomon's wisdom surpassed the wisdom of all the people of the east, and all the wisdom of Egypt. 31He was wiser than anyone else, wiser than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, Calcol, and Darda, children of Mahol; his fame spread throughout all the surrounding nations. 32He composed three thousand proverbs, and his songs numbered a thousand and five. 33He would speak of trees, from the cedar that is in the Lebanon to the hyssop that grows in the wall; he would speak of animals, and birds, and reptiles, and fish. 34People came from all the nations to hear the wisdom of Solomon; they came from all the kings of the earth who had heard of his wisdom.”
            2. Heb 5:9-14, “and having been made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him, 10having been designated by God a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek. 11About this we have much to say that is hard to explain, since you have become dull in understanding. 12For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic elements of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food; 13for everyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is unskilled in the word of righteousness. 14But solid food is for the mature, for those whose faculties have been trained by practice to distinguish good from evil.”
            3. 1 Kgs 3:16-28, “Later, two women who were prostitutes came to the king and stood before him. 17The one woman said, “Please, my lord, this woman and I live in the same house; and I gave birth while she was in the house. 18Then on the third day after I gave birth, this woman also gave birth. We were together; there was no one else with us in the house, only the two of us were in the house. 19Then this woman’s son died in the night, because she lay on him. 20She got up in the middle of the night and took my son from beside me while your servant slept. She laid him at her breast, and laid her dead son at my breast. 21When I rose in the morning to nurse my son, I saw that he was dead; but when I looked at him closely in the morning, clearly it was not the son I had borne.” 22But the other woman said, “No, the living son is mine, and the dead son is yours.” . . . 25The king said, “Divide the living boy in two; then give half to the one, and half to the other.” 26But the woman whose son was alive said to the king—because compassion for her son burned within her—“Please, my lord, give her the living boy; certainly do not kill him!” The other said, “It shall be neither mine nor yours; divide it.” 27Then the king responded: “Give the first woman the living boy; do not kill him. She is his mother.” 28All Israel heard of the judgment that the king had rendered; and they stood in awe of the king, because they perceived that the wisdom of God was in him, to execute justice.”
         4. “the spirit-endowed qualities of the messianic king . . .” (Scott 5) Isa 11:2-3, “The spirit of the Lord shall rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. 3His delight shall be in the fear of the Lord. He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide by what his ears hear . . .”
         5. “the teacher’s goal for his charges . . .” (Scott 5) Prov 2:1-11, “My child, if you accept my words and treasure up my commandments within you, 2making your ear attentive to wisdom and inclining your heart to understanding; 3if you indeed cry out for insight, and raise your voice for understanding; 4if you seek it like silver, and search for it as for hidden treasures—5then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God. 6For the Lord gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding; 7he stores up sound wisdom for the upright; he is a shield to those who walk blamelessly, 8guarding the paths of justice and preserving the way of his faithful ones. 9Then you will understand righteousness and justice and equity, every good path; 10for wisdom will come into your heart, and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul; 11prudence will watch over you; and understanding will guard you.”
         6. “the divine principle which eluded man’s search . . .” (Scott 5) Job 28, “Surely there is a mine for silver . . . 11hidden things they [miners] bring to light. 12But where shall wisdom be found? And where is the place of understanding? 13Mortals do not know the way to it, and it is not found in the land of the living. . . . 18the price of wisdom is above pearls 19. . . nor can it be valued in pure gold. 20Where then does wisdom come from? And where is the place of understanding? 21It is hidden from the eyes of all living, and concealed from the birds of the air. 22Abaddon and Death say, ‘We have heard a rumor of it with our ears.’ 23God understands the way to it, and he knows its place. 24For he looks to the ends of the earth, and sees everything under the heavens. 25When he gave to the wind its weight, and apportioned out the waters by measure; 26when he made a decree for the rain, and a way for the thunderbolt; 27then he saw it and declared it; he established it, and searched it out. 28And he said to humankind, ‘Truly, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding.’”
         7. “the in­strument of God in creation . . .” (Scott 5) Prov 8:22-31, “The Lord created me [Wisdom] at the beginning of his work, the first of his acts of long ago. . . . 27When he established the heavens, I was there . . . 29when he marked out the foundations of the earth, 30then I was beside him, like a master worker; and I was daily his delight, rejoicing before him always, 31rejoicing in his inhabited world and delighting in the human race.”
         8. “the learning of the scribes . . .” (Scott 5) Ezra 7:11, “This is a copy of the letter that King Artaxerxes gave to the priest Ezra, the scribe, a scholar of the text of the commandments of the Lord and his statutes for Israel . . .”
         9. “the surpass­ing bril­liance of Joseph and Daniel at foreign courts . . .” (Scott 5)
            1. Gen 41:39, “Pharaoh said to Joseph, “Since God has shown you all this, there is no one so discerning and wise as you.””
            2. Dan 1:17-20, “To these four young men God gave knowledge and skill in every aspect of literature and wisdom; Daniel also had insight into all visions and dreams. 18At the end of the time that the king had set for them to be brought in, the palace master brought them into the presence of Nebuchadnezzar, 19and the king spoke with them. And among them all, no one was found to compare with Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah; therefore they were stationed in the king’s court. 20In every matter of wisdom and understanding concerning which the king inquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters in his whole kingdom.”
         10. “the effect of man’s eating the forbid­den fruit.” (Scott 5) Gen 3:1-7, “Now the serpent was more crafty than any other wild animal that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God say, ‘You shall not eat from any tree in the garden’?” 2The woman said to the serpent, “We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden; 3but God said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the middle of the garden, nor shall you touch it, or you shall die.’” 4But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not die; 5for God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” 6So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate. 7Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made loincloths for themselves.”

“A striking illustration of this [varying meaning of the term] is to be seen in the four different ways in which the famous wisdom of Solomon is pre­sented in the narra­tives of that king’s reign in 1 Kings 1-11.” (Scott 6) See the handout “Solomon” below.

* + 1. “The primary meaning of *ḥokmāh* is “superior mental ability or special skill,” with no necessary moral reference.” (Scott 6)
       1. superior mental ability
          1. “In Job 38:36 and 39:17 *ḥokmāh* means simply “in­telli­gence,” as affirmed or denied to natural objects.” (Scott 7)
          2. “In the [6] older sources the disgraceful strata­gem sug­gested to Amnon by Jonadab [2 Sam 13:3] is explained by attribut­ing wisdom to the latter.” (Scott 6-7)
          3. “The ruse proposed by Joab to the wise woman of Tekoa [2 Sam 14:1-24] and the scheme carried out at the sugges­tion of the wise woman of Abel [2 Sam 20:16-22] are clever solu­tions ap­plied to difficult situations.”Cf. Qoh 9:13-16. (Scott 7)
          4. “The older sense persists in Job 5:13 with its reference to the craftiness of the wise.” (Scott 6 n. 10)
       2. special skill
          1. *Ḥokmāh* may simply have a “general sense of knowing what to do and how to do it.” (Scott 7)

“. . . in Jeremiah 9:23 (Heb. 9:22) the wise or edu­cated man is associat­ed with the wealthy and power­ful simply as mem­bers of an elite class.” See also “Isa. 5:21 in the con­text of vv. 18-23; Jer. 51:57; Isa. 19:11.” (Scott 8 n. 17)

“. . . the female attendants on Sisera’s queen moth­er are called [7] “the wisest of her prin­cesses” [Judg 5:29].” (Scott 7-8)

* + - * 1. “The term is applied also to other particular skills . . .” (Scott 7)

In Ps 107:27 the “wisdom” of the storm-tossed sail­ors is “swal­lowed up” (i.e., overwhelmed). “Wisdom” here “designates the spe­cial skill of sea­man­ship . . .” [7] See 1 Kings 9:27, 22:48-49; Ezek 27:8. (Scott 7, 7 n. 13)

Bezalel and Oholiab were “skillful” (*beḥokmāh*) with gems and textiles, respectively (Exod 35:31-33); see also Isa 28:24-29; Ezek 28:4-5; 1 Kings 5:6 (Heb. 5:­20); Jer 9:17 (Heb 9:16); 2 Sam 16:23; Prov 21:2; Isa 47:9-13; Jer 8:8; Mal 2:4-7; Deut 16:­18; 2 Sam 14:20; Isa 10:13; 11:2. [7, 7 n. 15] “The skills enu­mer­ated above de­manded special knowledge ac­quired through training and experi­ence, in addition to su­perior intel­li­gence. Wisdom and knowledge (*da*`*ath*) are so frequent­ly associated as to be almost synony­mous.” (Scott 7, 7 n. 15, 8)

* + 1. wisdom as a moral and religious quality
       1. “Broadly speak­ing, the moral and reli­gious element is a later enlarge­ment of the meaning of the term.” [6] “The idea of wisdom as a fundamentally ethical and reli­gious quality comes to the fore most prominently in Prov­erbs, Job, the wisdom Psalms, and to a lesser degree in Qo­heleth, whose author displays an intellectual­ist cast of mind. . . . The keynote is struck [by the author of Prov 1-10] at the out­set with a firm declara­tion of principle: “Reverence for the Lord is the begin­ning of knowledge; fools despise wis­dom and in­struction.” Here knowledge and wisdom are synon­y­mous. They are rooted in reli­gion . . .” (Scott 9)
       2. “This established view of the nature of religious wisdom is directly chal­lenged by Job . . .” (Scott 10)
  1. **of “fool”**
     1. “The *pethi* is the naïve, untutored youth . . .” (Scott 48)
     2. “The ´*ewil* or *sakal* is obstinate . . .” (Scott 48)
     3. “The *kesil* is stupid.” (Scott 48)
     4. “The *leṣ* is the foolish talker, opinionated and insolent.” (Scott 48)
     5. “The *ba*`*ar* is crude . . .” (Scott 48)
     6. “. . . the *nabal* [is] brutal and depraved . . .” (Scott 48)
     7. “. . . the *holel* [is] irrational to the point of mad­ness.” (Scott 48)
  2. **of** “**righteous**” **and** “**wicked**”: “Originally *righteous* meant “innocent” or “in the right,” as judged in a court of law, and *wicked* meant “in the wrong,” “guilty.” See Deut. 25:1. For the more generalized sense [i.e., the “identification of wise men with the righteous and of fools with the wicked,” 67], see Gen. 18:23-25; Ps. 1:5-6.” (Scott 67 n. 52)
     1. Deut 25:1, “Suppose two persons have a dispute and enter into litigation, and the judges decide between them, declaring one to be in the right and the other to be in the wrong.”
     2. Gen 18:23-25, “Then Abraham came near and said, “Will you indeed sweep away the righteous with the wicked? 24Suppose there are fifty righteous within the city; will you then sweep away the place and not forgive it for the fifty righteous who are in it? 25Far be it from you to do such a thing, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous fare as the wicked! Far be that from you! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what is just?”
     3. Ps 1:5-6, “Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous; 6for the Lord watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.”

1. **frequent wisdom terminology**
   1. Wisdom “was a way of think­ing and speaking, with a dis­tinc­tive voca­bulary . . .” (Scott 22)
   2. “The words of this [characteristic vocabulary] are rare­ly peculiar to it, but their propor­tionate frequency is noticeable. The follow­ing list will be useful in as­sessing wisdom influence in other parts of the Old Tes­tament such as the prophetic writings and the Psalms.” (Scott 121)

(??these all need to be verified in Scott:) ability, success (*tushiyyah*)

admonish, discipline (*yasar*, *yisser*)

advice, counsel (`*eṣah*)

be wise (*ḥakam*)

be silent (*heḥerish*)

blameless, righteous (*tam*, *tam­im*)

breath, emptiness (*hebel*)

brutish, stupid (*ba*`*ar*)

clever, prudent (`*arum*)

cleverness (`*ormah*)

consider, complain (v.) (*siaḥ*)

contempt (*qalon*)

contend, dispute (v.) (*rib*)

council; counsel (*sod*)

decide, reprove (*hokiaḥ*)

desire (n.) (*ta*´a*wah*)

discerning (*nabon*)

dispute, accusation (n.) (*rib*)

estimate, measure (*takan*, *tik­ken*)

evil, wickedness (´*awen*)

fear (of Yahweh) (*yir*´*ah*)

folly (*nebalah*)

fool (*sakal*)

give counsel (*ya*`*aṣ*)

godless (*ḥaneph*)

grasp (v.) (*tamak*)

happy is, fortu­nate is (´*ashre*)

hasten (*ḥush*)

heart, mind (*leb*, *lebab*)

inform (*ḥiwwah*)

insight (*tebunah*)

insolent, stupid (*kesil*)

insolent, scoffing (*leṣ*)

integrity (*tom*)

investigate (*ḥaqar*)

investigation (*ḥeqer*)

know (*yada*`)

knowledge (*da*`*ath*, *de*`*ah*)

lazy (`*aṣel*)

learning (n.) (*leqa*`)

lie (n.) (*kazab*)

make crooked (`*iwweth*)

meditaiton, complaint (*siaḥ*, *siḥah*)

mock (*la*`*ag*)

neglect, deceit (*remiyyah*)

obstinate fool (´*ewil*)

path (*nethibah*)

path (´*oraḥ*)

pay attention (*hiqshib*)

pleasure; thing, affair (*ḥepheṣ*)

profit, benefit (v.) (*ho`il*)

proverb, wise saying (*mashal*)

rebuke, blame (n.) (*tokaḥath*)

righteous (*ṣaddiq*)

scheme, scheming (*mezimmah*)

simple, uninstructed (*pethi*)

sinner (*ḥaṭa*´)

straightforward (*nakoaḥ*)

strife (*madon*)

teach, direct (*horah*)

teach (*limmad*)

think, devise (*ḥashab*)

toil, trouble (`*amal*)

training, discipline (*musar*)

trouble, vexation (*ka*`*as*)

truly (´*omnam*)

understand (*bin*)

understanding (n.) (*binah*)

upright, straight (*yashar*)

uprightness (*yosher*)

vulgar fool (*nabal*)

way (*derek*)

wicked (*rasha*`)

wickedness (´*awelah*)

wisdom (*ḥokmāh*)

wise (*ḥakām*)

wish, favor (n.) (*rason*) (Scott 121-22)

## DEVELOPMENT OF THE WISDOM LITERATURE

Anderson, G.W. *Criti­cal Introduction to the Old Testament*. London: Duckworth, 1959.

Rankin, O.S. *Israel*’*s Wisdom Literature: Its Bearing on Theology and the History of Religion*. 1936. Rpt. New York: Schocken, 1969.

1. **parents**
   1. “. . . certain wisdom lore was communicated in the family . . . The teaching of parents, even if they are not described as official “sages,” is clearly part of the wisdom program.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 3)
      1. “. . . it stands to reason that parents would have played a role in the training of their children.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 3)
      2. There are references to “father” and “mother.”
         1. Prov 10:1; 15:20; 20:20; 23:22, 25; 30:11, 17
      3. “My son” is a frequent address. (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 3)
         1. Prov 1:8, 10, 15; 2:1; 3:1, 11, 21; 4:10, 20; 5:1, 20; 6:1, 3, 20; 7:1; 19:27; 23:19, 26; 24:13, 21; 27:11
         2. “It is true that “son” can be understood in the metaphorical sense to indicate a teacher-pupil relationship [and] this may explain the frequent appearance in Prov 1-9 . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 3)
      4. Prov 4:3-5
         1. Prov 4:3-5, “When I was a son with my father, . . . 4he taught me, and said to me, “. . . 5Get wisdom; get insight: do not forget, nor turn away from the words of my mouth.””
         2. “. . . the appeal [is] to hear a father’s *mûsar* (discipline) and *tôrâ* (teaching) in Prov 4:5.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 3)
   2. “The home may be regarded as perhaps the original site of wisdom teaching, before and after such teaching became professionalized among the sages.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 4)
   3. J.-P. Audet “advanced the hypothesis that the wisdom tradition is rooted in pre-school and pre-city civilization, in the family (as later examples of Tobit 4:1-19 and [Ahiqar] illustrate). [Audet, J.-P. “Origines comparées de la double tradition de la loi et de la sagesse dans la proche-orient ancient.” *Acts of the International Orientalists’ Congress*. Moscow, 1960. 1.352-57. Couturier, Guy. “La vie familiale comme source de la sagesse et de la loi.” *Science et Esprit* 32 (1980): 177-92.] One must postulate family training or *paideia* as the basis for people to live together. Out of these insights grew a certain family ethos that [105] sustained the social fabric. [Gerstenberger, E. *Wesen und Herkunft des “apodiktischen Rechts.”* WMANT 20. Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1965. Richter, W. *Recht und Ethos*. SANT 15. Munich: Kösel, 1966.] This undifferentiated mode of living gradually separated into what we call wisdom instruction and also what came to be called law. But for all their differentiation, they had a common root. Primitive structures of society slowly became more sophisticated in teaching and in law.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 105-6)
2. “**the oral or preliterary stage of the wisdom writings**” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 4)
   1. Westermann, Claus. “Weisheit im Sprichwort.” *Schalom: Studien zu Glaube und Geschichte Israels*. (A. Jepsen Festschrift.) Ed. K.-H. Bernardt. Stuttgart: Calwer, 1971. 73-85. (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 13 n. 4)
   2. Golka, F. W. “Die Königs- und Hofsprüche und der Ursprung der israelitischen Weisheit.” *VT* 36 (1986) 13-36. (Murphy, *Tree of* Life 13 n. 4)
   3. It is “impossible . . . to recover any evidence of this stage in ancient Israel . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 4)
   4. “. . . analogies with modern “primitive” societies make this oral stage plausible. Before the rise of complicated social stratification, the wisdom of a family or tribe [“education and training in the home by parents, or within the tribe by the elders,” 5] would have been formed, based upon the house, the farm, and the town. The values of the group would receive expression governing work, speech, and the basics of daily life. Here the contrasts between poor and rich, lazy and diligent, appearance and reality would have been noted . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 4, 5)
   5. “It is reasonable to think that what later became “wisdom” and “law” was at first an undifferentiated mass of commands, prohibitions, and observations concerning life. At this level there is a preurban and preschool stage of instruction where the family and tribe are at the center of society. Only later did instruction become differentiated into the scholastic and legal areas.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 4)
      1. “. . . the Decalogue itself is a reflection of the ethos of early Israel.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 4)
      2. Audet, J.-P. “Origines comparées de la double tradition de la loi et de la sagesse dans la proche-orient ancient.” *Acts of the International Orientalists’ Congress*. Moscow: 1960. 1.352-57. (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 13 n. 5)
      3. Couturier, Guy. “La vie familiale comme source de la sagesse et de la loi.” *Science et Esprit* 32 (1980): 177-92. (Murphy, *Tree of* Life 13 n. 5)
   6. “. . . the origins of wisdom thought are to be sought in the family and tribe rather than in any kind of school associated with court and temple. This does not deny the likely role of trained scribes (such as the “men of Hezekiah,” Prov 25:1) in the transmission and the formation of the wisdom sayings. But the sayings are not the creation of a study desk; they grew out of human situations and needs. Skill in literary expression is not to be found only with the formally educated. Centuries before Israel existed, Ptah-hotep the Egyptian sage wrote, “Good speech is more hidden than the emerald, but it may be found with maidservants at the grindstones” (*ANET*, 412). One may well admit that further refinement in speech was cultivated in various circles of Israelite society . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 4)
   7. “. . . no argument [concerning the origin of sayings] can be based on the content of the sayings, as though aphorisms about the king and courtiers would necessarily have arisen in a court school. As one saying puts it, “A cat may look at a king.” [Qtd. in: Fontaine, Carole R. *Traditional Sayings in the Old Testament*. BLS 5. Sheffield: Almond, 1982. 270.] One may not simply transfer the known setting of the Egyptian wisdom literature—that is, scribal schools of the court—to Israel.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 4)
3. **wisdom at the Egyptian court**
   1. “The wisdom tradition . . . was much more than the flowering of proverbial sayings among the common people. [4] . . . It sought, in the first place, to pro­vide guid­ance for living by pro­pounding rules of moral order and, in the second place, to ex­plore the mean­ing of life through reflection, speculation, and debate.” [22] (Scott, *Way of Wisdom* 4, 22)
   2. “This description is based on the comments of Fox . . .” (Fox, Michael V. “Two Decades of Research in Egyptian Wisdom Literature.” *ZAS* 107 (1980): 127-28 [article is 120-35].) (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 177 n. 22)
   3. The Egyptian sages “are scribes, described as “men of knowledge,” whose words are sayings or, more literally, “knots” (tight, pithy thoughts?). Because they are students of *ma`at*, they know the order of the world (and hence prophecies . . . could come within their expertise [see those of Neferti below]).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 163)
   4. “For the Bible we speak of “the wise,” who authored and transmitted the wisdom literature. But there is no strictly comparable class in Egypt, as Michael V. Fox has pointed out: “There is no special term to designate the authors or speakers of wisdom texts. They were educated men—called scribes—whose education and literary activity included various areas of study, among them gnomic wisdom. Wisdom literature is the product of the scribal class, i.e., the educated class, but so are most other forms of Egyptian literature. There is no point in calling the scribal class the “wisdom school.” We could just as well label the scribal class the “magical school” because some of its members produced magical texts. This is not to deny the distinctive style and content of wisdom literature, but to stress that this distinctive character was determined by the function of the genre, just as the distinctive character of epistolic literature and even magic was determined by their function, not by the group from which they derived.” (Fox, Michael V. “Two Decades of Research in Egyptian Wisdom Literature,” *ZAS* 107 (1980): 128 [article is 120-35].) (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 163)
4. **wisdom at the Israelite court**
   1. “In Israel, . . . the “wise” . . . appear to have evolved from the office of writers or scribes who, since the beginning of the kingdom, were charged with correspondence, the archives and, we may assume, the training of pupils in the scribes’ vocation.” (Rankin 6)
   2. “. . . the teacher of Wisdom . . ., if Gressmann and Humbert judge aright, is older than even the first of the writing prophets.” (Rankin ix)
   3. R. N. Whybray has “argued that the Israelite sages did not constitute a particular professional class. They were simply a relatively small group of men of superior intelligence. It must be admitted that [unlike the Egyptian sages] it is difficult to draw their sociological profile.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 163)
   4. “Unlike the biblical wisdom writers, they deal specifically with history (the writings of Merikare, Amenemhet). . . . Although it is possible that Israelite sages may have been involved in the writing of various parts of the Old Testament, there is little evidence to show that they were . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 163)
   5. “. . . Solomon asked for “wisdom” that he might be a successful ruler of God’s people (1 Kgs 3:6-14).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 4)
   6. “counselors”
      1. “Associated with royal wisdom are the counselors (*yô*`*ēṣîm*) who are to provide `*ēṣâ* or “advice” to the ruler.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 4)
      2. de Boer, P. “The Counsellor.” *Wisdom in Israel and in the Ancient Near East*. (H. H. Rowley Festschrift.) Ed. M. Noth and D. Thomas. VTSup 3. Leiden: Brill, 1955. 42-71.
      3. “Thus Ahitophel, David’s counselor, gave advice to Absalom, and it was regarded practically as a divine oracle (2 Sam 16:20-23), although Absalom rejected his advice.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 4)
      4. “. . . Rehoboam takes counsel with advisers (1 Kgs 12:6).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 4)
   7. 700s-600s bc: priest, prophet, and sage
      1. “. . . the “wise” . . ., in the eighth and seventh centuries b.c., represent, like the prophet and priest . . ., a definite class . . .” (Rankin 6)
      2. Prov 25:1, “These are other proverbs of Solomon that the officials of King Hezekiah of Judah copied.” “This points to the activity of the court in the wisdom enterprise and gives some support to the idea that the collection is designed for the training of courtiers.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 22)
      3. Jer 8:8-9
         1. Jer 8:8-9, Yahweh says to the Judahites, “How can you say, “We are wise, and the law of the Lord is with us,” when, in fact, the false pen of the scribes has made it into a lie? 9The wise shall be put to shame, they shall be dismayed and taken; since they have rejected the word of the Lord, what wisdom is in them?”
         2. In Jer 8:8 “the “wise” seem to be identified as scribes (*sōpĕrîm*).” (Anderson *Criti­cal* 182 agrees.) (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 5)
      4. Jer 18:18
         1. Jer 18:18, “they [the Judahites] said, “Come, let us make plots against Jeremiah—for instruction shall not perish from the priest, nor counsel from the wise, nor the word from the prophet.””
         2. “The priest’s *torah* [instruc­tion] must not cease, nor the wise man’s counsel, nor the prophet’s message.” (Scott, *Way of Wisdom* 4)
         3. Compare Ezek 7:26, “Disaster comes upon disaster, rumor follows rumor; they shall keep seeking a vision from the prophet; instruction shall perish from the priest, and counsel from the elders.”
         4. “. . . counsel is associated with the wise (*ḥākām*) . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 4)
         5. The “wise” are mentioned as a class coordinate with the classes of priest and prophet. (Anderson *Criti­cal* 182)
         6. “The priest not only conducted the cult of sacrifice and festi­val; part of his duty was to proclaim the fundamental beliefs and to instruct in the conse­quent obliga­tions of the people of God.” (Scott, *Way of Wisdom* 4)
            1. Deut 26:1-9, “When you have come into the land that the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance to possess, and you possess it, and settle in it, 2you shall take some of the first of all the fruit of the ground . . . 3You shall go to the priest who is in office at that time, and say to him, “Today I declare to the Lord your God that I have come into the land that the Lord swore to our ancestors to give us.” 4When the priest takes the basket from your hand and sets it down before the altar of the Lord your God, 5you shall make this response before the Lord your God: “A wandering Aramean was my ancestor; he went down into Egypt and lived there as an alien, few in number, and there he became a great nation, mighty and populous. 6When the Egyptians treated us harshly and afflicted us, by imposing hard labor on us, 7we cried to the Lord, the God of our ancestors; the Lord heard our voice and saw our affliction, our toil, and our oppression. 8The Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with a terrifying display of power, and with signs and wonders; 9and he brought us into this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey.””
            2. Deut 33:8-10, Moses, just before dying, says to God, “Give to Levi your Thummim, and your Urim to your loyal one . . . 9. . . For they observed your word, and kept your covenant. 10They teach Jacob your ordinances, and Israel your law; they place incense before you, and whole burnt offerings on your altar.”
            3. 2 Chr 15:3, “For a long time Israel was without the true God, and without a teaching priest, and without law . . .”
            4. Mal 2:4-7, “Know, then, that I have sent this command to you, that my covenant with Levi may hold, says the Lord of hosts. 5My covenant with him was a covenant of life and well-being, which I gave him; this called for reverence, and he revered me and stood in awe of my name. 6True instruction was in his mouth, and no wrong was found on his lips. He walked with me in integrity and uprightness, and he turned many from iniquity. 7For the lips of a priest should guard knowledge, and people should seek instruction from his mouth, for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts.”
         7. priest and prophet contrasted: “The priest ministered in terms of the eternal and changeless to that in man’s life which was constant or recurrent. The “wise man” distilled in his teaching the essence of common and long experience. The message of the prophet was differently related to [time]. . . . some present moments stand out from all others. . . . It can be a *great* moment, charged with eternal issues determining destiny. . . . The prophet, not the priest or the teacher, is the voice of God in that moment.” (Scott, *Relevance* 13)
         8. “The spokesmen of wisdom . . . do not address the collective Is­rael, as the [4] prophets do, nor ap­peal to the authority of revelation. Their concern is with men as individuals . . . and [with the] world . . . The authority with which they speak is that of counsel and instruction, and, at a later stage, persuasion and debate.” (Scott, *Way of Wisdom* 4-5)
         9. “. . . such passages as Proverbs 16:6 and 21:3 have almost the ap­pearance of a polemic against formal cultic requirements . . .” (Scott, *Way of Wisdom* 20)
            1. Prov 16:6, “By loyalty and faithfulness iniquity is atoned for, and by the fear of the Lord one avoids evil.”
            2. Prov 21:3, “To do righteousness and justice is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice.”
         10. The pro­phets, too, were critical of the wise. (Anderson *Criti­cal* 182)
             1. Isa 5:21, “Ah, you who are wise in your own eyes, and shrewd in your own sight!”
             2. Isa 29:14, Yahweh says to Isaiah, “I will again do amazing things with this people, shocking and amazing. The wisdom of their wise shall perish, and the discernment of the discerning shall be hidden.”
      5. “lack of concern for the “history of salvation”” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 1)
         1. The theme which dominates the historical and prophetic books is “the covenant people theme,” but the theme of the wisdom literature is quite different. [2] “. . . the older wisdom tradition was quite remote in its interests and methods from the religiously dominant priestly and pro­phetic tradi­tions.” [20] (Scott, *Way of Wisdom* 2, 20)
         2. “. . . the wisdom literature is exciting, because it deals directly with *life*. The sages of Israel did not share the same interest in the saving interventions of the Lord as did the Deuteronomistic historians. Their concern was the present, and how to cope with the challenges provoked by one’s immediate experience.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* ix)
         3. “The most striking characteristic of this literature is the absence of what one normally considers as typically Israelite and Jewish. There is no mention of the promises to the patriarchs, the Exodus and Moses, the covenant and Sinai, the promise to David (2 Sam 7), and so forth. The exceptions to this statement, Sir 44-50 and Wis 11-19, are very late . . . Wisdom does not re-present the actions of God in Israel’s history; it deals with daily human experience in the good world created by God. There are hidden connections between Yahwism and wisdom. The Lord of Israel is also the God who gives wisdom to humans (Prov 2:6). We will return to this issue in chap. 8.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 1)
         4. “. . . the sages do not investigate the saving events in Israel’s tradition as part of their repertoire (Sirach and Wisdom of Solomon are notable exceptions, and at the end of the wisdom development). They draw upon daily experience as this was framed in the traditions handed down in the family and by teachers.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 113)
         5. salvation history in Sirach: see “Sirach.”
         6. salvation history in Wisdom: see “Book of Wisdom.”
5. **schools**?
   1. “For a summary point of view, with complete bibliography (especially the debate between A. Lemaire and F. W. Golka), see”: Crenshaw, J. L. “Education in Ancient Israel.” *JBL* 104 (1985): 601-15. (Murphy, *Tree of* Life 13 n. 8)
   2. “There is no firsthand evidence of the existence of schools in ancient Israel.” [5] “. . . the nature of the evidence for the existence of schools in Israel . . . remains inferential only.” [13 n. 8] (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 5, 13 n. 8)
   3. “Whether or not [the sage was] engaged as an educator of a sort (training future courtiers, scribes, etc.) is not clear but is plausible.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 5)
   4. arguments for schools (“it is logical to infer that there must have been similar institutions in Israel.” Murphy, *Tree of Life* 5)
      1. Hermisson, H.-J. *Studien zur israelitischen Spruchweisheit*. WMANT 28. Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1968. 113-36.
      2. Lang, B. *Die weisheitliche Lehrrede*. SBS 54. Stuttgart: KBW, 1972. 36ff.
      3. There is “the analogy of the various schools that are known to have existed in Egypt and Mesopotamia . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 5)
      4. “With Israel’s ascendancy during the Davidic and Solomonic periods, some kind of training would have been necessary to support the bureaucratic government system (see the list of officials in 2 Sam 8:15-18; 20:23-26; 1 Kgs 4:1-6).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 5)
      5. “The role of the “men of Hezekiah” in Prov 25:1 suggests the existence of a court school.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 5)
      6. “The clear influence of [*Amenemope*] in Prov 22:17-24:22 and elsewhere is construed as another link in the Egyptian connection that would have involved scribal training.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 5)
   5. arguments against schools
      1. The arguments for schools, though “advanced by many scholars, remain hypothetical.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 5)
      2. “. . . there is only modest royal coloring in the Book of Proverbs. This clearly does not reflect the relatively narrow class ethic of its Egyptian counterparts.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 5)
         1. “The picture is certainly more complex than a court school . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 5)
         2. “. . . if [a court] school did exist, how did it compare with the education and training in the home by parents, or within the tribe by the elders?” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 5)
      3. “After the exile, was there a temple school to replace the court school, if such existed? . . . There is reason to think that the Pentateuch in its final form issued from the postexilic community; was there a school for this?” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 5)
   6. “scribes”
      1. “If we shift the question from “schools” to training, perhaps we are on more secure ground.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 5)
      2. “The ambiguous term “scribe” (*sōpēr*) could have served to designate the writer of various genres: legal, liturgical, political, literary (in the sense of Qoheleth and Ben Sira), and the official transcription of the documents that became the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 5)
      3. “Obviously training for chancellery work is different from training for liturgical service, such as the Levites received.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 5)
      4. “At least we can describe these literary activities, although we do not know the precise institutions that nourished them.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 5)
6. “**sages**”
   1. Gammie, J.G., and L. Perdue, eds. *The Sage in Israel and the Ancient Near East*. Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1990. (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 13 n. 3)
   2. R.N. Whybray has argued that “there was no class of sages in Israel to whom the traditional wisdom literature is to be attributed.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 102)
      1. Wisdom influence in the historical and prophetic books, he says, suggests “that there was no class of sages as a distinct professional group, but rather merely “men of superior intelligence,” “an educated class, albeit a small one, of well-to-do citizens who were accustomed to read for edification and for pleasure, and that among them there arose from time to time men of literary ability and occasionally of genius who provided the literature which satisfied their demand” . . .” (Whybray, R. N. *The Intellectual Tradition in the Old Testament*. BZAW 135. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1974. 54, 69.) (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 102)
      2. “The prickly question of the existence of schools in Israel (and thus, who were the teachers?) aside, the issue here is the existence of a professional class of *ḥăkāmîm*.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 102)
      3. rebuttal
         1. “One can hardly controvert the evidence of the usage of the *ḥākām*, or “sage,” in Jer 8:8, 9:22 [23], and 18:18. However undefined their tasks are, the “wise” are designated as beyond the ordinary, and they are contrasted with other professionals (priests, prophets).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 102)
         2. “Similarly, the titles (“words of the wise”) in the Book of Proverbs at 22:17 (emended text) and 24:23 (cf. 1:6; 30:1; and 31:1) are indicative of a class.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 102)
         3. “Probably the activity of the *yô`ēṣ* or “counselor” should be considered here as substantially the same as the *ḥākām*, but channeled in a more restricted style in court life.” (de Boer, P. “The Counsellor.” *Wisdom in Israel and in the Ancient Near East*, ed. M. Noth and D. Thomas. VTSup 3. (H. H. Rowley Festschrift.) Leiden: Brill, 1955. 42-71.) (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 102)
         4. “All things considered, it seems impossible to eliminate the sages (certainly not Qoheleth or Sirach!) as a class among the literati who pursued their own purposes: writing, teaching, and these within the specific field of human experience as opposed to meditating upon the sacred traditions of Israel. This is not a hard-and-fast line; there could have been crossovers of both persons and influence.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 102)
   3. There are only “sparse and vague indications about” individual sages. (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 5)
   4. Proverbs
      1. “. . . “the sayings of the wise” is a clear title in 24:23 and probably in 22:17.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 3)
      2. In the phrase, “the words of the wise”—1:6; 22:17 (probably a title); 24:23 (definitely a title)—“the wise” “suggests that they constitute a professional class, but they are left undefined.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 3)
      3. Agur (30:1-4) “is otherwise unknown.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 3)
      4. Lemuel (31:1-9) is described as a king who receives “words” from his mother, the queen. (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 3)
   5. Job
      1. “The author of Job is likewise an unknown figure . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 3)
      2. “. . . but the portraits that he has drawn of Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar are portraits of wise men. They are steeped in wisdom lore, as their “lectures” to Job make clear.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 3)
   6. Qoheleth
      1. “. . . Qoheleth was a sage . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 3)
      2. Qoh 12:9-12
         1. Qoh 12:9, “Besides being wise [a *ḥākām*], the Teacher also taught the people knowledge, weighing and studying and arranging many proverbs [*mĕšālîm*]. 10The Teacher sought to find pleasing words, and he wrote words of truth plainly. 11The sayings of the wise are like goads, and like nails firmly fixed are the collected sayings that are given by one shepherd. 12Of anything beyond these, my child, beware. Of making many books there is no end, and much study is a weariness of the flesh.”
      3. “But the precise circumstances of his activity are unknown to us.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 3)
   7. Sirach
      1. Sir 51:23, “Draw near to me, you who are uneducated, and lodge in the house of instruction.”
         1. *Bêt midrāš* here means “school” or “teaching.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 3)
      2. Sir 38:24-39:11, “The wisdom of the scribe depends on the opportunity of leisure; only the one who has little business can become wise. 25How can one become wise who handles the plow . . .? 26He sets his heart on plowing furrows, and he is careful about fodder for the heifers. 27So it is with every artisan . . . 28So it is with the smith . . . 29So is it with is the potter . . . 31All these rely on their hands, and all are skillful in their own work. 32Without them no city can be inhabited, and wherever they live, they will not go hungry. Yet they are not sought out for the council of the people, 33nor do they attain eminence in the public assembly. They do not sit in the judge’s seat, nor do they understand the decisions of the courts; they cannot expound discipline or judgment, and they are not found among the rulers. 34But they maintain the fabric of the world, and their concern is for the exercise of their trade.

“How different the one who devotes himself to the study of the law of the Most High! 39:1He seeks out the wisdom of all the ancients, and is concerned with prophecies; 2he preserves the sayings of the famous and penetrates the subtleties of parables; 3he seeks out the hidden meanings of proverbs and is at home with the obscurities of parables. 4He serves among the great and appears before rulers; he travels in foreign lands and learns what is good and evil in the human lot. 5He sets his heart to rise early to seek the Lord who made him, and to petition the Most High; he opens his mouth in prayer and asks pardon for his sins. 6If the great Lord is willing, he will be filled with the spirit of understanding; he will pour forth words of wisdom of his own and give thanks to the Lord in prayer. 7The Lord will direct his counsel and knowledge, as he meditates on his mysteries. 8He will show the wisdom of what he has learned, and will glory in the law of the Lord’s covenant. 9Many will praise his understanding; it will never be blotted out. His memory will not disappear, and his name will live through all generations. 10Nations will speak of his wisdom, and the congregation will proclaim his praise. 11If he lives long, he will leave a name greater than a thousand, and if he goes to rest, it is enough for him.”

* + 1. Sirach “singled out the profession of the scribe (*sōpēr*) as excelling all others . . . By this time, ca. 180 b.c.e., the activity of the sage was concentrated particularly on the study of the Law . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 3)
  1. Wisdom
     1. “We know nothing about the author of the Wisdom of Solomon.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 3)
  2. conclusions
     1. “. . . the explicit data provided by wisdom books provides relatively little information about the sages.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 3)
     2. But “they are associated with royalty and with teaching.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 3)

1. **conclusion**
   1. “The wisdom movement within Israel is not without surprises. The security preached by Proverbs is jarred by the experience of Job and buffeted by the hard-nosed insistence upon vanity by Qoheleth. Unruffled, Sirach seems to put it all together again with his emphasis on traditional wisdom and Law. Perhaps the most surprising twist is the appearance in the Diaspora of the Wisdom of Solomon. Here Greek language and culture make a significant entree into the Bible, but under the aegis of Solomon, no less. Wisdom and salvation history come together; both are recognized as integral to the experience of the people.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 94)

## SOLOMON AND WISDOM

Anderson, G.W. *Criti­cal Introduction to the Old Testament*. London: Duckworth, 1959.

1. **introduction**
   1. “. . . the wisdom [1] books and movement are closely associated with one of Israel’s national heroes, Solomon.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 1-2)
2. **1 Kgs 3-11**
   1. Solomon asks for wisdom.
      1. 1 Kgs 3:5-15, “At Gibeon the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream by night; and God said, “Ask what I should give you.” 6And Solomon said, “You have shown great and steadfast love to your servant my father David, because he walked before you in faithfulness, in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart toward you; and you have kept for him this great and steadfast love, and have given him a son to sit on his throne today. 7And now, O Lord my God, you have made your servant king in place of my father David, although I am only a little child; I do not know how to go out or come in. 8And your servant is in the midst of the people whom you have chosen, a great people, so numerous they cannot be numbered or counted. 9Give your servant therefore an understanding mind to govern your people, able to discern between good and evil; for who can govern this your great people?” 10It pleased the Lord that Solomon had asked this. 11God said to him, “Because you have asked this, and have not asked for yourself long life or riches, or for the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern what is right, 12I now do according to your word. Indeed I give you a wise and discerning mind; no one like you has been before you and no one like you shall arise after you. 13I give you also what you have not asked, both riches and honor all your life; no other king shall compare with you. 14If you will walk in my ways, keeping my statutes and my commandments, as your father David walked, then I will lengthen your life.” 15Then Solomon awoke; it had been a dream. He came to Jerusalem where he stood before the ark of the covenant of the Lord. He offered up burnt offerings and offerings of well-being, and provided a feast for all his servants.”
         1. Compare 2 Chr 1:9-10, “O Lord God, let your promise to my father David now be fulfilled, for you have made me king over a people as numerous as the dust of the earth. 10Give me now wisdom and knowledge to go out and come in before this people, for who can rule this great people of yours?”
   2. Immediately, he demonstrates his wisdom with the two mothers.
      1. 1 Kgs 3:16-28, “Later, two women who were prostitutes came to the king and stood before him. 17The one woman said, “Please, my lord, this woman and I live in the same house; and I gave birth while she was in the house. 18Then on the third day after I gave birth, this woman also gave birth. We were together; there was no one else with us in the house, only the two of us were in the house. 19Then this woman’s son died in the night, because she lay on him. 20She got up in the middle of the night and took my son from beside me while your servant slept. She laid him at her breast, and laid her dead son at my breast. 21When I rose in the morning to nurse my son, I saw that he was dead; but when I looked at him closely in the morning, clearly it was not the son I had borne.” 22But the other woman said, “No, the living son is mine, and the dead son is yours.” The first said, “No, the dead son is yours, and the living son is mine.” So they argued before the king. 23Then the king said, “The one says, ‘This is my son that is alive, and your son is dead’; while the other says, ‘Not so! Your son is dead, and my son is the living one.’” 24So the king said, “Bring me a sword,” and they brought a sword before the king. 25The king said, “Divide the living boy in two; then give half to the one, and half to the other.” 26But the woman whose son was alive said to the king—because compassion for her son burned within her—“Please, my lord, give her the living boy; certainly do not kill him!” The other said, “It shall be neither mine nor yours; divide it.” 27Then the king responded: “Give the first woman the living boy; do not kill him. She is his mother.” 28All Israel heard of the judgment that the king had rendered; and they stood in awe of the king, because they perceived that the wisdom of God was in him, to execute justice.”
   3. summary of Solomon’s wisdom
      1. 1 Kgs 4:29-34 (MT 1 Kgs 5:9-14), “God gave Solomon very great wisdom, discernment, and breadth of understanding as vast as the sand on the seashore, 30so that Solomon’s wisdom surpassed the wisdom of all the people of the east, and all the wisdom of Egypt. 31He was wiser than anyone else, wiser than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, Calcol, and Darda, children of Mahol; his fame spread throughout all the surrounding nations. 32He composed three thousand proverbs, and his songs numbered a thousand and five. 33He would speak of trees, from the cedar that is in the Lebanon to the hyssop that grows in the wall; he would speak of animals, and birds, and reptiles, and fish. 34People came from all the nations to hear the wisdom of Solomon; they came from all the kings of the earth who had heard of his wisdom.”
      2. “It is noteworthy that his wisdom is compared with that of Egypt, whose reputation for wisdom was well known in the ancient Near East (see the reaction of the prince of Byblos to Wen-Amon, 2:20ff., *ANET*, 27). “People of the East” seems to be a vague reference to the tribes in the Syro-Arabian Desert [Job 1:3, Job “was the greatest of all the people of the east”] and to their clan wisdom; it can hardly refer to Mesopotamia, although considerable wisdom writings have been found there . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 2)
      3. “We know nothing about the four specific characters who are mentioned.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 2)
      4. “There is reference not to Solomon’s writing, but to his “speaking” proverbs.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 2)
      5. “. . . the royal concern is not human conduct, but “nature” wisdom, such as one finds in Job 38-41 or in Prov 31.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 2) There are no references to nature in Prov 31. Perhaps Murphy means 30:19, 24-31.—Hahn
   4. the queen of Sheba
      1. This story exemplifies 1 Kgs 4:34. (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 2) 1 Kgs 4:34, “People came from all the nations to hear the wisdom of Solomon; they came from all the kings of the earth who had heard of his wisdom.”
      2. 1 Kgs 10:1-13, “When the queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon, (fame due to the name of the Lord), she came to test him with hard questions. 2She came to Jerusalem with a very great retinue, with camels bearing spices, and very much gold, and precious stones; and when she came to Solomon, she told him all that was on her mind. 3Solomon answered all her questions; there was nothing hidden from the king that he could not explain to her. 4When the queen of Sheba had observed all the wisdom of Solomon, the house that he had built, 5the food of his table, the seating of his officials, and the attendance of his servants, their clothing, his valets, and his burnt offerings that he offered at the house of the Lord, there was no more spirit in her. 6So she said to the king, “The report was true that I heard in my own land of your accomplishments and of your wisdom, 7but I did not believe the reports until I came and my own eyes had seen it. Not even half had been told me; your wisdom and prosperity far surpass the report that I had heard. 8Happy are your wives! Happy are these your servants, who continually attend you and hear your wisdom! 9Blessed be the Lord your God, who has delighted in you and set you on the throne of Israel! Because the Lord loved Israel forever, he has made you king to execute justice and righteousness.” 10Then she gave the king one hundred twenty talents of gold, a great quantity of spices, and precious stones; never again did spices come in such quantity as that which the queen of Sheba gave to King Solomon. 11Moreover, the fleet of Hiram, which carried gold from Ophir, brought from Ophir a great quantity of almug wood and precious stones. 12From the almug wood the king made supports for the house of the Lord, and for the king’s house, lyres also and harps for the singers; no such almug wood has come or been seen to this day. 13Meanwhile King Solomon gave to the queen of Sheba every desire that she expressed, as well as what he gave her out of Solomon’s royal bounty. Then she returned to her own land, with her servants.”
   5. wealth
      1. The wealthy are considered wise, and Solomon was wealthy *par excellence*.
      2. E.g., 1 Kings 10:21-23 (see 14-29), “All King Solomon’s drinking vessels were of gold, and all the vessels of the House of the Forest of Lebanon were of pure gold; none were of silver—it was not considered as anything in the days of Solomon. 22For the king had a fleet of ships of Tarshish at sea with the fleet of Hiram. Once every three years the fleet of ships of Tarshish used to come bringing gold, silver, ivory, apes, and peacocks. 23Thus King Solomon excelled all the kings of the earth in riches and in wisdom.”
3. **Solomon as author of wisdom literature**
   1. “It is doubtless this reputation of Solomon [for wisdom] that is behind the ascription of . . . wisdom books to him.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 2)
   2. Proverbs is attributed to Solomon.
   3. Qoheleth is attributed to Solomon.
   4. Wisdom (“written in Greek!”) is attributed to Solomon. (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 2)
   5. Song of Songs is attributed to Solomon.
   6. See also the *Psalms of Solomon* in the pseudepigrapha.
   7. “Today no serious scholar accepts Solomonic authorship for these works . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of* Life 2)

“He [Solomon] was, no doubt, a patron . . . and the conditions of his reign, when communica­tions with neigh­bouring countries were easy, may well have fos­tered cosmopoli­tan literary influence.” (Anderson *Criti­cal* 183)

## OUTLINE OF 1 KINGS 1-11

Wright, Addison G., Roland E. Murphy, and Joseph A. Fitzmyer. “A History of Israel.” *New Jerome Biblical Commentary*. Ed. Raymond E. Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, and Roland E. Murphy. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1990.

Start editing at ch. 8.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **1** | 1 | Abishag |
|  | 5 | Adonijah (birth order of David’s sons is: Amnon, Absalom, Adonijah, dead infant [2 Sam 12:14-19], Solomon) |
|  |  | supported by Joab and priest Abiathar |
|  |  | opposed by Nathan, priest Zadok, commander Benaiah, warriors (= bodyguard, 1:38) |
|  |  | spoiled by David; handsome; chariots, 50 men run before him |
|  | 9 | opposed by Solomon (it seems) |
|  |  | does large sacrifices, becomes king (so Nathan, 1:11) |
|  | 11 | Nathan advises Bathsheba to tell David that David promised Solomon could be king; David will then confirm the promise. (There was no such promise: the only references to Solomon in 2 Samuel are 5:14 [king’s sons list] and 12:24 [birth].) |
|  |  | (Bathsheba’s and Solomon’s lives are in danger, 1:12.) |
|  | 15 | Bathsheba reminds David of his “promise.” |
|  | 22 | Nathan reminds David of his “promise” (Bathsheba has left David’s presence). |
|  | 28 | David tells Bathsheba (Nathan has left David’s presence) that he will do as he swore: Solomon will be king. |
|  | 32 | David tells Nathan, Zadok, and Benaiah to anoint Solomon king at Gihon. |
|  | 38 | They anoint Solomon king at Gihon; “the earth quaked at their noise [rejoicing].” |
|  | 41 | Jonathan, son of Abiathar, tells Adonijah and guests that Solomon is now on the throne and that David and the city are rejoicing. |
|  | 49 | Adonijah grasps altar horns; Solomon says, “If he is good, he may live”; Adonijah does obeisance. |
| **2** | 1 | David tells Solomon to obey the Mosaic Law; then there will always be “a successor on the throne of Israel.” |
|  | 5 | David tells Solomon to avenge Joab’s murder of Abner (2 Sam 3:27) and Amasa (2 Sam 20:­10). |
|  |  | David tells Solomon to be good to Barzillai’s (2 Sam 17:27; 19:31-39) sons. |
|  |  | David tells Solomon to avenge Shimei’s throwing stones (2 Sam 16; see 19). |
|  | 10 | David dies; Solomon reigns. |
|  | 13 | Adonijah asks Bathsheba to ask Solomon to give Abishag to Adonijah. |
|  | 19 | Bathsheba asks; Solomon recognizes the plan and has Benaiah slay Adonijah. |
|  | 26 | Solomon banishes Abiathar. |
|  | 28 | Joab grasps altar horns; Solomon has Benaiah slay Joab at altar. |
|  |  | Benaiah heads the army; Zadok is priest. |
|  |  | 33, “to David, and to his descendants, and to his house, and to his throne, there shall be peace from the Lord forevermore.” |
|  | 36 | Solomon restricts Shimei to Jerusalem. |
|  | 39 | Shimei brings back two slaves from Gath; Solomon has Benaiah slay Shimei. |
|  |  | 45, “King Solomon shall be blessed, and the throne of David shall be established before the Lord forever.” |
| **3** | 1 | Solomon brings an Egyptian princess to Jerusalem. |
|  |  | People sacrifice at high places because there is no temple yet. |
|  | 3 | Solomon is a good king except that he sacrifices at high places (especially Gibeon). |
|  | 5 | In a dream Solomon asks for “an understanding mind to govern your people, able to discern be­tween good and evil.” |
|  | 10 | God: “I give you a wise and discerning mind; no one like you has been before you and no one like you shall arise after you” |
|  | 15 | Solomon goes to Jerusalem; he sacrifices thank offerings before the ark. |
|  | 16 | Two prostitutes each say, “the living son is mine, and the dead son is yours.” |
|  | 23 | Solomon says to divide it; the real mother says, “Give it to her,” and the other says, “Divide.” |
| **4** | 1 | list of Solomon’s officials: priest, secretaries, recorder, general, priests, overseer of officials, priest and king’s friend, in charge of the palace, in charge of the forced labor |
|  | 7 | list of 12 officials, each providing food to the palace one month each year |
|  | 20 | “Judah and Israel were as numerous as the sand by the sea; they ate and drank and were happy.” |
|  |  | Solomon rules from the Euphrates to Egypt. |
|  | 22 | Solomon’s enormous provision for one day |
|  |  | Solomon rules from the Euphrates to Egypt; all are happy. |
|  |  | 40,000 horse stalls for chariots, 12,000 horsemen |
|  | 29 | “Solomon’s wisdom surpassed the wisdom of all the people of the east, and all the wisdom of Egypt.” |
|  |  | Solomon wrote 3000 proverbs and 1005 songs. |
|  |  | Solomon spoke of trees, animals, birds, reptiles, fish. |
|  |  | “. . . people came from all the nations to hear the wisdom of Solomon.” |
| **5** | 1 | Solomon says to Hiram of Tyre: David could not build a temple because of wars; I will; cut cedars of Lebanon for me. |
|  |  | 1 Kgs 5:5 quotes 2 Sam 7:12-13 (read 7:1-5, 12-18). |
|  | 7 | “. . . the two of them made a treaty”: |
|  |  | Hiram floats rafts down the coast to Solomon; |
|  |  | Solomon provides 20,000 cors of wheat and 20 cors of oil yearly. |
|  | 13 | 30,000 male Israelites are conscripted to forced labor and sent to Lebanon in shifts. |
|  |  | In the hill country there are 70,000 laborers, 80,000 stonecutters, and 3300 supervisors. |
| **6** | 1 | In the 480th year after the exodus began, the temple begins. |
|  |  | Dimensions of the temple (nave and inner sanctuary): 90' l, 30' w, 45' h. porch: 30' w, 15' l. |
|  |  | It has “side chambers all around.” |
|  |  | There are three stories (= side chambers? higher are wider!). |
|  | 7 | No sound of cutting tools is heard at temple. |
|  | 8 | The entrance is on the south. Solomon finishes the temple. |
|  | 11 | God tells Solomon to obey the commandments so that God will dwell among the Israelites. |
|  | 14 | The “most holy place” is 30' l, 30' w, 30' h. |
|  |  | The nave is 40' l; it has an altar before it. |
|  |  | Its inside is completely paneled with wood (with floral carvings). |
|  |  | All is overlaid with gold. |
|  | 23 | There are two side-by-side cherubim; their outer wings touch the walls; they are gold-plated. |
|  | 29 | There are carved walls with floral carvings and cherubim. |
|  | 31 | The holy of holies’s doors are olivewood, carved, and gold-overlaid. |
|  | 33 | The nave’s doors are olivewood, carved, and gold-overlaid. |
|  |  | The inner court is built. |
|  | 37 | The temple is built from Solomon’s 4th-11th years (7 years total). |
| **7** | 1 | Solomon built the palace (13 years total). |
|  | 2 | The “House of the Forest of the Lebanon” is 150' l, 75' w, 45' h. |
|  | 6 | The “Hall of Pillars” is 75' l, 45' w (with a pillared porch and a canopy in front of the porch). |
|  | 7 | The “Hall of the Throne where he was to pronounce judgment, the Hall of Justice,” is built. |
|  | 8 | Solomon’s living quarters are in back of the throne room; similar quarters are for Pharaoh’s daughter. |
|  | 9 | Foundation stones are 12' and 15'; they have costly stones and cedar paneling. |
|  | 13 | Hiram (Naphtali mother, Tyrean bronze-worker father) comes to do the bronze work. |
|  | 15 | He makes two pillars (27' + 7.5' ornate capital), named “Jachin” and “Boaz,” for porch |
|  | 23 | He makes the bronze “sea” (15' w, 7.5' w, a span thick); it has 15' bronze panels beneath that rest on 12 oxen (3 in the N, 3 in the S, 3 in the E, 3 in the W). |
|  | 27 | He makes 10 bronze stands (6' l, 6' w, 4.5' h) to support basins; each with 4 wheels; carved with florals, lions, oxen, cherubim. |
|  | 38 | He makes 10 bronze basins (6'—diameter at brim?). |
|  |  | Stands are 5 on the S of the house and 5 on the N of the house (in the nave?). |
|  |  | The sea is at the SE corner of the temple. |
|  | 40 | He makes pots, shovels, and basins. |
|  |  | summary of bronzework |
|  |  | The bronze was cast in the Jordan plain between Succoth and Zarethan. |
|  | 48 | Solomon makes |
|  |  | the gold table for the bread of the Presence |
|  |  | the gold lampstands (which are before the holy of holies, 5 in the N, 5 in the S) |
|  |  | gold flowers, lamps, tongs |
|  |  | gold “cups, snuffers, basins, dishes for incense, and firepans” |
|  |  | gold door sockets (for the holy of holies’s doors and nave doors). |
|  | 51 | Solomon puts in the temple treasuries the silver, gold, and vessels that David had dedicated. |
| **8** | 1 | dedication ceremony: elders from each tribe |
|  |  | priests bring up ark, tent of meeting, tent vessels |
|  |  | uncountable sheep and oxen sacrificed |
|  |  | ark put under cherubims’ wings (holy of holies); ark poles extend into holy place (nave) |
|  |  | ark only has Ten-Commandments tablets in it |
|  |  | cloud fills temple: “for the glory of the Lord filled the house” |
|  | 12 | Solomon blesses people, says 2 Sam 7 fulfilled |
|  |  | (10 Comm’s = covenant: “the ark, in which is the covenant”) |
|  | 22 | Solomon faces altar, raises hands, and prays: |
|  | 23 | “there is no God like you in heaven above or on earth beneath, keeping covenant and steadfast love for your servants who walk before you with all their heart” |
|  | 25 | “you promised . . . ‘There shall never fail you a successor before me to sit on the throne of Israel, if only your children look to their way’” |
|  | 27 | “But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Even heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain you” |
|  | 29 | “that your eyes may be open night and day toward this house, the place of which you said, ‘My name shall be there,’ that you may heed . . . 30your people Israel when they pray toward this place; O hear in heaven your dwelling place; heed and forgive.” |
|  | 31 | judge when case is brought here |
|  | 33 | if Israel defeated, hear Israel’s prayer here and restore to land |
|  | 35 | if drought for sin, hear Israel’s prayer toward here and forgive |
|  | 37 | if famine, plague, blight, mildew, locust, city beseiged—whatever plea from individual or the nation, hear in heaven and act “according to all their ways, for only you know what is in every human heart” |
|  | 41 | “when a foreigner comes and prays toward this house, 43then hear in heaven [and do], so that all the peoples of the earth may know your name and fear you” |
|  | 44 | “if your people go out to battle [and pray] toward the city [and] the house . . . then hear in heaven” |
|  | 46 | “if they sin against you—for there is no one who does not sin— |
|  |  | and you are angry with them and give them to an enemy, so that they are carried away captive . . . |
|  | 48 | “if they repent [and] pray to you toward their land . . . |
|  | 49 | “then hear in heaven [and] maintain their cause 50and forgive your people . . . |
|  | 53 | “For you have separated them from among all the peoples of the earth, to be your heritage, just as you promised through Moses, your servant, when you brought our ancestors out of Egypt . . .” |
|  | 54 | Solomon blesses people, says: “may he not leave us or abandon us, 58but incline our hearts to him, to walk in all his ways” [read this paragraph also] |
|  | 62 | Solomon sacrifices 22,000 oxen, 120,000 sheep |
|  | 65 | dedication festival lasts 7 days |
| **9** | 1 | God appears to Solomon “as at Gibeon” (1 Kgs 3): |
|  |  | “As for you, if you will walk [with] integrity of heart and uprightness, . . . keeping my statutes and my ordinances, 5then I will establish your royal throne over Israel forever” |
|  | 6 | “If you turn aside [to] other gods . . . then I will cut Israel off from the land [and] This house will become a heap of ruins . . .” |
|  | 10 | After 20 years (of building), Solomon gives Hiram 20 cities in Galilee; he disliked, so “called the land of Cabul to this day” |
|  | 15 | Solomon built temple and palace, the Millo [uncertain: prob. part of Jerusalem’s fortifications] and the wall of Jerusalem, Hazor, Megiddo, Gezer, and 3 other cities, Solomon’s storage cities, cities for chariots, cities for cavalry, etc. |
|  | 21 | All remaining Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites “Solomon conscripted for slave labor, and so they are to this day.” |
|  | 23 | 550 chief officers oversaw the work. |
|  | 24 | Pharaoh’s daughter went up to her own dwelling. |
|  | 25 | Solomon offered sacrifices at the temple 3 times per year. |
|  | 26 | Solomon built a fleet of ships at Ezion-geber (Red Sea), and with Hiram’s sailors imported 420 talents [4.5 tons] of gold from Ophir (Somalia, or perhaps Yemen) |
|  |  | [talent (c 75 lbs) = 60 minas (= c 1 lb), mina = 50 or 60 shekels] |
| **10** | 1 | queen of Sheba [Yemen], with wealth in retinue, “came to test him with hard questions [ḥidot, “rid­dles”]. . . . there was nothing . . . he could not explain . . .” |
|  |  | Seeing Solomon’s wealth, “there was no more spirit in her.” |
|  | 6 | queen of Sheba proclaims how blessed are Israel and God, gives 120 talents [15 tons] gold, much spices |
|  | 11 | Hiram’s fleet brings almug wood from Ophir, for temple supports, lyres, harps |
|  | 13 | Solomon gave “the queen of Sheba every desire that she expressed”; she returns to Sheba |
|  | 14 | Solomon got 666 talents [24,975 tons] of gold each year |
|  |  | Solomon made 200 large gold shields, 300 gold shields, all in House of the Forest of Lebanon |
|  |  | Solomon made ivory throne (gold overlay), with 6 steps, 2 lions by each step |
|  |  | all Solomon’s drinking vessels were gold; silver “was not considered as anything” |
|  |  | every 3 yrs “ships of Tarshish” (tech. term for ocean-going vessels) brought “gold, silver, ivory, apes, and peacocks” |
|  | 23 | summary: all kings worldwide come to hear wisdom, bring presents (euphemism for tribute) |
|  | 26 | Solomon had 1400 chariots, 12,000 horses |
|  |  | Solomon bought from Egypt, resold to Hittite Empire and Aram |
| **11** | 1 | wives were 700 princesses and 300 concubines |
|  |  | old Solomon followed Astarte (Sidon) and Milcom (Ammon), |
|  |  | built high places (on a mountain E of Jerusalem) for Chemosh (Moab), Molech (Ammon), |
|  |  | and “did the same for all his foreign wives” |
|  | 9 | God to Solomon: “I will tear the kingdom from you” |
|  |  | “Yet for [David’s] sake [not] in your lifetime” |
|  |  | for David’s sake Solomon’s son will get one tribe |
|  | 14 | God raises up Hadad of Edom against Solomon |
|  |  | (Joab had killed all males of Edom, but Hadad fled to Egypt) |
|  |  | (Pharaoh set up Hadad in Egypt, gave Hadad Pharaoh’s sister-in-law) |
|  | 23 | God raised up Rezon, bandit king of Aram, against Solomon |
|  | 26 | Solomon made Jeroboam (Ephraimite) officer over forced labor of house of Joseph |
|  |  | prophet Ahijah (Shiloh) meets Jeroboam in countryside, |
|  |  | tears his new garment in 12 pieces, gives 10 pieces, says: |
|  |  | God will tear the kingdom from Solomon |
|  |  | but for David and Jerusalem’s sake, Solomon’s son to get one tribe |
|  |  | for David’s sake not in Solomon’s lifetime |
|  |  | “you shall be king over Israel. 38If you will listen to all that I command you” |
|  |  | “I will punish the descendants of David, but not forever” |
|  |  | Solomon tries to kill Jeroboam, Jeroboam flees to Egypt till Solomon dies |
|  | 41 | “Now the rest of the acts of Solomon, all that he did as well as his wisdom, are they not written in the Book of the Acts of Solomon? 42The time that Solomon reigned in Jerusalem over all Israel was forty years. 43Solomon slept with his ancestors and was buried in the city of his father David; and his son Rehoboam succeeded him.” |

“In a few generations there was a transition from tribal federation to “empire” status; the agricultural and pastoral life yielded to urban life with a corresponding growth of social inequalities.” (Wright, Murphy, and Fitzmyer “History of Israel” 1232)

# THE BOOKS OF THE

# WISDOM MOVEMENT

## PROVERBS

introduction

1. **introduction**
   1. “It has been said that a proverb in a collection is dead. [W. Mieder, qtd. in Fontaine, *Traditional Sayings* 54.] Those who read for the first time the various collections of sayings in the Book of Proverbs might firmly agree. After a while the sayings seem to blend together; the [5] wise/virtuous prevail over fools/wicked. Even what seemed to be perceptive at first becomes dull and trite because of repetition.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 5-6)
   2. “However, the proverbs are far from dead, if they are read with alertness and awareness of their literary power and forms. Robert Alter was correct in entitling his chapter on Proverbs “the poetry of wit.”” (Alter, Robert. *The Art of Biblical Poetry*. New York: Basic Books, 1985. 163-84.) (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 6)
   3. “It is too facile, although quite traditional, to characterize the Book of Proverbs as a compendium of ethics, of Israelite morality. This view is strengthened by the optimistic note that sounds frequently in the work: wisdom (justice) prospers, while folly (wickedness) self-destructs. As a result, the book has been very popular in Western culture, both for the picturesque language and for the timely truths it is seen to convey. It is quoted freely, and many times not exactly, and it has received greater authority than many another book of Holy Writ. But the true subtlety of the book is seldom recognized in its popular usage. A moral code undergirds it, but the real intent is to train a person, to form character, to show what life is really like and how best to cope with it. The favored approach is to seek out comparisons or analogies between the human situation and all else (animals and the rest of creation). It does not command so much as it seeks to persuade, to tease the reader into a way of life (although it must be admitted that chaps. 1-9 are much more dogmatic in style than the rest of the work).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 15)
2. **structure**
   1. “Perhaps no other book of the Bible is as neatly laid out as this one.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 15)
   2. “It has titles that mark off the main parts . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 15)
      1. Prov 1:1, “The proverbs of Solomon, son of David, king of Israel . . .”
         1. “. . . this serves as a title to the entire thirty-one chapters, as well as to chaps. 1-9 . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 15)
      2. Prov 10:1, “The proverbs of Solomon.”
         1. Solomon again; “but chaps. 10-22 are quite different in style from chaps. 1-9 . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 15)
      3. Prov 22:17, “The words of the wise . . .”
         1. Prov 22:17-24:22 are an Egyptian work, the *Instruction of Amen-em-ope*, that has been “emended.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 15)
      4. Prov 24:23, “These also are sayings of the wise . . .”
      5. Prov 25:1, “These are other proverbs of Solomon that the officials of King Hezekiah of Judah copied.”
      6. Prov 30:1, “The words of Agur son of Jakeh.”
      7. Prov 31:1, “The words of King Lemuel.”
      8. In “Prov 31:10-31, there is no title, but this is the acrostic poem about the ideal wife.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 15)
   3. “It will be easily recognized that chaps. 1-9 stand out from the rest of the book in regard to both form (long poems) and content (exhortatory tone, [18] strong emphasis on moral right and wrong). Except for the few sayings (such as in chap. 3 and 6:1-19), the concern of these chapters is to persuade the reader to the path of wisdom/justice.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 18-19)
   4. “The collection of sayings in Prov 10ff. is relatively haphazard in the sense that each verse stands on its own.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 70)
   5. “P. Skehan [*Studies* 27-45, esp. 43-45] has claimed that the author laid out the columns of text in the design of a house (which is called “wisdom’s house” in [27] 9:1), and it is modeled on Solomon’s Temple. Whether or not one is prepared to accept all the architectural details in this reconstruction, Skehan’s remarks about the numerical values of the names (and the term *ḥkmym* [*sic*], or “wise”) in the titles deserve serious consideration.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 27-28)
      1. supporting arguments
         1. “First, 1:1 has three names, *šlmh*, *dwd*, and *ysr’l*, which have the numerical value of 375, 14, and 541, for a total of 930. We shall see that this hint in the title of the book is verified by the total number of lines in the book, 930.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 28)
         2. “Second, the title of 10:1 has *šlmh*, equivalent to 375, and this is the number of single-line proverbs in this Solomonic collection (10:1-22:16).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 28)
         3. “Third, the “Hezekian” collection (chaps. 25-29) has 140 lines or sayings. In the title at 25:1, Hezekiah is the operative word. Depending on the spelling, it could yield the numerical equivalent of 130 (so the MT spelling), 136, 140, or 146. The correct choice, in view of the entire book, is 140 (*yḥzqyh*).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 28)
         4. “Fourth, the term *ḥkmym* (title in 22:17, 24:23) or “wise” has a numerical value of 118, and this is the number of lines in 22:17-24:32 and 30:7-33.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 28)
         5. “Fifth, one can now add to all of this the rest of the sayings: 16 (for Lemuel and Agur) and 22 (the acrostic poem about the woman in 31:10ff.) for a total of 38, and 259 lines in chaps. 1-9.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 28)
         6. “The yield now is: 259 (chaps. 1-9); 375 (10:1-22:16); 118 (for the *ḥkmym* sayings in 22:17-24:32 and 30:7-33); 140 (chaps. 25-29); 38 (Lemuel, Agur, and the acrostic). Sum total: 930 lines in the entire book, as was hinted at in 1:1 . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 28)
      2. “Needless to say, this outcome can hardly be coincidental. And it leads to the plausible conclusion that the hand of one person is responsible for the book as author-editor.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 28)
      3. “Objections can be made against this numerical calculation for the Book of Proverbs.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 32 n. 35)
         1. “This count does not include the harmonizing glosses at 1:16; 8:11; 24:33-34, which have been questioned by many scholars for various reasons.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 28)
         2. “It may be that verses other than these should be recognized as insertions.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 32 n. 35)
         3. But “There is no intentional skewing of the text merely to arrive at preconceived numbers.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 32 n. 35)
         4. “Thus, is the elimination of 1:16 and 8:11 dictated by a desire to reach a certain number (in chaps. 1-9, 259 lines are the count)? These two lines have been questioned independently and legitimately by commentators in the past. Two important LXX mss. do not have 1:16, which is a reflection of Isa 59:7. In Wisdom’s speech of chap. 8, the first person is interrupted by a statement in the third person, namely 8:11, which reflects Prov 3:15.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 32 n. 35)
         5. “The case of 24:33-34 is more delicate. These verses repeat Prov 6:10-11, which are addressed to the sluggard in the second person. In the context of 24:30-32, in which an “I” is reflecting about the overgrown field of a sluggard, an address in the second person is at least strange and could possibly be a borrowing of 6:10-11.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 32 n. 35)
      4. conclusion
         1. “At the present time there is no way of determining when the equation of letters and numbers came into use in this fashion. But the sages undeniably do betray a preoccupation with the letters of the alphabet (acrostics, and poems of 22-23 lines).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 32 n. 35)
         2. “The strength of the argument comes from an overall analysis of the manner in which the numerical equivalent of the names in the titles has indicated the extent of the book (930 lines), and the improbability of sheer coincidence.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 32 n. 35)
3. **date**
   1. “Because this section [Prov 1-9] is noticeably different from the following chapters, various hypotheses have arisen concerning the setting and date of this material. Although these efforts have ended in a disappointing uncertainty, . . . [two] views may be presented as typical.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 19)
      1. “Bernhard Lang begins with a dominant presupposition: the influence of Egyptian wisdom literature . . . [Lang, Bernhard. *Die weisheitliche Lehrrede*. SBS 54. Stuttgart: KBW, 1972.] Prov 1-9 consists of ten wisdom speeches addressed by a teacher to a student (“my son”). They were practice texts for the students who were trained to be court officials (as also happened in Egypt)—although their teaching was less class-oriented, perhaps an effect of the influence of tribal ethos in Israel. This Egyptian influence fits in with an early dating of the materials, even from the Solomonic era.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 19)
      2. “Otto Plöger is much more cautious about the pertinence of these chapters to a school. [Plöger, Otto. *Sprüche Salomos* (*Proverbia*). BKAT 13. Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1984. 111-12.] He suggests that they are a kind of enchiridion or handbook that was destined for a wider audience than students. The dating is left rather wide open. Some seven centuries (900-200 b.c.e.) witnessed a compilation of the admonitions (the style of chaps. 1-9) and sayings (the style of chaps. 10ff.).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 19)
   2. “Common opinion dates chaps. 1-9 in the postexilic period, but it is obvious that there is a great deal of uncertainty. Compared to chaps. 10ff., chaps. 1-9 reveal a concentration on wisdom, what Gerhard von Rad termed “theological wisdom,” [*Old Testament Theology* 1.441-53 is entitled, “Israel’s Theological Wisdom”] but this offers little information about dating.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 19)
   3. “Although it is hazardous to attempt a description of the historical development of wisdom, one can agree that Prov 1-9, especially with Lady Wisdom (see chap. 9), represents a theologizing, a deeper reflection on the data that composed the wisdom tradition.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 30 n. 13)

proverbs 1-9

1. **Prov 1**
   1. Prov 1:1-6
      1. “The majestic introduction to the book (1:1-6) sweeps the reader up into the goal of wisdom instruction. The hermeneutical key to the entire work is given; all that follows is to provide guidance (or “steering,” *taḥbulôt*, 1:5) and training in virtue (1:3).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 16)
      2. “Obviously, the writer of these lines did not distinguish between the secular and the religious in the way we do. All the so-called “secular” advice that is given in the course of the thirty-one chapters belongs to training in a wisdom that is essentially religious.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 16)
      3. “The vocabulary in 1:1-6 is overwhelming: learning, understanding, righteousness, discernment, knowledge, and so forth. All combine to spell out the riches of wisdom. These are not abstract, merely intellectual characteristics; they are tied to the practical aspects of human conduct.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 16)
   2. Prov 1:7
      1. Becker, J. *Gottesfurcht im Alten Testament*. AnBib 25. Rome: Biblical Institute, 1965. Esp. 210ff.
      2. Marböck, J. “Im Horizont der Gottesfurcht: Stellungnahme zu Welt and Leben in der alttestamentlichen Weisheit.” *BN* 26 (1985): 47-70.
      3. “Verse 7, about the fear of the Lord as the beginning of knowledge, serves as a motto after the introductory sentence (vv 1-6). The positioning of this verse (echoed in 9:10; 15:33; Job 28:28; Ps 111:10) is important. It is the seventh verse, following upon the introduction, and it is repeated in 9:10, at the end of the first collection. Fear of the Lord also appears in 31:30, as a kind of inclusion to the book. The notion itself is used frequently in the Bible with various nuances (awe before the divinity, worship, observance of the Law). It is the equivalent of biblical religion and piety, and in the context of Proverbs, of proper moral behavior.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 16)
      4. “For Gerhard von Rad this verse “contains in a nutshell the whole Israelite theory of knowledge.”” (von Rad, Gerhard. *Wisdom in Israel*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1972. 67.) (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 16)
      5. “It is surely remarkable that a commitment to God lies at the basis of the wisdom enterprise.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 16)
   3. Prov 1:8-33
      1. “In the context of this book, “my son” (v 8) is the reader who is willing to follow the discipline of wisdom. The parental instruction (father and mother) would then be metaphorical for the wisdom teachers.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 16)
      2. “If the father’s advice is understood to be vv 8-19, it is a warning against being seduced by the proposals of sinners.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 16)
      3. “Perhaps the mother’s advice can be seen in the striking speech of Lady Wisdom in vv 20-33. [Fontaine, Carole R. “Proverbs.” *Harper’s Bible Commentary*, ed. J. L. Mays. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988. 503.] She speaks publicly and vehemently like a biblical prophet threatening with doom and destruction those who reject her message. [“On Prov 1:20-33 as a threat, see”: Murphy, Roland E. “Wisdom’s Song: Proverbs 1:20-33.” *CBQ* 49 (1986): 456-60.] Two ways are laid out for the reader to choose—the way of the foolish and obedience to Wisdom (vv 32-33).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 16)
2. **Prov 2**
   1. Skehan, P. *Studies in Israelite Poetry and Wisdom*. CBQMS 1. Washington: Catholic Biblical Association, 1971. 1-45. (For Prov 2, see 9-10.)
   2. “Chapter 2 is an astonishing literary composition. In Hebrew it is one long sentence: an alphabetizing poem, in twenty-two lines according to the letters of the Hebrew alphabet.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 16)
   3. “The first three strophes (vv 1-4, 5-8, 9-11) begin with the first letter, *´aleph*, and contain an “if-then” message.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 16)
      1. “Fear of the Lord, knowledge of God, and wisdom are inseparably twined (vv 5-6).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 17)
      2. “Even though wisdom is something to be pursued by individual effort, it is essentially a gift from God (2:6)—one of the many paradoxes in this book.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 17)
   4. “The strophes in part two (vv 12-15, 16-19, 20-22) all begin with *lamed*, the middle letter of the alphabet . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 16)
      1. Part two stresses “how Wisdom “saves” (vv 12, [16] 16) those who follow her. A program is announced that will be followed rather closely in the ensuing chapters.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 16-17)
      2. “The contrast between the good and the bad (vv 20-22) is reminiscent of Ps 1.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 17)
3. **Prov 3**
   1. Prov 3:1-12
      1. “Typical wisdom concerns are touched upon: the need to “hear,” the promise of “life,” and a “trust in the Lord” that will eliminate the danger of being “wise in one’s own eyes” (cf. 26:12).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 17)
      2. “Chapter 3 begins with six admonitions accompanied by motivating clauses (vv 1-12).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 17)
         1. Prov 3:11-12: “in a daring move the teacher anticipates an objection (vv 11-12 . . .): if the promise of a full and prosperous life is not realized, one should consider it, paradoxically, as a sign of divine favor, for the Lord disciplines those who are the objects of divine love.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 17)
         2. Heb 12:5-6 quotes Prov 3:11-12: “you have forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as children—“My child, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, or lose heart when you are punished by him; 6for the Lord disciplines those whom he loves, and chastises every child whom he accepts.””
   2. Prov 3:13-18
      1. “Verses 13-18 are held together by an inclusion, the repetition of “happy” (an *´ašrê* saying, or beatitude).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 17)
      2. “Traditional symbolism is employed in a eulogy of wisdom as precious beyond gold and silver, granting life and peace, indeed a “tree of life” (cf. 11:30).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 17)
   3. Prov 3:19-20
      1. “The recognition of the role of wisdom in the creative activity of the Lord is introduced rather suddenly (v 19) . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 17)
      2. Wisdom’s role in creation “is a common theme (Ps 104:24; 147:5; Prov 8:22-31).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 17)
      3. “A very simple picture is drawn: no one builds a house without wisdom (Prov 24:3-4 [“By wisdom a house is built, and by understanding it is established; 4by knowledge the rooms are filled with all precious and pleasant riches”]); so also wisdom was at work in the making of creation, especially in the production of water so beneficent to the inhabitants of Palestine (v 20).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 17)
   4. Prov 3:21-35
      1. “The chapter ends as it began, with a series of admonitions in vv 25ff.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 17)
4. **Prov 4**
   1. “Chapter 4 contains a touching description of the teacher’s reminiscence of parental training (vv 1-5). The teacher continues with an intensity (cf. also 7:1-4) that reminds one of the Deuteronomic preaching: get wisdom!” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 17)
   2. Prov 4:9, “She will place on your head a fair garland; she will bestow on you a beautiful crown”: “The metaphor of diadem and crown recalls 1:9 and 3:3.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 17)
      1. Prov 1:9, “they [father’s instruction and mother’s teaching] are a fair garland for your head, and pendants for your neck.”
      2. Prov 3:3, “Do not let loyalty and faithfulness forsake you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart.” (No crown in nab either.—Hahn)
   3. “The two “ways” develop 1:32-33.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 17)
      1. Habel, N. “The Symbolism of Wisdom in Proverbs 1-9.” *Interpretation* 26 (1972): 131-57.
      2. ““Way” and “life” are catchwords that form an inclusion for vv 10-27; the way of wisdom is the path of the just (v 18), which leads to life; the way of the wicked (v 14) is not to be entered.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 17)
         1. This makes no sense to me. Prov 3:10, 14, 18, 27 are the same content in the nab.—Hahn
         2. Prov 3:10, “then your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will be bursting with wine.”
         3. Prov 3:14, “for her income is better than silver, and her revenue better than gold.”
         4. Prov 3:18, “She is a tree of life to those who lay hold of her; those who hold her fast are called happy.”
         5. Prov 3:27, “Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in your power to do it.”
5. **Prov 5-7**
   1. “The theme of 2:16, the “strange woman,” is taken up in chaps. 5-7.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 17)
   2. “The emphasis is puzzling. Granted that sexual conduct is a legitimate topic for wisdom teaching (22:14; 23:27-28), why is the treatment so detailed?” (Murphy, Roland E. “Wisdom and Eros in Prov. 1-9.” *CBQ* 50 (1988): 600-3.) (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 17)
   3. “The woman may simply be another Israelite, and the warning is strictly one of marital fidelity.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 17)
      1. “. . . the advice is one-sided. The young man is warned against enticement by the woman, but his own responsibility is not mentioned; he is never instructed about his own sexual desires or about enslavement to his sexual passion.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 18)
   4. “At the same time, there [17] may be another level of meaning here, suggesting religious fidelity and pursuit of fear of the Lord.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 17-18)
      1. “Perhaps it has something to do with the Lady Wisdom-Dame Folly antithesis (explicitly developed in chap. 9). The counterpart to the pursuit of Wisdom as woman is the seduction by Folly as woman. [17] . . . The figure of Lady Wisdom seems to have provided the model for the figure of Dame Folly (9:13-18).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 17-18)
      2. “The use of sexual imagery in the Bible to express fidelity or infidelity to God is well known (Hosea).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 17)
      3. “And Israel’s unhappy history of “whoring” after other gods, the Baals and Asherahs, is attested to many times. It has been suggested that the “stranger” is a devotee of the Canaanite fertility cult that seduced so many Israelites. This identification is hard to establish.” (Boström, G. *Proverbiastudien: Die Weisheit und das fremde Weib in Sir 1-9*. LUA n. f. A 1, vol. 30:3. Lund: Gleerup, 1935.) (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 17)
   5. Prov 5
      1. “The warning in 5:1-14 is quite straightforward: the feet of the “stranger” lead to Death/Sheol (v 5), and only recrimination awaits the unfortunate man (vv 12-14). The youth is given positive recommendation to be faithful to his wife (“Drink water from your own cistern,” v 15), whose love will be a source of life to him (vv 18-19).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 18)
   6. Prov 6
      1. “The theme of adultery is interrupted in 6:1-19 by advice concerning several topics: becoming surety for one’s neighbor [6:1-5], diligence [6:7-11], a judgment on the evildoer [6:12-14]. There is a numerical saying about things that are an abomination to the Lord [6:16-19].” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 18)
      2. “But the urgent warning against the smooth-talking adulteress is picked up again in 6:20-35. The youth is confronted with the negative results he can expect: “impossible questions” in vv 27-28, and the folly of adultery that ends up with physical beating (vv 32-35).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 18)
   7. Prov 7
      1. “The sage’s description of the seduction of a young man is vividly related in chap. 7. The smooth-talking lady speaks at length in vv 14-20. A striking feature about the scene is the emphasis upon speech, almost as if the seduction were verbal (“smooth-talking,” 7:5; 6:24), not sexual. The power of the word to persuade, even to seduce, is highlighted as much as sexual indulgence itself.” (Aletti, J.-N. “Seduction et parole en Proverbes I-IX. *VT* 27 (1977):129-44.) (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 18)
6. **Prov 8-9**
   1. “In chaps. 8-9 the author returns to the explicit personification of Wisdom as a woman (cf. 1:20-33).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 18)
   2. Prov 8
      1. “The significance of Prov 8 is explained later in the treatment of the personification of Wisdom (chap. 9).” (See the handout, “Wisdom Personified (Lady Wisdom).”) (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 18)
      2. “The structure of chap. 8 has been variously interpreted, but the general meaning is clear.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 18)
         1. “Skehan [*Studies* 14] detects seven units of five lines (with 8:11 being a gloss based on 3:15), guided by the emphatic *´ănî* (“I”) in vv 12 and 17, the origins of Wisdom in vv 22-31 (with *´ānî* ?? the “n” has a macron above it in v 27), and the conclusion “now then” (*we`attâ*) in 32 . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 30 n. 10)
         2. “M. Gilbert describes 8:1-3 as an introduction and claims that “all authors” distinguish four sections: 8:4-11, 12-21, 22-31 (a unity), 32-36 (the ending). He regards these sections as a collection that motivates the audience to listen: the teaching of Wisdom (contained in chaps. 10-31).” (Gilbert, M. “Le discours de la sagesse en Proverbes 8.” *La Sagesse de l’Ancien Testament*, ed. M. Gilbert. BETL 51. Leuven: Leuven UP, 1979. 202-18 [esp. 218].) (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 30 n. 10)
      3. “Wisdom is introduced, prophetlike and calling for an audience.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 18)
      4. “She emphasizes the truth of her message, her royal connections (“By me kings reign”), and the wealth and honor she brings to those who love her.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 18)
      5. Prov 8:22-31: Wisdom “describes her divine origin as the very first act of God’s creation. She was present not only to God (as an “artisan,” or “darling,” v 30) but also to human beings in whom she delighted.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 18)
      6. “Her speech ends with another appeal for attention (“listen” occurs three times in vv 32-34), and with the astounding promise of life as opposed to death (vv 35-36).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 18)
   3. Prov 9
      1. “Lady Wisdom is matched by Dame Folly in Prov 9 (where the sayings in vv 7-12 separate these two figures). Both issue an invitation to a meal that is characterized by life (for Wisdom, v 6) and by death (for Folly, whose guests end up in Sheol, v 18).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 18)

first Solomonic collection (10:1-22:16)

1. **introduction**
   1. The couplets “have little context to illuminate them.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 19)
   2. “The intensive, persuasive speech of the teacher [in Prov 1-9] yields to dry aphorisms.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 19)
   3. “How can one best read collections of sayings? In the experience of many, the proverbs seem to blur all together when they are read at one sitting. The obvious move is to settle for a limited number—for example, to read a chapter at a time—and to select from the (roughly thirty) sayings in each chapter two or three verses that catch the reader’s fancy. Perhaps none will appeal, but that may say more about the reader than about the sayings. The point is that one must concentrate on a limited number and sift out those sayings that, for whatever reason, stand out among the rest. Such an attentive reading can yield pleasant surprises . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 20)
   4. “J. G. Williams has given a helpful list of characteristics of aphoristic speech.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 20)
      1. Williams, J. G. “The Power of Form: A Study of Biblical Proverbs.” *Gnomic Wisdom*, ed. J. D. Crossan. Semeia 17. Chico: Scholars, 1980. 35-58 (esp. 37-40).
      2. “First, it is assertive; it looks a priori, but it is not that. The reader is left to qualify it by other contexts, by exceptions, by experiences that run contrary to it.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 20)
      3. “Second, it provides insight, not only by what is said, but by the process: the reader can be startled, and thus invited to go beyond the proverb itself. For example, there is the caution not to be “wise in one’s own eyes” (26:12). What is the proper attitude then? This seems to be answered in Prov 3:5-7 and 28:25-26.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 20)
         1. Prov 3:5-7, “Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not rely on your own insight. 6In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths. 7Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord, and turn away from evil.”
         2. Prov 28:25-26, “The greedy person stirs up strife, but whoever trusts in the Lord will be enriched. 26Those who trust in their own wits are fools; but those who walk in wisdom come through safely.”
      4. “Third, the proverb often registers a reversal of one’s expectation and provokes surprise. Here one may instance such sayings as a soft tongue breaking a bone (25:15b), or the bitter turning out to be sweet (27:7). This is the process of defamiliarization, looking at a thing afresh, from another perspective.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 20)
         1. Prov 25:15, “With patience a ruler may be persuaded, and a soft tongue can break bones.”
         2. Prov 27:7, “The sated appetite spurns honey, but to a ravenous appetite even the bitter is sweet.”
      5. “Fourth, the proverb is marked by brevity and conciseness: “The point is a maximum of meaning in a minimum of words.” Williams comments [“Power of Form” 39] on the words of Hippocrates (“*vita brevis*—*ars longa*”): “How ironically interesting to be told by the briefest of art forms that art is long (enduring? immortal?) and life is brief!” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 20)
   5. authority vs. experience
      1. “From one point of view, they [the proverbs] are rooted in experience; one is to hear them carefully and recognize their empirical truth. On the other hand, they bear the authority of tradition; they are handed down as the teaching of parents and elders.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 20)
      2. “Sometimes the conflict between authority and experience breaks out into the open. . . . There are many ambiguities in life that cannot be solved by the deceptive simplicity of an aphorism. That is why there are so many sayings relative to such variables as wealth and poverty, or speech and silence. Complete wisdom will depend upon keeping in view the [20] outward reach of all these sayings. A particular word at a given time may be out of order (cf. 26:4-5 on answering a fool).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 20-21)
   6. “. . . the original context of a given saying is usually irrecoverable. Hence the reader creates a certain context in which the saying is understood. Sometimes this is on target, but at other times the saying may be bent to support one’s own prejudice or preunderstanding. [This is] faulty interpretation . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 21)
   7. Worse is “the failure to recognize further levels of meaning. In our own culture we recognize the saying that you can lead a horse to water but it cannot be made to drink. This undoubtedly arose from experience. Then it becomes an image for human activity, and the hermeneutical possibilities emerge: stubbornness? satiety? self-reliance? This open-ended character of proverbs will strike every reader.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 21)
   8. “Finally, some proverbs are simply obscure. This may be due to textual corruption, or to the density of expression. It is important, in any case, to try to find the point that is being scored.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 21)
   9. “Usually there is a *tertium comparationis*, the point (or points?) of the comparison. Williams [“Power of Form” 39-40] illustrates this with the New Testament comparison in Matt 13:44: “The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field which a man found and covered up, then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.” Many points of comparison emerge. The kingdom is precious; it is hidden. But is that the point? Williams indicates the hidden comparison expressed in the second half of the verse: namely, the valuer and his action. But even here the focus of the comparison is manifold: the treasure? the burying and buying? joy? The story seems straightforward, but it is not at all clear. Is it wise to sell all one has? Or is the point to enlarge our concept of the kingdom—we should not count the cost, but change our lives radically? Parables like this one, and the comparisons with which the proverbs abound, make them exciting comments on the human scene. It would be a mistake to allow triteness and repetition to overpower the reach of the sayings.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 21)
2. **structure**
   1. “The collection in 10:1-22:16 contains 375 sayings, the numerical equivalent of the proper name *šlmh* (1:1; 10:1), as P. Skehan has pointed out [*Studies* 43-45].” [21] “. . . there are 375 single-line proverbs in . . . 10:1-22:16.” [31 n. 17] (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 21, 31 n. 17)
   2. “Many commentators favor a division between 10-15 (antithetic parallelism primarily) and 16:1-22:16 (synonymous and synthetic parallelism primarily).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 21)
      1. “The frequency of the “Yahweh sayings” from 14:26 on has suggested to Skehan [*Studies* 18-20, 35-36] that they were deliberately inserted in 14:26-16:15 by the editor in order to suture the two parts and thus attain the number 375.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 21)
   3. “There is no logical unity to the collections, although the sayings were not put together in a haphazard way. Catchwords (e.g., *lēb*, “heart,” “mind,” in 15:13-15) and common topics (“fool” in 26:1-12) can be recognized . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 19)
   4. “. . . in some cases there is a clear relativizing of a saying by means of juxtaposition. The meaning of 18:11 (riches are the strength of a person—cf. also 10:15a) is relativized by the saying in 18:10 that the name of the Lord is a strong tower. This impression is strengthened when one examines 18:12 (pride goes before a fall). Many sayings throughout the book are in a certain tension with one another, but rarely in such a striking context as this (cf. also 26:4-5).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 19)

Prov 22:17-24:22 and Amenemope

1. **introduction**
   1. Prov 22:17
      1. “. . . a new section clearly begins at this point. It is marked by admonitions, rather than sayings, usually in couplets (e.g., 22:22-23, 24-25, 26-27, etc.), in which reasons for the admonition are given (cf. Prov 3:1-12).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 23)
      2. “Most textual critics grant that there should be a title before 22:17, “the words of the wise” (see 24:23). It is found at the beginning in the Septuagint version, but it is swallowed up into v 17 in the Masoretic text.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 23) The nrsv of 22:17 begins, “The words of the wise: . . .”
   2. Because of its connection with Prov 22:17-24:22, Amenemope “is familiar to many readers of the Bible. It seems indisputable that there is some literary connection between the two . . ., and the instruction is certainly older (ca. 1200) than Proverbs.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 166)
   3. “The appearance of Amenemope in the *NAB* translation of Proverbs 22:19 is due to an emendation of a seemingly corrupt text, rendered in the *NJV* as “I let you know today—yes, you—. . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 31 n. 23) nrsv of Prov 22:19b, “I have made them known to you today—yes, to you.”
   4. “The connection [of Proverbs with Egyptian wisdom] was particularly clear for the section beginning with Prov 22:17, although similarities could be detected in verses scattered elsewhere [than 22:17-24:22].” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 23)
      1. Prov 16:1 = Amenemope 8:9-10 (“about human plans and divine activity”) (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 23)
      2. Prov 15:17 = Amenemope 9:7-8 (= 16:13-14) (“a “better” saying in favor of the repast of the poor accompanied by love”) (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 23)
      3. “Another correspondence may be pointed out: the contrast between the silent person and the “heated man,” which is frequent in Amenemope and in other Egyptian writings. This theme is to be found also in Prov 15:18; 22:24; 29:22. In Prov 17:27 the expressive phrase “cool of spirit” is used to indicate self-control in speaking.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 25)
      4. “. . . there are sayings in other collections of Proverbs (e.g., Prov 18:1 and chap. 18 [Miriam Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature* 2.157]) that are similar to those in the Egyptian work. In those instances there is no need to postulate a dependency of one on the other; these sayings merely illustrate the international, humanistic character of ancient Near Eastern wisdom.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 166)
   5. “One might not claim dependence if examples were scattered widely and were less striking.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 24)
      1. “After all, it is conceivable that a given saying acquired currency on its own strength and became common coin. . . . many ideas become common currency, and there is no need to speak of literary dependence in these instances.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 24)
         1. Bryce (*Legacy of Wisdom* 154-59) “points to the thought in Ptah-hotep (lines 115-16) about the contrast between divine and human activity. This also appears in the Instruction of Ani (8:9-10) and in Amenemope (19:16-17). The biblical equivalent is in Prov 16:1, the contrast between human plans and divine action.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 24)
         2. Prov 16:1, “The plans of the mind belong to mortals, but the answer of the tongue is from the Lord.”
   6. “the enigmatic *šlšwm* in Prov 22:20” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 23)
      1. “In the Masoretic tradition this has been translated as “formerly” and as “noble things.” Neither is very satisfactory . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 23)
      2. “. . . the ancient versions went in a different direction, reading the word as a number “three times” (Greek, and Latin Vulgate).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 23)
      3. “The emendation that is now generally favored is the reading “thirty.” This would be a clear reference to the “thirty chapters” (or “houses”) found in Amenemope’s work (27:7; *ANET*, 424).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 23)
   7. “The introduction of Prov 22:17-18 is remarkably like the introduction to Amenemope’s instruction (3:9-16; see *ANET*, 421-22). G. Bryce has made a list of the parallels in the same sequence as they occur in both introductions. [*A Legacy of Wisdom*. Lewisburg: Bucknell, 1979. 101-11.]

*Amenemope* *Proverbs*

your ears your ear

hear hear

what one says words of [23]

your heart your heart

it is beneficial it is pleasant

in the casket of your belly in your belly

on your tongue on your lips

* 1. G. Bryce (*A Legacy of Wisdom* 154-59): “of the nine sections dealing with different subjects in Prov 22:22-23:11, six begin with a word or phrase that corresponds exactly to its counterpart in Amenemope.” (Qtd. in Murphy, *Tree of Life* 24)

“*Amenemope* *Proverbs*

4:4 robbing a poor man 22:22 rob the poor

11:13 befriend a hot man 22:24 befriend a man of heat

27:16 skillful in his occupation 22:29 skillful in his occupation

23:13 eat . . . ruler 23:1 eat . . . ruler

9:14 labor to seek to gain wealth 23:4 labor to gain wealth

7:12 remove . . . landmark 23:10 remove . . . landmark

* 1. “There is no need here to note other similarities (see *ANET*, 424, n. 46).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 23-24)
  2. “What is the nature of the relationship between the two works? It is not likely that both depend upon a third work, and the dependence of the biblical chapters on the Egyptian seems settled by the early dating of Amenemope’s writing (in the Ramesside period, ca. 1200).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 24)
  3. “. . . the Israelite writer was quite independent; he adapted the Egyptian admonitions rather freely to suit his own purpose.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 24)
     1. “His reference to the “thirty” in 22:20 is a general reference to the Egyptian work and does not indicate that he is offering thirty corresponding sayings. Efforts to identify precisely thirty sayings in 22:17-24:22 have not been successful, and in fact it seems as if the Egyptian connection ceases at 23:11.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 24)
  4. “Egyptologists have noted the religious tone of the work of Amenemope. Miriam Licht­heim [*Ancient Egyptian Literature* 2.146] has remarked on its “quality of inwardness,” a shift to contemplation and humility. This may explain the particular openness of [24] Hebrew wisdom to this work.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 24-25)

Prov 24:23-34

1. **title**: the title (24:23, “These also are sayings of the wise”) “associates it with the previous sayings of the wise (22:17), perhaps as an appendix.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 25)
2. **contents**: “It is a mixture of sayings and admonitions in traditional wisdom style. An “example story” is related in vv 30-32 concerning the sluggard, followed by a reprise of 6:10-11.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 25)

second Solomonic collection (Prov 25-29)

1. **Prov 25:1**
   1. “The collection in chaps. 25-29 is introduced (25:1) as “also the proverbs of Solomon” and was transmitted (the word *he`tîqû* is unusual, ordinarily meaning “remove”) by the men of Hezekiah (king of Judah in the time of Isaiah at the end of the eighth century).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 22)
2. **structure**
   1. “Many claim that there are two major collections here because of differences between chaps. 25-27 and 28-29. The former contain many striking comparisons and metaphors, and relatively little antithetic parallelism. In chaps. 28-29 these features are reversed, and in addition, the old just-unjust antithesis is more frequent.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 22)
   2. “A more sophisticated analysis of chaps. 25-27 has been proposed by R. Van Leeuwen . . .” (Van Leeuwen, R. *Context and Meaning in Proverbs 25-27*. SBLDS 96. Atlanta: Scholars, 1988.) (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 22)
      1. “. . . 25:2-27, a “proverb poem” addressed primarily to courtiers, dealing with social rank and social conflict;
      2. “26:1-12, a proverb poem dealing especially with the fool (*ksyl*), and the various life situations that call for a wisdom approach;
      3. “26:13-16, a proverb poem dealing with the [22] sluggard (*`ṣl*);
      4. “26:17-28, a poem that develops themes taken from chap. 25;
      5. “27:1-22, a collection of miscellaneous proverbs set out in couplets (vv 1-2,3-4, etc.);
      6. “27:23-27, an admonitory poem that can be read as advice to a farmer but in a metaphorical sense can be taken as addressed to the king, as “shepherd” of his people.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 22-23)
   3. “Chapters 28-29 lack the bite of 25-27; the vivid language and comparisons are absent, and familiar contrasts are drawn between the just and the wicked, and the rich and the poor.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 23)

words of Agur (Prov 30)

1. **introduction**
   1. “. . . there is no agreement about where his [Agur’s] words end (vv 4? 6? 14?). We can be certain that vv 1-4 are his.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 25)
2. **Prov 30:1-4**
   1. Prov 30:1, “The words of Agur son of Jakeh. An oracle. Thus says the man: I am weary, O God, I am weary, O God. How can I prevail? 2Surely I am too stupid to be human; I do not have human understanding. 3I have not learned wisdom, nor have I knowledge of the holy ones. 4Who has ascended to heaven and come down? Who has gathered the wind in the hollow of the hand? Who has wrapped up the waters in a garment? Who has established all the ends of the earth? What is the person’s name? And what is the name of the person’s child? Surely you know!”
   2. Prov 30:1
      1. ““Words of Agur, son of Yakeh the Massaite” is the title in 30:1 . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 25)
      2. “Agur” means “I am a sojourner.” [25] Murphy thinks Agur is fictional: he says of Lemuel (31:1-9), “In contrast to the identity of Agur in 30:1, this man seems to be real . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 25-26)
      3. “We know nothing about Agur, son of Yakeh. His place of origin (?), Massa, which also identifies Lemuel in 31:1, may be a region in Arabia.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 25)
      4. Agur’s words “are called a *nĕ´um*, “oracle” or “pronouncement,” and are best interpreted as a riddle.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 25)
      5. “His opening words about Ithiel seem to be textually corrupt.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 25)
         1. “The translation of the MT in the *NIV* is “The speech of the man to Ithiel, to Ithiel and Ucal.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 31 n. 27)
         2. “They are generally emended to a statement about his impotence before God, which is further developed in the statements of ignorance in vv 2-3.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 25)
   3. Prov 30:4
      1. Prov 30:4, “Who has ascended to heaven and come down? Who has gathered the wind in the hollow of the hand? Who has wrapped up the waters in a garment? Who has established all the ends of the earth? What is the person’s name? And what is the name of the person’s child? Surely you know!”
      2. “The questions in v 4 seem to announce a riddle [thus Skehan, *Studies* 42-43], and to challenge the reader for an answer: “What is his name, what is his son’s name . . . ?” The clue to the names is the description in v 4 of one who went up to heaven and came down, and one who bound up the waters in a cloak. We might guess that the latter refers to God the creator (Gen 1:6-10; Ps 104:5-9). But who has gone up and come down? Skehan associates this with the Jacob of Gen 18:12-13 (Jacob’s “ladder”). Now Jacob describes himself as a “sojourner” to Pharaoh in Gen 47:9. This brings us back to the name of Agur, which means “I am a sojourner.” Agur, then, would be the “son’s name” (v 4). The name of the one who is described as binding up the water can only be the Lord. Now the subtlety of the riddle emerges. If Agur is son of Yakeh, then Yqh must be some kind of acronym for *yhwh qādôš hû´* (the Lord, holy is he). On this interpretation, we have the answer to the riddle, and Agur must be understood as a reference, not to a non-Israelite, but to Jacob/Israel, God’s “son” (Exod 4:22; cf. also Wis 10:10).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 25)
         1. Exod 4:22, “you shall say to Pharaoh, ‘Thus says the Lord: Israel is my firstborn son.’”
         2. Wis 10:10, “When a righteous man fled from his brother’s wrath, she guided him on straight paths; she showed him the kingdom of God, and gave him knowledge of holy things; she prospered him in his labors, and increased the fruit of his toil.”
3. **Prov 30:5-6**
   1. Prov 30:5-6, “Every word of God proves true; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him. 6Do not add to his words, or else he will rebuke you, and you will be found a liar.”
   2. “It is possible to construe vv 5-6 as a reply to Agur’s statement of ignorance (v 2; for an “ignorant” man, he turns out to be adept at riddles!). The verses are an instruction about the reliability of the word of God (based upon [25] Ps 18:30 and Deut 4:2) and its sufficiency—nothing is to be added to it.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 25-26)
      1. Deut 4:2, “You must neither add anything to what I command you nor take away anything from it, but keep the commandments of the Lord your God with which I am charging you.”
      2. Ps 18:30, “This God—his way is perfect; the promise of the Lord proves true; he is a shield for all who take refuge in him.”
4. **Prov 30:7-9**
   1. Prov 30:7-9, “Two things I ask of you; do not deny them to me before I die: 8Remove far from me falsehood and lying; give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with the food that I need, 9or I shall be full, and deny you, and say, “Who is the Lord?” or I shall be poor, and steal, and profane the name of my God.”
   2. “Because the prayer in vv 7-9 is in the first person singular, like Agur’s pronouncement, it is possible to see it as a continuation of his “words.” The form anticipates the numerical proverbs that dominate the rest of the chapter. Two things are asked for in vv 7-9: honesty and the means to steer a middle way between riches and poverty.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 26)
5. **Prov 30:10**
   1. Prov 30:10, “Do not slander a servant to a master, or the servant will curse you, and you will be held guilty.”
   2. “Verse 10 has the appearance of an errant saying that may have been inserted here because of the catchword “curse” beginning v 11.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 26)
6. **Prov 30:11-14**
   1. Prov 30:11-14, “There are those who curse their fathers and do not bless their mothers. 12There are those who are pure in their own eyes yet are not cleansed of their filthiness. 13There are those—how lofty are their eyes, how high their eyelids lift! 14There are those whose teeth are swords, whose teeth are knives, to devour the poor from off the earth, the needy from among mortals.”
   2. “Verses 11-14 are a kind of numerical saying, in that four generations (the word *dôr* begins each verse), or groups, of wicked people are characterized.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 26)
7. **Prov 30:15-33**
   1. “The pattern of the numerical proverb is unmistakable in the rest of the chapter.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 26)
   2. 30:15-16 (“The leech has two daughters; “Give, give,” they cry. Three things are never satisfied; four never say, “Enough”: 16Sheol, the barren womb, the earth ever thirsty for water, and the fire that never says, “Enough.””): “Verses 15-16 associate, by way of contrast, the saying about the two daughters of the leech with things that do not “give” but are inexhaustible in taking.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 26)
   3. 30:17 (“The eye that mocks a father and scorns to obey a mother will be pecked out by the ravens of the valley and eaten by the vultures”): “Verse 17 about the punishment for those who reject their parents is interruptive.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 26)
   4. 30:18-19 (“Three things are too wonderful for me; four I do not understand: 19the way of an eagle in the sky, the way of a snake on a rock, the way of a ship on the high seas, and the way of a man with a girl”): “The numerical proverb in 18-19 is typical of nature wisdom. [Murphy, Roland E. “The Interpretation of Old Testament Wisdom Literature.” *Int* 23 (1969): 289-301.] In each saying a “way” is admired. Does this refer to the fact that no trace is left by the items that are mentioned? Or is the marvel admired by the sage the mystery of movement (the bird’s flight, the serpent’s progress without legs, the ship’s ability to stay afloat and to go forward)? It seems better to say that the point of the comparison lies in the term “way,” which occurs four times. Then one can see that in every case the way is irrecoverable. One cannot recover the ways of the eagle or serpent or ship. In the culminating line the sage wonders how a particular human situation or way between man and woman came about, the marvelous attraction that brings them together; this, too, is a mystery that can never be recovered.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 26)
   5. 30:20 (“This is the way of an adulteress: she eats, and wipes her mouth, and says, “I have done no wrong””): “In v 20 another “way” has been added, which goes beyond the three-four pattern enunciated in v 18: it is the “way” of a particular woman, the adulteress, and one that is in conflict with the fourth marvel of sexual attraction.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 26)
   6. 30:21-23 (“Under three things the earth trembles; under four it cannot bear up: 22a slave when he becomes king, and a fool when glutted with food; 23an unloved woman when she gets a husband, and a maid when she succeeds her mistress”): “The next numerical proverb (21-23) deals with the general topos of the “world upside down” and gives four examples of proper societal hierarchy.” (Van Leeuwen, R. “Proverbs 30:21-23 and the Biblical World Upside Down.” *JBL* 105 (1986): 599-610.) (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 26)
   7. 30:24-28 (“Four things on earth are small, yet they are exceedingly wise: 25the ants are a people without strength, yet they provide their food in the summer; 26the badgers are a people without power, yet they make their homes in the rocks; 27the locusts have no king, yet all of them march in rank; 28the lizard can be grasped in the hand, yet it is found in kings’ palaces”): “Verses 24-28 single out four of the smallest animals and praise their “wisdom.”” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 26)
   8. 30:29-31 (“Three things are stately in their stride; four are stately in their gait: 30the lion, which is mightiest among wild animals and does not turn back before any; 31the strutting rooster, the he-goat, and a king striding before his people”): “Although the text . . . is uncertain, it clearly exalts royal power.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 26)
   9. 30:32-33 (“If you have been foolish, exalting yourself, or if you have been devising evil, put your hand on your mouth. 33For as pressing milk produces curds, and pressing the nose produces blood, so pressing anger produces strife”): “The string of numerical proverbs closes with an admonition against pride: be silent, for persistence (“pressure” three times in v 33) will not work.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 26)

words of Lemuel (Prov 31:1-9)

1. “The “words of Lemuel” (31:1-9) are really those of his mother. . . . Verses 1-9 are unusual in that they are ascribed to a queen mother.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 26)
2. “We know nothing about either of them [Lemuel or his mother]. In contrast to the identity of Agur in 30:1, this man seems to be real, and his name can be understood to mean “(belonging) to God.”” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 26)
3. “Advice to a prince is in the tradition of international wisdom, as exemplified in the Instruction of Merikare [*ANET* 414-19] and the Babylonian *Advice to a Prince* [*BWL* 110-15].” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 26)
4. “The prohibitions are directed against sexual excess and intoxication, and they urge the king to justice.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 26)
5. “This [26] bit of royal wisdom can be understood to have been “democratized” within the biblical tradition: what is fit for a king is fit for all.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 26-27)

the ideal wife (Prov 31:10-31)

1. **introduction**
   1. Prov 31:10-31 “concludes the words of Lemuel . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 27)
   2. Prov 31:10-31 is an acrostic poem, “as in Sirach, where the acrostic in 51:13-30 is the conclusion.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 27)
   3. Murphy calls this section “The ideal of the worthy wife (31:10-31).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 27)
   4. “An *´ēšet ḥayil* (31:10, literally, “a woman of strength”) was already celebrated in 12:4 as the “crown” of her husband. [Prov 12:4, “A good wife is the crown of her husband, but she who brings shame is like rottenness in his bones.”] The book now ends with an acrostic poem describing such a woman.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 27)
   5. “One is reminded of 18:22, which implies that one who finds a wife finds happiness and the favor of the Lord.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 27) Prov 18:22, “He who finds a wife finds a good thing, and obtains favor from the Lord.”
   6. “The capabilities of this woman are simply astonishing, so much so that one must ask if this ideal is really proposed for imitation. O. Plöger [*Sprüche Salomos* 376] claims that this figure is real, but the problem is to find her.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 27)
2. **the ideal wife and Wisdom**
   1. “. . . this woman is described in a manner reminiscent of Wisdom herself . . . Wisdom and the good wife seem intertwined. . . . Rather than being a model for performing the everyday tasks of marital life (who could perform all the things this woman does?), she is a symbol of wisdom, or to quote A. Bar­ucq [*Livre des Proverbes* 230], “a form of wisdom.” The poem is a pendant to the picture of Lady Wisdom presented in 9:4-6.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 27)
   2. O. Plöger (*Sprüche Salomos* 376) “correlates her with the question of Job 28:12, 20 about the location of Wisdom: where is she to be found?” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 27)
   3. “. . . she is described as more precious than corals (v 10; cf. 3:15; 8:11).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 27)
   4. ““Happy the man who finds wisdom” proclaims the sage in 3:13.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 27)
   5. “Ben Sira says almost the same thing—“Happy the husband of a good wife” (*´iššâ ṭôbâ*)—in Sir 26:1, and a good wife is a gift to one who fears the Lord (Sir 26:3).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 27)
3. **Prov 30:10-31 as a conclusion to Proverbs**
   1. “As T. McCreesh has noted, it serves as a summary, or “coda,” which concludes the book in a significant way . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 27)
      1. McCreesh, T. “Wisdom as Wife: Proverbs 31:10-31.” *RB* 92 (1985): 25-46.
      2. Camp, Claudia. *Wisdom and the Feminine in the Book of Proverbs*. BLS 11. Sheffield: Almond, 1985. 90-93, 251-52.
   2. “One may even find here a subtle riddle. McCreesh correlates the opening line, “Who can find . . .?” with the answer of Samson to his opponents, “You would not have found my riddle” (Judg 14:18): “Could the poet of Prov 31:10a be suggesting that the woman is not only incomparable, but a riddle whose identity is to be solved, discovered?” [McCreesh, “Wisdom as Wife” 38] This is a delicate allusion, but support for it can be found in reference to the riddles of the sages in 1:6 and in 30:14, the riddle of the “words of Agur.” It would seem that the last two chapters contain riddles; 30 begins with that of Agur, and 31 concludes . . . with the riddle in vv 10-31.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 27)
   3. David N. Freedman (letter to Murphy): “it is possible to connect the description of the virtuous woman with the alphabetic scheme. The description encompasses all the virtues and attributes of such a woman, as we would say in English idiom, from A to Z; so here one runs through the whole alphabet from *alef* to *tav*, running the gamut of her qualities and accomplishments, [31] and thereby providing a fitting conclusion to the book . . .”” (Qtd. in Murphy, *Tree of Life* 31-32 n. 32)

theology of Proverbs

1. **introduction**
   1. “For a general summary [of Proverbs’ themes], see”: Skladny, U. *Die ältesten Spruchsammlungen in Israel*. Berlin: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1961. (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 31 n. 19)
   2. “The commentary of A. Barucq is built upon a topical treatment . . .” Barucq, A. *Le Livre des Proverbes*. SB. Paris: Gabalda, 1964. (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 31 n. 19)
2. **Proverbs as a moral handbook**
   1. “Chapter 8 has had a distinguished history in theology, serving as a source in the Arian controversies of the early Church.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 28)
   2. “But theologians hardly advert to the book as a whole as a theological source. [Murphy, Roland E. “Proverbs and Theological Exegesis.” *The Hermeneutical Quest*, ed. D. G. Miller. J. L. Mays Festschrift. Allison Park: Pickwick, 1986. 87-95.] It is not the kind of work that finds commentators, except for the great reformer Melanchthon, who wrote two commentaries on it!” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 28)
   3. “By and large it is viewed as a kind of source for moral guidance, and here it rates behind the Torah itself. It is no small contribution, and one can easily imagine the importance of the collections as means of moral formation among the Israelites. The range of the sayings, along with a content that aims at persuasion rather than enforcement, must have made it an attractive source for establishing the group ethos.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 28)
   4. But “This somewhat utilitarian approach to the book is still not adequate. It flattens it out to the status of a moral handbook.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 28)
3. **wise vs. foolish**
   1. “The theme of the just (wise) and wicked (fool) is dominant in chaps. 10-15. These chapters all deal with conduct and the corresponding fate. They are so general that they seem to lose their proverbial character. C. Westermann claims that they are the development of one [21] basic idea, comparable to the monotonous elaboration of the same ideas in the speeches of Job’s friends. [Westermann, C. “Weisheit im Sprichwort.” *Schalom: Studien zu Glaube und Geschichte Israels*, ed. K.-H. Bernhardt. A. Jepsen Festschrift. Stuttgart: Calwer, 1971. 73-85 (esp. 84-85 n. 7).] Here the aim of the teacher seems to be the emphasis of a lesson, and not experience.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 21-22)
   2. “At the same time, various virtues (such as humility or generosity) as well as vices (such as dishonesty or pride) can be given due recognition.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 22)
4. **speech**
   1. “The topic of speech deserves special mention. After all, words are the coin of the wisdom realm. In a world without our mass media, the power of the word reigned supreme.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 22)
   2. W. Bühlmann found in the Solomonic collections some 60 sayings dealing with proper speech . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 22)
      1. Bühlmann, W. *Vom Rechten Reden und Schweigen*. OBO 12. Fribourg: Universitätsverlag, 1976.
      2. See also Huwiler, “Control of Reality,” chap. 4.
      3. “He found several judgments about proper speech:
         1. “it is precious, comparable to silver and gold (10:20; 20:15);
         2. “it is expressed graciously and eloquently (25:11; 15:2; 16:21, 23; 22:11);
         3. “it is beneficent (16:24; 15:26; 12:25);
         4. “it is gentle (15:1; 25:15);
         5. “it is “just” or open, even to giving reprimand (16:13; 10:10; 25:12);
         6. “it is honest and reliable (12:19, 22; 14:5, 25);
         7. “it is appropriate to its time (15:23);
         8. “it brings good to others, as a fountain of life (10:11; 13:14) or as a means of deliverance (11:9).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 22)
      4. “. . . a study of improper speech (lies, calumny, prattling, etc.) would have been material for another book.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 22)
   3. “By and large, words will be wise because they are few (almost imitating the terse style of the saying!)—because the fewer the words, presumably the more intelligent the observation, and the more the speaker is in control of thinking and less prone to error. This mentality is reflected in many proverbs: be stingy with words for whatever reason (17:27; 10:19); think before you speak (15:28; 29:20); listen before you speak (18:13); watch your tongue (13:3; 21:23). This all implies that one knows how to observe silence, again for whatever reason: you stand to gain more (12:16, 23), and you may even be considered wise (17:28)!” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 22)
   4. “The importance of silence is underscored in the Egyptian teachings also, especially by Ptah-hotep . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 22)
5. **retribution**: for retribution in Proverbs, see the handout, “Retribution.”

## TOBIT 4:5-19

nrsv

5Revere the Lord all your days, my son,

and refuse to sin or to transgress his commandments.

Live uprightly all the days of your life,

and do not walk in the ways of wrongdoing;

6for those who act in accordance with truth will prosper in all their activities.

To all those who practice righteousness 7give alms from your possessions,

and do not let your eye begrudge the gift when you make it.

Do not turn your face away from anyone who is poor,

and the face of God will not be turned away from you.

8If you have many possessions, make your gift from them in proportion;

if few, do not be afraid to give according to the little you have.

9So you will be laying up a good treasure for yourself against the day of necessity.

10For almsgiving delivers from death

and keeps you from going into the Darkness.

11Indeed, almsgiving, for all who practice it, is an excellent offering in the presence of the Most High.

12Beware, my son, of every kind of fornication. First of all, marry a woman from among the descendants of your ancestors; do not marry a foreign woman, who is not of your father’s tribe; for we are the descendants of the prophets. Remember, my son, that Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, our ancestors of old, all took wives from among their kindred. They were blessed in their children, and their posterity will inherit the land. 13So now, my son, love your kindred, and in your heart do not disdain your kindred, the sons and daughters of your people, by refusing to take a wife for yourself from among them. For in pride there is ruin and great confusion. And in idleness there is loss and dire poverty, because idleness is the mother of famine.

14Do not keep over until the next day the wages of those who work for you, but pay them at once.

If you serve God you will receive payment.

Watch yourself, my son, in everything you do,

and discipline yourself in all your conduct.

15And what you hate, do not do to anyone.

Do not drink wine to excess or let drunkenness go with you on your way.

16Give some of your food to the hungry,

and some of your clothing to the naked.

Give all your surplus as alms,

and do not let your eye begrudge your giving of alms.

17Place your bread on the grave of the righteous,

but give none to sinners.

18Seek advice from every wise person

and do not despise any useful counsel.

19At all times bless the Lord God, and ask him that your ways may be made straight and that all your paths and plans may prosper. For none of the nations has understanding, but the Lord himself will give them good counsel; but if he chooses otherwise, he casts down to deepest Hades.

So now, my child, remember these commandments, and do not let them be erased from your heart.

## JOB

1. **introduction**
   1. “The well-known phrase “the patience of Job” comes from the New Testament, not the Old. The Epistle of James (5:11) points to the *hypomonē* of Job as an example to the community. The word was rendered “patience” in the King James Version, but modern translations usually and correctly render it as “steadfastness.” That is exact; Job is steadfast, not patient.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 33)
   2. “The book is rightly placed in the category of wisdom literature. . . . The events of Israel’s history are not referred to, in contrast to the type of motif sounded in Ps 89:50 (“Where are your ancient favors?”). Job never has recourse to the sacred traditions. The disputants carry on their discussion solely on the level of (international) wisdom. . . . it stays within the perspective of such wisdom. Its sapiential character is shown by the many explicit references to wisdom and by the abundance of wisdom themes that appear.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 33)
      1. explicit references
         1. “Job sarcastically refers to the “wisdom” of the three friends (12:2; 13:5).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 33)
         2. “The traditions of the wise are invoked by Eliphaz in 15:18.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 33)
         3. “Wisdom is associated with God in 9:4, 12:13, and 39:17.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 33)
         4. “The most obvious and perhaps telling words concerning wisdom are in chap. 28: where is wisdom to be found (vv 12, 20)?” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 33)
         5. “As a class, “wise men” are addressed by Elihu in 34:2 (cf. 34:10, 34), who also admonishes Job that he will teach him “wisdom” (33:33).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 33)
      2. “More important than the explicit references are several wisdom themes that float in and out of the dialogue, and that are found also in the wisdom books . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 33)
         1. “A preoccupation with creation: Job 12:10-25; 36:22-37:24; chaps. 38-41.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 33)
            1. “See Prov 8:22-31; 30:15-31; Eccl 1:4-11; Sir 42:15-43:33.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 33)
         2. “The importance of the name, or memory: Job 18:16-18.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 34
            1. “See Prov 10:7; Eccl 2:16; 6:4; 9:5; Sir 39:9-11; 41:11-13; Wis 2:4.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 34)
         3. “Life as onerous: Job 7:1-2; 14:1-6.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 34)
            1. “See Eccl 2:17, 23; Sir 40:1-10.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 34)
         4. “The traditions of the fathers: Job 8:8-10.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 34)
            1. “See Prov 4:1-5; 5:13; Eccl 2:13-15; 8:17; Sir 8:8-9; 39:1-2.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 34)
         5. “Personification of Wisdom: Job 28.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 34)
            1. “See Prov 1, 8, 9; Sir 24; Wis 7-9.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 34)
         6. “The problem of retribution . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 34)
            1. See “Eccl 4:1-2; 6:1-6; 8:5-15; Sir 2:1-6; 11:4-6; 39:16-41:13.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 34)
   3. “While the Book of Job can comfortably be classified within wisdom literature, it remains wisdom of an unusual kind. Scholars often speak of a crisis of wisdom in connection with Job and Ecclesiastes.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 34)
   4. “The main protagonists, Job and his three friends, are not Israelites.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 33)
      1. “Their origins outside Israel are carefully noted.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 33)
      2. “With the exception of 12:9 (in the mouth of Job), the sacred name of the Lord (*yhwh*) is never mentioned by them in the great debate (chaps. 3-31).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 33)
      3. “. . . the Book of Job has been compared with several extrabiblical compositions . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 33)
      4. “This does not mean it is not Israelite. It is a book of Israelite wisdom . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 33)
   5. the historicity of Job
      1. “Did he ever exist?” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 35)
      2. Ezek 14:13-14
         1. “Ezek 14:13-14, “Mortal, when a land sins against me by acting faithlessly, and I stretch out my hand against it, and break its staff of bread and send famine upon it, and cut off from it human beings and animals, 14even if Noah, Daniel, and Job, these three, were in it, they would save only their own lives by their righteousness, says the Lord God.”
         2. “These three would save only themselves because of their virtue, but no one else (cf. Abraham’s pleas in Gen 18:22ff.). It is clear that these are cited as examples of unquestionably holy men. Noah is of course familiar as the blameless man who survived the flood (saving his family). “Daniel” should probably be identified with a hero known from Ugaritic literature as a just person (see The Tale of Aqhat in *ANET*, 149-55). In such company Job must also be accounted a saint. The Noah of Gen 6-9 cannot be said to be a historical character. *Dn´l* of ancient Ugarit seems more typical than real. What about Job?” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 35)
      3. “He may indeed have been a historical individual whose reputation for piety was handed down for generations.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 35)
      4. “But the style of the narrative in Job 1-2 is in the legendary mode and does not allow us to draw historical conclusions. The author deliberately chose the figure of a well-known holy man as the hero of his work. The artificiality of the structure and events in these chapters suggests art more than reality. Indeed the high and studied quality of the poetry throughout the speeches of the book forbids us to think they were spontaneously composed by Job (on a dung heap, according to the LXX in 2:8) and by the friends in a half-hour debate. The entire work is a sophisticated literary achievement.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 35)
      5. “This probability keeps us from historicizing the scenes in the prologue and in the actual course of the debate.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 35)
      6. “Thus the meeting between the Lord and the Satan in the heavenly council is imaginative.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 35)
2. **the prologue**
   1. structure (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 35)

1:1-5 “Job’s sturdy piety and prosperity.”

1:6-12 “the interview between the Lord and the Satan in the heavenly court.”

1:13-19 “the disasters that wipe out Job’s possessions and children.”

1:20-22 “Job’s reaction.”

2:1-6 “the second interview between the Lord and the Satan in the heavenly court.”

2:7-8 “the affliction of Job’s person.”

2:9-13 “Job’s reaction.”

* + 1. “The scenes have been deliberately and artfully contrived to set before the reader a picture of a living saint, one who has won divine approval for his lifestyle, and who holds firmly to God despite cruel afflictions.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 35)
  1. “The dialogue style carries most of the action: the repetitive interviews between the Lord and the Satan; the artificial and mechanical announcements of the four disasters by Job’s servants, one on the heels of the other. These disasters alternate between human (Sabaeans, Chaldeans) and natural (fire, wind) calamities.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 35)
  2. first dialogue between God and Satan
     1. Satan
        1. “In this book Satan is one of the “sons of God,” the members of the heavenly court who do the Lord’s bidding and [35] serve as his counsel (cf. Isa 6:8 [sc. 6:2]). Clearly he is not the “devil” of New Testament times.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 35-36) Isa 6:2, “Seraphs were in attendance above him; each had six wings: with two they covered their faces, and with two they covered their feet, and with two they flew.”
        2. ““Satan” designates his office, an adversary (here, of Job, and in Zech 3:1, of Joshua; cf. 1 Chr 21:1), a kind of prosecuting attorney.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 36)
           1. Zech 3:1-2, “Then he showed me the high priest Joshua standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him. 2And the Lord said to Satan, “The Lord rebuke you, O Satan! The Lord who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is not this man a brand plucked from the fire?””
           2. 1 Chr 21:1, “Satan stood up against Israel, and incited David to count the people of Israel.”
        3. “To fulfill this function [of adversary], he [Satan] “roams the whole earth” (Job 1:7), and he is in a position to know who are the saints and who are the sinners.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 36)
     2. Satan’s proposal
        1. “He [Satan] is unwilling to agree with the Lord’s verdict about Job, but he is unable to point to a concrete sinful action. So he astutely raises the question of motivation (1:9, one of the most profound questions in the Bible, and on the lips of Satan!).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 36) Job 1:9, “Then Satan answered the Lord, “Does Job fear God for nothing?””
        2. Satan’s motives
           1. “From a perverse point of view, one might even say that Satan is concerned about God’s true glory, that God not be deceived by these humans whom Satan knows so well!” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 36)
           2. “But perhaps we are invited to question Satan’s motivations, too. Is he genuinely concerned about the divine glory, or rather is he out to score high as a prosecuting attorney? If the author does not raise these questions (explicitly, at least), it is difficult for the reader to escape them.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 36)
     3. God
        1. “The scene in the heavenly court . . . raises a nagging question: what kind of a God is this who is willing to prove a point of honor by sorely afflicting a faithful servant?” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 36)
        2. “The scene presupposes an understanding of God that the modern reader may be loath to share. [In] Ancient Israel . . . There was a dark side, or underside, to God that was simply accepted. This dark side resulted from the worldview that attributed to divine agency all that happens, evil as well as good (cf. Deut 32:39; Isa 45:7).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 36)
           1. Deut 32:39, “there is no god beside me. I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal; and no one can deliver from my hand.”
           2. Isa 45:6-7, (God to Cyrus,) “I arm you, though you do not know me, 6so that they may know, from the rising of the sun and from the west, that there is no one besides me; I am the Lord, and there is no other. 7I form light and create darkness, I make weal and create woe; I the Lord do all these things.”
           3. Lam 3:38, “Is it not from the mouth of the Most High that good and bad come?”
           4. Amos 3:6, “Does disaster befall a city, unless the Lord has done it?”
        3. “God seems arbitary and mysterious. Perhaps the author was not fully aware of how he had put the Lord in a “no win” situation. If God refused the Satan’s challenge, would he not have seemed to be uncertain of the loyalty of his servants, and willing to be a partner to a *do ut des* arrangement whereby he “buys” obedience in return for favor? In a sense, God had to accept the challenge or else appear as one who does not (or fears to) trust the loyalty of his followers.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 36-37)
     4. Is human love of God selfless?
        1. “At first sight the Lord might appear to be indifferent to the well-being of his servant. He seems to accept the Satan’s wager in order to be certain of the loyalty of his subject, Job. But this may be a misreading. It fails to take into account the issue that the author wants to raise: do human beings serve God for God’s sake or for their own profit (Job 1:9)?” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 36)
        2. “This issue has been a perennial one in theological discussion. Do I love God or myself when I love God? Is a selfless, disinterested worship of God possible?” (“On the “degrees” of the love of God, see the classic treatise of Bernard . . .” *De Diligendo Deo*. *The Works of Bernard of Clairvaux*. Cistercian Fathers 13. Washington: Consortium, 1974. 91-132. [46 n. 1]) (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 36)
        3. “The Satan brings this point to center stage when he questions the divine approbation of Job as God-fearing: Is Job pious because of the divine blessings? Does he truly fear God? Does Job act “for nought” (1:9, *ḥinnām*)? The phrase is deliberately taken up by the Lord in the second scene when Satan is charged with accusing Job “for nought” or in vain (2:3).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 36)
        4. “The issue is not divine caprice, but human sincerity, and the author has portrayed the issue by means of the exchange between the Lord and the Satan.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 36)
        5. “Hence it is off the mark to be scandalized by the description of the Lord [36] in Job 1-2.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 36-37)
  3. Satan destroys Job’s possessions.
     1. “. . . the Lord gives approval to the testing that Satan proposes.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 36)
     2. “The Satan is given leave to lay waste Job’s possessions in a series of cataclysmic events that are, as it were, hurried over, till one arrives at Job’s noble response: “. . . blessed be the name of the Lord” (1:21). The author is careful to note that Job remains sinless.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 37)
  4. second dialogue between God and Satan
     1. “. . . the Lord and the Satan go through the same question-and-answer preliminary . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 37)
     2. “. . . the Lord taunts him about Job’s holding fast to his integrity.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 37)
     3. “The Satan increases the pressure, and now Job’s person is the target.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 37)
  5. Satan destroys Job’s health.
     1. “He is smitten with a disease whose nature is difficult to determine, except that he is driven to scraping himself with potsherds.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 37)
  6. Job’s wife
     1. “She suggests to Job what the Satan had already predicted that Job would do: “bless” (i.e., curse—as in 1:11, 2:5, this is a euphemism) God.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 37)
     2. “The reaction of Job’s wife has been variously interpreted.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 37)
        1. “Her question can be construed as a taunt (note that “hold fast to integrity” in 2:9 echoes God’s words in 2:3); she possibly means that Job should at least curse God before dying.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 46 n. 2)
        2. “Or else, Job should curse God, and the divine power would strike him dead.” [46 n. 2] “Such a reaction [cursing God] would have been a way out, in the sense that it would call down divine intervention to destroy Job.” [37] (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 37, 46 n. 2)
  7. Job’s second response
     1. “He stands by the biblical view that God is the cause of all things, evil as well as good . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 37)
     2. “Or is there a difference between 1:21-22 and 2:10? [46] . . . Could the text be signaling a weakening of Job’s resolve?” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 46-47 n. 3)
        1. “. . . J. G. Janzen [*Job*. Interpretation. Atlanta: Knox, 1985] has made a strong case for movement, for change in Job from the first to the second scene.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 46 n. 3)
        2. “. . . Janzen points to the replacing of “Lord” by “God” . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 46 n. 3)
        3. 2:10 is “a statement that is not a [46] profession of faith (as in 1:21), but a rhetorical question in which Job can hide under the “we.”” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 46-47 n. 3)
        4. “The verdict of the writer in 2:10 is expressed differently than in 1:22.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 47 n. 3)
        5. “Already the Talmud, followed by the great Jewish commentator Rashi, suggested that Job sinned in his heart. The way is prepared then for the outburst in chap. 3.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 46-47 n. 3)
        6. “However, the author notes for the second time that Job did nothing wrong.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 46-47 n. 3)
  8. Job’s three friends arrive.
     1. “Job’s three friends arrive, ostensibly to give him comfort. The first sign of that is their gestures of mourning (2:12). So appalling is Job’s condition that silence (for a week!) is the only suitable reaction. (Later on, 13:5, Job acidly remarks that silence is their only wisdom!)” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 37)

1. **dialogues** (**Job 3-31**)
   1. “The temptation to inflexibility is clearly exemplified by the three friends of Job, who read Job’s affliction as a pointer to his sinfulness.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 12)
   2. “The length of the dialogue between Job and the three friends would of itself suggest the importance that the author attached to it.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 37)
   3. “The pattern is simple: Job alternates with each of the friends . . . in three cycles (3-14; 15-21; 22-27).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 37)
   4. “There is a snag in chaps. 26-27, where Zophar is left without a speech. If this is not directly attributable to the author, the disappearance of Zophar’s speech must have occurred very early on. The present form of the text is supported by the scroll of the Targum of Job (11QtgJob), which was discovered at Qumran only several years ago and dated to the first century c.e. [van der Ploeg, J., and A. van der Woude, eds. *Le Targum de Job de la grotte XI de Qumran*. Leiden: Brill, 1971.] None of the solutions proposed by scholars for the redistribution of the lines in chaps. 25-27 are more than hypotheses.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 37)
   5. “It [the dialogue, Job 3-31] is marked by verisimilitude, a faithfulness to reality. [Does Murphy mean that the debate realistically portrays the sort of discussion that people have about such topics as divine retribution?—Hahn) [38] . . . The course of the dialogue is uneven; that is, there is no logical response of one speech to another. It has often been remarked that the disputants seem to be talking past each other. Perhaps there is no other way in a discussion of such a mystery. The three are allowed to give their defense of the traditional theology, while Job is entitled to vent his feelings. The dispute is triggered by Job’s powerful lament in which he curses the day of his birth and asks “why?” (chap. 3).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 38-39)
   6. “The temper of their words to Job increases steadily from the sympathetic opening of Eliphaz (4:1-11) to his eventual specific accusations against Job (22:1-11).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 38)
   7. “The personal remarks, from both corners, enliven the debate. Job’s friends accuse him of doing away with piety (15:4). He reminds them that their best wisdom would be silence (13:5) and that lying for the sake of God (13:7-9) is dangerous business.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 38)
   8. contradictions
      1. Job contradicts himself.
         1. “If it were profitable, one could make a list of statements by Job that cancel each other out.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 40)
         2. “He attacks God (7:20-21; 9:22-24; 16:7-17) and he cajoles God (10:4-12).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 40)
         3. “His despair (e.g., 9:16-18; 14:18-22) is matched by his faith (13:15-16; 19:23-27).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 40)
      2. Job contradicts the frame story.
         1. “. . . he seems to admit that he is not sinless (7:21; 10:6; 13:26), but the reader knows the divine verdict from the prologue.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 40)
         2. “He even refers to his family in 19:17 in a way that is contrary to 1:13-19.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 40)
         3. “Such inconsistencies are really beside the point. There is no need to make the dialogue agree with the Job legend in such details; it is more important to understand the literary character Job as a realistic figure.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 40)
   9. first cycle of speeches
      1. “This description of the first cycle of speeches gives some flavor of the rather free flow of the discussion.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 40)
      2. “The three friends lecture Job directly and never speak to God. Job responds to them, but significantly he turns from them often in order to address God (the Almighty, or El Shaddai). It is here that the author is once again true to life. Job oscillates between despair and ardent faith. He argues with God, and even if he cannot find God (23:8-9), he never stops yearning for a confrontation (9:32-35; 13:3, 16, 22; 16:18-22; 31:35-37). This is the stuff of spiritual conflict, the dark night of the soul, which countless people have experienced.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 38)
      3. “Job’s affirmation of his innocence is as inevitable as it is clear; the prologue secures that. His very integrity demands that he reject the imputation of the friends (cf. the accusations of Eliphaz in 22:6-11). Hence he has no other course but to maintain his integrity (27:6; cf. 2:3), to ask “why?” and with a certain bravado to challenge God (sarcastically in 7:12-21; somewhat lovingly in 10:1-12). He is baffled by events but he never quite gives up on God as his vindicator (or *gō´ēl*, 19:25). He is caught between two nightmares: Could the three friends possibly be right? This he clearly rejects. On the other hand, is God without care for him?” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 38)
      4. “The modern reader may ask the question, which Job is more admirable? the God-fearing Job of chaps. 1-2, or the complaining job of chaps. 3-31? Perhaps Søren Kierkegaard has given the best reply [*Repetition*. Trans. W. Lowrie. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1941. 110-11]: “Job! Job! Job! Job! Didst thou indeed utter nothing but these beautiful words, “The Lord gave, the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord”? Didst thou say nothing more? . . . No, thou who in the ripeness of thy days wast a sword for the oppressed, a cudgel to protect the old, a staff for the decrepit, thou didst not fail [38] men when all was riven asunder—then thou wast a mouth for the afflicted, and a cry for the contrite, and a shriek for the anguished, and an assuagement for all who were rendered dumb by torments, a faithful witness to the distress and grief a heart can harbor, a trustworthy advocate who dared to complain “in anguish of spirit” and to contend with God. Why do people conceal this? . . . Does one perhaps not dare to complain before God? . . . Thee I have need of, a man who knows how to complain aloud, so that his complaint echoes in heaven where God confers with Satan in devising schemes against a man.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 38-39)
      5. Job 4-5: “The response of Eliphaz, although moderate, is unmistakable: Job is clearly in the wrong. He tries to make it easy for Job to admit this: “Can mortals be righteous as against God?” (4:17). If Job would only recognize that “happy is the one whom the Lord reproves” (5:17; cf. Prov 3:11-12)! This is a test. If Job appeals to the Lord (and by implication admits to his sinfulness), the Lord will heal him.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 39)
      6. Job 6-7: Job’s “response” is taken up with describing his own agony, attacking his friends as deceitful wadis that promise water but do not deliver (6:14-30). Then he appeals to God (7:7-21), making a parody of Ps 8: what is a mere mortal, that you are so concerned with him!” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 39)
      7. Job 8: “Bildad defends divine justice (8:3, 20) in words that are truer than he realizes: God will not reject the upright (*tām*, the word used of Job in 1:8)—indeed, that is the way the story will end!” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 39)
      8. Job 9-10
         1. Job 9:17 (“For he crushes me with a tempest, and multiplies my wounds without cause”): “In another ironic touch, Job accuses God of afflicting him “for nought” (9:17, *ḥinnām*, the word used by the Satan and the Lord in 1:9; 2:3).” [39] M. Greenberg on 9:17 (“Job.” *The Literary Guide to the Bible*, ed. Robert Alter and F. Kermode. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1987. 283-304, esp. 289): “Ironically, Job has unwittingly stumbled on the true reason for his suffering.” [47 n. 6] (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 39, 47 n. 6)
         2. “In chap. 10 he makes an emotional appeal to the brighter side of God, his creator (10:4-12), only to recognize that God hunts him down like a lion.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 39)
      9. Job 11: “Zophar in reply anticipates the tone of the Lord in chaps. 38-41: the mystery of God is higher than the heavens and deeper than Sheol—what can Job do (11:7-8)? Ironically, he wishes that God would intervene (God will!) and teach Job (11:6) the “secrets of wisdom.” He can offer Job respite only if Job repents of his sinfulness.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 39)
      10. Job 12-14: “Job’s answer is to single out God’s power as the cause of all that happens, including his own calamity. He warns the three against their unworthy and deceitful defense of God’s cause. As usual he addresses God directly, after the famous line “Slay me though he might, I will wait for him” (13:15, although the consonantal text, or *kĕtîb*, has “I have no hope”). He closes with the striking contrast between [39] the tree (even when it is cut down, there is hope for it to grow again) and humans (once they are cut down, there is no more hope for life). In a touching outburst, he *imagines* life beyond death (14:13-22) in which God might show graciousness—only to conclude, “You destroy human hope.”” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 39-40)
   10. Job 28
       1. “Many scholars are of the opinion this is a later insertion in the book.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 41)
       2. “The position of this poem on wisdom could make it appear as a continuation of Job’s words in chap. 27. But the whole tenor of the poem is tangential to the points Job is making. The mere sequence of chapters does not force one to place it in his mouth, although chaps. 26-27 are attributed to him. There is no identifying formula to specify the speaker of this sudden passage on the whereabouts of wisdom.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 41)
       3. “Nonetheless it forms part of the total message of the book as it stands. . . . It appears to be another view of the situation that the writer provides. The new viewpoint is that the problem is beyond the understanding of created beings, for they lack the wisdom that God alone possesses. Hence this chapter implicitly warns against even attempting to answer the problem. No answer is available.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 41)
       4. “The point of chap. 28 is simple: God alone knows where wisdom is.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 41)
       5. “The final verse (28:28 [God “said to humankind, ‘Truly, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding’”]) modifies this mystery. . . . This conclusion lies outside the wisdom poem (vv 1-27), but it is a reasonable inference. The best one can do is “fear God,” an old wisdom ideal. The verse harks back to the description of Job in 1:1 as God-fearing and avoiding evil. . . . humans do not have the wisdom to solve the mystery; they can only “fear” God (cf. Eccl 5:6a).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 41) Qoh 5:6, “Do not let your mouth lead you into sin, and do not say before the messenger that it was a mistake; why should God be angry at your words, and destroy the work of your hands?”
   11. Job 29-31
       1. “The dialogue is, in effect, over when Job makes a full-scale review of his life and assesses his present situation (chaps. 29-31). He does not even advert to the friends. Instead he describes the golden days, when the Lord’s “lamp shone above my head” (29:3) and Job’s “footsteps were bathed in milk” (29:6). That has all disappeared, and Job is left with the God who does not answer (30:20).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 41)
       2. Job 31
          1. “He had already taken oaths on his right, his integrity, and his justice in 22:2-6.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 41) Job 22:2-6 is irrelevant: Eliphaz is speaking. I can’t find where Job takes oaths on his right, his integrity, and his justice.—Hahn
          2. Job “launches into a series of oaths, invoking upon himself divine wrath if he has contravened pious conduct (the items mentioned are counted differently by different commentators, ranging from ten to fourteen). . . . in this horrendous series, Job invokes dire consequences upon himself if he has been guilty.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 41)
       3. Job 31: “His very integrity and clear vision of himself call forth the famous series of exculpatory oaths in chap. 31. The reader knows, with all the certainty of the Lord himself in the prologue, that Job is simply stating the truth, not boasting.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 40)
   12. “the theme of a confrontation with God” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 40)
       1. Yahweh’s intervention in Job 38-41 “is prepared for by Job’s desire for a confrontation with the Lord.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 42)
       2. *9:2-20*: “According to 9:2-20, Job can see no advantage in this: one cannot win against God (“Though I am innocent, my own mouth would condemn me; though I am blameless, he would prove me perverse,” 9:20). But in 13:3, 16, 22, he insists on arguing his case before God. The thought of this confrontation floats in and out of Job’s speeches.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 40)
       3. *13:3*: “In 13:3 Job recognized the danger in such a confrontation, but it remained a goal for him (23:3).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 42)
          1. Job 13:3, “But I would speak to the Almighty, and I desire to argue my case with God.”
          2. Job 23:3, “Oh, that I knew where I might find him, that I might come even to his dwelling!”
       4. *16:19-21*
          1. “Indeed, in 16:19-21 he is able to affirm a heavenly witness who will support him. [Job 16:19-21, “Even now, in fact, my witness is in heaven, and he that vouches for me is on high. 20My friends scorn me; my eye pours out tears to God, 21that he would maintain the right of a mortal with God, as one does for a neighbor.”] The identity of this witness is disputed; could it be God, insofar as Job opposes the bright and dark sides of God to each other?” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 40)
          2. “In 19:25-27 he expressed his faith in vindication that would come from his *gō´el*, presumably God, whom his very eyes would behold.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 42)
       5. *19:25-27*: “he certainly asserts in the famous text of 19:25-27 that the Lord is his vindicator (*gō´ēl*; “redeemer” is misleading in the context). [Job 19:25-27, “For I know that my Redeemer lives, and that at the last he will stand upon the earth; 26and after my skin has been thus destroyed, then in my flesh I shall see God, 27whom I shall see on my side, and my eyes shall behold, and not another.”] However these difficult lines are to be translated, Job affirms emphatically a personal vision of God. This, and not the notion of resurrection that has traditionally been associated with this text, is the point of these lines. The declaration serves as an anticipation of the “vision” that Job will experience later (42:5). Until then, however, Job experiences the dark night of the soul (chap. 23).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 40)
       6. *31:35*: “his final challenge [is], “Let the Almighty answer me!” (31:35). [41] . . . In 31:35 he wanted an indictment, which he confidently expected to refute.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 41-42)
   13. “At the most, Job may be at fault in saying “God must” (somehow intervene in his favor) if God is to remain credible. [von Rad, Gerhard. *Wisdom in Israel*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1972. 219.] It is always dangerous to write the script for divinity to be bound by. Like anyone else, Job is operating with a human concept of justice, which cannot be simply applied to God. In this sense, he is concerned with “the credibility of God,” as von Rad put it [*Wisdom in Israel* 221].” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 40)
2. **Elihu**
   1. Elihu is “also a non-Israelite . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 42)
   2. “After a prolix introduction (32:1-5) and bombastic preliminary remarks (32:6-22) he settles into the first of his four speeches (chaps. 32-33, 34, 35, 36-37). He is distressed at the failure of the three friends in the debate, so he directs himself primarily to Job—who never answers him.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 42)
   3. Several good reasons have induced scholars to regard these chapters as a later insertion . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 42)
      1. “If ever the encounter with God for which Job yearned were to take place, now would be the moment. Instead, Elihu . . . is introduced. . . . he interrupts the sequence of chaps. 31 and 38 . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 42)
      2. “. . . Elihu is never mentioned in the rest of the book . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 42)
      3. “. . . his contribution to the theme hardly differs from that of the three friends.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 42)
      4. Job 32-37 “are meant to bolster the arguments of the friends. It has been noted [Freedman, David N. “The Elihu Speeches in the Book of Job.” *HTR* 61 (1968): 51-59] that Elihu resembles a reader who has gone over the dialogue meticulously and singled out statements for further comment (e.g., 33:10-11 and 14:24b, 13:27).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 42)
      5. “. . . Elihu contradicts Job (33:13-14) by claiming that God does answer; Job’s suffering is medicinal (33:19-33; 36:8-15), a point touched on briefly by Eliphaz (5:17-18). But the presupposition of both Elihu and Eliphaz is that such discipline is divinely given to turn the sinner toward God, and this is not applicable to Job.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 42)
      6. “Finally, in the last speech (36:1-37:24) there is a splendid creation hymn in honor of God’s greatness (36:26-37:24), which concludes with questions in the style of the Yahweh speeches in chaps. 38-41. In this respect Elihu can be said to anticipate or provide a transition to the intervention of the Lord. But his speeches are no more effective than those of the three friends.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 42)
3. **the Yahweh-Job dialogues** (**Job 38-42:6**)
   1. introduction
      1. “One might reasonably expect the theophany in chap. 38 to settle the debate, to “answer” the question. It does contribute to a solution, but the speeches of the Lord are not what Job or the reader expect.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 42)
      2. God makes “a (somewhat self-serving, one may think) statement, the famous Yahweh speeches of chaps. 38-41.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 46)
      3. “It has been well said that when the Lord “replies” to Job he lets nature do the talking (Job 38-41).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 113)
   2. Yahweh’s first speech (38:1-40:2)
      1. “The vaunted encounter opens with a series of questions in a divine lecture about creation. [42] . . . “. . . the author employed the rhetorical questions characteristic of the wisdom tradition, as an opening onto the mysteries of God and the world.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 42-43)
      2. “At first sight the divine reply is striking for its irrelevance. The only time the issue is joined is in 40:7-14, especially in v 8, [42] “Would you condemn me that you may be justified?” Here the Lord challenges Job to play king of creation (after all the changes that have been rung on the creation theme in chaps. 38-39!).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 42-43)
      3. “The real issue of the book remains below the surface, and the reader is forced to ask what the purpose of the divine speeches is.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 43)
      4. “At the close of the first speech the Lord challenges him to reply (40:1-2).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 43)
   3. Job’s first response (40:3-5)
      1. Job 40:3-5, “Then Job answered the Lord: 4“See, I am of small account; what shall I answer you? I lay my hand on my mouth. 5I have spoken once, and I will not answer; twice, but will proceed no further.””
      2. “. . . Job has nothing to say. His answer is not defiant, but it is vague enough to be either humble or evasive; it is not an admission of any wrong.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 43)
   4. Yahweh’s second speech (40:15-24, Behemoth; 41, Leviathan)
      1. “. . . Job’s impotence is underscored by the descriptions of Behemoth and Leviathan, symbols of unruly power or chaos, whom only the Lord, not Job, can dominate.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 43)
   5. the mood of Yahweh’s speeches
      1. “There is heavy sarcasm in 38:21, “You know, for you were born then” (i.e., like Wisdom herself, before creation; cf. Prov 8:22-31; in 15:7 Eliphaz made the same point).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 43)
      2. “But mostly there is pleasant irony as the Lord rolls out the questions about the works of creation. As one scholar has put it, the mood is: you know this, and you know that I know that you know.” (Fox, Michael V. “Job 38 and God’s Rhetoric.” *The Book of Job and Ricoeur’s Hermeneutic*, ed. J. D. Crossan. Semeia 19. Missoula: Scholars, 1981. 53-61.) (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 43)
      3. “There is even a playful note, which G. K. Chesterton expressed, perhaps with exaggeration: “God says, in effect, that if there is one fine thing about the world, as far as men are concerned, it is that it cannot be explained. . . . The whole is a sort of psalm or rhapsody of the sense of wonder. The maker of all things is astonished at the things He has Himself made.” (Qtd. in: Murphy, Roland E. *Psalms, Job*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982. 84.) (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 43)
   6. Job’s second response (42:1-6)
      1. “It can be said that the speeches convey the impact of the theophany upon Job, transforming him.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 43)
         1. MacKenzie, R. A. F. “The Purpose of the Yahweh Speeches in the Book of Job.” *Bib* 40 (1959): 435-45.
         2. MacKenzie, R. A. F. “Job.” *New Jerome Biblical Commentary* 466-88 (esp. 486).
      2. “The presupposition of the speeches is that the Lord somehow reveals self in creation, for the result of this encounter is Job’s transformation. The Lord’s questions add little to Job’s fund of knowledge, but they do leave him changed.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 43)
      3. “The reaction of Job in 42:1-6 is markedly different from the reaction to the first speech [40:1-2].” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 43)
      4. 42:2-4
         1. “In 42:2-4 Job acknowledges the divine purpose and also his own ignorance . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 43)
         2. Job quotes “from the Lord’s speeches (38:2 in v 3a; 38:3b and 40:7 in v 4).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 43)
      5. 42:5
         1. “Then comes his classic line: “I had heard of you by word of mouth, but now my eye has seen you” (42:5).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 43)
         2. “The vision of God, pointed to so emphatically in 19:25-27 and so desperately sought for in 23:9, has now become a reality.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 43)
         3. “It is enough for Job; vision has replaced hearsay. Job’s experience of God in the theophany works the transformation that the lectures of the friends could not accomplish.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 43)
      6. 42:6
         1. “The meaning of 42:6 is obscure. Literally, Job says, “I abhor [with no direct object; the verb could be translated also as “I dissolve”] and I repent [*nḥṃ*] concerning dust and ashes.” The entire verse is supposedly in support of his submission, but the exact meaning is not clear.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 43)
         2. “It would be mistaken to see here repentance for all that he has said, or even merely for certain statements that he made. The repentance should be interpreted as a change of mind (as frequently the Lord is said to change his mind or “repent of the evil” he had planned to do; e.g., Jonah 3:9-10).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 43)
         3. “Probably the *NJV* [43] captures the meaning best: “I recant and relent, being but dust and ashes.” So also the comment of M. Greenberg [“Job” 299]: “He rejects what he formerly maintained” and “is consoled for (being mere) dust and ashes.”” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 43-44)
4. **the epilogue** (**42:7-17**)
   1. “The epilogue in 42:7-17 returns to the style of the prologue (chaps. 1-2) . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 44)
   2. “If Elihu was angry with the friends (32:1-5), so now is the Lord. The reason is that they “have not spoken rightly about me [understanding *´ēlay* as *`ālay*], as has my servant Job” (v 7). This verdict of approval for Job may come as a surprise after one has read Job’s rebellious speeches and the Lord’s own characterization of them as “words of ignorance” (38:2). Is this simply a relative judgment, that Job is more right (closer to the truth, as it were) than the three friends? Certainly the friends are repudiated, but how much approval is given to Job? The question is not really answered. The restoration of Job is part of God’s mysterious freedom and generosity, the free divine response to Job’s actions and words. Now the tables are turned: the friends are to ask Job for his prayers for them. Job becomes the mediator in their holocaust sacrifice. The words of Eliphaz to Job in 22:27 (“You shall pray to him and he will hear you”) find an ironic fulfillment!” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 44)
   3. “The restoration of Job, who receives “twice as much as he had before” (v 10), has sometimes been interpreted as an inconsistency in the book. Not so; restoration is also a feature of life, which the author-editor (who has no doctrinaire “solution”) would not feel compelled to deny. Some would regard the restoration, and the visit of Job’s relatives and friends, as simply a remnant from the original Job story (presumably before the debate with the three friends was inserted). Be that hypothesis as it may, the actions of the visitors are described in exactly the same terms as the purpose of the friends’ visit in 2:11: to “console and comfort.” Another ironic touch! To judge from their “gifts,” these visitors were far too practical to give lectures like those of the three friends.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 44)
   4. “In conclusion it should be emphasized that the Book of Job is bigger than Job himself. We need only point to the basic question raised in the prologue (1:9; by the Satan, no less!): do humans serve God for themselves or for God? The dialogue between Job and the friends highlights the traditional theory of retribution, while showing how inapplicable it is to the case of Job. Chapter 28 (an independent piece?) enlightens us concerning the mystery of divine wisdom, as if to say that there is no answer to the problem raised in the book. Elihu attempts to salvage the traditional theory, with little success. The Lord appears to Job and discourses like a wisdom teacher, raising all kinds of [44] questions about the secrets of the universe. This vision of the Lord is enough for Job to abandon himself to the Lord. The restoration of the hero shows what the Lord can do, and even does, in God’s own time.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 44-45)
5. **modern interpreters**
   1. Duquoc, C., et al., eds. *Job and the Silence of God*. Concilium 169. Edinburgh: Clark, 1983.
   2. Glatzer, Nathan, ed. *The Dimensions of Job*. New York: Schocken, 1969.
   3. Sanders, P., ed. *Twentieth Century Interpretation of the Book of Job*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1968.
   4. “Few books in the Old Testament call for a response from the reader as urgently as the Book of Job does. It has had a long history of interpretation that also illustrates a wide range of reaction.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 45)
   5. “Artists and poets, especially, seem to have been captivated by Job.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 47 n. 16)
      1. “Thus, Robert Browning’s *Fra Lippo Lippi* speaks of including Job in his painting: “And Job, I must have him there past mistake, the man of Uz (And Us without the z, Painters who need his patience).”” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 47 n. 16)
      2. “See also the novel of G. K. Chesterton, *The Man Who Was Thursday: A Nightmare* (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1975) xix-xxvii, with the perceptive comments on the relationship to Job by Garry Wills.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 47 n. 16)
   6. Gustavo Gutiérrez
      1. Gutiérrez, Gustavo. *On Job*. Maryknoll: Orbis, 1987.
      2. “The work cannot be read without existential involvement. That is why the commentary of Gustavo Gutiérrez has been so gripping. The original Spanish title of his *On Job* is “to speak of God from the point of view of the suffering of the innocent.” This title provides the particular perspective that he sees as “central to the book itself: the question of how we are to talk about God” [*On Job* xviii] especially in the context of the suffering poor of South America. He has provided an enlightened and moving interpretation of Job . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 45)
      3. Job “has become a paradigm: “How are human beings to find a language applicable to God in the midst of innocent suffering? This question, with all its implications for our understanding of the justice and unmerited generosity of God, is the great theme of the book of Job.”” (*On Job* 12) (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 45)
      4. But Murphy describes himself as “a “Yanqui” fails to see the growth that Gutiérrez finds in the dialogue whereby Job becomes aware of his solidarity with the poor . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 45)
   7. Robert Frost
      1. Frost, Robert. “A Masque of Reason.” *The Complete Poems of Robert Frost*. New York: Henry Holt, 1949. 587-606.
      2. “One of the most unexpected and successful commentators on Job has been the American poet Robert Frost, in “A Masque of Reason.” This short poem is practically a dialogue between Job and his wife, God, and the Satan. At the outset Job and his wife are speaking when God makes his appearance—the wife claims to know who the stranger is, because she recognizes him from Blake’s pictures! When Job inquires about the heavenly bliss, the Lord begins in an apologetic vein, to the effect that it has long been on the divine mind (a thousand years) to thank Job for the way in which he helped God make the point that the old reward-punishment principle of retribution simply does not hold. There is no reasoned connection between virtue and reward, wickedness and punishment. The trial was admittedly hard for Job, who could not possibly understand what God was up to, but by now Job should know the significant role he played in showing up the folly of Deuteronomist theology . . . Job set God free to be God by slipping him out of the bind that the three friends of Job clearly placed God in. At the end, Job’s wife takes a photograph of Job, God, and Satan with her Kodak!” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 45)
6. **conclusions**
   1. In part “The difficulties arise from the apparently composite character of the work (e.g., what is chap. 28 doing there, and how does it function?) . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 45)
   2. “. . . scholars, like David N. Freedman, ask seriously, “Is it possible to understand the Book of Job?” Probably every reader (or at least commentator) has put that question to himself or herself.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 45)
      1. Freedman, David N. “Is It Possible to Understand the Book of Job?” *Bible Review* 4 (April 1988): 26-33, 44.
      2. See also: Freedman, David N. “The Book of Job.” *The Hebrew Bible and Its Interpreters*. Eds. W.H. Propp et al. Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1990. 33-51.
7. **divine retribution in Job**: see the handout, “Retribution.”

## QOHELETH

questions of introduction

1. **bibliography**
   1. Michel, Diethelm. *Qohelet*. EF 258. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1988. (Michel summarizes “the wide range of opinions expressed in this century” on questions of introduction. Murphy, *Tree of Life* 60 n. 1)
   2. Michel, Diethelm. *Untersuchungen zur Eigenart des Buches Qohelet. Mit einem Anhang: Reinhard Lehmann, Bibliographie zu Qohelet*. BZAW 183. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1989.
   3. Fox, Michael V. *Qohelet and His Contradictions*. JSOTSup 18. Sheffield: Almond, 1989. 1-150.
2. **author**
   1. “Ecclesiastes is the Greco-Latin form of the Hebrew Qoheleth.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 49)
   2. “Both “names” have to do with a congregation (*qāhāl*, *ecclesia*), but the exact meaning escapes us.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 49)
   3. ““Preacher” is another interpretation of the word, going back through Luther (*Prediger*) to Jerome (*concionator*). However, Qoheleth does not preach, and his book has no sermons.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 49)
   4. “He is described as “David’s son” (1:1; cf. 1:12), probably referring to Solomon, the accepted “author” of so many wisdom books. But this attribution has no support in the text except briefly in chap. 2, and it is negated by Qoheleth’s views on royalty and on life.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 49)
   5. the epilogue (Qoh 12:9-14)
      1. Qoh 12:9-10 are relevant to the question of authorship (Qoh 12:11-14 are teaching). Qoh 12:9-10, “Besides being wise, the Teacher also taught the people knowledge, weighing and studying and arranging many proverbs. 10The Teacher sought to find pleasing words, and he wrote words of truth plainly [nab, “and to write down true sayings with precision”].”
      2. In 12:9-14, “an editor speaks of Qoheleth in the third person, in contrast to the first-person style throughout the work.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 52)
      3. “It is reasonable to infer that he formed some kind of school, perhaps after the manner of Ben Sira a century later (Sir 51:23), and the present work would have been edited by his disciple or disciples.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 49)
3. **date**
   1. “A date around 300 b.c.e. is generally suggested for the author; it would appear that his work was in circulation by 150 b.c.e., to judge from the dating of the Hebrew fragments of the book that were discovered at Qumran.” (Muilenburg, J. “A Qoheleth Scroll from Qumran.” *BASOR* 135 (1964): 20-28.) (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 49)
   2. “If this date of 300 b.c.e. is reasonable, the question of Hellenistic influence on both Qoheleth’s language and thought immediately arises. This is not a new issue, but it has been pressed vigorously in recent studies. At the present time it is safe to say that the judgment on this point is still moot . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 49)
   3. “The style approaches that of (later) Mishnaic Hebrew.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 50)
4. **language**
   1. “. . . the book includes an astonishing amount of repetition.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 50)
      1. “Within the 2,643 words in 1:4-12:8, there are about 25 Hebrew roots (appearing as nouns, verbs, etc.) that occur at least five times, some of them thirty and fifty times—and they account for about 21 percent of the words used.” (Loretz, O. *Qohelet und der alte Orient*. Freiburg: Herder, 1964. 166-80.) (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 50)
      2. “Among these “favorite” terms are the following: vanity, toil, work, wise, good, time, know, sun, see, fool, eat, profit, wind, death, just, wicked, portion, memory, vexation.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 50)
      3. “The primary term, of course, is vanity, which occurs in various combinations thirty-eight times in the Masoretic text.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 50)
   2. “The “simplicity” of this vocabulary is deceiving. The book is exceedingly difficult to translate, not because of any extensive corruption in the text, but because of our ignorance of the precise nuances of the terminology and of Qoheleth’s thought. The reader can test this by comparing various translations at certain points, such as 2:8; 2:12 (sequence of thought); 3:11 (meaning of *`ōlām*); 5:8; 6:8; 7:14, 18; 8:1; 10:10; 12:11—and many others could be added.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 50)
5. **literary forms**
   1. proverbs
      1. “It is not surprising that many proverbial sayings are to be found in Qoheleth, the *ḥākām*.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 50)
      2. “Some of these may be traditional, or even part of the repertoire to which he himself contributed.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 50)
      3. “But it is frequently difficult to detect his judgment of them.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 50)
         1. “Thus it is clear that the sayings in 2:13-14 proclaim the superiority of wisdom. And it is equally clear that Qoheleth rejects them in the lines that follow (2:15-16).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 50)
         2. “In 4:5-6 he quotes two sayings that he considers inadequate, or perhaps he favors v 6 over v 5; it is difficult to tell.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 50)
         3. “The same is true of the many sayings in chaps. 7 and 10 . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 50)
         4. “. . . in many cases the text has to be carefully sifted—often unsuccessfully.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 50)
   2. genre of the work as a whole
      1. “. . . many scholars have termed the book a “royal testament” . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 50)
         1. Galling, K. “Der Prediger.” *Die fünf Megilloth*. HAT 18. 2nd ed. Tübingen: Mohr/Siebeck, 1969. 88.
         2. von Rad, Gerhard. *Wisdom in Israel*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1972. 226.
         3. They rely “on 1:1, 12 and 2:9, 12 and upon such works as the Egyptian instructions of Merikare and Amenemhet . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 50)
         4. But “this view is not adequate. The work is *sui generis* and lies somewhere between a treatise and a collection of sayings and thoughts. Sayings and admonitions alternate with lengthy reflections.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 50)
      2. the longer “reflections”
         1. On the reflections, see: Murphy, Roland E. *Wisdom Literature*. FOTL 13. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981. 127-28 (“with references to the studies of R. Braun and F. Ellermeier”). (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 61 n. 6)
         2. “As W. Zimmerli remarks [“Das Buch Kohelet—Traktat oder Sentenzensammlung?” *VT* 24 (1974): 221-30], it is not a treatise with a clearly recognizable structure and a definable theme, but it is more than a loose collection of sayings.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 61 n. 5)
         3. “The reflection states a thesis that Qoheleth has arrived at, and that he then develops in an unstructured way by observations, sayings, and the like.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 50)
         4. “The reflection is frequently introduced by favorite phrases, such as “I gave my heart to know” (1:13, 17; 8:16) or simply “I know” (3:12, 14).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 51)
         5. “Sometimes he will relate a story to make his point (the “example story,” 4:13-16; 9:13-16).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 51)
6. **Qoheleth’s methodology**
   1. Is Qoheleth a “philosopher”?
      1. “. . . should Qoheleth be regarded as a philosopher? Diethelm Michel [*Qohelet* 103-7] has a helpful historical resume of modern views.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 51)
      2. “. . . E. Renan stoutly maintained that the book was clear, but theologians made it unclear.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 51)
      3. “E. Podechard thought that Qoheleth’s philosophical status could be justified because his viewpoint was universal (the area of wisdom), and not something specifically Israelite. But it is doubtful whether the question can be answered in terms of the alleged opposition between Yahwism and wisdom . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of* Life 51)
      4. “. . . philosophy [is] limited to the rational, while theology involves the revealed (faith?) or suprarational . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 51)
      5. “. . . ultimately the characterization of philosopher or theologian tells one little about Qoheleth or his book.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 51)
   2. Fox vs. Michel on Qoheleth’s methodology
      1. “For both scholars, Qoheleth is a skeptic, but they arrive at this conclusion in different ways.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 51)
      2. Michael V. Fox (“Qohelet’s Epistemology.” *HUCA* 58 (1987): 137-55, esp. 137, 152-54): “Qohelet’s epistemology is essentially (though not consistently) empirical. His procedure is to deliberately seek experience as his primary source of knowledge and to use experiential argumentation in testifying for his claims.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 51)
         1. “Fox seems to have a specific definition of “empirical,” for he excludes ancient Near Eastern wisdom from that sphere. He conceives of wisdom as a static body of knowledge transmitted by the sages, whose duty it was to motivate their students to accept it. In contrast to the sages’ lack of argument stands the explorative character of Qoheleth’s thought. It is true that by contrast Qoheleth is more exciting and provocative than the traditional sages, but they were nonetheless oriented toward experience.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 61 n. 8)
         2. “Qoheleth is a skeptic [because] Qoheleth contests traditional wisdom (which Fox conceives as something static and not really experiential) by appealing to experience as a source of knowledge.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 51)
      3. Diethelm Michel (no citation): Qoheleth is “not an empiricist . . . but a thinker (or more exactly: an epistemological sceptic).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 51)
         1. “. . . Michel argues for a specific meaning to the verb *rā´â* (see). It means “to consider, to look at in a testing manner” (“*betrachten*, *prüfend ansehen*”). Qoheleth does not report an experience of “seeing” something, but is testing some statement. Thus one can distinguish between his own opinion and the view that he is criticizing. Hence one should view him not as a haphazard diarist but as a “philosopher who analyzes critically.”” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 51)
         2. Michel “lists the instances in the text where the verb [*rā´â*, “to see”] means “to look at critically.”” (*Qohelet*. EF 258. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1988. 32-33, 80-81.) (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 61 n. 7)
      4. “I fail to see the difference between the Qoheleth who derives his arguments from experience to justify his views and the “philosopher” or epistemological skeptic who is consistently testing (by what he “sees”) the traditional wisdom claims. It is not easy to enter into Qoheleth’s world by way of “philosophy.”” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 51)
7. **structure**
   1. summaries of proposed structures
      1. Wright, Addison. “The Riddle of the Sphinx: The Structure of the Book of Qoheleth.” *CBQ* 30 (1968): 313-34, esp. 314-17.
      2. Crenshaw, J. L. “Qoheleth in Current Research.” *HAR* 7 (1983): 41-56.
      3. Esp.: Michel, Diethelm. *Qohelet*. EF 258. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1988. 9-45.
   2. “There has been little unanimity among scholars concerning the structure of the work. There is general recognition of a prologue (1:1-11) and an epilogue (12:9-14) from another hand, but the main body has been fragmented into several sayings or unified by broad conceptual headings . . . [in] arbitrary fashion . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 52)
   3. Addison Wright
      1. Wright, Addison. “The Riddle of the Sphinx Revisited: Numerical Patterns in the Book of Qoheleth.” *CBQ* 42 (1980): 38-51.
      2. Wright, Addison. “The Book of Wisdom.” *New Jerome New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, ed. Raymond E. Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, and Roland A. Murphy. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1990. 489-95.
      3. Wright notes “peculiar, but objective, characteristics” of the text. (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 52)
      4. “Thus, “vanity” and “chase after wind” are repeated several times in 1:12-6:9 and may be regarded as indicating the end of a section.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 52)
      5. “The book breaks neatly into two halves of 111 verses each at 6:9.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 52)
      6. “The second part also has a key phraseology: “find/not find” and “know/not know,” which appear to form sections within 6:10-11:6. A final poem about youth and old age appears in 11:7-12:8. Numerological factors seem to have been at work. Thus, the numerical value of *hebel* (vanity—a key term) is 37, which is the number of times that *hbl* occurs in the book (excluding the repeated *hbl* in 9:9). The word is repeated in 1:2 three times, yielding the number 111, or the number of verses at midpoint.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 52)
8. **integrity**
   1. prologue (Qoh 1:1-11)
      1. “There is general recognition of a prologue (1:1-11) and an epilogue (12:9-14) from another hand . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 52)
      2. Does “from another hand” modify only “an epilogue” or modify both “a prologue [and] an epilogue”? Is Murphy asserting that the prologue also is by another hand? And, if so, is he also asserting that prologue and epilogue are by the same person?—Hahn
   2. epilogue (Qoh 12:9-14)
      1. “The epilogist (whether one or many) who is responsible for 12:9-14 not only identified Qoheleth as a wise man but added a few remarks of his own.” (Qoh 12:9-10 are relevant to the question of authorship; 12:11-14 are the epilogist’s teachings.—Hahn) (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 59)
      2. Qoh 12:9-10
         1. Qoh 12:9-10, “Besides being wise, the Teacher also taught the people knowledge, weighing and studying and arranging many proverbs. 10The Teacher sought to find pleasing words, and he wrote words of truth plainly [nab, “and to write down true sayings with precision”].”
         2. In 12:9-14, “an editor speaks of Qoheleth in the third person, in contrast to the first-person style throughout the work.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 52)
         3. Fox and Fisch
            1. “Fox has argued [*Qohelet and His Contradictions* 311-21] that he is the true author of the book. That is to say, Qoheleth is his persona, and he transmits Qoheleth’s teachings in 1:3-12:7. He is the “teller of the tale,” or the frame narrator of Qoheleth’s tale.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 63 n. 28)
            2. “Fisch claims [Fisch, Harold. “Qohelet: A Hebrew Ironist.” *Poetry with a Purpose: Biblical Poetics and Interpretation*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1988. 158-78] that the “view that would assign these closing verses of Ecclesiastes [12:9-14] to another author or editor should be resisted. This skeptical rejection of skepticism is the final twist of Qohelet’s super-irony” (p. 175). Thus Qoheleth reverses the traditional wisdom saying about the fear of the Lord being the beginning of wisdom. Instead, according to 13:13 he tells us that to fear God and keep his commandments is “the end of the matter,” or “the whole of man.” As Fisch remarks, Qoheleth’s “final statement seems to say that the end point of *ḥokmāh* is the fear of God!” (p. 175). This approach fits a current hermeneutical tendency to interpret a book holistically (as a whole, including all the parts), and not merely genetically (i.e., from the point of view of how the book was put together in various periods of time).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 63 n. 33)
         4. But “The epilogist is commonly considered to be distinct from Qoheleth.” [63 n. 28] The epilogist is “probably . . . one of his [Qoheleth’s] disciples . . .” [49] (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 49, 63 n. 28)
      3. Qoh 12:11
         1. Qoh 12:11, “The sayings of the wise are like goads, and like nails firmly fixed are the collected sayings that are given by one shepherd.”
         2. “In v 11 he manifests a high respect for the “sayings of the wise,” which he regards as goads to thought.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 59)
      4. Qoh 12:12
         1. Qoh 12:12, “Of anything beyond these, my child, beware. Of making many books there is no end, and much study is a weariness of the flesh.”
         2. “. . . v 12 has been interpreted by some as a kind of corrective . . . If the intention of this verse was to muffle the salvos of Qoheleth, the editor was much too indirect. Indeed, he speaks of Qoheleth in a laudatory way in vv 9-11, associating the book with the “sayings of the wise.”” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 59)
         3. “What v 12 affirms is that the wisdom tradition, the “sayings of the wise” (to which the word “these” refers), suffices; no more wisdom books are needed after the Book of Qoheleth, which is to be included in “sayings of the wise.”” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 59)
      5. Qoh 12:13-14
         1. Qoh 12:13-14, “The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God, and keep his commandments; for that is the whole duty of everyone. 14For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil.”
         2. “. . . in vv 13-14 the book is summarized . . . in a manner that Qoheleth himself would hardly have done. In v 13, fear of God and keeping the commandments are joined together in such a way that the “judgment” of God seems to be obvious. Qoheleth would never put it that way. He does not deny that God judges (3:17; 11:9), but he denies that human beings can make sense of divine judgment or of anything that God does (3:11; 8:17; 11:5).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 59)
         3. “The final verses (13-14) provide a reassuring tone to a [59] work that may indeed have been unsettling, but that the tradition included in the canon.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 59-60)
   3. Though “The only certain addition to the book is the epilogue . . ., many commentators have proposed the recognition of glosses and other additions to the book. These would be statements that contradict or soften the seemingly unorthodox view of life proffered by Qoheleth (e.g., contrast 8:11-12a with 8:12b-13).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 52)
   4. “The tendency today, however, is to recognize such a procedure as arbitrary; the “contradiction” may well lie in the interpreter’s understanding of the text, rather than with Qoheleth. Hence it seems better to take the book as all of one piece, despite the difficulties. This allows for tensions that would have existed within the author himself, and it attempts to explain the book as it stands.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 52)
   5. “To allow for such tensions, commentators have recognized “broken sentences,” or “yes, but” sayings, in which a second statement modifies the previous statement; thus, 8:12b-13 represents the common wisdom, in contrast to Qoheleth’s true opinion, expressed in 8:15. See Murphy, *Wisdom Literature*, 130-31.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 61 n. 11)
   6. “The reader should be ready, therefore, for the tensions within the book, to keep them in careful balance. One must do this, moreover, without the dubious method of eliminating certain phrases or verses as being insertions of a later hand.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 53)
   7. “Precisely because Qoheleth’s viewpoints are so sharp and extreme, the modern reader may relativize them into a “biblical” homogeneity. The radical features of his thought can be tamed by the way in which the book is read in a larger context, even a biblical or ecclesial context. This is not to deny the right, or even the need, of anyone to absorb Qoheleth into a larger context. But the cutting edge of the book has to be retained.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 53)
9. **interpretation**
   1. See O. Loretz (*Qohelet und der alte Orient*. Freiburg: Herder, 1964. 197-200) for a “particularly valuable” “list of seventy-one topoi that Qoheleth shares with other biblical works . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 178 n. 31)
   2. The Babylonian work, *The Dialogue of Pessimism* (c. 1300 bc) (Lambert, *Babylonian Wisdom Literature* 139-49; Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts* 600-1) “has been deservedly compared with the Book of Ecclesiastes. In both, extreme positions are taken. Qoheleth consistently rejects values if he can show even one disadvantage; the author of the Babylonian piece operates in a similar way—what seems to be a good has a negative side.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 158)
   3. “Qoheleth consistently rejects values if he can show even one disadvantage . . . There is no question but that Qoheleth’s verdict is deadly serious: all things are vanity.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 158)
   4. “Although von Rad claimed that Qoheleth had lost the trust that characterized traditional wisdom, one may wonder if he ultimately had a deeper faith than those who “trusted.” He rejected the easy acceptance of the tradition, questioning it severely, but ultimately he accepted God on God’s terms.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 115)
      1. von Rad, Gerhard. *Wisdom in Israel* 226-39.
      2. von Rad, Gerhard. *Old Testament Theology*. New York: Harper & Row, 1962. 1.453-59.
      3. Murphy, Roland E. “The Faith of Qoheleth.” *Word & World* 7 (1987): 253-60.
10. **Qoh 9:7-9 and *Gilgamesh***
    1. In *Epic of Gilgamesh*, Gilgamesh seeks immortality. “He is warned by a tavern keeper, Siduri, that his search is futile: “Gilgamesh, whither rovest thou? / The life thou pursuest thou shalt not find. / When the gods created mankind, / Death for mankind they set aside, / Life in their own hands retaining.” She continues immediately, in a passage that is strikingly similar to Eccl 9:7-9: [155] “Thou, Gilgamesh, let full be thy belly, / Make thou merry by day and by night. / Of each day make thou a feast of rejoicing, / Day and night dance thou and play! / Let thy garments be sparkling fresh, / Thy head be washed; bathe thou in water. / Pay heed to the little one that holds on to thy hand, / Let thy spouse delight in thy bosom! / For this is the task of [mankind]!” (*ANET* 90) (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 155-56)
11. **Qoheleth and Job as protest literature**
    1. John J. Collins “has illustrated a basic trait that wisdom shares with Yahwism. Both “contained within themselves the seeds of a debunking tendency.” [“Proverbial Wisdom and the Yahwist Vision.” *Gnomic Wisdom*, ed. J. D. Crossan. Semeia 17. Chico: Scholars, 1980. 1 (article is 1-17).] Thus prophetic Yahwism, with its tendency to undermine established structures, cannot be legitimately contrasted with a supposedly rigid and dogmatic wisdom. Like prophecy, wisdom also raised questions (Job, Ecclesiastes).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 131 n. 44)
    2. “Contrast the rigidity of A. de Pury, . . . for whom wisdom is the realm of the rational, which excludes faith and any personal relationship with God.” (de Pury, A. “Sagesse et revelation dans l’Ancien Testament.” *Revue de théologie et de philosophie* 27 (1977): 1-50.) (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 131 n. 44)
    3. “. . . many proverbial sayings are to be found in Qoheleth . . . But it is frequently difficult to detect his judgment of them. . . . As a general rule one may conclude that he is usually critical of traditional wisdom . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 50)
12. **history of interpretation**
    1. Murphy, Roland E. “Qohelet Interpreted: The Bearing of the Past on the Present.” *VT* 32 (1982): 331-37.
    2. “The history of biblical exegesis points up the presuppositions that always accompany interpretation. It also makes us aware of our own presuppositions in approaching the book.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 59)
    3. “History shows that the interpretation of Qoheleth’s book has been very contradictory: skepticism, pessimism, Stoicism, Epicureanism, and others have all had their turn . . . This is understandable, for the book itself provides certain starting points for these views.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 52)
    4. “Jewish tradition also accepted Solomonic authorship, and the single-minded emphasis on “profit” was understood to be the advantage of studying the word of God, which assured reward in the world to come. The words in 12:13 (fear God and keep the commandments) made a strong impression on Jewish commentators. Yet they, too, had recourse to the device of recognizing different “voices” in the book in order to explain hard sayings and apparent contradictions. The history of exegesis is more than a curious collection of ancient views. It tells us of answers that disappear, but also of attempts that emerge even in modern times in our own explanations of this puzzling book.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 60)
       1. “There is a lengthy exposition of Jewish interpretation”: Ginsburg, C. D. *The Song of Songs and Qoheleth*. Rpt. New York: KTAV, 1970. 27-99. (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 63 n. 32)
    5. Jerome, five years before his commentary on Qoheleth, read Qoheleth “to a certain Blesilla, “to provoke her to contempt of the world.” [*Commentarius in Ecclesiasten*. CCSL 72. Turnholt: Brepols, 1959. 249 praefatio.] His commentary proceeded by distinguishing between the literal and the spiritual meaning. For him, as for all others before the modern period, Solomon was the author, and sometimes Solomon spoke from the point of view of another person. Such was the device that the ancients used in order to account for certain seeming contradictions in the book. This is continued in a slightly different way by modern scholars, who have recourse to later insertions!” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 60)
    6. “In the Christian tradition, perhaps the best-known statement on Ecclesiastes is that found in the *Imitation of Christ* of Thomas à Kempis: “‘Vanity of Vanities, and all is vanity,’ unless we serve God and love him with our whole heart (*Eccles* 1, 2). Oh, this is the highest and safest wisdom, that by contempt of the world we endeavor to please God.” [à Kempis, Thomas. *The Following of Christ*. Ed. J. van Ginneken. New York: America Press, 1937. 14.] This thought captures the spirit of asceticism and contempt of the world that caught on in early Christianity. Jerome set the tone for this . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 60)
    7. “Luther, too, accepted Solomonic authorship, and the purpose of the book was “to put us at peace and to give us a quiet mind in the everyday affairs and business of this life, so that we may live contentedly in the present without care and yearning about the future.” [“Notes on Ecclesiastes.” *Luther’s Works*, ed. J. Pelikan. St. Louis: Concordia, 1972. 15.7.] He was, of course, quite opposed to the patristic and medieval “contempt of the world.”” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 60)

themes

1. **introduction**
   1. “There are two thematic summaries. First, “vanity of vanities” and “all is [52] vanity” (1:2; 12:8) at the beginning and end of the work (an inclusion) make a powerful characterization that suggests pessimism.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 52-53)
   2. “Second, 12:13 is another summary, which goes in a contrary direction: “The last word . . .: Fear God and keep his commandments.” [Sheppard, Gerald T. *Wisdom as a Hermeneutical Construct*. BZAW 151. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1980. 125-26.] It matters not that this seems to be an editorial addition; it was designed to give an orientation to the work.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 53)
   3. “We propose to single out various areas that can be considered as central to the author’s thought, and to illustrate these with copious references to the text that the readers can verify for themselves. The themes will be intimately connected with certain key words that are repeated over and over in the book. The essential points are: vanity, joy, wisdom, fear of God, retribution, and God.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 53)
2. **vanity**
   1. “Hebrew *hebel* means “vapor,” “breath,” hence something insubstantial and ephemeral—a vain, futile thing.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 53)
   2. Michael V. Fox (“The Meaning of *Hebel* for Qohelet.” *JBL* 105 (1986): 409-27) “argues that it does not have several different meanings in the book. It means “absurd,” or “absurdity,” and this is to be taken in the sense of the irrational, and not merely in the sense of the incomprehensible. But what is “reason” and the “rational” for Qoheleth? I think that the sharp distinction between absurd as irrational and absurd as incomprehensible cannot really be made (as is done on p. 413).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 62 n. 14)
   3. Diethelm Michel (*Qohelet* 86) “also favors the term “absurd”; it is interesting to note that both Fox and Michel invoke the authority of *The Myth of Sisyphus* by A. Camus. For Michel, this comparison with Camus underscores the philosophical character of Qoheleth’s work . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 62 n. 14)
   4. G. Ogden (*Qoheleth*. Sheffield: Almond, 1987. 22) “concludes that *hebel* “conveys the notion that life is enigmatic, and mysterious; that there are many unanswered and unanswerable questions.” I think this is closer to the mark, even if one disagrees with Ogden’s emphasis on “Qoheleth’s Call to Enjoyment” (p. 21).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 62 n. 14)
   5. “When Qoheleth pronounces the verdict of vanity on life, nothing is excluded. Life, in its totality, is utterly futile. This desperate judgment runs through the work, and it is not to be muted: *all* is vanity.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 53)
      1. “His experiment with pleasure yields nothing (2:1-11).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 53)
      2. “His toil (*`āmāl*) and the fruits thereof (2:18-23; 3:9; 6:7-9) give no enduring satisfaction.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 53)
      3. “Riches also turn out to be a failure (5:9-16; 6:1-6).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 53)
      4. “Even wisdom, which he resolutely aspired to but failed to attain (7:23-24), is not satisfying (“Why then should I be wise?” 2:15).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 53)
   6. His verdicts are clear and forthright, but his reasons are varied and often quite circumstantial in ways that may not seem convincing to the reader. For example, he “hates” the fruits of his labor because he has to leave them to another who has not toiled for them (2:19-21, and his successor might turn out to be a fool!). There is no feeling here for family identity or the community—feeling that is so typical of traditional Israelite thought. No matter the strength of his argument, his conclusions are firm.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 53)
   7. “He can always have recourse to the fact of death (“How is it that the wise man dies as well as the fool?” 2:16), which casts its shadow over all his thoughts (3:19-20; 4:3; 9:3-6, 10-12; 8:8; 11:8-12:7).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 53)
   8. “Qoheleth’s judgment is also expressed in ways other than the repetition of “vanity.”” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 54)
      1. “He questions after the “profit” (*yitrôn*) in such a way as to make it clear that there is none (1:3; cf. 2:11; 3:9; 5:15).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 54)
      2. “Another ominous term is “lot” (*miqreh*, literally, “happening”), which befalls all living things (2:15; 3:19; 9:2); this is equated with death. But there is also what has been called the “falling time” when “time and a blow” (“time of calamity,” 9:11) “happen” to living beings; it is the “evil time” (9:12).” [54] Murphy also defines the “falling time” as “the evil time that comes suddenly.” [57] (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 54, 57)
      3. “Elsewhere he conveys the futility of events by asserting human ignorance as fact or as a rhetorical question (“Who knows?” 3:21; 6:12).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 54)
   9. “For Qoheleth, then, the human situation is utterly bleak; it is no wonder that he can say that he “hated” life (2:17). It is possible to quarrel with his verdict and to claim that humans are not “helpless.” [Lang, B. “Ist der Mensch hilflos?” *TQ* 159 (1979): 109-24.] But such relativization goes beyond Qoheleth’s thought, and it has to be argued from perspectives he does not envision.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 54)
   10. “vanity of vanities”
       1. “The repetition “vanity of vanities” is of course the normal Hebrew idiom for the superlative (as in “Song of Songs”).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 53)
       2. “The superlative expression “vanity of vanities,” or complete absurdity, occurs in 1:3 and 12:8 in such a way as to suggest that it is the conclusion for the book; it obviously expresses a main theme.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 50)
3. **joy**
   1. “A case has also been made for another key theme: “Enjoy life!” (e.g., 9:7ff.). [53] . . . . . . a substantial number of scholars have evaluated the book in a positive way as inculcating enjoyment of life (the leitmotif, some would say); and one has even entitled Qoheleth “preacher of joy.”” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 53-54)
      1. Gordis, R. *Koheleth—The Man and His World*. New York: Schocken, 1968. 129-31.
      2. Johnston, R. “‘Confessions of a Workaholic’: A Reappraisal of Qoheleth.” *CBQ* 38 (1976): 14-28.
      3. Whybray, R. N. “Qoheleth, Preacher of Joy.” *JSOT* 23 (1982): 87-98.
   2. “There are several passages in the book that can be advanced in favor of the gospel of enjoyment: 2:10; 2:24; 3:12; 3:22; 5:17-18; 8:15; 9:7-9; 11:7-10. Four of these are very similar: 3:12; 3:22; 8:15; and, with a mild emendation, 2:24.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 54)
      1. Qoh 2:10, “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.”
      2. Qoh 2:24, “There is nothing better for mortals than to eat and drink, and find enjoyment in their toil. This also, I saw, is from the hand of God . . .”
      3. Qoh 3:12, “I know that there is nothing better for them than to be happy and enjoy themselves as long as they live . . .”
      4. Qoh 3:22, “So I saw that there is nothing better than that all should enjoy their work, for that is their lot; who can bring them to see what will be after them?”
      5. Qoh 5:17-18, “Besides, all their days they eat in darkness, in much vexation and sickness and resentment. 18This is what I have seen to be good: it is fitting to eat and drink and find enjoyment in all the toil with which one toils under the sun the few days of the life God gives us; for this is our lot.”
      6. Qoh 8:15, “So I commend enjoyment, for there is nothing better for people under the sun than to eat, and drink, and enjoy themselves, for this will go with them in their toil through the days of life that God gives them under the sun.”
      7. Qoh 9:7-9, “Go, eat your bread with enjoyment, and drink your wine with a merry heart; for God has long ago approved what you do. 8Let your garments always be white; do not let oil be lacking on your head. 9Enjoy life with the wife whom you love, all the days of your vain life that are given you under the sun, because that is your portion in life and in your toil at which you toil under the sun.”
      8. Qoh 11:7-10, “Light is sweet, and it is pleasant for the eyes to see the sun. 8Even those who live many years should rejoice in them all; yet let them remember that the days of darkness will be many. All that comes is vanity. 9Rejoice, young man, while you are young, and let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth. Follow the inclination of your heart and the desire of your eyes, but know that for all these things God will bring you into judgment. 10Banish anxiety from your mind, and put away pain from your body; for youth and the dawn of life are vanity.”
   3. “They present their conclusions as “nothing better than” (enjoyment, eating and drinking, etc.). That mode of expression is not as enthusiastic as it appears. In every case, the “nothing better” turns out to be a concession to circumstances; it is not an unqualified approval. The circumstances are that the real attainments in life are unfulfilled or unfulfilling, for whatever reason. So what to do? In that case, there is “nothing better.”” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 54)
   4. Qoh 2:10, 3:22
      1. “Qoheleth does admit that the “portion” (*ḥēleq*) of a given effort can be satisfaction or enjoyment (2:10; 3:22). What he means is that this much is *given* by God. But the tantalizing factor is that God is quite arbitrary in “giving.” God gives as God pleases, and there is no consistency that Qoheleth can discover about this “giving”; it is mystery, rather than generosity. Hence there is an unmistakable quality of resignation in the “nothing better” statements. This is all that one can hope for in a very uncertain world; it is not an unqualified solution to living.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 54)
   5. Qoh 5:16-18
      1. In the gloomy situation of human life (5:16), Qoheleth offers (5:17) eating and drinking as man’s “portion” (*ḥēleq*). Why? Because that is all humans can do, *if* they receive this “gift” (5:18) from an inscrutable divinity.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 54)
   6. Qoh 8:15
      1. In 8:15 Qoheleth recommends joy (*śimḥâ*), again as a “gift,” always arbitrary, from God.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 54)
   7. Qoh 9:7-9
      1. Here “he issues a positive command to enjoy life as one’s “lot” (*ḥēleq*; cf. 2:10; 3:22; 5:17; 9:6, 9). But this is severely conditioned by 9:10: one is to live life to the fullest in view of the total inertia that one will eventually experience [54] in Sheol.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 54-55)
   8. Qoh 11:7-10
      1. “The same grim perspective of death haunts the enchanting recommendation to enjoy life (11:8-10): one is to remember that the days of darkness will be many (and these are vividly described in the passage on old age and death in 12:1-7).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 55)
   9. “There is no denying the unquenchable thirst for life that Qoheleth himself had (9:10a; 11:7-9). But he knew only too well, and indicated explicitly, that this was severely conditioned by the fact of death, and by the inscrutable ways of the Almighty. This hardly merits for him the title of “preacher of joy.”” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 55)
4. **Qoheleth on traditional wisdom**
   1. “It is a commonplace that Qoheleth goes against traditional wisdom, that with him (and the Book of Job) wisdom has entered a crisis situation.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 55)
      1. Galling, K. *Die Krise der Aufklarung in Israel*. Mainzer Universitätsreden 19. Mainz, 1952.
      2. Galling “is followed in this by many other scholars, such as A. Lauha and H. Gese.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 62 n. 16)
   2. “The issue here is a correct evaluation of his dispute with traditional wisdom. Is it simply bankrupt, and hence to be shelved? Two things should be clear.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 55)
   3. “First, Qoheleth is a *ḥākām*, or “wise man” (12:9), and he can be understood only in the light of this tradition with which he “quarrels.” [Murphy, Roland E. “Qohelet’s ‘Quarrel’ with the Fathers.” *From Faith to Faith*, ed. D. Y. Hadidian. Pittsburgh Theological Monograph Series 31. D. G. Miller Festschrift. Pittsburgh: Pickwick, 1979. 235-45.] Yes, he freely admits that he never attained the wisdom he sought (7:23-24), and he clearly rejects many of the claims of the sages (8:17). But the points he scores (vanity, failure of justice to be rewarded, etc.) are precisely the stuff of wisdom, the preoccupation of the sages. He reasons as a sage does, attempting to find out what is “good” for one to do (2:3; 6:10; etc.). The ever recurring question about the “profit” (1:3; 2:11, 13; 3:9; 5:8, 15; 7:12; 10:10-11) is another sign of the quest for wisdom. In his experiment with pleasure, he states twice that wisdom is the means he employed (2:3, 9). In short, his methodology is that of the Israelite sage, even if the sage has no advantage over the fool (6:8).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 55)
   4. “Second, it is surely significant that he *never* considers folly a viable option. He challenges traditional wisdom and even seems to poke fun at it (1:18; 2:13-15; 9:16-17). But he never recommends folly. Indeed, folly is dangerous; just a little folly can spoil wisdom, which is extremely vulnerable (7:5-7; 9:18-10:1). He excoriates wordiness, the traditional sign of a fool (5:1-2; 10:12-15; cf. Prov 14:3; 10:19, 32; 15:17; Sir 21:16-17). Hence it is a misreading to claim that Qoheleth jettisons wisdom per se (any more than the Book of Job does). The ancients (and especially the editor of his book in 12:9-12) were not as “shocked” as modern readers are who consider Qoheleth to be in revolt against everything in the tradition. Yes, his was a deeply critical and even strident voice that did not sing in tune with the others; but the ancients made room for him among the sages.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 55)
5. **fear of God**
   1. Qoh 12:13 (“Fear God and keep his commandments; for that is the whole duty of everyone.”)
      1. “This frequently quoted line [was] regarded by F. Delitzsch as “the kernel and star of the whole book” . . .” (*Commentary on the Song of Songs and Ecclesiastes*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982. 438) (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 55)
      2. But “How could Qoheleth have said this? These are not his words. They belong to the epilogist or editor of the entire book, who gave a hermeneutical direction to the book that is in line with Ben Sira’s teaching on fear of God and Torah observance. [Sheppard, Gerald T. *Wisdom as a Hermeneutical Construct*. BZAW 151. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1980. 126-27.] . . . [The statement] is simply not appropriate for the Book of Ecclesiastes, which never mentions “commandments” (*miṣwôt*).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 55)
      3. “The nomistic understanding of fear as observance of the Torah is understandable, for the concept [55] [of “fear of God”] itself developed various nuances within the Hebrew Bible.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 55-56)
         1. Becker, J. *Gottesfurcht im Alten Testament*. AnBib 25. Rome: Biblical Institute, 1965.
         2. Pfeiffer, E. “Die Gottesfurcht im Buche Kobelet.” *Gottes Wort und Gottes Land*, ed. H. G. Reventlow. H. Hertzberg Festschrift. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1965. 133-58.
   2. “The phrase itself (“fear of God/Lord”) is not found in the book; Qoheleth uses the verbal form, “(to) fear.”” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 56)
   3. Qoh 3:14
      1. The first occurrence is in 3:14, where the mysterious divine activity is given a purpose: that people “may fear him.” Here the verb takes on the connotation of fear before the numinous and mysterious, as the context of 3:13-22 clearly shows. On this verse W. Zimmerli astutely remarks, “Fear of God here is not travelling in paths of light which secure for those who walk therein the harvest of life’s fruits and honors. Fear of God here means walking under a heaven that is mysteriously closed, walking without the assurance that lightning might not suddenly shoot out and strike you as you go—at every step relying upon the free gift of God, but with every step also summoned to suffer the riddle and oppression that God can inflict.” (Zimmerli, W. “Das Buch des Predigers Salomo.” *Sprüche/Prediger*. ATD 16/1. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1962. 174.) (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 56)
   4. Qoh 5:6
      1. “The same connotation is present also in 5:6 in the terse command “Fear God!” This appears in a context in which Qoheleth warns against many words, rash promises, and insincerity in the worship of God. He even holds out the possibility of divine anger and ensuing destruction (5:6b). This is an instructive example of his understanding of divine wrath or judgment. He cannot rule it out, just as he cannot find it in the twists and turns of life; but it is always lurking in the background of the mysterious God whose actions cannot be programmed.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 56)
   5. Qoh 7:18
      1. “The meaning of the “God-fearer” in 7:18 is uncertain. It occurs in a context (7:15-18) that points out the uselessness of righteousness (v 15) and offers conflicting testimony about righteousness and wickedness (vv 16-17). His meaning is obscure; he seems to be pointing up once more the inadequacy of human judgment about virtue and vice. His only positive recommendation is that the one who fears God “will come forth from them all” (*RSV*) or “will win through at all events” (*NAB*). Any translation of these words remains uncertain, but the context demands a positive recommendation of the fear of God. Hence it would seem that this is the fear of the numinous, which keeps humans in check.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 56)
   6. Qoh 8:12
      1. “The only time that fear of God is used in the traditional sense is found in 8:12b, where God-fearers (hence, the just or pious) are contrasted with the wicked with respect to retribution. This surprising passage has been regarded by many scholars as a gloss, because it is a sentiment that Qoheleth totally denies elsewhere in his book. But one can allow it to remain as part of his work if one recognizes that he is repeating, even quoting, the traditional doctrine that he does not adhere to. One might paraphrase the sense thus: “There is no punishment for the sinner, although I am aware of the teaching that distinguishes between the fate of the God-fearers and that of the wicked.”” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 56)
6. **retribution**: see the handout, “Retribution.”
7. **God**
   1. bibliography
      1. Muller, H.-P. “Wie sprach Qohälät von Gott?” *VT* 128 (1968): 507-21. (“The data on this topic has been assembled by H.-P. Muller . . .”) (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 62 n. 23)
      2. Gorssen, L. “La Cohérence de la conception de Dieu dans L’Ecclésiaste.” *ETL* 46 (1970): 282-324.
      3. Michel, Diethelm. *Qohelet*. EF 258. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1988. 95-103. (“Further bibliography [and] discussion . . .”) (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 62 n. 23)
   2. “He [God] is never called by the sacred name, *yhwh*. The generic *´ĕlōhîm* occurs forty times (twenty-six times with the definite article).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 57)
   3. “This god is preeminently the creator.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 57)
      1. “He has made everything “beautiful” (cf. “good” in Gen 1) or appropriate to its time (3:11) . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 57) Qoh 3:11, “He has made everything suitable for its time; moreover he has put a sense of past and future into their minds, yet they cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end.”
      2. “. . . the Masoretic text reads “creator” in 12:1.” (Qoh 12:1, “Remember your creator in the days of your youth . . .”) (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 57)
      3. “This aspect is further developed by the verbs most often used of God.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 57)
         1. “He “makes” and “gives.” Eleven times he is said to give (*ntn*).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 57)
            1. “Among these gifts are life (mentioned parenthetically in 5:17; 8:15; 9:9), just as in 12:7 he gives the *rûaḥ* or “breath of life,” which returns to him.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 57) Qoh 12:7, “the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the breath returns to God who gave it.”
            2. “But his gifts are often ambiguous, to say the least . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 57)
            3. One “such as the gift of *hā`ōlām* [*sic*] (3:11; a difficult term, which has been translated in various ways, e.g., duration, world, eternity [nrsv, “a sense of past and future”]) in the human heart; it keeps humans from understanding what God is up to. This is part of the [57] *`inyan*, or “troublesome task,” which God has “given” to human beings to be troubled about (1:13; 3:10).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 57-58)
            4. “More positively, he also gives wisdom and knowledge (2:26) to anyone he pleases.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 58)
            5. “The joys of life, epitomized by eating and drinking, are his gift (3:13; 5:18); such things come from the “hand” of God (2:24).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 58)
            6. “He also gives riches and glory to someone, only to have another take them (6:2). Hence, one never knows for certain the meaning of God’s gifts. He seems to be supremely arbitrary in his generosity.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 58)
         2. “Another frequent verb is *`śh* (do or make).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 58)
            1. “Two verses refer (with approval) to the divine action in creation: 3:11 and 7:29.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 58)

Qoh 3:11, “He has made everything suitable for its time . . .”

Qoh 7:29, “God made human beings straightforward, but they have devised many schemes.”

* + - * 1. “Many times Qoheleth speaks of the *ma`ăśeh* or “action” of God (3:11; 7:13; 8:17; 11:5) or simply of the things that are done under the sun (which are “evil,” 4:3; 9:3; or “vanity,” 8:14).

Qoh 3:11, “He has made everything suitable for its time . . .”

Qoh 7:13, “Consider the work of God; who can make straight what he has made crooked?”

Qoh 8:17a, “then I saw all the work of God, that no one can find out what is happening under the sun.”

Qoh 11:5, “you do not know the work of God, who makes everything.”

Qoh 4:3, “the one who has not yet been . . . has not seen the evil deeds that are done under the sun.”

Qoh 9:3, “This is an evil in all that happens under the sun, that the same fate comes to everyone. Moreover, the hearts of all are full of evil; madness is in their hearts while they live, and after that they go to the dead.”

Qoh 8:14, “There is a vanity that takes place on earth, that there are righteous people who are treated according to the conduct of the wicked, and there are wicked people who are treated according to the conduct of the righteous. I said that this also is vanity.”

* + - * 1. “Elsewhere in the Bible the “work(s) of God”—his creative activity (Pss 19:2; 104:24; Job 34:19) or his saving works (Pss 66:3; 111:2-7; 118:17)—are singled out for praise: But for Qoheleth the work of God is not something that stirs his admiration. It is totally unintelligible. Humans cannot know what God is doing (3:11). The work of God is something he has made crooked, and no one can straighten it out (7:13; cf. 1:15). Humans are simply unable to make sense of the action of God (8:17). Qoheleth compares the divine action to the mystery of the process of gestation, the role of the life breath in the womb of the mother (11:5).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 58)

Qoh 3:11c, “they cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end.”

Qoh 7:13, “Consider the work of God; who can make straight what he has made crooked?”

Qoh 1:15, “What is crooked cannot be made straight, and what is lacking cannot be counted.”

Qoh 8:17a, “then I saw all the work of God, that no one can find out what is happening under the sun.”

Qoh 11:5, “Just as you do not know how the breath comes to the bones in the mother’s womb, so you do not know the work of God, who makes everything.”

* 1. “All this constitutes a rather grim picture of the divinity.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 58)
     1. “Nowhere does Qoheleth pray to this God, or even complain, as did many of the psalmists and Job. He is simply not rebellious. “God is in heaven, and you are on earth; so let your words be few” (5:1).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 58) Qoh 5:2, “Never be rash with your mouth, nor let your heart be quick to utter a word before God, for God is in heaven, and you upon earth; therefore let your words be few.”
     2. “He offers no consolation, nor does he limn the “soft” side of God that one finds in the rest of the Bible. He simply accepts God on God’s terms. That is his faith. These terms are mysterious, so extreme that Qoheleth can call life’s venture a vanity or absurdity (intending this as an objective fact, not as an insult). I have called this faith.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 58)
  2. Qoheleth’s faith “is not the faith that celebrates the saving acts of the Lord, of which we hear so much in the Bible.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 58)
     1. “Hence some scholars interpret Qoheleth as honoring only an *Urhebergott* (a God of origins, or creator God), or even as rejecting the saving history of his people.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 58)
        1. Muller, H.-P. “Wie sprach Qohälät von Gott?” *VT* 128 (1968): 520 (article: 507-21).
        2. Preuss, Horst D. *Einführung in die alttestamentliche Weisheitsliteratur*. UrbanTaschenbücher 383. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1987. “174 and passim.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 62 n. 24)
        3. “R.B.Y. Scott implies [*Proverbs, Ecclesiastes*. AB 18. Garden City: Doubleday, 1965. 207] that Qoheleth denies the salvation-history doctrine of Israel, but there is no evidence of Qoheleth’s reflecting on this. Perhaps he may have regarded it as having [62] stopped (as many in the postexilic period might have thought) . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 61-62 n. 24)
     2. “However, he says nothing about Israel’s traditions, and it is not legitimate to extrapolate and make him say things that he has not said, or to infer that he accepted only a creator God.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 58)
     3. “In view of the circumstances we learn from his writing, it is no little thing that he accepted this mysterious God . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 58)
  3. “A sympathetic interpretation of Qoheleth is in order.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 58)
     1. “His is a valuable witness in the Bible to the mystery of God.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 58)
     2. “He reminds us of the celebrated words of Thomas Aquinas: “When the existence of a thing has been ascertained, there remains the further question of the manner of its existence, in order that we may know its essence. Now because we cannot know what God [58] is, but rather what He is not, we have no means for considering how God is, but rather how He is not. Therefore we must consider (1) how He is not; (2) how He is known by us; (3) how He is named.”” (*ST* 1.3 introduction.From: Aquinas, Thomas. *Basic Writings of Saint Thomas Aquinas*. Ed. Anton Pegis. New York: Random House, 1944. 25.) (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 58-59)
     3. “Despite the general religious judgment that God is “Wholly Other,” and truly mysterious, the pictures of God that human beings draw tend to be selective, optimistic, and favoring particular theological traits.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 59)
     4. “Qoheleth provides a sober and necessary balance. He shows that there is more to religion than salvation. Although he failed to write of a comforting encounter with God, he did not lack reverence for the God who created a history in which his people could encounter him.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 59)
     5. “There is a danger for Christians in particular to underrate this book.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 59)
        1. “H. Hertzberg finished his commentary with the statement that the Book of Qoheleth is “the most staggering messianic prophecy to appear in the Old Testament.” By this he meant that the “Old Testament was here on the point of running itself to death. Behind this total nothing from a human point of view, the only possible help was the ‘new creature’ of the New Testament.”” (Hertzberg, H. *Die Prediger*. KAT 17/4. Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1963. 237.) (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 59)
        2. “This is not an adequate perspective from which to view Qoheleth. He must be taken on his own terms and not judged from a supposedly “superior” attitude. The *deus absconditus* who was real to him is sometimes hidden to those who think they know the hidden God.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 59)

### THREE CARPE-DIEM POEMS

EVEN SUCH IS TIME

Raleigh, Walter. “Even Such Is Time.” *Prerogative of Parliaments*. 1628. Lumenarium. 3 Jan. 2006. <http://www.luminarium.org/renlit/evensuch.htm>.

Even such is time, that takes on trust

Our youth, our joys, our all we have,

And pays us but with earth and dust;

Who, in the dark and silent grave,

When we have wandered all our ways,

Shuts up the story of our days;

But from this earth, this grave, this dust

My God shall raise me up, I trust!

TO THE VIRGINS, TO MAKE MUCH OF TIME

Herrick, Robert. “To the Virgins, to make much of Time.” C. 1650. *The Oxford Book of English Verse: 1250–1900*. Ed. Arthur Quiller-Couch. Oxford: OUP, 1919.

Gather ye rosebuds while ye may,

  Old Time is still a-flying:

And this same flower that smiles to-day

  To-morrow will be dying.

The glorious lamp of heaven, the sun, 5

  The higher he ‘s a-getting,

The sooner will his race be run,

  And nearer he ‘s to setting.

That age is best which is the first,

  When youth and blood are warmer; 10

But being spent, the worse, and worst

  Times still succeed the former.

Then be not coy, but use your time,

  And while ye may, go marry:

For having lost but once your prime, 15

  You may for ever tarry.

ON A FLY DRINKING OUT OF HIS CUP

Oldys, William. “On A Fly Drinking Out Of His Cup.” Book of Days. 3 Jan. 2006. <http://www.­thebookofdays.com/months/april/15.htm>.

Busy, curious, thirsty fly!

Drink with me, and drink as I!

Freely welcome to my cup,

Couldst thou sip and sip it up;

Make the most of life you may:

Life is short and wears away.

Both alike are mine and thine,

Hastening quick to their decline!

Thine's a summer, mine no more,

Though repeated to threescore!

Threescore summers, when they're gone,

Will appear as short as one!

William Oldys “rummaged old book-stalls undisturbed, made his honest notes, collected materials for mighty works contemplated, jotted down gentle indignation at unworthy treatment in endless diaries, and left all these invaluable treasures at his death to be scattered and lost and destroyed. . . . he grows melancholy about his work, and sets down a pious misgiving,—‘he heapeth up riches, and cannot tell who shall gather them.’[[1]](#footnote-1) In sadder mood still, he includes the contents in a quaint couplet:

‘Fond treasurer of these stores, behold thy fate

In Psalm the thirty-ninth, 6, 7, and 8.’[[2]](#footnote-2)

## SIRACH

1. **author**
   1. “In what appears to be a colophon to the book, the author has given us his name: Yeshua (Greek form “Jesus”) ben (son of) Eleazar ben Sira (50:27). . . . The author has transmitted the name of his father and then his grandfather, but he is commonly referred to as either Ben Sira or Sirach (the Greek form of Sira).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 65)
   2. “This is a departure from the style of Old Testament writings, which are usually unsigned.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 65)
   3. prologue to the Greek translation
      1. “. . . the prologue . . . his grandson prefixed to the book when he translated it . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 66)
      2. “His grandson, in the important prologue to his Greek translation, . . . notes that his grandfather had devoted himself to an intense study of the Hebrew Bible and, out of a desire to help others, had written the present work. . . . The grandson notes that Ben Sira was thoroughly familiar with these [earlier biblical] works. His judgment is quite correct.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 67)
   4. Sir 24:30-33
      1. Sir 24:30-33, “As for me, I was like a canal from a river, like a water channel into a garden. 31I said, “I will water my garden and drench my flower-beds.” And lo, my canal became a river, and my river a sea. 32I will again make instruction shine forth like the dawn, and I will make it clear from far away. 33I will again pour out teaching like prophecy, and leave it to all future generations.”
      2. “In 24:30-33 he develops the metaphor of water and applies it to himself. Wisdom, or Torah, is comparable to the great rivers of antiquity (24:23-25), and he is a rivulet that channels the water into the garden he has planted. He registers a naive astonishment: “This rivulet of mine became a river, and my river became a sea” (v 29). . . . he is somewhat self-effacing; he is surprised at what has happened.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 66)
      3. “Indeed, his teaching will shine like the dawn, illuminating far-off places. More than that, he calls it “prophecy,” which is destined for future generations (vv 30-31). This gives an idea of the importance he attached to his work.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 66)
   5. Sir 33:16-18
      1. Sir 33:16-18, “Now I was the last to keep vigil; I was like a gleaner following the grape-pickers; 17by the blessing of the Lord I arrived first, and like a grape-picker I filled my wine press. 18Consider that I have not labored for myself alone, but for all who seek instruction.”
      2. “He wrote not for himself but for those who seek wisdom (33:18). We learn in 33:16-18 that [his success] is due to the Lord’s blessing. He modestly compares himself to one who gleans after the vintage that was prepared in Israel’s traditions.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 66)
   6. Sir 50:27-29 (the colophon)
      1. Sir 50:27-29, “Instruction in understanding and knowledge I have written in this book, Jesus son of Eleazar son of Sirach of Jerusalem, whose mind poured forth wisdom. 28Happy are those who concern themselves with these things, and those who lay them to heart will become wise. 29For if they put them into practice, they will be equal to anything, for the fear of the Lord is their path.”
      2. “. . . he speaks of the teaching that he has poured forth. “Happy the one who meditates on these things,” for if he acts on them, he can cope with anything (50:27-29).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 66)
   7. Sir 51:23-27
      1. Sir 51:23-27, “Draw near to me, you who are uneducated, and lodge in the house of instruction. . . . 25I opened my mouth and said, Acquire wisdom for yourselves without money. . . . 27See with your own eyes that I have labored but little and found for myself much serenity.”
      2. “. . . Sirach can invite the “untutored to take up their dwelling in my house of instruction” (51:23). He may be speaking in literal terms of a school building (although we know nothing of the circumstances) or merely referring to his teaching.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 66)
      3. “Teacher that he is, he asks for an earnest desire for wisdom on the part of his students, and he promises them (without cost!) the riches for which he himself labored.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 66)
   8. Sir 39:1-11 (description of the sage)
      1. Sir 38:34b-39:11, “How different the one who devotes himself to the study of the law of the Most High! 39:1He seeks out the wisdom of all the ancients, and is concerned with prophecies; 2he preserves the sayings of the famous and penetrates the subtleties of parables; 3he seeks out the hidden meanings of proverbs and is at home with the obscurities of parables. 4He serves among the great and appears before rulers; he travels in foreign lands and learns what is good and evil in the human lot. 5He sets his heart to rise early to seek the Lord who made him, and to petition the Most High; he opens his mouth in prayer and asks pardon for his sins. 6If the great Lord is willing, he will be filled with the spirit of understanding; he will pour forth words of wisdom of his own and give thanks to the Lord in prayer. 7The Lord will direct his counsel and knowledge, as he meditates on his mysteries. 8He will show the wisdom of what he has learned, and will glory in the law of the Lord’s covenant. 9Many will praise his understanding; it will never be blotted out. His memory will not disappear, and his name will live through all generations. 10Nations will speak of his wisdom, and the congregation will proclaim his praise. 11If he lives long, he will leave a name greater than a thousand, and if he goes to rest, it is enough for him.”
      2. The context is a review of “various professions in relation to that of the scribe (*sōpēr*; 38:24-39:11). . . . Sirach’s perception of other callings is far from ridicule . . . [But] he ranks higher the vocation of the sage . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 66)
      3. “In a sense this is an ideal self-description, for it is clearly the goal that Sirach set for himself.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 66)
      4. “. . . in 39:4 Sirach notes the sage’s travels and appearance before rulers (did he himself travel?).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 67)
      5. “It is noteworthy that prayer is underlined. The wise man prays to be purified, and only then does the Lord bestow his gift of understanding and wisdom (39:5-6).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 67)
      6. “Sirach becomes very effusive in describing the fame the wise man achieves (39:9-11). Even if this is an idealized portrait, not a biographical note, it fills out the author’s vision of himself, the goal to which he aspired.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 67)
2. **date**
   1. 200-150 bc: “There is universal agreement that Ben Sira was actively engaged in his teaching and writing in the first part of the second century b.c.e.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 65)
      1. Proof “is the praise of Simon the high priest in 50:1-24; he is to be identified with Simeon II, who was high priest from 219 to 196. Sirach describes his Temple ministry, as it were, from the point of view of an eyewitness . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 65)
      2. “. . . 50:1 implies that Simon has (just) died.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 65) Sir 50:1, “The leader of his brothers and the pride of his people was the high priest, Simon son of Onias, who in his life repaired the house, and in his time fortified the temple.”
   2. 200-175 bc: “Indeed, the first quarter of the century is more accurate . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 65)
      1. “. . . the book does not reflect the problems that arose in Palestine with the advent of Antiochus IV Epiphanes to power in 175, and the ensuing Maccabean revolt triggered by the desecration of the Temple in 167.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 65)
   3. c. 180 bc: “Hence the year 180 is generally assigned as the date of the work.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 65)
      1. “This inference is strengthened by the prologue to the Greek translation written by Sirach’s grandson. This grandson mentions his arrival in Egypt in 132 b.c.e., the thirty-eighth year of the reign of King Euergetes (Ptolemy VII), when his activity as a translator could have begun (perhaps in Alexandria). This provides a suitable time period between his grandfather and himself.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 65)
3. **provenance**
   1. “It is generally presumed that the work was composed in Jerusalem.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 65)
4. **title**
   1. “The original title, if any, has not been transmitted in Hebrew . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 67)
   2. “. . . the Greek tradition calls it The Wisdom of Jesus, Son of Sira.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 67)
      1. “. . . most Latin manuscripts are in harmony with the Greek: The Book of Jesus, Son of Sirach.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 67)
   3. “Another commonly used title, Ecclesiasticus, derives from many Latin Vulgate manuscripts . . . The term Ecclesiasticus refers to the book (*liber ecclesiasticus*, “church book”). Nothing is known about the origin of this title, which dates back to the time of St. Cyprian (d. 258 c.e.), but it has been surmised that the title is due to the extensive use of the book as a *vade mecum* for Christians, or perhaps as a claim for its canonicity. (*Vade mecum*: Latin, “go with me.” “A useful thing that one constantly carries about. A book, such as a guidebook, for ready reference.” *American Heritage Dictionary*, 4th ed.) (Murphy, *Tree of* Life 67)
5. **canonicity**
   1. “It is part of the canonical Old Testament for Catholics and most Orthodox groups.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 67)
   2. “. . . the book was not received as canonical in the Jewish tradition (followed by Protestants), although it is quoted in the Talmud and other Jewish writings, sometimes even with the formula “it is written,” the usual sign of a canonical work.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 67)
6. **text**
   1. Kearns, C. “Ecclesiasticus.” *A New Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture*, ed. B. Orchard et al. London: Nelson, 1969. 546-51.
   2. Skehan, P., and A. Di Lella. *The Wisdom of Ben Sira*. AB 39. Garden City: Doubleday, 1987. 51-82.
   3. “. . . the original Hebrew text [disappeared] from the Western world for about fifteen centuries (from Jerome to about 1900).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 68)
   4. “Although the Hebrew was known in the Jewish tradition, it was not conspicuous.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 68)
   5. recovering the original Hebrew text
      1. “In the Christian tradition it was known from the Greek and Latin translations, from daughter versions (e.g., Coptic) of these sources, and from the Syriac version.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 68)
      2. 1896: Solomon Schechter discovers “medieval Hebrew manuscripts of Sirach that had been fortuitously preserved in an old Jewish *genizah* (a storeroom for used liturgical and biblical Hebrew manuscripts) in Cairo.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 68)
      3. “By 1900 fragments from four different Cairo manuscripts (A, B, C, D) were published.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 68)
      4. 1931: “a fifth manuscript (E) was brought to light.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 68)
      5. “By 1960 more portions from manuscripts B and C were made available by J. Schirmann.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 68)
      6. the Dead Sea Scrolls
         1. Cave 2 had “small fragments of Sir 6:20-31 . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 68)
         2. Cave 11 had “51:13-20, 30 in the Psalms Scroll . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 68)
      7. 1964: “excavation of the Masada fortress (1964) led to the discovery and publication of Sir 39:27-44:71. This manuscript was written about a hundred years after the book was composed.” (Yadin, Yigael. *The Ben Sira Scroll from Masada*. Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1965. Review: Skehan, P. *Studies in Israelite Wisdom and Poetry*. CBQMS 1. Washington: Catholic Biblical Association, 1971. 245-46.) (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 68)
      8. “At the present time we possess a little over two thirds of Sirach in the original language.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 68)
      9. Do these manuscripts “represent the original, or are they Hebrew translations of, say, a Greek text . . .? Minute and exacting scholarly analysis quickly established that these were copies of an original Hebrew.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 68)
   6. short and long texts
      1. “The phenomenon of short and long forms of a biblical book is not unusual, as can be seen from the differences between the Hebrew and Greek texts of Jeremiah and of Job. Many of the expansions in Sirach are typical of the fate of any book that is handed down over the years, such as marginal glosses that creep into the text.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 68)
      2. “In both the Hebrew and Greek traditions two basic forms of the text, one short and one long, came to be recognized. It is not to be thought that the recensions in the Hebrew manuscripts discovered since 1896 are impeccable. Most of these are of medieval provenance and give evidence of some contamination. In fact the Cairo manuscripts betray a short and a long (expansion) form of the Hebrew text. This conclusion is not surprising in view of the evidence provided by the ancient versions. There are also short and long forms in the Greek tradition: short in the famous uncials, such as Codex Alexandrinus and Vaticanus, and long in Codex 248 and in ancient translations from the Greek such as the Old Latin, which Jerome took over into the Vulgate with practically no change.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 68)
      3. “. . . the expanded (long) form of Sirach provides considerable interest in that it supplies an eschatology that goes beyond the views of the author. This eschatology is attested in the Greek and Old Latin traditions that imply a judgment after death, with suffering for [68] evildoers and joyous eternal life for the righteous. Similar ideas are found in the ancient Syriac version, which stresses union with the angels in the next life.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 68-69)
   7. Which text is canonical?
      1. Gilbert, M. “L’Ecclesiastique: Quel texte? Quelle autorite?” *RB* 94 (1987): 233-50.
      2. Kearns, C. “Ecclesiasticus.” *A New Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture*, ed. B. Orchard et al. London: Nelson, 1969. 546-51.
      3. “C. Kearns proclaims the long form as the canonical text, and he has recourse to the Council of Trent, which considered canonical those books “in their integrity with all their parts” that were found in the Catholic tradition represented by the Vulgate Bible.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 69)
      4. “M. Gilbert has argued that both text types, the short and the long, are canonical and inspired . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 79 n. 4)
      5. “Many Catholic authors have sided with Augustine in claiming that the Septuagint form of the Bible is inspired (i.e., the translation itself) because this form was the one used by the early Church. [Barthélemy, D. “La Place de la Septante dans l’Eglise.” *Etudes d’histoire du texte de l’Ancien Testament*. OBO 21. Fribourg: Editions Universitaires, 1978. 111-26.] Normally, one would assume that a translation is, objectively speaking, “inspired” only to the extent it agrees with the original autograph. But the claim here would include the expansions that are not due to the hand of Ben Sira.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 69)
      6. “However, the proper issue is not text, but book. [“Rightly argued by”: Hartman, L. “Sirach in Hebrew and in Greek.” *CBQ* 23 (1961): 443-51. (80 n. 6)] No council or theological opinion has determined the canonical character of later additions to a text. It cannot be said that Trent intended to settle the problems of textual criticism (of which the council fathers had little understanding). But they did want to ensure that such passages as the deuterocanonical parts of Esther and Daniel be considered part of the Bible because the centuries-old Vulgate contained them. They were of course ignorant of the Hebrew text of Sirach and the corresponding textual problems. Hence one may conclude that only the identity of a biblical book (Genesis, for example) is determined as canonical. Issues of textual criticism have to be distinguished from canonicity and left open to whatever evidence textual critics can muster. Additions by later hands to an original autograph testify to the later history of the book, how the book was interpreted by later readers, but not to the original text and meaning of the book.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 69)
   8. “the problem of the translation of the work” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 69)
      1. “Some [translations] settle for a translation from a Greek text, with occasional footnotes about Hebrew readings (e.g., *RSV*, *NIB*, *NEB*). Others (*NAB*, *AB*) rightly attempt to establish a critical text of Sirach on the basis of the Hebrew, Greek, and other ancient versions, and translate this critical text into the vernacular. The result [is that] there are significant differences among the English versions . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 69)
      2. Another result is that “chapter and verse references will often differ, sometimes by one or several verses. The plea has been made that all should follow the numbering of a critically established Greek text, and that practice is followed in this book.” [69] “So Skehan and Di Lella, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira*, x . . . Di Lella reasonably proposes that all should adopt the numbering of the critically established Greek text (by J. Ziegler) in order to introduce some uniformity in references to Sirach. The NRSV [*sic*] also follows suit.” [80 n. 7] (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 69, 80 n. 7)
7. **structure**
   1. “Efforts to detect a structure in the book have not been successful. Every proposal suffers from subjective factors, and none have rallied any consensus.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 70)
      1. “. . . the reader is confronted with a collection of minitreatises on various topics: wisdom, friendship, poverty and riches, and the like.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 70)
      2. “The ancients seem to have recognized the absence of any structure. In both the Hebrew and Greek manuscript traditions, subtitles were added at various places, and this practice is followed by some modern translations (*NAB*, *NIB*).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 70)
      3. “. . . Sirach has organized his discourses in a relatively logical and consecutive fashion.” (This seems contradictory.—Hahn) (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 70)
   2. “It is generally agreed that chap. 51 is an addition or appendix to the work (like the acrostic poem that ends Prov 31, an acrostic is found in Sir 51:13-30).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 70)
8. **style**
   1. “The work is filled with allusions and deliberate repetitions of phrases from earlier books of the Bible. Modern scholarship has called this *style anthologique*, or “anthological composition.” The writer knows the Bible so well that he expresses his thoughts in the phraseology of previous biblical books; his work becomes, as it were, a mosaic of biblical terms and images. This style of writing has been verified in many other compositions of this era, such as the Wisdom of Solomon (written in Greek, and using the earlier Greek translation, or Septuagint, as its source) and the *Hodayot* psalms from Qumran.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 67)
9. **literary forms**
   1. “Sirach mastered a wide range of forms . . . [He was adroit] in combining the proverbial sayings with relatively lengthy poems.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 71)
   2. “Naturally, Sirach exploits all the usual wisdom forms, such as sayings . . . and admonitions.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 72)
      1. Numerical proverbs: “e.g., 25:7-10, ten beatitudes [emended text]; 26:5-6 . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 72)
      2. “A particular form of the admonition is the “say not” prohibition. This recommends against a saying that is quoted and usually gives a reason for the command. The form occurs also in Eccl 7:10 and in Egyptian wisdom (Amenemope 18,21, *ANET*, 423-24). A series of these occur in Sir 5:1-6 (cf. also 15:11-12; 16:17-18). In the context of Sirach’s treatment of human freedom, 15:11 is typical: “Say not, ‘It was God’s doing that I fell away’; for what he hates he does not do.”” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 72)
   3. “Sirach’s various compositions resemble the wisdom poems in Prov 1-9.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 70)
   4. “. . . the discrete sayings in [Prov 10-30] stand out in contrast to the smooth discourses in Sirach. But careful examination illustrates the art of Ben Sira. [In Prov 10-30,] each verse stands on its own. In Sirach, however, there is a sense of unity and development of thought to a topic, even though many of his verses could be excerpted and seen clearly to be proverbial sayings in their own right. [70] . . . one has the impression of reading a unit, not merely a collection of sayings. He succeeds in mixing imperative commands, “better” sayings, and quotations, as in 29:21-28, which manifests a sense of continuity despite the wide range of literary forms.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 70-71)
      1. “Thus, Sir 13:1-14:2 deals with attitudes toward the rich and the poor, and it reads quite smoothly—so smoothly that one may overlook the fact that there are several (independent) sayings that have been worked into the flow of thought (e.g., 13:18, 21, 23). What the Book of Proverbs has separated in Prov 10:15; 18:23; 19:4, 6 (on riches and poverty) is found together in Sirach: Sir 13:21-23 consists of separate sayings about the treatment of the rich and poor (the differences that wealth creates), but they are so strung together that a unity is created.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 70)
      2. “A different kind of example is the way in which Sirach will expand on a given saying. Thus Prov 21:3 (cf. Prov 15:8) on justice and sacrifice is reflected in a kind of homily in Sir 31:1-11.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 70)
      3. “An outstanding example is the multiple development of the traditional wisdom theme, fear of the Lord (Sir 1:11-30; 10:19-23; etc.), a theme that can be compared to the motto in Prov 1:7 (9:10). Sirach develops this theme in a creative way . . ., mixing in sayings (vv 11-14) with commands (vv 28-30).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 70)
      4. Sir 1:11-30, on fear of the Lord, “contains twenty-two lines, the number of letters in the Hebrew alphabet . . .” [70] “On the several poems in Sirach of twenty-two and twenty-three lines, see Skehan and Di Lella, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira*, 74.” [80 n. 8] (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 70, 80 n. 8)
      5. “. . . Ben Sira has a tendency to round off a discourse with a proverb, or rather an admonition (cf. 7:36; 28:6-7; 35:12-13).” (Sanders, J. T. *Ben Sira and Demotic Wisdom*. SBLMS 28. Chico: Scholars, 1983. 15.) (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 70)
      6. For further comparsions of Sirach and Proverbs, see:
         1. Sanders, J. T. *Ben Sira and Demotic Wisdom*. SBLMS 28. Chico: Scholars, 1983.
         2. Duesberg, H., and I. Fransen. *Ecclesiastico*. LSB. Rome: Marietti, 1966. 64-71.
   5. Hymns include Sir 16:24-18:14, 39:12-35, and 42:15-43:33. (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 71)
   6. “Two prayers of petition occur: 22:17-23:6 and 36:1-22.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 72)
      1. “The first is a personal request of Sirach for control of his tongue and his sexual appetite. Interestingly, the prayer ends in an instruction on these topics (the tongue, 23:7-15; passion and adultery, 23:16-27).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 72)
      2. “The second prayer clearly has a political bent: a request that the Lord raise his hand against the *goyim*, or “gentiles”—that is, the Seleucid rulers who have begun to dominate Palestine (after 198 b.c.e.). Just as God manifested his holiness by punishing his people, so now he is to show his glory by granting them victory over their oppressors (cf. Ezek 28:22-25). The “signs and wonders” of the Exodus are to be repeated, and the Jews of the Diaspora are to be brought home to Palestine—to Zion and the Temple, where the divine glory will be manifested. In 50:25-26 Sirach expresses his loathing for the Edomites, Philistines, and Samaritans, but his prayer in chap. 36 is clearly directed against the Seleucid yoke. It is the only “eschatological” passage in his book. He wants to see the people united, and his vehemence is a harbinger of the aggressive spirit that was shortly to be manifested during the Maccabean revolution.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 72)

themes

1. **introduction**
   1. Sirach “is very much a conservative and traditionalist, relying strongly on the Book of Proverbs . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 174)
   2. Sirach’s originality
      1. Sirach’s originality “lies more in his presentation than in the content, and perhaps this is to be expected in a sage who conserves and hands on the tradition.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 71)
      2. “However, when one considers the wide range of his topics, and the fruitful development of his themes, one recognizes the magnificent control that he had of wisdom lore. While one may not always be able to single out individual verses as the original creation of Sirach, there can be no doubt about his deft orchestration and expansion of traditional ideas.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 71)
      3. “Among the excellent examples of his ability should be mentioned the treatment of the fear of the Lord (1:11-30); the association of creation with divine goodness (16:24-18:24); the miseries of life (40:1-10); the hymn to God’s works (42:15-43:33). Finally his “praise of famous men” in chaps. 44-49 is a tour de force that builds on Old Testament sources.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 71)
   3. lists of themes
      1. other lists
         1. Oesterley, W. *An Introduction to the Books of the Apocrypha*. London: SPCK, 1935. 229-32.
         2. Skehan, P., and A. Di Lella. *The Wisdom of Ben Sira*. AB 39. Garden City: Doubleday, 1987. 4-6.
         3. Pfeiffer, R. *History of New Testament Times*. New York: Harper, 1949. 352-408 (“a detailed summary,” 80 n. 10).
      2. “It is impossible to summarize the contents or message of this book. Two ways of reading Sirach can be suggested. One can begin with chap. 1 and be agreeably surprised in meeting the variety of topics that are treated, and even [72] repeated. It is also possible to put together an index of the various topics that occur, in order to gain a more synthetic view of this thought.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 72-73)
2. **creation**
   1. creation of humankind (Sir 16:24-18:14, a creation hymn)
      1. Sir 16:24-18:14 “illustrates the thin line that exists between wisdom reflection and praise.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 71)
      2. “It begins with a didactic opening (“my son”) and then proceeds to a description of the manner in which God has ordered creation. The creation of humankind is the main emphasis . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 71)
      3. “. . . Sirach lingers over the data of Gen 2:7 and 3:19.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 71)
         1. Gen 2:7, “then the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being.”
         2. Gen 3:19, “By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread until you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; you are dust, and to dust you shall return.”
      4. “The detail of creation is touching: tongues, eyes, and ears (17:6), and also an “understanding heart” (Solomon’s request in 1 Kgs 3:9).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 71)
      5. “The destiny of humankind is to praise God. This has been made possible for Israel through the covenant and Torah.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 71)
      6. “The Lord is aware of human sinfulness, which will be requited, but Sirach praises the divine mercy toward those who will convert.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 71)
      7. “The final verses (18:1-14) are a lively contrast between the ephemerality of human existence and the Lord’s patience and shepherding qualities.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 71)
3. **God’s omniscience and omnipotence** (Sir 42:15-43:33, a creation hymn)
   1. This hymn “is marked by a sequence of natural phenomena, reminiscent of Job 38-41. It is a creation hymn in praise of the master, omniscient and omnipotent, whom all the works of creation obey, especially the hail, lightning, rain, and the like . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 72)
   2. Compare Pss 147-48. (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 72)
      1. Ps 147:1-18, “Praise the Lord! . . . 4He determines the number of the stars; he gives to all of them their names. 5Great is our Lord, and abundant in power; his understanding is beyond measure. . . . 8He covers the heavens with clouds, prepares rain for the earth, makes grass grow on the hills. 9He gives to the animals their food, and to the young ravens when they cry. . . . 15He sends out his command to the earth; his word runs swiftly. 16He gives snow like wool; he scatters frost like ashes. 17He hurls down hail like crumbs—who can stand before his cold? 18He sends out his word, and melts them; he makes his wind blow, and the waters flow.”
      2. Ps 148:1-10, “Praise the Lord! . . . 3Praise him, sun and moon; praise him, all you shining stars! 4Praise him, you highest heavens, and you waters above the heavens! 5Let them praise the name of the Lord, for he commanded and they were created. 6He established them forever and ever; he fixed their bounds, which cannot be passed. 7Praise the Lord from the earth, you sea monsters and all deeps, 8fire and hail, snow and frost, stormy wind fulfilling his command! 9Mountains and all hills, fruit trees and all cedars! 10Wild animals and all cattle, creeping things and flying birds!”
   3. “In an outburst of admiration he concludes in 43:27, “He is [the] all” (*hû´ hakkōl*). This seems to mean that God is the source and sustenance of all that exists.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 72)
   4. “It is appropriate to conclude with a reference to the acrostic poem on Wisdom with which the book ends . . . it forms an inclusion with 1:11-30. [“For a careful translation based on the Hebrew text from cave 11 at Qumran, see”: Skehan, P., and A. Di Lella. *The Wisdom of Ben Sira*. AB 39. Garden City: Doubleday, 1987. Skehan, P. “The Acrostic Poem in Sirach 51:13-30.” *HTR* 64 (1971): 387-400. 81 n. 18] It describes the intensity of Sirach’s pursuit of Lady Wisdom, and it ends on the paradoxical note of human industry and divine beneficence, which Sirach understood so well . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 79) Sir 51:30, “Do your work in good time, and in his own time God will give you your reward.”
4. **afterlife**
   1. Sirach concentrates on “the here and now. The only immortality is that of name or memory, and one’s descendants (30:4-5; 37:26; 41:12-13).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 72)
      1. Sir 30:4-5, “When the father dies he will not seem to be dead, for he has left behind him one like himself, 5whom in his life he looked upon with joy and at death, without grief.”
      2. Sir 37:26, “One who is wise among his people will inherit honor, and his name will live forever.”
      3. Sir 41:12-13, “Have regard for your name, since it will outlive you longer than a thousand hoards of gold. 13The days of a good life are numbered, but a good name lasts forever.”
   2. “There is evidence of the typical Israelite resignation to the finality of death . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 72) Sir 14:16, “Give, and take, and indulge yourself, because in Hades one cannot look for luxury.”
   3. “His advice to the mourner is practical: one can weep and pay the tribute of sorrow, but not to excess. There is no hope of return, and one must face the future resolutely (38:16-23).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 72)
      1. Sir 38:16-23, “My child, let your tears fall for the dead, and as one in great pain begin the lament. Lay out the body with due ceremony, and do not neglect the burial. 17Let your weeping be bitter and your wailing fervent; make your mourning worthy of the departed, for one day, or two, to avoid criticism; then be comforted for your grief. 18For grief may result in death, and a sorrowful heart saps one’s strength. 19When a person is taken away, sorrow is over; but the life of the poor weighs down the heart. 20Do not give your heart to grief; drive it away, and remember your own end. 21Do not forget, there is no coming back; you do the dead no good, and you injure yourself. 22Remember his fate, for yours is like it; yesterday it was his, and today it is yours. 23When the dead is at rest, let his remembrance rest too, and be comforted for him when his spirit has departed.”
   4. “In a brilliant passage (41:1-4) he describes various reactions to death, how bitter it is to the one who is well off, but how welcome to others.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 72) Sir 41:1-4, “O death, how bitter is the thought of you to the one at peace among possessions, who has nothing to worry about and is prosperous in everything, and still is vigorous enough to enjoy food! 2O death, how welcome is your sentence to one who is needy and failing in strength, worn down by age and anxious about everything; to one who is contrary, and has lost all patience! 3Do not fear death’s decree for you; remember those who went before you and those who will come after. 4This is the Lord’s decree for all flesh; why then should you reject the will of the Most High? Whether life lasts for ten years or a hundred or a thousand, there are no questions asked in Hades.”
   5. Sirach “consistently affirms that Sheol/Death is the ultimate end of human beings (e.g., 14:16-19; 41:4).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 72)
      1. Sir 14:16-19, “Give, and take, and indulge yourself, because in Hades one cannot look for luxury. 17All living beings become old like a garment, for the decree from of old is, “You must die!” 18Like abundant leaves on a spreading tree that sheds some and puts forth others, so are the generations of flesh and blood: one dies and another is born. 19Every work decays and ceases to exist, and the one who made it will pass away with it.”
      2. Sir 41:4, “This is the Lord’s decree for all flesh; why then should you reject the will of the Most High? Whether life lasts for ten years or a hundred or a thousand, there are no questions asked in Hades.”
5. **Torah piety** (**wisdom and Israel’s election**/**covenant traditions**)
   1. “Ben Sira is the first to have created a bond between wisdom and the typical traditions of Israel.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 76)
   2. “Lady Wisdom is communicated by God, who sends her to Israel to take up residence in the Temple [24:8, God says to Wisdom, “Make your dwelling in Jacob, and in Israel receive your inheritance”; 24:10, “In the holy tent I ministered before him”], and Sirach explicitly identifies her with “the Law which Moses commanded us” (24:23). This is best described as “Torah piety,” the joyful and enthusiastic pursuit of God’s will, which permeates Pss 1, 19, and 119. It is not legalism; it is the manifestation of the divine will, “a lamp to my feet and a light to my path” (Ps 119:105).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 78)
   3. “Like chap. 24,” the praise of the fathers (Sir 44-50:24) “stands out in contrast to the rest of the book.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 77)
   4. *Sir 24*: “the identification of Wisdom and Torah . . . is not a casual connection, as the several references to Law [76] [9:15; 11:1; 17:11; 19:20; 24:23; 32:14-33:3; 35:1; 39:1] demonstrate. Wisdom has become for Ben Sira a new expression of Israel’s self-understanding. She hears the astonishing command from the Most High—“In Jacob make your dwelling, in Israel your inheritance” (Sir 24:8)—and so she does (24:10-12), and Ben Sira identifies her with the “Law which Moses commanded us” (24:23).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 76-77)
      1. Sir 24:10-12, “In the holy tent I ministered before him, and so I was established in Zion. 11Thus in the beloved city he gave me a resting place, and in Jerusalem was my domain. 12I took root in an honored people, in the portion of the Lord, his heritage.”
      2. Sir 24:23, “All this is the book of the covenant of the Most High God, the law that Moses commanded us as an inheritance for the congregations of Jacob.”
   5. *the praise of the fathers* (Sir 44-49 [appendix about Simon, 50:1-24)
      1. “. . . “the praise of the fathers” [is] the title that appears in many Greek and Latin manuscripts.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 77)
      2. “The immediately preceding hymn (42:15-43:33) praises the works of God in creation; it ends with the line that God has given wisdom to his *ḥăsîdîm* (“loyal,” “faithful” ones). This serves to unite it to 44:1, in which it is the praises of *´anšê ḥesed* (men of loyalty) that are sung.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 77)
      3. “. . . it is something new in the Bible that men are praised, and not God. Where the Old Testament recalls its past heroes—such as Moses or Joshua or David—it is not to sing their praises; the emphasis is rather on what the Lord did through his servants, as the hymns of the Psalter clearly illustrate. Sirach’s creation is a compact sequence of historical figures that occurs nowhere else in the Bible.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 77)
      4. “Sirach follows a chronological sequence, but he omits freely.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 77)
      5. “The opening lines are very general: wisdom, prophecy, governors, and the like. No names are given, but the heroes will be specified. Their name and memory will be perpetuated (44:1, with an inclusion in v 14).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 77)
      6. “Looked at from the point of view of office, the list can be broken down into
         1. “the fathers (Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob);
         2. “priests (Aaron, Phineas);
         3. “judges (Joshua and Caleb receive explicit mention);
         4. “prophets (Moses, Samuel, Elijah, and Elisha, plus the twelve, and the three major prophets);
         5. “kings (only the good kings are explicitly named—David, Hezekiah, and Josiah; Solomon is criticized).
         6. “It is striking that he mentions Zerubbabel, Jeshua, and Nehemiah from the restoration period, but omits Ezra.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 77)
         7. “Several figures have more than one office (e.g., Moses, who is teacher, prophet, and ruler).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 77)
         8. “To this roster of heroes is added an emphatic and lengthy description of Simeon II, high priest, but also a ruler who protected his people (50:2-4).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 77)
      7. “Burton Mack [*Wisdom and the Hebrew Epic*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1985. 11-36] has described the literary structure of the individual items:
         1. “designation of office (prophet, etc.);
         2. “mention of divine choice (“found,” “formed”);
         3. “a reference to covenant (except for prophets);
         4. “virtues (according to their offices);
         5. “historical setting (especially the background of threat against the people);
         6. “rewards (namely, the honor or praise that the heroes receive from the people).
      8. “. . . what precise significance did he [Sirach] [77] attach to this list of heroes? This is obviously more than a catalogue, and it is placed in a prominent position at the end of his book. Perhaps we must be satisfied with his words in 44:7-9, contrasting these heroes with others whose names have been forgotten. At least the achievements of these “godly people” will live on, thanks to his efforts.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 77-78)
         1. “For many, these chapters have evoked the memory of the Roman genre *de viris illustribus*, or the Hellenistic genre of encomium (praise) . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 77) Encomium: Lee, T. R. *Studies in the Form of Sirach 44-50*. SBLDS 75. Atlanta: Scholars, 1986. 81ff.
         2. “Burton Mack [*Wisdom and the Hebrew Epic*] considers the poem as more than an encomium—he considers it as an [80] epic (p. 136). Read in the light of Sir 24, it leads from the order of covenants down to the climax, the glorification of Simon in chap. 50. Thus, “the hymn may have functioned as a mythic charter for Second Temple Judaism” (p. 56).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 80-81 n. 16)
6. **fear of the Lord**
   1. “For Sirach, wisdom and fear of the Lord are practically one, in line with the slogan found in Prov 1:7; 9:10; Job 28:28; and Ps 111:10, and repeated in Sir 1:14, “The beginning of wisdom is the fear of the Lord.”” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 78)
      1. Haspecker, J. *Gottesfurcht bei Jesus Sirach*. AnBib 30. Rome: Biblical Institute, 1967.
      2. Skehan, P., and A. Di Lella. *The Wisdom of Ben Sira*. AB 39. Garden City: Doubleday, 1987. 75.
   2. R. Smend (qtd. in Skehan and Di Lella 75): for Sirach, “Subjectively, wisdom is fear of God; objectively, it is the law book of Moses (chap. 24).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 81 n. 17)
   3. Sir 1
      1. “An impressive introduction is given to the book by the initial discourse . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 78)
      2. *Sir 1:1-10*: Sir 1:1-10 finds “echoes in chap. 24. The mood is that of Job 28, but Sirach moves beyond it. Yes, Wisdom is with God, beyond human reach. However, the Lord who created and *saw* Wisdom (cf. Job 28:27; Sir 1:9) has communicated this Wisdom, lavishing her upon creation, upon all that lives, and especially upon those who love him (Sir 1:10). Wisdom has now become accessible, despite her locus with God.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 78)
      3. *Sir 1:11-30*: “Job 28:28 had the added note that wisdom is the fear of the Lord. This concept now is developed by Sirach (1:11-30) in a series of strong metaphors: fear of the Lord is the beginning (1:14), fullness (1:16), crown (1:18), and root (1:20) of wisdom. Attitudes characteristic of the wise person are mentioned: self-control, correct speech, sincerity, humility. A new and significant addition is made: keeping of the commandments (1:26).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 78)
         1. Fear of the Lord “leads to wisdom, but wisdom in turn feeds the God-fearer with choice foods and long life (1:16-20; cf. 24:19-21).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 78)
   4. “. . . Sirach equates fear of the Lord with love and hope . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 78)
      1. Sir 2:15, “Those who fear the Lord do not disobey his words, and those who love him keep his ways. 16Those who fear the Lord seek to please him, and those who love him are filled with his law. 17Those who fear the Lord prepare their hearts, and humble themselves before him.”
      2. Sir 34:16, “Those who fear the Lord will not be timid, or play the coward, for he is their hope.”
   5. “This interiorization of fear of the Lord, the intense commitment that it signifies, gives an insight into Sirach’s emphasis on the Law. Throughout his work he keeps coming back to the relationship of wisdom, fear of the Lord, and the Law . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 79)
      1. Sir 15:1, “Whoever fears the Lord will do this [dwell with Wisdom], and whoever holds to the law will obtain wisdom.”
      2. Sir 19:20, “The whole of wisdom is fear of the Lord, and in all wisdom there is the fulfillment of the law.”
7. **evaluation of professions** (Sir 38:24-39:11)
   1. Sir 38:24-39:11 is a review of “various professions in relation to that of the scribe (*sōpēr*; 38:24-39:11). Some have compared this passage with the Egyptian Satire on Trades (*ANET*, 432-34), but this is misleading. Sirach’s perception of other callings is far from ridicule; he is remarkably enlightened, and even enthusiastic. His description is vivid, almost as if he had worked on a farm, or cut seals, or labored in a smithy, or toiled at a pottery kiln. He ends up praising the noble work of various artisans: “Without them no city could be lived in” (38:32). At the same time, he ranks higher the vocation of the sage, who devotes himself “to the study of the Law of the Most High,” and Sirach describes him in 39:1-11. This person is concerned with the Torah, wisdom, and the prophecies (a threefold division of the Hebrew Bible—as in the prologue to the Greek translation, [66] but now in a different order). The wise man’s concern with parables, proverbs, and the like is not surprising (39:3), but in 39:4 Sirach notes the sage’s travels and appearance before rulers (did he himself travel?). It is noteworthy that prayer is underlined. The wise man prays to be purified, and only then does the Lord bestow his gift of understanding and wisdom (39:5-6). Sirach becomes very effusive in describing the fame the wise man achieves (39:9-11). Even if this is an idealized portrait, not a biographical note, it fills out the author’s vision of himself, the goal to which he aspired.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 66-67)
8. **retribution**: see the handout, “Retribution.”
9. **miscellaneous themes**
   1. almsgiving and lending: 29:1-20
   2. autobiographical references: 24:28-32; 33:16-18; 34:9-13; 50:27-29; 51:13-30; see also the evaluation of professions in 38:24-39:11
   3. counsel: 37:7-15
   4. creation: 16:24-18:14; 39:12-35; 42:15-43:33
   5. death: 14:11-19; 38:16-23; 41:1-4
   6. discretion and moderation: 11:7-28
   7. fear of the lord (see “wisdom”): “very frequent, perhaps over sixty times, and especially prominent in” 1:9-2:18
   8. forgiveness: 28:1-7
   9. friendship: 6:5-17; 9:10-16; 11:29-12:18 (friends and enemies: 22:19-26; 27:16-21; 37:1-15)
   10. humility: 3:17-24; 7:16-17; 10:28
   11. hymns:
       1. creation: 16:24-18:14; 42:15-43:33
       2. providence: 32:14-33:18; 39:12-35
   12. joy: 14:11-19; 30:21-25
   13. law: 9:15; 11:1; 17:11; 19:20; 24:23; 32:14-33:3; 35:1; 39:1
   14. miscellanea: 4:1-6:4 (commands and prohibitions; cf. also 7:1-8:19)
   15. paradoxes: 20:9-31
   16. parents and children: 3:1-16; 7:23-25; 16:1-4; 30:1-13; 41:5-10
   17. physicians: 38:1-15
   18. praise of the ancestors: 44:1-49:16 (50:24)
   19. prayers: 22:27-23:6; 36:1-17; 50:22-24; 51:1-12
   20. riches: 11:10-21; 14:11-19; 31:1-11; cf. 13:1-14:10 (rich and poor)
   21. sacrifice: 34:21-35:13
   22. self-control: 18:30-19:3; 37:27-31
   23. shame: 41:17-42:8
   24. Sheol: 14:16-17; 17:27-28
   25. Simon, high priest: 50:1-24
   26. sin and folly: 16:5-23; 19:18-20:32; 21:1-22:2
   27. social justice: 4:1-10; 34:21-27; 35:14-26
   28. table etiquette: 31:12-32:13
   29. tongue: 5:9-15; 23:7-15; 28:8-26; cf. 20:1-8 (silence)
   30. wisdom: 1:1-10; 4:11-19; 6:18-37; 14:20-15:10; 24 (see chap. 9); 51:13-30; see also 19:20-20:31; 21:11-26; 32:14-33:6; 37:16-26; 38:24-39:11
   31. women (wives, daughters): 9:1-9; 23:22-26; 25:13-26:18; 36:26-31; 42:9-14 (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 73)
10. **canon**
    1. Sir 38:34b-39:1
       1. Sir 38:34b-39:1, “How different the one who devotes himself to the study of the law of the Most High! 39:1He seeks out the wisdom of all the ancients, and is concerned with prophecies . . .”
       2. “This person [the *sōpēr*, “sage”] is concerned with the Torah, wisdom, and the prophecies (a threefold division of the Hebrew Bible—as in the prologue to the Greek translation, [66] but now in a different order).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 66-67)
    2. Sirach’s grandson prefixed the prologue to his Greek translation when he translated it some time after 132 bc. “Already a threefold division . . . was recognized in the translator’s time . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 67) “. . . the Law and the Prophets and the others that followed them . . . the Law and the Prophets and the other books of our ancestors . . . the Law itself, the Prophecies, and the rest of the books . . .”
       1. The “threefold division . . . came to be termed “Law, Prophets and Writings” (TNK) . . .” “TNK is the acronym, spelled out often as Tenach or Tanakh, for the threefold division of the Hebrew Bible into *Tôrāh* (Law), *Nĕbî´îm* (Prophets, both former and latter), and *Kĕtûbîm* (Writings).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 79 n. 1)

## BOOK OF WISDOM

questions of introduction

1. **title**
   1. “The title according to the Greek tradition is *The Wisdom of Solomon* . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 83)
   2. “. . . the Latin tradition calls it simply *The Book of Wisdom*.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 83)
   3. “The Book of Wisdom is well named, since wisdom pervades it all.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 142)
2. **author**
   1. The work “never mentions Solomon by name, but only an “I.” This “I” is not called “son of David, king in Jerusalem,” as Qoheleth is (Eccl 1:1), but it is clear that the author assumes the mantle of Solomon and speaks in his name (e.g., 9:7-8, 12). [83] . . . Although the author never claims the name of Solomon, he is clearly writing in the name of that personality (cf. chaps. 8-9).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 83-84)
      1. Wis 9:7-12, “You have chosen me to be king of your people and to be judge over your sons and daughters. 8You have given command to build a temple on your holy mountain, and an altar in the city of your habitation, a copy of the holy tent that you prepared from the beginning. . . . 10Send her [Wisdom] forth from the holy heavens, and from the throne of your glory send her, that she may labor at my side, and that I may learn what is pleasing to you. 11For she knows and understands all things, and she will guide me wisely in my actions and guard me with her glory. 12Then my works will be acceptable, and I shall judge your people justly, and shall be worthy of the throne of my father.”
   2. Thus the work fits into the wisdom tradition that is dominated by the figure of Solomon (Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 83)
   3. “This king fiction adds a certain weight to his words and perhaps disguises the identity of his real audience. Solomon was the classic wise person in Israel’s tradition, and wisdom was seen as a royal prerogative.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 84)
   4. “The identity of the author cannot be ascertained, despite the many guesses (e.g., Philo).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 83)
3. **date**
   1. “This work stands out as intensely Jewish and, at the same time, thoroughly stamped by Greek culture. It could have been written only in the Hellenistic period . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 84)
   2. “The work shows a dependence upon the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible, which would make 200 b.c.e. the *terminus a quo*.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 83)
   3. “On the other hand, it was written before Romans and Ephesians, which seem to utilize it (Rom 1:18-32; Eph 6:11-17).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 83)
      1. Rom 1:18-32, “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and wickedness of those who by their wickedness suppress the truth. 19For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. 20Ever since the creation of the world his eternal power and divine nature, invisible though they are, have been understood and seen through the things he has made. So they are without excuse; 21for though they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their senseless minds were darkened. 22Claiming to be wise, they became fools; 23and they exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling a mortal human being or birds or four-footed animals or reptiles. 24Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the degrading of their bodies among themselves, 25because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen. 26For this reason God gave them up to degrading passions. Their women exchanged natural intercourse for unnatural, 27and in the same way also the men, giving up natural intercourse with women, were consumed with passion for one another. Men committed shameless acts with men and received in their own persons the due penalty for their error. 28And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind and to things that should not be done. 29They were filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, covetousness, malice. Full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, craftiness, they are gossips, 30slanderers, God-haters, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, rebellious toward parents, 31foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. 32They know God’s decree, that those who practice such things deserve to die—yet they not only do them but even applaud others who practice them.”
      2. Eph 6:11-17, “Put on the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. 12For our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. 13Therefore take up the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to withstand on that evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. 14Stand therefore, and fasten the belt of truth around your waist, and put on the breastplate of righteousness. 15As shoes for your feet put on whatever will make you ready to proclaim the gospel of peace. 16With all of these, take the shield of faith, with which you will be able to quench all the flaming arrows of the evil one. 17Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.”
   4. “Hence a first century b.c.e. date is generally agreed upon, perhaps in the last half of the century.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 83)
   5. D. Winston “thinks the book was likely to have been composed ca. 37-41 c.e. and hence was dependent upon Philo.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 95 n. 2)
      1. Winston, D. *The Wisdom of Solomon*. AB 43. Garden City: Doubleday, 1979. 59-69 (a “summary of the ideas shared by Philo and the Book of Wisdom”). (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 95 n. 2)
      2. Larcher, C. *Etudes sur le livre de la Sagesse*. EBib. Paris: Gabalda, 1969 (“many helpful pages on the relationship of the book to Enoch, Qumran literature, and Philo (pp. 103-78)”). (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 95 n. 2)
      3. Mack, Burton. *Logos und Sophia*. SUNT 10. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1973. 63-184 (“a comparison of the Book of Wisdom and the oeuvre of Philo”). (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 95 n. 4)
4. **provenance**
   1. “It is reasonable to suppose that the work originated in Alexandria, a large Jewish center of the Diaspora, which was also an intellectual pivot of the ancient world. This is in harmony with the author’s knowledge of Greek ideas . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 83)
   2. Attention is “given to Egypt in chaps. 11-19 . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 83)
   3. “. . . the preoccupation with the Exodus suggests its relevance for the large Jewish population in Alexandria.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 84)
5. **language**
   1. “It retains the parallelism of Hebrew poetry . . .” In fact, “it was once argued that the first part of the work (chaps. 1-5, or even 1:1-11:1) was a translation from a Hebrew original . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 84)
   2. “. . . but it abounds in such literary devices as paronomasia and alliteration, which are less likely to occur in a translation.” Consequently, “it is now generally agreed that the work is an original Greek composition.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 84)
6. **integrity**
   1. There are “obvious differences between chaps. 11-19 and the first half of the book.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 84)
   2. But “there is one author throughout . . . The unity has been demonstrated by the forty-five “flashbacks” that J. Reese has recognized in the work; these are short repetitions “of a significant word or group of words or distinctive idea in two different parts of Wisdom.” [Reese, J. *Hellenistic Influence on the Book of Wisdom and Its Consequences*. AnBib 41. Rome: Biblical Institute, 1970. 124 (see also 130).] Reese points to the association between 6:12 and 13:5-6. In both of these passages contemplation (*theōreō*, used in the sense of mental vision) is the beginning and the means for one to “seek” and “find” Wisdom and God (for the Greeks also wanted to find God).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 84)
      1. Wis 6:12, “she [Wisdom] is easily discerned by those who love her . . .”
      2. Wis 13:5-6, “from the greatness and beauty of created things comes a corresponding perception of their Creator.”
7. **audience**
   1. “Surprisingly, the book is addressed to those “who judge the earth” (1:1), to “kings” (6:1), as if the unnamed Solomon were addressing his colleagues. . . . Wisdom is of course associated with kingship . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 84)
   2. But “The reason for such address is not clear. . . . the author is not really interested in instructing monarchs. He has his own Jewish sisters and brothers in mind, and he wants to strengthen them in their traditions.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 84)
8. **anthological style**
   1. His style is “anthological composition—the use of words and phrases from the Bible in the presentation of one’s thought (as Ben Sira did with the Hebrew Bible). This is not so much a question of quotations, even implicit, as it is a studied use of biblical data (e.g., chap. 10).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 84)
   2. “The author knew the Hebrew text of the Bible, but most of the time he reflected the Septuagint (LXX) Greek . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 84)
   3. “He shows a [84] marked preference for Genesis, Isa 40-66, Proverbs, and Psalms.” (Larcher, C. *Etudes sur le livre de la Sagesse*. EBib. Paris: Gabalda, 1969. 102-3.) (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 84-85)
   4. “Certain portions of the Bible are the subject of elaborate developments, such as 1 Kgs 3:5-15 and Proverbs in chaps. 7-9, Genesis in chap. 10, and Exodus in chaps. 11-19.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 85)
9. **Hellenistic influence**
   1. Here is “an interesting example of a biblical writer who took seriously the culture of his day, while elaborating his own vision of faith.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 85)
   2. “This work stands out as intensely Jewish and, at the same time, thoroughly stamped by Greek culture.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 84)
   3. vocabulary
      1. Reese (*Hellenistic Influence* 3) “calculated that the book contains a vocabulary of 1,734 different words, of which 1,303 appear only once, and 335 (about 20 percent) are not found in any other canonical book of the Old Testament.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 85)
      2. Reese “provides many examples of Hellenistic religious and philosophical vocabulary, pp. 6-25.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 95 n. 3)
   4. ideas
      1. “More significant than this is the influence of contemporary Hellenistic (rather than classical Greek) thought.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 85)
      2. An example is “the four cardinal virtues in 8:7 . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 85)
      3. Another example is “the philosophical treatment of the knowledge of God in 13:1-9.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 85)
   5. “It is difficult to trace the dependence of the author upon given books or writers. The judgment of C. Larcher and J. Reese suggests that the author was eclectic in his use of contemporary popular Greek philosophy.” (Larcher, *Etudes* 232-36; Reese, *Hellenistic Influence* 88-89) (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 85)
10. **literary form**
    1. “It was described by the ancient Muratorian canon (ca. third century c.e.?) as a volume we would today call a “Festschrift”: *sapientia ab amicis Solomon’s in honorem ipsius scripta* (wisdom written in honor of Solomon by his friends).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 142)
    2. “Considerable discussion has focused on the precise genre that is represented by the Book of Wisdom.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 85)
    3. “D. Winston [*Wisdom* 18-20] and J. Reese [*Hellenistic Influence* 117-21] agree in calling it a protreptic, a form of didactic exhortation. This form goes back as far as Aristotle, but it developed more in the Hellenistic period.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 85)
    4. “M. Gilbert thinks that the genre is epideictic, that is, an encomium or praise, as this was practiced in Greek and Latin rhetoric.” (Gilbert, M. “Sagesse de Salomon.” *DBSup*. 11.58-119 [esp. 83ff].) (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 85)
    5. “All would agree that . . . diatribe [is] found in chaps. 1-6. Diatribe is characterized by such features as the address to kings, the argument for moral integrity, and the use of imaginary opponents.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 85)
    6. “Chaps. 11-19 are marked by the Greek figure *synkrisis*, or “comparison.”” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 85)
    7. The work “breaks new ground [in that] It is addressed to kings (1:1; 6:1), but from 10:20 to 19:9 the addressee is God, who is at the center of the author’s concern.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 85)
11. **structure**
    1. “The outline proposed by Addison Wright, implemented in the *NAB* translation and in his *NBC* commentary, commends itself.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 85)
       1. Wright, Addison. “The Structure of the Book of Wisdom.” *Bib* 48 (1967): 165-84.
       2. Wright, Addison. “The Structure of Wisdom 11-19.” *CBQ* 27 (1965): 28-34.
    2. “Wright has pointed out the many instances of literary *inclusio* (a word or phrase used at the beginning of a section and repeated at the end, e.g., “justice” in 1:1, 15). These are not obvious in an English translation, but the original Greek text makes them clear, and they serve to mark off units within the whole.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 85)
    3. “In addition, Wright has shown that there was a careful symmetry intended by the author: the book can be divided into two parts of 251 poetic verses. The break is after 11:1 [Wright, *NJBC* 512-13] (which others are inclined to see as the title of the second half [Gilbert, “Sagesse de Salomon” 73, 89]).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 85)
    4. “Within the two parts are further refinements in structure—such as [85] concentric and linear arrangement, and proportionality—which need not detain us here.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 85-86)
       1. “One can recognize a concentric circle in chaps. 1-6: an address to rulers about wisdom (chaps. 1, 6); the speech of the wicked (chaps. 2, 5); and the fate of the just and wicked relative to suffering, childlessness, and an early death (chaps. 3-4).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 87)
    5. “The analysis follows a threefold division.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 86)
       1. “1:1-6:21, The Reward of Wisdom: Immortality” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 86)
       2. “6:22-11:1, Solomon and Wisdom” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 88)
       3. 11:2-19:22, God’s Providence During the Exodus” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 90)

wis 1:1-6:21

1. **introduction**
   1. Murphy entitles Wis 1:1-6:21 “The Reward of Wisdom: Immortality . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 86)
   2. “The message of the first six chapters deals with justice/wisdom and immortality. Wisdom is the way to God for human beings [1:4] . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 86) Wis 1:4, “wisdom will not enter a deceitful soul, or dwell in a body enslaved to sin.”
   3. Wis 1:1-6:21 are dealt with in the handout, “Body and Soul, and Immortality in the Book of Wisdom.”
2. **Wis 6:1-21**
   1. “While wisdom is merely mentioned in 1:4-7, it becomes the principal [87] concern of chap. 6. . . . According to 1:4 she [Wisdom] could not dwell with a sinner, but because she is a spirit (“the spirit of the Lord,” 1:7), she knows all that goes on, and punishment ensues for the sinner. This cosmic quality of Wisdom will appear also in 7:27-8:1.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 87-88)
   2. “Pseudo-Solomon begins with an exhortation to this audience (“kings,” 6:1) to “learn wisdom” (6:9). . . . The king fiction of 1:1 appears in the exhortation to kings in chap. 6.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 88)
   3. “This exhortation is remarkable for its description of Wisdom’s initiative and the use of the Greek style of sorites. Although one should seek out Wisdom (a theme already present in Prov 9:4-6 and Sir 6:23-31), she anticipates the desire for her and seeks out those who are worthy of her (6:12-16). The chain of reasoning in the Greek sorites (6:17-21) is that the predicate of one statement becomes the subject of the next (A = B; B = C, etc., then Z = A). The style is elastic in that there is not an exact repetition of words (e.g., “desire” becomes “care” for discipline in v 17). The conclusion goes back to desire (v 17) as leading to incorruptibility and a kingdom (synonymous with being close to God). The emphasis on kingdom is of course in harmony with this address to “kings.”” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 88)
   4. For immortality in Wis 1:1-6:21, see the handout, “Body and Soul, and Immortality in the Book of Wisdom.”

wis 6:22-11:1 (solomon and wisdom)

1. **Wis 6**:**22-7**:**16**
   1. “Solomon describes a personal experience of Wisdom with a low-key approach about his own sincerity and honesty; note the parallelism of sage and king in the introduction (6:22-25), and his humanity (no divine origin for him! 7:16). He attained Wisdom because he prayed (an allusion to 1 Kgs 3:5-9; cf. 2 Chr 1:9-10), and she came to him as the spirit she is (7:7; cf. vv 22-24). He continues in a very intimate vein about his love of her and the joy he experienced in the incomparable gifts that she bestowed upon him. He again refers to the need of prayer because God is the “guide of Wisdom” and “we and our words are in his hand” (7:15-16).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 88)
   2. 1 Kgs 3:9-10, “Give your servant therefore an understanding mind to govern your people, able to discern between good and evil; for who can govern this your great people?” 10It pleased the Lord that Solomon had asked this.”
   3. 2 Chr 1:9-10, “O Lord God, let your promise to my father David now be fulfilled, for you have made me king over a people as numerous as the dust of the earth. 10Give me now wisdom and knowledge to go out and come in before this people, for who can rule this great people of yours?”
2. **Wis 7**:**17-23**
   1. “Solomon claims (7:17-21) to have received an encyclopedic knowledge that would make any Greek envious (contrast the modest description in 1 Kgs 5:9-14 [4:29-34]): cosmology, time, astronomy, zoology, demonology (“powers of the winds”), psychology, botany, and pharmacy—knowledge taught him by Wisdom, the “artificer of all” (perhaps he understood Wisdom in Prov 8:30 as artisan; cf. Wis 13:1 [“all people who were ignorant of God were foolish by nature; and they were unable from the good things that are seen to know the one who exists, nor did they recognize the artisan while paying heed to his works . . .”]).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 88)
   2. “This very Hellenistic passage is followed by another (7:22-23), enumerating twenty-one attributes of Wisdom as spirit which explain how she can teach all these things. As spirit, Wisdom is of utter purity, acting on all other spirits and penetrating all things (v 24). At the same time, this immanence is balanced by transcendence: holy, unique, all-powerful, all-seeing. Scholars have pointed out the influence of the Stoic pneuma and the Platonic world soul in the terminology and ideas of 7:22-24. [Larcher, *Etudes* 367-402. Finan, T. “Hellenistic Humanism in the Book of Wisdom.” *ITQ* 27 (1960): 30-48.] The purity (vv 23 and esp. 24) of Wisdom’s spirit leads into the images of vv 25-26, which describe the relation of Wisdom to [88] God. She is an expression of the divine power, glory, light, and goodness. The author returns in vv 27-30 to Wisdom’s activity, especially among her followers, those who “cohabit” (v 28) with her and are therefore beloved of God. She is a “super-sun” whose light conquers even the darkness of evil. The effusive description of Wisdom closes with the affirmation of her universal providence.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 88-89)
   3. “Personified Wisdom (see chap. 9) is now light (Wis 7:10, 25-26, 29) and spirit (Wis 1:6; 7:22; 9:17). She had been traditionally associated with creation (Prov 8:22ff.), and she even roamed the created world (Sir 24:5). Now she penetrates all things (Wis 1:7; 7:24; 8:1). While the Jews of the Diaspora doubtless recognized that she dwelt in the Temple in Jerusalem (Sir 24:812), they recognized her in their Greek world as well (Wis 7:16-28). Hence “Solomon” could address (the kings of) the world and speak of his coming into Wisdom (Wis 6:22ff.), and even of taking her as his bride (8:2). The vision of this unknown author was a powerful one.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 94)
3. **Wis 8**
   1. “Solomon proceeds to relate his love affair with Wisdom . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 89)
   2. The language “is reminiscent of the Song of Songs (e.g., Cant 1:15; 4:9-10).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 89)
      1. Song 1:15, “Ah, you are beautiful, my love; ah, you are beautiful; your eyes are doves.”
      2. Song 4:9-10, “You have ravished my heart, my sister, my bride, you have ravished my heart with a glance of your eyes, with one jewel of your necklace. 10How sweet is your love, my sister, my bride! how much better is your love than wine, and the fragrance of your oils than any spice!”
   3. “The theme of marital love is clearly emphasized in 8:2, 9, 16, 19.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 89)
   4. “In 8:2 he falls in love with her “beauty” (a Greek touch; cf. 6:12; 7:10), but he quickly describes the other qualities of this ideal spouse, such as nobility and “living with” (*symbiōsis*) God (8:3).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 89)
      1. Wis 6:12, “Wisdom is radiant and unfading, and she is easily discerned by those who love her, and is found by those who seek her.”
      2. Wis 7:10, “I loved her more than health and beauty, and I chose to have her rather than light, because her radiance never ceases.”
   5. *Wis 8:7*: “She has taught him the four cardinal virtues (temperance, justice, prudence, and fortitude) that were a staple of Greek moral teaching; it is the only time they are enumerated in the Bible (8:7).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 89)
   6. “These remarkable qualities stir Solomon in his desire to have her as spouse, for he will become a glorious king whose memory (that is the sense of “immortality” in 8:13) will perdure. The essential means to gain her is by prayer (oddly enough, there is no prayer for Wisdom in Proverbs, Job, or Ecclesiastes).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 89)
   7. Wis 8:19-21
      1. “In a somewhat parenthetical aside (8:19-21), he mentions that he possesses a noble nature, but prayer will be necessary in order to gain Wisdom.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 89)
      2. “Verses 19-20 have been interpreted to indicate a belief in the Platonic preexistence of the soul: having a good soul, Solomon came to an unsullied body. This idea seems remote from the text. Pseudo-Solomon nowhere else gives any evidence of such a belief, and here he is explaining his noble nature by emphasizing the soul—as it were, the “ego”—which is united to the body. The point is that his noble nature does not suffice for him to be wise; for the gift of Wisdom he must pray to the Lord.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 89)
4. **Wis 9**:**1-18**
   1. “Solomon’s prayer is neatly structured in three strophes: 9:1-6, 7-12, 13-18.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 89)
      1. Gilbert, M. “La Structure de la prière de Salomon (Sg 9).” *Bib* 51 (1970): 301-31.
   2. “The keynote is the request for Wisdom in vv 4 and 10 and presumed in v 17.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 89)
   3. “The motive in the first strophe is that Solomon is human and imperfect, and thus unable to govern God’s people (cf. 1 Kgs 3) unless he has the divine Wisdom that was already manifested in creation.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 89)
   4. “In the second strophe, Solomon claims a need for the Wisdom that was present when the world was made if he is to build a Temple.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 89)
   5. “The final strophe moves off from Solomon’s immediate concern to contemplate the human condition. Our thoughts are simply remote from the divine plans, and we are worn down by our own physical weakness (v 15, a reminiscence of the Platonic notion of soul and body—in the sense of physical weakness, not the impurity, of the body). Without the gift of Wisdom we cannot know what God is about, namely in the history of those who were saved by Wisdom (v 18, which is then articulated in the stories of chap. 10).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 89)
5. **Wis 10**
   1. Murphy, Roland E. “Wisdom and Salvation.” *Sin, Salvation, and the Spirit*, ed. D. Durken. Collegeville: Liturgical, 1979. 177-83.
   2. “Chapter 10 presents a new development: Wisdom is now credited with salvation.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 89)
   3. “The verbs “deliver” (*ryomai*) and “preserve” (*phylassō*) are [89] repeated in a series of examples in the lives of “the just”—a code name, as it were, for specific characters: Adam, Noah, Abraham, Lot, Jacob, and Joseph.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 89-90)
   4. “Most surprisingly, the key event of the Exodus deliverance is attributed to Wisdom: “She brought them across the Red Sea” (v 18). The “Lord’s servant” is Moses, also identified as prophet in 11:1; this latter verse serves as a transition to the second part of the book, which deals with the plagues.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 90)
   5. “The chapter stands in contrast to Sir 44-50. There also, Wisdom and history came together. But here theology of history is presented from the viewpoint of saving Wisdom. It has the same bold sweep as the Old Testament itself, from Adam to the Exodus from Egypt (Genesis and Exodus).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 90)

wis 11:2-19:22 (“God’s Providence During the Exodus”)

1. **introduction**
   1. “It [Wis 11-19] is unusual in that it is addressed to God (11:4, 7, 8, 10, etc.).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 90)
   2. “The second half of the book is a kind of meditation or homily on the plagues. . . . In all, seven plagues are treated, and quite freely, since the author means to draw lessons from them.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 90)
   3. “The theme running through the presentation is a simple one: by the things through which the Egyptians were punished, the Israelites were benefited (11:5).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 90)
   4. “Another principle is introduced in 11:16: the Egyptians are to recognize that they are punished by the very things through which they sin . . . a principle enunciated in 11:16 and 12:27; cf. Ps 7:15-16.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 90)
      1. Wis 11:15-16, “you sent upon them a multitude of irrational creatures to punish them, 16so that they might learn that one is punished by the very things by which one sins.”
      2. Wis 12:27, “in their suffering they became incensed at those creatures that they had thought to be gods, being punished by means of them . . .”
      3. Ps 7:15-16, “They make a pit, digging it out, and fall into the hole that they have made. 16Their mischief returns upon their own heads, and on their own heads their violence descends.”
      4. “The punishment of the Egyptians is appropriate in the author’s view: in suffering from the animals [Wis 11:15-16:15], the Egyptians are being punished by the very things through which they sin . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 91)
   5. “In a sense this is another discussion of the fate of the just and the wicked, which was treated in chaps. 1-5. Now the Israelites are the just in contrast to the wicked Egyptians. The Lord’s fidelity to his people during the Exodus is the same as to individual just ones (chaps. 1-5). The Exodus has become, as it were, a type or model of the way God acts to save the just. There are even specific allusions to the earlier chapters, such as the “testing” (11:9-10 and 3:5-6), the “doom” of the wicked (13:10 and 3:11), and the like.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 90)
2. **structure**
   1. “. . . five tableaux or contrasts (*synkrisis*) are set up, comparing the experiences of the Israelites with those of the Egyptians.” [90] “Other scholars recognize seven contrasts or diptychs [e.g.: Gilbert, “Sagesse de Salomon” cols. 72-77].” [95 n. 14] (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 90, 95 n. 14)
   2. “An outline of the structure (adapted from Addison Wright in the *NJBC*) is in order if the reader wishes to follow the development of thought . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 90)
      1. “God’s fidelity to his people in the Exodus (11:2-19:22)
         1. “Introduction (11:2-4)
         2. “Theme: Israel benefits from the very things that punish Egypt (11:5)
         3. “Theme illustrated by five contrasts:
            1. “Water from rock instead of Nile plague (11:6-14)
            2. “Quail instead of plague of little animals (11:15-16:15)

“11:15-16 with digression on God’s power and mercy (11:17-12:22)

“12:23-27 with digression on false worship (13:1-15:17)

“15:18-16:4 with digression on serpents in desert (16:5-15) [90]

* + - * 1. “Manna from heaven instead of rain, hail, and fire (16:16-29)
        2. “The pillar of fire instead of the plague of darkness (17:1-18:4)
        3. “The tenth plague instead of the Exodus, by which God punished the Egyptians and glorified Israel (18:5-19:22)” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 90-91)
  1. first contrast
     1. “The theme (11:5) is immediately exemplified in the first contrast (11:6-14). In the first plague, the punishment of the Egyptians (Nile water turned into blood and ensuing thirst) corresponds to the benefit of the Israelites (water from rock, to quench their thirst). The example is quite dense, since the author elaborates upon it as a testing and discipline (vv 9-10; cf. the testing of the just person in 3:5-6).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 91)
  2. second contrast
     1. “The second contrast (11:15-16:15) is between the plague of little animals (locusts, flies, etc.) and the quail that provided food for the Israelites. The unwary reader should note that this contrast is prolonged through five chapters, from 11:15 to 16:4 (11:15-16; 12:23-27; 15:18-16:4), with digressions corresponding to each mention of the contrast: God’s power and mercy (11:17-12:22); false worship (13:1-15:17); and the serpents in the desert (16:5-15).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 91)
     2. *first digression* (God’s power and mercy)
        1. “The digressions are more interesting than the contrast itself. In the first digression, God is said to be merciful because he loves (11:17-12:8). He could have destroyed the enemy by terrible means, but instead he gave them warnings as he did to the Canaanites, to whom he gave a chance to repent, for he loves his creatures (11:23-12:8). After all, his spirit is in all things (12:1; cf. 1:7). God’s lenient treatment of the Canaanites derives from his very power, “the source of justice” (12:16).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 91)
        2. “This justice of God is not lost on his own people—they too are to be kind to others (12:19, *philanthropos*, “loving humankind”), and they are to expect God’s merciful justice for their own wrongdoing.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 91)
     3. “Pseudo-Solomon returns to the animals-quail contrast in 12:23-27 . . . Indeed, their real sin was that after recognizing the true God (cf. Exod 10:16), they continued in their wrongdoing and received the “final condemnation.”” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 91)
     4. *second digression* (idolatry)
        1. “The example of the Egyptians provides the opportunity for a second digression, dealing with false worship—of nature and of idols (13:1-15:17).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 91)
        2. “The passage on nature worship in 13:1-9 (cf. Acts 17:27-31; Rom 1:19-25) is unlike anything else in the Bible and is clearly influenced by Greek philosophical thought (cf. “analogy” in v 5).” (See Larcher’s commentary on 13:1-9 in *Le Livre de la Sagesse* 3.748-73.) (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 91)
        3. “The author is not out to prove the existence of God; the existence of God or gods was simply a given in the [91] ancient world. Rather, the claim is that those (especially the Greeks, incidentally) who identified nature and divinity were mistaken. If they had applied their own principle of analogy, that principle would have recognized the true creator God. There is a certain excuse in that the very beauty of the world seduced them, but then they are still to be faulted because they did not find the Lord of the world. The beauty and power of created things should have led pagans away from nature worship to the one who was “their original author.” This passage breathes the monotheism of the Hebrew and the aesthetics of the Greek. It looks out upon the mutual reaction of humans and nature. What do the marvels of creation say to us? The question was already suggested in the personification of Wisdom and her role in creation (Prov 8). Pseudo-Solomon understands creation as the revelation of “him who is” (13:1; cf. Exod 3:14 in the LXX). While he underscores the fact that humans may err in hearing this message, the approach “through” the greatness and beauty of created things (13:5) is clearly affirmed as a path to God (see chap. 8).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 91-92)
           1. Wis 13:1, “all people who were ignorant of God were foolish by nature; and they were unable from the good things that are seen to know the one who exists, nor did they recognize the artisan while paying heed to his works . . .”
           2. Exod 3:14 LXX, “
           3. Wis 13:5, “For from the greatness and beauty of created things comes a corresponding perception of their Creator.”
        4. “The condemnation of idolatry (13:10-15:17) draws on several biblical books that contain polemic against idols (Isaiah, Deuteronomy, Hosea, and Psalms).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 92)
        5. “First the carpenter is singled out for his role. With biting irony the author describes how the idol is made out of refuse wood, fastened to a wall so that it will not fall, and then, utterly lifeless, it becomes the object of worship and prayers for life and prosperity. Sarcastic jibes are continually made throughout these chapters, but one must remember that this is polemic, a polemic all the more bitter in the light of Israel’s own failures in the past.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 92)
        6. “For an empathetic understanding of the “graven image,” one has to recall that the ancient image had a symbolic aspect, and “image worship” is by no means as crass as the biblical writers made it out to be. In the words of Thorkild Jacobsen, “the god—or rather the specific form of him that was represented in this particular image—was born in heaven, not on earth. In the birth the craftsmen-gods that form an embryo in the womb gave it form. When born in heaven it consented to descend and to ‘participate’ (in L. Lévy-Bruhl’s sense) in the image, thus transubstantiating it. The image as such remains a promise, a potential, and an incentive to a theophany, to a divine presence, no more.”” (Jacobsen, Thorkild. “The Graven Image.” *Ancient Israelite Religion: Essays in Honor of Frank Moore Cross*, ed. P. Miller et al. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987. 29 [the article is 15-32].) (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 92)
        7. “Carpentry leads into shipbuilding: can one pray to a wood that is more unsound than the boat itself (14:1)? It is the providence of the Father that guarantees the welfare of the seafarer, as in the case of Noah. Idolatry itself is described as originating in worship of those who have died, and in the construction of an image of an absent ruler. All kinds of moral evils are attributed to this abomination, for which there will surely be retribution. In a beautiful aside (15:1-3), the writer claims Israel’s privileged relationship to the living God, to know whom brings justice and immortality (in contrast to lifeless idols).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 92)
        8. “He returns to his topic in another sarcastic description of the [92] clay images that the potter creates. The acme of folly is exemplified by one who creates a god out of the very clay from which he was made—all for the sake of profit. Thus a lifeless thing is made, and the worshiper is better off than his god, for he at least lives (15:17).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 92-93)
     5. second contrast continued (plague of little animals) (15:18 ff)
        1. “After this long digression on idolatry, pseudo-Solomon returns in 15:18 to the second contrast (cf. 11:15ff.), the plague of little animals that afflicted the Egyptians in contrast to the quail that benefited the Israelites. The topic triggers a development on the serpents that afflicted Israel in the desert (Num 21:6-9). Whereas the Egyptians were slain by the animals (16:9), the Israelites were merely given a warning and ultimately saved from the serpents, not by what they saw (the bronze serpent), but “by you, the savior of all” (v 7), “your all-healing word” (v 12).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 93)
  3. third contrast
     1. “The third contrast is between the rain, hail, and fire (thunderbolts and lightning) that devastated the Egyptians and the manna that God rained down upon the Israelites (16:16-29). The author plays on the fact that fire destroyed the food of the Egyptians, while Israel was nourished by the “bread from heaven” (vv 19-20). The underlying principle is that creation fights for Israel, fulfilling the divine purpose (vv 17, 24). Many embellishments are given to the Exodus story, such as the taste of the manna (v 20; cf. Num 11:6; 21:5), the admonition to thank God before sunrise (v 28), and the lesson that is conveyed by the food (God’s words give life, v 26; cf. Deut 8:3-4).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 93)
  4. fourth contrast
     1. “The fourth contrast is between the plague of darkness and the pillar of fire (17:1-18:4). The effects of the darkness upon the Egyptians are presented in vv 3-19 with vividness and imagination. And certain bold psychological conclusions are drawn: cowardly wickedness testifies to its own condemnation and is driven by conscience (*syneidēsis*, the first mention of conscience in the Bible) to magnify its misfortunes; fear is the surrender of the aid that comes from reason (vv 11-12). It is fear that begets the paralysis described by the vivid reactions (vv 18-19) to even the most ordinary sounds. On the other hand, the pillar of fire provided great light and guidance for God’s people, “through whom the imperishable light of the Law was to be given to the world” (18:4).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 93)
  5. fifth contrast
     1. “The fifth and final contrast is between the tenth plague (death of the firstborn) and the Exodus experience (18:5-19:22). Several minor contrasts accompany this description, such as the punishment of the death of the firstborn for the Egyptians, who had decreed death for Israelite males (Exod 1:16, 22) and who were oppressing God’s firstborn, Israel (Exod 4:22-23). The Passover prayers of Israelites are matched by the wailing of the Egyptians, as the all-powerful Word leapt from the heavenly throne on a mission of death (18:8-19).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 93)
     2. “A parenthesis (18:20-25) describes the plague suffered by Israel because of the revolt of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram (Num 16-17). It is the intercession of Aaron, the “blameless man,” that stops the plague.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 93)
     3. “The [93] Exodus experience is the counterpart to the tenth plague, and it is described in rather fanciful terms (19:8-9). The whole event is portrayed as a renewal of creation (v 7, and note the harmonious melody of the elements in vv 18-21, a Greek touch). The punishment of the Egyptians is for their inhospitality, worse than that of the Sodomites (19:13-17).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 93-94)
     4. “The abrupt conclusion in v 22 is a doxology on the Lord’s faithful providence, and it seems to have a bearing on the people for whom the book is written.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 94)

1. **omniscience**
   1. “A warning is in order: through the all-pervading spirit of wisdom (1:6-7) God is aware of wrongdoing . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 86) Wis 1:6-7, “wisdom is a kindly spirit, but will not free blasphemers from the guilt of their words; because God is witness of their inmost feelings, and a true observer of their hearts, and a hearer of their tongues. 7Because the spirit of the Lord has filled the world, and that which holds all things together knows what is said . . .”
2. **Torah piety**
   1. “. . . it is remarkable that this book is relatively silent about the Torah, despite the identification of Wisdom and Torah in Sir 24:23. Now Wisdom is identified with spirit (recall the twenty-one qualities of 7:22-23), “pervades all things” (7:24), and is ever more closely identified with God (7:25-26). Such characteristics are in sharp contrast to the modest references to the “imperishable light of the Law” (18:4; cf. 16:6).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 94)

### PARALLELS BETWEEN THE BOOK OF WISDOM

### AND THE NEW TESTAMENT

parallels between Romans and Wisdom

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **natural revelation** | |
| Rom 1:19-20, “For what can be known about God is plain to them [the wicked], because God has shown it to them. 20Ever since the creation of the world his eternal power and divine nature, invisible though they are, have been understood and seen through the things he has made. ” | Wis 13:1-5, “For all people who were ignorant of God were foolish by nature; and they were unable from the good things that are seen to know the one who exists, nor did they recognize the artisan while paying heed to his works; 2but they supposed that either fire or wind or swift air, or the circle of the stars, or turbulent water, or the luminaries of heaven were the gods that rule the world. 3If through delight in the beauty of these things people assumed them to be gods, let them know how much better than these is their Lord, for the author of beauty created them. 4And if people were amazed at their power and working, let them perceive from them how much more powerful is the one who formed them. 5For from the greatness and beauty of created things comes a corresponding perception of their Creator.” (Hadas says Wis 11; 13; 15.) |
| **losing the power to recognize what is good** | |
| Rom 1:21-22, “though they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their senseless minds were darkened. 22Claiming to be wise, they became fools . . .” | Wis 10:8, “For because they [inhabitants of Sodom] passed wisdom by, they not only were hindered from recognizing the good . . .” |
| **idolatry** | |
| *in human or even animal form* | |
| Rom 1:21-23, “though they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their senseless minds were darkened. 22Claiming to be wise, they became fools; 23and they exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling a mortal human being or birds or four-footed animals or reptiles. . . . 25they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator . . .” | (Hadas says Wis 11; 13; 15.)  Wis 13:1-5, “people who were ignorant of God . . . 2supposed that either fire or wind or swift air, or the circle of the stars, or turbulent water, or the luminaries of heaven were the gods that rule the world. 3If through delight in the beauty of these things people assumed them to be gods, let them know how much better than these is their Lord, for the author of beauty created them. 4And if people were amazed at their power and working, let them perceive from them how much more powerful is the one who formed them. 5For from the greatness and beauty of created things comes a corresponding perception of their Creator.”  Wis 13:13-14, “But a cast-off piece from among them, useful for nothing, a stick crooked and full of knots, he takes and carves with care in his leisure, and shapes it with skill gained in idleness; he forms it in the likeness of a human being, 14or makes it like some worthless animal, giving it a coat of red paint and coloring its surface red and covering every blemish in it with paint . . .” |
| *idolatry is the root of all evil* | |
| Rom 1:22, 28-29, “they exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images . . . 28And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind and to things that should not be done. 29They were filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, covetousness, malice.”  (1 Tim 6:10, “the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil . . .”) | Wis 14:27, “the worship of idols not to be named is the beginning and cause and end of every evil.” |
| **vice list** | |
| Rom 1:29-30, “They were filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, covetousness, malice. Full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, craftiness, they are gossips, 30slanderers, God-haters, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, rebellious toward parents, 31foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless.” | Wis 14:25-26, “all is a raging riot of blood and murder, theft and deceit, corruption, faithlessness, tumult, perjury, 26confusion over what is good, forgetfulness of favors, defiling of souls, sexual perversion, disorder in marriages, adultery, and debauchery.” |
| **God’s delaying judgment to allow repentance** | |
| Rom 2:4, “do you despise the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience? Do you not realize that God’s kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?”  (See 2 Pet 3:8-9 and Heb 12:17 below.) | Wis 11:23, “But you are merciful to all, for you can do all things, and you overlook people’s sins, so that they may repent.”  Wis 12:10, “judging them [Canaanites] little by little you gave them an opportunity to repent, though you were not unaware that their origin was evil and their wickedness inborn, and that their way of thinking would never change.”  Wis 12:19, “you have filled your children with good hope, because you give repentance for sins.” |
| **natural law** | |
| Rom 2:14-16, “When Gentiles, who do not possess the law, do instinctively what the law requires, these, though not having the law, are a law to themselves. 15They show that what the law requires is written on their hearts, to which their own conscience also bears witness; and their conflicting thoughts will accuse or perhaps excuse them 16on the day when [God] will judge the secret thoughts of all.” | Wis 13:6-9 (non-Israelites will not be judged harshly), “Yet these people are little to be blamed, for perhaps they go astray while seeking God and desiring to find him. 7For while they live among his works, they keep searching, and they trust in what they see, because the things that are seen are beautiful. 8Yet again, not even they are to be excused; 9for if they had the power to know so much that they could investigate the world, how did they fail to find sooner the Lord of these things?” |
| **the devil instigated death** | |
| Rom 5:12, “sin came into the world through one man, and death came through sin . . .”  1 Cor 15:21-22, “For since death came through a human being, the resurrection of the dead has also come through a human being; 22for as all die in Adam, so all will be made alive in Christ.” | Wis 1:13-15, “God did not make death, and he does not delight in the death of the living. 14For he created all things so that they might exist; the generative forces of the world are wholesome, and there is no destructive poison in them, and the dominion of Hades is not on earth. 15For righteousness is immortal.”  Wis 2:23-24, “God created us for incorruption, and made us in the image of his own eternity, 24but through the devil’s envy death entered the world, and those who belong to his company experience it.”  Wis 7:1, “I also am mortal, like everyone else, a descendant of the first-formed child of earth . . .”  Wis 10:1-2, “Wisdom protected the first-formed father of the world, when he alone had been created; she delivered him from his transgression, 2and gave him strength to rule all things.” |
| **potter and clay** | |
| Rom 9:21, “Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one object for special use and another for ordinary use?” | Wis 15:7, “A potter kneads the soft earth and laboriously molds each vessel for our service, fashioning out of the same clay both the vessels that serve clean uses and those for contrary uses, making all alike; but which shall be the use of each of them the worker in clay decides.” |
| **authorities on earth** | |
| Rom 13:1-7, “Let every person be subject to the governing authorities; for there is no authority except from God, and those authorities that exist have been instituted by God. 2Therefore whoever resists authority resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. 3For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Do you wish to have no fear of the authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive its approval; 4for it is God’s servant for your good. But if you do what is wrong, you should be afraid, for the authority does not bear the sword in vain! It is the servant of God to execute wrath on the wrongdoer. 5Therefore one must be subject, not only because of wrath but also because of conscience. 6For the same reason you also pay taxes, for the authorities are God’s servants, busy with this very thing. 7Pay to all what is due them—taxes to whom taxes are due, revenue to whom revenue is due, respect to whom respect is due, honor to whom honor is due.” | Wis 6:1-11, “Listen therefore, O kings, and understand; learn, O judges of the ends of the earth. 2Give ear, you that rule over multitudes, and boast of many nations. 3For your dominion was given you from the Lord, and your sovereignty from the Most High; he will search out your works and inquire into your plans. 4Because as servants of his kingdom you did not rule rightly, or keep the law, or walk according to the purpose of God, 5he will come upon you terribly and swiftly, because severe judgment falls on those in high places. 6For the lowliest may be pardoned in mercy, but the mighty will be mightily tested. 7For the Lord of all will not stand in awe of anyone, or show deference to greatness; because he himself made both small and great, and he takes thought for all alike. 8But a strict inquiry is in store for the mighty. 9To you then, O monarchs, my words are directed, so that you may learn wisdom and not transgress. 10For they will be made holy who observe holy things in holiness, and those who have been taught them will find a defense. 11Therefore set your desire on my words; long for them, and you will be instructed.”  Wis 15-19 |
| Rom | Wis 11:15-12:11, “In return for their foolish and wicked thoughts, which led them astray to worship irrational serpents and worthless animals, you sent upon them a multitude of irrational creatures to punish them, 16so that they might learn that one is punished by the very things by which one sins. 17For your all-powerful hand, which created the world out of formless matter, did not lack the means to send upon them a multitude of bears, or bold lions, 18or newly-created unknown beasts full of rage, or such as breathe out fiery breath, or belch forth a thick pall of smoke, or flash terrible sparks from their eyes; 19not only could the harm they did destroy people, but the mere sight of them could kill by fright. 20Even apart from these, people could fall at a single breath when pursued by justice and scattered by the breath of your power. But you have arranged all things by measure and number and weight.  21For it is always in your power to show great strength, and who can withstand the might of your arm? 22Because the whole world before you is like a speck that tips the scales, and like a drop of morning dew that falls on the ground. 23But you are merciful to all, for you can do all things, and you overlook people’s sins, so that they may repent. 24For you love all things that exist, and detest none of the things that you have made, for you would not have made anything if you had hated it. 25How would anything have endured if you had not willed it? Or how would anything not called forth by you have been preserved? 26You spare all things, for they are yours, O Lord, you who love the living. 12:1For your immortal spirit is in all things. 2Therefore you correct little by little those who trespass, and you remind and warn them of the things through which they sin, so that they may be freed from wickedness and put their trust in you, O Lord.  3Those who lived long ago in your holy land 4you hated for their detestable practices, their works of sorcery and unholy rites, 5their merciless slaughter of children, and their sacrificial feasting on human flesh and blood. These initiates from the midst of a heathen cult, 6these parents who murder helpless lives, you willed to destroy by the hands of our ancestors, 7so that the land most precious of all to you might receive a worthy colony of the servants of God. 8But even these you spared, since they were but mortals, and sent wasps as forerunners of your army to destroy them little by little, 9though you were not unable to give the ungodly into the hands of the righteous in battle, or to destroy them at one blow by dread wild animals or your stern word. 10But judging them little by little you gave them an opportunity to repent, though you were not unaware that their origin was evil and their wickedness inborn, and that their way of thinking would never change. 11For they were an accursed race from the beginning, and it was not through fear of anyone that you left them unpunished for their sins.” |
| Rom | Wis 14:22-27, “Then it was not enough for them to err about the knowledge of God, but though living in great strife due to ignorance, they call such great evils peace. 23For whether they kill children in their initiations, or celebrate secret mysteries, or hold frenzied revels with strange customs, 24they no longer keep either their lives or their marriages pure, but they either treacherously kill one another, or grieve one another by adultery, 25and all is a raging riot of blood and murder, theft and deceit, corruption, faithlessness, tumult, perjury, 26confu­sion over what is good, forgetfulness of favors, defiling of souls, sexual perversion, disorder in marriages, adultery, and debauchery. 27For the worship of idols not to be named is the beginning and cause and end of every evil.” |

parallels between the rest of the New Testament and Wisdom

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| John 1:1, 18, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. . . . 18No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known.” | Wis 8:3, “She glorifies her noble birth by living with God, and the Lord of all loves her.”  Wis 9:4, “give me the wisdom that sits by your throne, and do not reject me from among your servants.” |
| John 1:3-4, 10, “All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being 4in him was life . . . 10 He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. | Wis 7:21, “I learned both what is secret and what is manifest . . .”  Wis 8:6, “And if understanding is effective, who more than she is fashioner of what exists?”  Wis 9:1, 9, “O God of my ancestors and Lord of mercy, who have made all things by your word, . . . 9With you is wisdom, she who knows your works and was present when you made the world; she understands what is pleasing in your sight and what is right according to your commandments.” |
| John 5:20, “The Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing; and he will show him greater works than these, so that you will be astonished.” | Wis 8:4, “she is an initiate in the knowledge of God, and an associate in his works.”  Wis 9:9-11, “With you is wisdom, she who knows your works and was present when you made the world; she understands what is pleasing in your sight and what is right according to your commandments. 10Send her forth from the holy heavens, and from the throne of your glory send her, that she may labor at my side, and that I may learn what is pleasing to you. 11For she knows and understands all things, and she will guide me wisely in my actions and guard me with her glory.” |
| 1 Cor 1:24, “to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.” | Wis 7:25, “she is a breath of the power of God, and a pure emanation of the glory of the Almighty . . .” |
| 2 Cor 5:5, “He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee. . . . 7for we walk by faith, not by sight.” | Wis 9:15, “for a perishable body weighs down the soul, and this earthy tent burdens the thoughtful mind.” |
| Eph 6:11-17, “Put on the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. 12For our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. 13Therefore take up the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to withstand on that evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. 14Stand therefore, and fasten the belt of truth around your waist, and put on the breastplate of righteousness. 15As shoes for your feet put on whatever will make you ready to proclaim the gospel of peace. 16With all of these, take the shield of faith, with which you will be able to quench all the flaming arrows of the evil one. 17Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.” | Wis 5:17-20, “The Lord will take his zeal as his whole armor, and will arm all creation to repel his enemies; 18he will put on righteousness as a breastplate, and wear impartial justice as a helmet; 19he will take holiness as an invincible shield, 20and sharpen stern wrath for a sword, and creation will join with him to fight against his frenzied foes.” |
| Col 1:15-17, “He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; 16for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—all things have been created through him and for him. 17He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together.” | Wis 7:25-26, “For she is a breath of the power of God, and a pure emanation of the glory of the Almighty; therefore nothing defiled gains entrance into her. 26For she is a reflection of eternal light, a spotless mirror of the working of God, and an image of his goodness.” |
| Heb 1:3, “He is the reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's very being, and he sustains all things by his powerful word. When he had made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high . . .” | Wis 7:25-26, “For she is a breath of the power of God, and a pure emanation of the glory of the Almighty; therefore nothing defiled gains entrance into her. 26For she is a reflection of eternal light, a spotless mirror of the working of God, and an image of his goodness.” |
| **God’s delaying judgment to allow repentance** | |
| Heb 12:17, “You know that later, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no chance to repent, even though he sought the blessing with tears.” | Wis 12:10, “But judging them [Canaanites] little by little you gave them an opportunity to repent, though you were not unaware that their origin was evil and their wickedness inborn, and that their way of thinking would never change.” |
| James 3:17-18, “But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without a trace of partiality or hypocrisy. 18And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace for those who make peace.” | Wis 7:22-23, “There is in her [Wisdom] a spirit that is intelligent, holy, unique, manifold, subtle, mobile, clear, unpolluted, distinct, invulnerable, loving the good, keen, irresistible, 23beneficent, humane, steadfast, sure, free from anxiety, all-powerful, overseeing all, and penetrating through all spirits that are intelligent, pure, and altogether subtle.” |
| 1 Pet 1:6-7, “In this you rejoice, even if now for a little while you have had to suffer various trials, 7so that the genuineness of your faith—being more precious than gold that, though perishable, is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.” | Wis 3:5-6, “Having been disciplined a little, they will receive great good, because God tested them and found them worthy of himself; 6like gold in the furnace he tried them, and like a sacrificial burnt offering he accepted them.” |
| **God’s delaying judgment to allow repentance** | |
| 2 Pet 3:8-9, “But do not ignore this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like one day. 9The Lord is not slow about his promise, as some think of slowness, but is patient with you, not wanting any to perish, but all to come to repentance.” | Wis 11:23, “But you are merciful to all, for you can do all things, and you overlook people’s sins, so that they may repent.”  Wis 12:10, “judging them [Canaanites] little by little you gave them an opportunity to repent, though you were not unaware that their origin was evil and their wickedness inborn, and that their way of thinking would never change.”  Wis 12:19, “you have filled your children with good hope, because you give repentance for sins.” |
| Rev 8-9 (sounding trumpets) | Wis 11:16-19, “one is punished by the very things by which one sins. 17For your all-powerful hand, which created the world out of formless matter, did not lack the means to send upon them a multitude of bears, or bold lions, 18or newly-created unknown beasts full of rage, or such as breathe out fiery breath, or belch forth a thick pall of smoke, or flash terrible sparks from their eyes; 19not only could the harm they did destroy people, but the mere sight of them could kill by fright.” |

# THEOLOGY OF THE

# WISDOM LITERATURE

## “LIFE”

1. “**life**” **in Old Testament books outside the wisdom literature**
   1. “The kerygma of the sages is found also in other books.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 29)
   2. Deuteronomy
      1. “The choice between life and death which Moses dramatically places before Israel in Deut 30:15-30 [*sic*, sc. “15-20”] is reechoed in the sages’ emphasis on *life*.” [ix] “The Deuteronomic preaching offered Israel a choice between life and death (Deut 30:15-20 . . .).” [29] (Murphy, *Tree of Life* ix, 29)
      2. Deut 30:15-20, “See, I have set before you today life and prosperity, death and adversity. 16If you obey the commandments of the Lord your God that I am commanding you today, by loving the Lord your God, walking in his ways, and observing his commandments, decrees, and ordinances, then you shall live and become numerous, and the Lord your God will bless you in the land that you are entering to possess. 17But if your heart turns away and you do not hear, but are led astray to bow down to other gods and serve them, 18I declare to you today that you shall perish; you shall not live long in the land that you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess. 19I call heaven and earth to witness against you today that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Choose life so that you and your descendants may live, 20loving the Lord your God, obeying him, and holding fast to him; for that means life to you and length of days, so that you may live in the land that the Lord swore to give to your ancestors, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.”
   3. “Amos urged Israel to seek good and not evil, “that you may live” (5:14).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 29)
   4. “In Isa 55:1-3 Israel is invited by the Lord to a banquet: “Listen, that you may have life.”” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 29)
   5. Sir 15:1-16:12, ““whoever holds to the law will obtain wisdom. . . . 4He will lean on her and not fall, and he will rely on her and not be put to shame. 5She will exalt him above his neighbors, and will open his mouth in the midst of the assembly. 6He will find gladness and a crown of rejoicing, and will inherit an everlasting name. 7The foolish will not obtain her, and sinners will not see her. . . . 15If you choose, you can keep the commandments, and to act faithfully is a matter of your own choice. 16He has placed before you fire and water; stretch out your hand for whichever you choose. 17Before each person are life and death, and whichever one chooses will be given. . . . 16:11mercy and wrath are with the Lord; he is mighty to forgive—but he also pours out wrath. 12Great as is his mercy, so also is his chastisement; he judges a person according to his or her deeds.”
2. **meaning of** “**life**” **in Proverbs**
   1. Prov 1-9 “(a continuation of the program set down in 1:1-6) shapes a theological vision. The vision can be stated sharply: the book purports to offer “life” [28] or “salvation” to the reader.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 28-29)
   2. “When the psalmists pray to be “saved,” they seek restoration to a full life in the here and now. Such is also the understanding in Proverbs. . . . Concretely “life” means riches and honor (22:4), a good name (10:7; 22:1), a long existence of many years (3:16; 28:16).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 29)
   3. “According to Proverbs, life is the goal of the wisdom enterprise (Prov 8:35). Wisdom is a “tree of life” (3:18), not merely in the sense of “length of days” (although the sages’ teaching provided this also—cf. Prov 3:2), but qualitatively, the *kind* of life that came to the wise person: “favor and good esteem” (3:4), “honor” (3:35).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 87)
   4. “Caution is in order here. Life is more than merely material goods; these are seen as sacramentals, signs of the Lord’s blessings (Prov 10:22 [“The blessing of the Lord makes rich, and he adds no sorrow with it”]). . . . But the perspective of Proverbs is life in the here and now.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 29)
3. “**fountain of life**” **in Proverbs**
   1. “Fountain of life” is in Prov 10:11; 16:22.
   2. “Personified Wisdom has a kerygma; she announces “security” (1:33) and “life” (8:35). The teaching of the wise is “a fountain of life” (13:14); this is also applied to “fear of the Lord” (14:27), which is also the beginning of wisdom.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 29)
4. “**tree of life**” **in Proverbs**
   1. “Tree of life” is in Prov 3:18; 11:30; 13:12; 15:4.
   2. See also Gen 2:9; 3:22, 24; Rev 2:7; 22:2, 14, 19.
   3. “The life-death situation is expressed positively in the image of “the tree of life.”” (Murphy ix)
   4. Wisdom “is a tree of life to those who lay hold of her; fortunate are they who embrace her” (Prov 3:28). This image was well known from its appearance in Genesis: the first dwellers in the garden were kept from that tree lest they live forever (Gen 2:9, 3:22-24). In a vivid turn of metaphor, wisdom has become the tree of life . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* ix)
5. **Lady Wisdom and life**
   1. Wisdom “is personified as a woman: “Long life is in her right hand—in her left, riches and honor” (Prov 3:16). She can boast that the [ix] one who finds her finds life (Prov 8:35), and the one who fails is ultimately in love with . . . death (8:36).” (Murphy ix-x)
   2. “This offering of life is a gift, because Wisdom herself is a gift of God (Prov 2:16). Paradoxically, however, wisdom cannot be attained without human endeavor. The need for discipline and obedience to the teachings is also asserted. Wisdom has at least two faces in this book: she calls (chaps. 1-9), but humans must respond (chaps. 10-31).” (Murphy, Roland E. “The Faces of Wisdom in the Book of Proverbs.” *Mélanges bibliques et orientaux en l’honneur de M. Mathias Delcor*, ed. A. Caquot et al. AOAT 212. Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1985. 337-45.) (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 29)
6. **life in the Book of Wisdom**
   1. “. . . the concept of life [expands] in the Old Testament; cf. Wis 1:15; 2:23-3:3; etc. . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 29)
      1. Wis 1:15, “For righteousness is immortal.”
      2. Wis 2:23-3:3, “God created us for incorruption, and made us in the image of his own eternity, 24but through the devil’s envy death entered the world, and those who belong to his company experience it. 3:1But the souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, and no torment will ever touch them. 2In the eyes of the foolish they seemed to have died, and their departure was thought to be a disaster, 3and their going from us to be their destruction; but they are at peace.”
   2. “. . . life and not death is the divine purpose . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 86) Wis 1:13-14, “and he does not delight in the death of the living. 14For he created all things so that they might exist; the generative forces of the world are wholesome, and there is no destructive poison in them, and the dominion of Hades is not on earth.”
   3. “This manner of thought is also consonant with the sages’ accent on life. According to Proverbs, life is the goal of the wisdom enterprise (Prov 8:35). Wisdom is a “tree of life” (3:18), not merely in the sense of “length of days” (although the sages’ teaching provided this also—cf. Prov 3:2), but qualitatively, the *kind* of life that came to the wise person: “favor and good esteem” (3:4), “honor” (3:35). This was, however, limited by the reality of Sheol, the inevitability of death; in the Book of Wisdom now the grip of death is broken by a deeper vision of the life that wisdom brings.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 87)

## WISDOM PERSONIFIED (LADY WISDOM)

Crenshaw, James L. *Ecclesiastes*: *A Commentary*. Old Testament Library. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1987. (Vanderbilt Divinity School.)

1. **introduction**
   1. “The personification of wisdom has evoked considerable discussion in recent literature. The state of the question can be ascertained in Lang (1986), Camp, Trible, Terrien, and Mack.” (Crenshaw 24 n. 2)
   2. “The most nakedly theological feature of the sapiential books is the personification of Lady Wisdom . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 111)
   3. “A list of the passages (minimum) where Wisdom is found to be personified: Job 28; Prov 1, 8, 9; Sir 1:9-10; 4:11-19; 6:18-31; 14:20-15:8; 51:13-21; Bar 3:9-4:4; Wis 6:12-11:1.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 146)
   4. Lady Wisdom “remains an elusive and allusive figure, despite the considerable attention given to *ḥokmāh*, or “wisdom.” She is the object of a quest in the first recorded petition for wisdom (Solomon in 1 Kgs 3) and in the last wisdom book to be written (the Wisdom of Solomon in the first century b.c.e., where Solomon is once more represented as praying for Lady Wisdom, Wis 9:1-17).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* x)
      1. 1 Kgs 3:9-28, “Give your servant therefore an understanding mind to govern your people, able to discern between good and evil . . .” 10It pleased the Lord that Solomon had asked this. 11God said to him, “Because you . . . asked for yourself understanding to discern what is right, 12I now do according to your word. Indeed I give you a wise and discerning mind; no one like you has been before you and no one like you shall arise after you.” . . . 28All Israel . . . stood in awe of the king, because they perceived that the wisdom of God was in him, to execute justice.”
      2. Wis 9:4-17, “give me the wisdom that sits by your throne . . . 6for even one who is perfect among human beings will be regarded as nothing without the wisdom that comes from you. . . . 9With you is wisdom, she who knows your works and was present when you made the world; she understands what is pleasing in your sight and what is right according to your commandments. 10Send her forth from the holy heavens, and from the throne of your glory send her, that she may labor at my side, and that I may learn what is pleasing to you. 11For she knows and understands all things, and she will guide me wisely in my actions and guard me with her glory. 12Then my works will be acceptable, and I shall judge your people justly, and shall be worthy of the throne of my father. 13For who can learn the counsel of God? Or who can discern what the Lord wills? . . . 17Who has learned your counsel, unless you have given wisdom and sent your holy spirit from on high?”
2. **personification**
   1. “Lady Wisdom is the most striking personification in the entire Bible.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 133)
   2. other personifications in the Bible
      1. “Personification enlivens a text, and it fits well with the Israelite tendency toward anthropomorphism.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 133)
      2. Job 28:14, 24, “The deep says, ‘It [wisdom] is not in me,’ and the sea says, ‘It is not with me.’ . . . . 22Abaddon and Death say, ‘We have heard a rumor of it with our ears.’”
      3. Ps 85:10-11, “Steadfast love and faithfulness will meet; righteousness and peace will kiss each other. 11Faithfulness will spring up from the ground, and righteousness will look down from the sky.”
      4. Ps 89:14, “Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne [=Ps 97:2]; steadfast love and faithfulness go before you.”
         1. “H. Brunner has shown the Egyptian background to the idea of justice as the foundation of the throne . . .” (Brunner, H. “Gerechtigkeit als Fundament des Thrones.” *Vetus Testamentum* 8 (1958): 426-28. Rpt. *Das hörende Herz*, ed. W. Rollig. OBO 80. Fribourg: Universitätsverlag, 1988. 393-95.) (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 147 n. 1)
      5. Ps 96:6, “Honor and majesty are before him; strength and beauty are in his sanctuary.” “. . . the heralds that go before him are kindness and truth . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 133)
      6. Prov 20:1, “Wine is a mocker, strong drink a brawler, and whoever is led astray by it is not wise.” “. . . wine and strong drink are personified as proud and riotous figures; they impersonate the effects they produce.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 133)
      7. Prov 23:31, “Do not look at wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup and goes down smoothly.” “. . . wine has “eyes” . . .: one is not to gaze upon wine in its redness, when it gives its “eye” (or sparkle) to the cup.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 133)
      8. Isa 58:8, “Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up quickly; your vindicator shall go before you, the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard.” “The justice or vindication (*ṣedeq*) of Israel will go before the Israelites when they leave from Babylon, and the glory of the Lord will be their rear guard . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 133)
   3. Why is Wisdom female?
      1. Camp, Claudia. *Wisdom and the Feminine in the Book of Proverbs*. BLS 11. Sheffield: Almond, 1985.
      2. See “the comment of Carole R. Fontaine on the personification of Wisdom in “Proverbs,” in *HBC*, 501-3.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 149 n. 23)
      3. “Various reasons have been put forward to explain why Wisdom is personified as female. There are no satisfactory answers (an indication that the question should not be raised in the first place?). It is simply not adequate to say that the Hebrew noun *ḥokmāh* is feminine gender, or that the female figure is an obvious one for literature that aims to educate young men, or that Lady Wisdom has been influenced by the description of goddesses. Some theologians have succeeded in reading Lady Wisdom in an oblique manner, seeking to correlate the biblical figure with the data that the Bible provides about women in Israelite society, both real and literary. This surely says something about women in society, which biblical scholarship has passed over in the past. But many questions remain to be answered.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 146)
   4. Is Wisdom a hypostasis?
      1. “In the case of biblical wisdom, . . . the extent and the significance of the literary personification is so great that it has been questioned whether “personification” does justice to the figure of Wisdom. Are we dealing with more than a literary character—with a person or hypostasis, no less?” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 133)
      2. “A problem of terminology arises here.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 133)
         1. “Hypostasis,” like “myth,” is difficult to define, and it is subject to the various meanings that scholars have attached to it.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 133)
            1. “The literature on this topic is voluminous.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 147 n. 2)
            2. Schencke, Wilhelm. *Die Chokma* (*Sophia*) *in der jüdischen Hypostasenspekulation*. Kristiania: Dybwad, 1913.
            3. Ringgren, H. *Word and Wisdom: Studies in the Hypostatization of Divine Qualities and Functions in the Ancient Near East*. Lund: H. Ohlssons, 1947. Esp. 89-171.
            4. Marcus, R. “On Biblical Hypostases of Wisdom.” *HUCA* 23 (1950-51): 57-171.
         2. “It has also acquired a technical meaning in Christian theological discussion of the three persons in the Trinity (e.g., “hypostatic” union).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 133)
      3. “The word is used very broadly to refer to an extension of divine attributes, or to certain communications of God, such as spirit, word, or *Shekinah* (the divine presence in the world). In this respect it stands for a certain immanence of the transcendent one.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 133)
      4. “It seems best to accept the term “personification” in our context in a literary sense, free from the baggage that philosophical thought came to attribute to the term “hypostasis.” In the biblical context the figure of Wisdom cannot be conceived as hypostasis or person because of the strict monotheism of the postexilic period. [Wisdom] is best understood in her biblical expression as a communication of God.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 133)
   5. “The approach of historians of religion has been to try to throw some light [133] on the origins and development of the concept of Lady Wisdom.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 133-34)
      1. “Such efforts are really dealing with the prehistory of the biblical figure, not with Wisdom as presented in the canonical text. They reveal the pedigree of Wisdom, rather than her identity.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 134)
      2. “Nevertheless, such reconstructions are important, if hypothetical, and will be pointed out as we progress through the pertinent texts.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 134)
   6. passages that personify wisdom
      1. “The key passages in the wisdom literature that call for comment are Job 28, Prov 8, Sir 24, Bar 3:9-4:4, and Wis 7-9.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 134)
      2. “In fact, all of Prov 1-9 and many other passages in Sirach and Wisdom have a bearing on this theological development.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 134)
         1. Schencke, Wilhelm. *Die Chokma* (*Sophia*) *in der jüdischen Hypostasenspekulation*. Kristiania: Dybwad, 1913.
         2. von Rad, Gerhard *Wisdom in Israel*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1972. 144-76.
         3. Terrien, S. “The Play of Wisdom: Turning Point in Biblical Theology.” *HBT* 3 (1981): 1-22.
         4. Murphy, Roland E. “Wisdom and Creation.” *JBL* 104 (1985): 3-11.
3. **Job 28**
   1. Job 28, “Surely there is a mine for silver, and a place for gold to be refined. 2Iron is taken out of the earth, and copper is smelted from ore. 3Miners put an end to darkness, and search out to the farthest bound the ore in gloom and deep darkness. 4They open shafts in a valley away from human habitation; they are forgotten by travelers, they sway suspended, remote from people. 5As for the earth, out of it comes bread; but underneath it is turned up as by fire. 6Its stones are the place of sapphires, and its dust contains gold.

7That path no bird of prey knows, and the falcon’s eye has not seen it. 8The proud wild animals have not trodden it; the lion has not passed over it.

9They put their hand to the flinty rock, and overturn mountains by the roots. 10They cut out channels in the rocks, and their eyes see every precious thing. 11The sources of the rivers they probe; hidden things they bring to light.

12But where shall wisdom be found? And where is the place of understanding? 13Mortals do not know the way to it, and it is not found in the land of the living. 14The deep says, ‘It is not in me,’ and the sea says, ‘It is not with me.’ 15It cannot be gotten for gold, and silver cannot be weighed out as its price. 16It cannot be valued in the gold of Ophir, in precious onyx or sapphire. 17Gold and glass cannot equal it, nor can it be exchanged for jewels of fine gold. 18No mention shall be made of coral or of crystal; the price of wisdom is above pearls. 19The chrysolite of Ethiopia cannot compare with it, nor can it be valued in pure gold.

20Where then does wisdom come from? And where is the place of understanding? 21It is hidden from the eyes of all living, and concealed from the birds of the air. 22Abaddon and Death say, ‘We have heard a rumor of it with our ears.’

23God understands the way to it, and he knows its place. 24For he looks to the ends of the earth, and sees everything under the heavens. 25When he gave to the wind its weight, and apportioned out the waters by measure; 26when he made a decree for the rain, and a way for the thunderbolt; 27then he saw it and declared it; he established it, and searched it out. [nab, “Then he saw wisdom and appraised it, gave it its setting, knew it through and through.”] 28And he said to humankind, ‘Truly, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding.’”

* 1. “The poem in Job 28 proclaims that one can find all kinds of precious metals in the earth, but the most precious find of all is out of reach. . . . This is the definitive reply to the questions raised in vv 12 and 20 (“Where can wisdom be found? Whence does wisdom come?”).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 134)
  2. “The female character of Wisdom is not highlighted here . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 134)
  3. “. . . wisdom might be interpreted simply as a divine attribute (as in Prov 3:19 [“The Lord by wisdom founded the earth; by understanding he established the heavens”]). But the verses just quoted suggest more than a divine attribute. God alone knows where wisdom is (Job 28:20-23). The reason given for this is that he sees “the ends of the earth”—wind, waters, rain, and thunderbolts are all God’s doing. Then he “saw wisdom and appraised it, gave it its setting, knew it through and through” (28:27). The implication is that Wisdom is somewhere in this world, for God put her here. When God looked to the ends of the earth, he apparently saw Wisdom and gave her a setting. She seems distinct from the works of creation (such as the abyss or the seas, 28:14); she is somehow present and visible to God.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 134)
  4. According to Job 28, “. . . Wisdom belongs to God, who alone knows where she is. Because she is inaccessible to humans, the thrust of the poem is to underline the transcendence of this figure. However, although no human knows the “way” to her (28:13, LXX), God does know the “way” (28:23). The theme of the way to Wisdom, and the mystery of her location, will be taken up again, as we shall see, in Sirach and Baruch. Within the context of the Book of Job, the poem functions as an indicator of the futility of human probing into the divine mystery; neither Job nor the three friends can fathom the divine ways. Within the context of wisdom literature, one may say that a mysterious figure of a personified Wisdom has made her initial appearance.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 135)

1. **Proverbs 8**
   1. Prov 8, “Does not wisdom call, and does not understanding raise her voice? 2On the heights, beside the way, at the crossroads she takes her stand; 3beside the gates in front of the town, at the entrance of the portals she cries out: 4"To you, O people, I call, and my cry is to all that live. 5O simple ones, learn prudence; acquire intelligence, you who lack it. 6Hear, for I will speak noble things, and from my lips will come what is right; 7for my mouth will utter truth; wickedness is an abomination to my lips. 8All the words of my mouth are righteous; there is nothing twisted or crooked in them. 9They are all straight to one who understands and right to those who find knowledge. 10Take my instruction instead of silver, and knowledge rather than choice gold; 11for wisdom is better than jewels, and all that you may desire cannot compare with her. 12I, wisdom, live with prudence, and I attain knowledge and discretion. 13The fear of the Lord is hatred of evil. Pride and arrogance and the way of evil and perverted speech I hate. 14I have good advice and sound wisdom; I have insight, I have strength. 15By me kings reign, and rulers decree what is just; 16by me rulers rule, and nobles, all who govern rightly. 17I love those who love me, and those who seek me diligently find me. 18Riches and honor are with me, enduring wealth and prosperity. 19My fruit is better than gold, even fine gold, and my yield than choice silver. 20I walk in the way of righteousness, along the paths of justice, 21endowing with wealth those who love me, and filling their treasuries.

22The Lord created me at the beginning of his work, the first of his acts of long ago. 23Ages ago I was set up, at the first, before the beginning of the earth. 24When there were no depths I was brought forth, when there were no springs abounding with water. 25Before the mountains had been shaped, before the hills, I was brought forth—26when he had not yet made earth and fields, or the world’s first bits of soil. 27When he established the heavens, I was there, when he drew a circle on the face of the deep, 28when he made firm the skies above, when he established the fountains of the deep, 29when he assigned to the sea its limit, so that the waters might not transgress his command, when he marked out the foundations of the earth, 30then I was beside him, like a master worker; and I was daily his delight, rejoicing before him always, 31rejoicing in his inhabited world and delighting in the human race.

32And now, my children, listen to me: happy are those who keep my ways. 33Hear instruction and be wise, and do not neglect it. 34Happy is the one who listens to me, watching daily at my gates, waiting beside my doors. 35For whoever finds me finds life and obtains favor from the Lord; 36but those who miss me injure themselves; all who hate me love death.”

* 1. “Proverbs 8 is the basic text for Lady Wisdom, because she speaks at length in her own name (as she also does more briefly in 1:22-23 and 9:4-6). In every instance, she is given a similar introduction; cf 8:1-3 with 1:20-21 and 9:3.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 135)
     1. Prov 1:20-23, “Wisdom cries out in the street; in the squares she raises her voice. 21At the busiest corner she cries out; at the entrance of the city gates she speaks: “How long, O simple ones, will you love being simple? How long will scoffers delight in their scoffing and fools hate knowledge? 23Give heed to my reproof; I will pour out my thoughts to you; I will make my words known to you.”
     2. Prov 9:3-6, “She has sent out her servant girls, she calls from the highest places in the town, 4“You that are simple, turn in here!” To those without sense she says, 5“Come, eat of my bread and drink of the wine I have mixed. 6Lay aside immaturity, and live, and walk in the way of insight.””
  2. “Her address is public and universal (even to fools and simple ones).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 135)
  3. “Her first claim is the honesty and integrity of her message—quite in contrast to the smooth talker, the “strange” woman of Prov 2:16; 5:3; 6:4; 7:21; Wisdom propounds *´ĕmet* and *ṣĕdeq*, truth and justice (8:7-8). This claim connotes more than simple honesty; these words are associated with the Lord, who is truthful (*´ĕmûnâ*) and just (*ṣaddîq*)—such is the way of wisdom and virtue.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 135)
  4. Since she is associated with Yahweh, “It is not surprising that her instruction is beyond price (8:10-11)—a claim [135] many times repeated in wisdom literature (Prov 2:4; 3:14-16; Job 28:15-29; Wis 7:8; 8:5). Indeed, 8:11 repeats 3:15 and is apparently a gloss, for it is not in the style of the first-person address that Lady Wisdom is delivering.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 135-36)
  5. “In 8:12-16 she continues the description of the high qualities that she communicates (the Hebrew text emphasizes the “I” or ego throughout the next several verses): prudence, knowledge, and aversion to anything evil. Indeed, the qualities of counsel, strength, and understanding enable Wisdom to be the basis for royal rule (these qualities are divine, according to Job 12:13, and in Isa 11:2 they are gifts of the Lord’s spirit to the messianic figure). [Isa 11:2, “The spirit of the Lord shall rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.”] Not only royalty, but anyone who will love her (vv 17-21) has the opportunity for riches.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 136)
  6. “Then comes the remarkable passage about her origins, 8:22-31. The Lord *begot* Wisdom as the firstborn (“begot” = “created” according to the LXX; others argue for “acquired,” as though Wisdom had come from another area and was then used by the Lord). [“B. Vawter, “Prov. 8:22: Wisdom and Creation,” *JBL* 99 (1980) 206-16 argues strenuously for the notion of “acquire.”” 147 n. 4] The emphasis on divine origins continues in vv 24-25 (“brought forth,” “born”). In about a half-dozen ways the origin of Wisdom *before* creation is affirmed (8:23-29).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 136)
  7. “This [Wisdom’s origin before creation] enables the poet to give a description of the cosmos, above and below, leading into a statement of Wisdom’s own place in creation [in 8:30-31] . . . [Prov 8:30-31, “then I was beside him, like a master worker [*´mwn*]; and I was daily his delight, rejoicing before him always, 31rejoicing in his inhabited world and delighting in the human race.” Murphy translates, “I was beside him as an *´mwn*, I was delight day by day, playing before him all the time, Playing on the surface of his earth, and my delight (was) with humankind.”] This literal translation respects the mystery of *´mwn*, whose meaning . . . is uncertain (“crafts [wo]man”? then Wisdom plays a role in the creative activity; “nursling”? then Wisdom’s role is that of a child, simply playing). In any case, due attention should be given to the significant repetition of “delight” and “playing.” The LXX interpreted the delight in v 30c as the Lord’s delight, but the text simply says that Wisdom is (all) delight, and v 31 indicates that this delight is associated with humanity (as well as with God). The delight is further modified by her reference to “playing” before God on the face of his earth. We may conclude to the happy and joyful nature of Wisdom, which in some ways is connected with her association with humankind. The passage remains mysterious.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 136)
  8. “The conclusion of the speech (8:32-36) is very clear and direct. Commands to listen (three times in 32-34) and beatitudes are directed to those who will dedicate themselves to the pursuit of Wisdom. But v 35 is astonishing: [136] [“whoever finds me finds life and obtains favor from the Lord”]. This is the well-known association of wisdom and life, but made very personal (“who finds *me*”). There is an interesting overlap with Prov 18:22 [“He who finds a wife finds a good thing, and obtains favor from the Lord”]. The “finding” (i.e., attaining) of a good wife is viewed as a great gift in Proverbs (18:22; 31:10)—so also is the “finding” of Lady Wisdom (8:35; cf. 3:13; 8:17). The issue is one of life and death (8:36).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 136-37)
  9. “This remarkable speech of Lady Wisdom seems to have a very deliberate purpose within the book; if Prov 1-9 is the “introduction” to the collections of individual sayings that follow, this powerful motivating figure sweeps all the practical wisdom of Israel into the orbit of her activity. And yet this cannot exhaust the meaning of one who originates from God before creation, is a cause for joy, plays on the earth, and is involved with human beings. The functions of Lady Wisdom are manifold; they are as broad as life itself, in keeping with her eternal origins from the source of all life. As we shall see, this open-ended character of Lady Wisdom enabled future sages to make further additions and thus achieve a formidable description of her self and her activities. And even when she is specifically identified as Torah by Sirach and Baruch, she is not totally confined—she seems to transcend even the most noble limitations.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 137)
  10. historians of religion on the origin of Prov 8’s Lady Wisdom
      1. “B. Lang weighed carefully the various attempts to capture the elusive origins of this figure.” (*Frau Weisheit*. Dusseldorf: Patmos, 1975. Trans. and rev., *Wisdom and the Book of Proverbs: An Israelite Goddess Redefined*. New York: Pilgrim, 1986.) (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 137)
      2. “He rejected the proposed Canaanite/Assyrian influence that had been alleged on the basis of the uncertain text in Ahiqar . . . In Ahiqar there is no speech by a wisdom goddess, nor does Lady Wisdom have the traits of an Assyrian goddess.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 137)
      3. “A stronger case for a relationship can be made between Wisdom and the Egyptian *ma`at* (recall that the abstract “justice” or *ma`at* was also personified as a goddess). The description of *ma`at* seems to have influenced the presentation of wisdom in Prov 1-9 . . ., although this influence is less evident in Prov 8.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 137)
      4. Lang at first (*Frau Weisheit* 170) “concluded that the figure was personified school wisdom: “a didactic reconstruction designed to make an impression on a student.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 137)
      5. “But when Lang returned to the topic in the English translation and adaptation of his study, he argued that Israel had a polytheistic past in which a goddess of wisdom was honored as the “divine patroness of scribal education and training.” [Lang, B. *Monotheism and the Prophetic Minority*. SWBAS 1. Sheffield: Almond, 1983. 51.] He then hypothesized that she came to be understood as a simple personification of a poetic type, representing “wisdom teaching with its moral injunctions.” [*Wisdom and the Book of Proverbs* 135] [137] Thus was she received into the biblical canon. The theorizing is ingenious but highly uncertain.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 137-38)
      6. “Gerhard von Rad [*Wisdom in Israel* 153] claimed that, especially in Prov 8:22-29, “the style of a specific egyptian divine proclamation has clearly been borrowed, and that in vv. 30f. the Egyptian idea of a deity caressing personified truth (*ma`at*) has somehow, though not without internal modifications, found its way into our didactic poem. . . . ideas which had their roots elsewhere came to Israel’s help when she needed them, in order [for her] to be able to progress in her thinking within her own domain.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 138)
  11. “Von Rad viewed Lady Wisdom as a personification of the world order that he regarded as central to sapiential thinking.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 138)
      1. von Rad (*Wisdom in Israel* 156): “the most interesting feature of what is new is that this world order turns, as a person, towards men, wooing them and encouraging them in direct address. What is objectified here, then, is not an attribute of God but an attribute of the world, namely that mysterious attribute, by virtue of which she turns towards men to give order to their lives.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 138)
      2. “If one grants the primacy of order in wisdom thought, as so many scholars do, then von Rad’s conclusion is logical. Personified Wisdom is for him “the self-revelation of creation,” the title that he gives to his treatment of this topic in chap. 9 of *Wisdom in Israel*.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 138)
      3. “However, the very origins and the authority of Wisdom suggest more than a personified order of creation. Wisdom is somehow identified with the Lord. The call of Lady Wisdom is the voice of the Lord; she is the revelation of God, not merely the self-revelation of creation. She is the divine summons issued in and through creation, sounding through the vast realm of the created world, and heard on the level of human experience. This is the task that seems to be assigned to her in Prov 8:31. [138] . . . One does not have to choose between God and creation in Lady Wisdom, as von Rad does.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 138-39)
      4. “Von Rad’s earlier description of Lady Wisdom is more accurate [*Old Testament Theology*. New York: Harper & Row, 1962. 1.444]: “. . . wisdom is the form in which Jahweh’s will and his accompanying of man (i.e. his salvation) approaches man. Wisdom is the essence of what man needs for a proper life, and of what God grants him. Still, the most important thing is that wisdom does not turn towards man in the shape of an “It,” teaching, guidance, salvation or the like, but of a person, a summoning “I.” So wisdom is truly the form in which Jahweh makes himself present and in which he wishes to be sought by man. “Whoso finds me, finds life” [Prov 8:35]. Only Jahweh can speak in this way. And yet, wisdom is not Jahweh himself; it is something separate from him: indeed, it once designates itself as Jahweh’s creature, albeit the firstborn of all creatures [Prov 8:22], and identifies itself with the thoughts which God cherished in creating the world [Prov 3:19].” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 138)
      5. “Ultimately the revelation of creation is the revelation of God. God speaks through wisdom/creation, which is turned to human beings and speaks in the accents of God. Such is the thrust of Prov 8.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 139)

1. **Sirach 1:9-10**; **24**
   1. “Sirach uses the language of love to describe the relationship between the faithful and Wisdom (4:11-19; 6:18-31; 14:20-27; 51:13-30). The youth is to search out and seek her, and “when you take hold of her, never let her go” (6:27; cf. Cant 3:4). He is to pursue her, peeping through her windows, listening at her doors (14:23; cf. Cant 2:9). The youth’s devotion will be matched by Wisdom’s response (4:11-19). “Like a young bride” she will embrace him (15:2; cf. Cant 2:6; 4:9-12) and will give him food and drink (15:3; cf. Cant 8:2). The teasing and testing (Cant 5:3) that go along with lovemaking are also characteristic of Wisdom’s approach, for she will test her lover (Sir 4:17). Sirach even speaks of Wisdom’s “yoke,” which the lover assumes (6:25; 51:26), but her cords are a sign of majesty: he will wear her as a robe of glory (6:31), for “whoever loves her loves life” (4:12; cf. Prov 8:35), and Wisdom will “reveal to him my secrets” (4:18).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 78)
   2. In Sirach, Wisdom is “poured out” on creation (Sir 1:9-10) and is “closely associated . . . with “fear of the Lord” (Sir 1:11-20) . . . Then she is described and identified specifically in chap. 24.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 139)
   3. Sir 1:9-10
      1. Sir 1:9-10, “It is he who created her; he saw her and took her measure; he poured her out upon all his works, 10upon all the living according to his gift; he lavished her upon those who love him.”
      2. Here “Wisdom is something God has “numbered” (*exērithmēsen*, the Greek equivalent of *spr* [nab “appraised”] in Job 28:27), and then “poured out” (*execheen*) on the works of creation. In the verses leading up to Sirach’s statement there is mention of typical “works of creation” as things beyond human understanding: the sand of the seashore, the drops of rain (who can number these? Sir 1:2); heaven’s height, earth’s breadth (who can explore these? 1:3). Before all things wisdom was created (1:4). It appears then that wisdom is the peculiar quality of God that is manifest in creation because he has lavished it upon his works. Unless human beings have this perspective, they cannot find Wisdom. If they fail to recognize Wisdom’s divine affiliation, they will not find her. She is the divine secret in the created world. One cannot predicate wisdom of an individual work of creation. The heavens are not wise, the earth is not wise, but wisdom is present in God’s creation. Is this the glory of the Lord that fills the earth (Isa 6:1)? As we shall see, Ben Sira (chap. 24) clearly personifies Wisdom as a woman in the style of Prov 8; indeed, he is dependent upon the Book of Proverbs for his thought.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 135)
   4. Sir 24
      1. Sir 24, “Wisdom praises herself, and tells of her glory in the midst of her people. 2In the assembly of the Most High she opens her mouth, and in the presence of his hosts she tells of her glory: 3“I came forth from the mouth of the Most High, and covered the earth like a mist. 4I dwelt in the highest heavens, and my throne was in a pillar of cloud. 5Alone I compassed the vault of heaven and traversed the depths of the abyss. 6Over waves of the sea, over all the earth, and over every people and nation I have held sway. 7Among all these I sought a resting place; in whose territory should I abide?

8Then the Creator of all things gave me a command, and my Creator chose the place for my tent. He said, ‘Make your dwelling in Jacob, and in Israel receive your inheritance.’ 9Before the ages, in the beginning, he created me, and for all the ages I shall not cease to be. 10In the holy tent I ministered before him, and so I was established in Zion. 11Thus in the beloved city he gave me a resting place, and in Jerusalem was my domain. 12I took root in an honored people, in the portion of the Lord, his heritage.

13I grew tall like a cedar in Lebanon, and like a cypress on the heights of Hermon. 14I grew tall like a palm tree in En-gedi, and like rosebushes in Jericho; like a fair olive tree in the field, and like a plane tree beside water I grew tall. 15Like cassia and camel’s thorn I gave forth perfume, and like choice myrrh I spread my fragrance, like galbanum, onycha, and stacte, and like the odor of incense in the tent. 16Like a terebinth I spread out my branches, and my branches are glorious and graceful. 17Like the vine I bud forth delights, and my blossoms become glorious and abundant fruit.

19Come to me, you who desire me, and eat your fill of my fruits. 20For the memory of me is sweeter than honey, and the possession of me sweeter than the honeycomb. 21Those who eat of me will hunger for more, and those who drink of me will thirst for more. 22Whoever obeys me will not be put to shame, and those who work with me will not sin.

23All this is the book of the covenant of the Most High God, the law that Moses commanded us as an inheritance for the congregations of Jacob. 25It overflows, like the Pishon, with wisdom, and like the Tigris at the time of the first fruits. 26It runs over, like the Euphrates, with understanding, and like the Jordan at harvest time. 27It pours forth instruction like the Nile, like the Gihon at the time of vintage. 28The first man did not know wisdom fully, nor will the last one fathom her. 29For her thoughts are more abundant than the sea, and her counsel deeper than the great abyss.

30As for me, I was like a canal from a river, like a water channel into a garden. 31I said, “I will water my garden and drench my flower-beds.” And lo, my canal became a river, and my river a sea. 32I will again make instruction shine forth like the dawn, and I will make it clear from far away. 33I will again pour out teaching like prophecy, and leave it to all future generations. 34Observe that I have not labored for myself alone, but for all who seek wisdom.”

* + 1. “. . . chap. 24 on the personification of Wisdom . . . is modeled on Prov 8.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 70)
    2. historians of religion on the origin of Lady Wisdom in Sir 24: “H. Conzelmann claimed that Isis influenced Sir 24 . . .” (“Die Mutter der Weisheit.” *Zeit und Geschichte: Dankesgabe an R. Bultmann*, ed. E. Dinkier. Tübingen: Mohr, 1964. 2.225-34.) (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 147 n. 5)
    3. “The question of the hidden abode (Job 28) and divine origin (Prov 8) of Wisdom is followed by a new development; where has she taken root?” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 139)
    4. “. . . in Job 28 she was not to be discovered in Sheol, much less on earth . . . [But] In Sir 24 Wisdom describes her origins in a manner similar to that of Prov 8:22-31: “From the mouth of the Most High I came forth” (24:3).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 139)
    5. “She is described as singing her own praises to her own people (24:1), but she does this from “the assembly of the Most High” (24:2)—that is, she is among the heavenly court. Her description of herself is very delicate: “mistlike” she covers the earth (24:3), much as the spirit or wind of God came over the waters of chaos (Gen 1:2). She is not confined to the earth: she is both on the heights (Sir 24:2, 4) and on a journey that will take her through the vault of heaven (24:5, just as God journeys through the vault of heaven in Job 22:14) as well as the abyss. Again like God, she has dominion over everything (24:6). Is this really God in the figure of traveling Wisdom?” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 139)
    6. “In 24:7 her journey is seen as a search for a place to rest. The creator commands her to dwell in Jacob/Israel. She lays claim to eternity, forward and backward (24:9), and then settles in Jerusalem, where she leads the liturgical service (*eleitourgēsa*, v. 10) in the “Holy Tent.” Here is her domain, in God’s chosen city.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 139)
    7. “In a series of striking comparisons, all drawn from Palestinian life, Wisdom describes her gracious effects: tall cedars, fruitful olive trees, balm, and myrrh (vv 13-17). She issues her invitation to those who yearn for her: they are to come and be filled with her fruits. Paradoxically, however, partaking of her will only increase the appetite: a greater hunger and thirst for her will ensue. But she will always be present, and obedience to her will secure one against all evil.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 139)
    8. “At this point Ben Sira identifies Wisdom directly with the Torah [139] . . . Wisdom now includes far more than the insights of the sages, more even than the practical teachings with which Ben Sira fills his book.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 139-40)
       1. 24:23, “All this is the book of the covenant of the Most High God, the law that Moses commanded us as an inheritance for the congregations of Jacob.”
       2. “This verse is an echo of Exod 24:7 (“the book of the covenant”) and Deut 33:4 (“the law which Moses commanded”; cf. LXX). The identification had already been prepared for by Ps 19, which links creation with Law, and by Deut 4:6-9, which describes observance of the Law as giving evidence of wisdom to the nations.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 140)
       3. “Yet there is a certain sapiential twist given to the Torah.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 140)
          1. Marböck, J. *Weisheit im Wandel*. BBB 37. Bonn: Hanstein, 1971. 81-96.
          2. “Of chap. 24 von Rad remarks [*Wisdom in Israel* 246], “It is wisdom who speaks here, not Torah, and this is where Sirach’s heart beats” . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 148 n. 12)
          3. “Gerald T. Sheppard [*Wisdom as a Hermeneutical Construct*. BZAW 151. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1980. 61] describes the song in Sir 24:1-22 as “plainly a recital of the history of Wisdom who resides in Israel as the Torah. . . . The center of attention is consistently on Wisdom who is or becomes the Torah in the possession of Israel. Therefore, the Song offers a selective application to Wisdom of some Torah traditions which can be associated with the divine presence in Israel.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 148 n. 12)
       4. “Sirach goes on to speak of the Torah as an ever rising flood (24:25-29), to which he can compare himself and his teachings (24:30-33). Although he himself is a modest stream in comparison, he has become a river, a sea, that pours out “instruction like prophecy.” He surely understood his book as an extension of the Torah.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 140)
    9. “Ben Sira obviously wrote the twenty-fourth chapter under the influence of Prov 8, [Skehan, P. “Structures in Poems on Wisdom: Proverbs 8 and Sirach 24.” *CBQ* 41 (1979): 365-79 (“reconstructs the Hebrew original of Sir 24 on the basis of Prov 8”), 148 n. 13] but he has provided his unique development to the figure of Wisdom (e.g., her receiving the divine command to dwell in Jerusalem), and he has given an explicit definition. This narrows down, in a sense, the broad view of Wisdom that Prov 8 suggested. Both perspectives are valid. Lady Wisdom is adapted to the circumstances of the time (with Sirach, the Torah), but she also retains the mysterious identity of Prov 8.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 140)
  1. “Gerald T. Sheppard [*Wisdom as a Hermeneutical Construct* 99] has summarized the path of Wisdom from Proverbs to Sirach and Baruch very neatly: “An older connection between the goals of Torah and the wisdom literature is fully exploited by the author. Traditionally, wisdom literature offered ‘life’ (e.g., Prov 3:18; 4:13, 22, 23; 13:14; 16:22), even ‘the way of life’ (e.g., 2:19; 5:6; 6:23; 10:17; 15:24), in a manner fully compatible with the same promise, based on obedience to the Torah (e.g., compare Deut 30:15 with Prov 3:1ff.). This symbiosis of Torah and wisdom, apparent already in Proverbs, has in the time of Sirach and Baruch led to a relatively more aggressive reunion of the different parts of the canon.”” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 141)
  2. “The identification of Wisdom and Torah seems neat and clear; it gives an unambiguous answer to a question that always lurks in the mind of the reader. By the same token, one can fail to appreciate what a strange and, in a sense, forced identification this is. It is not a conclusion that a reader of Prov 1-9 and Job 28 would have anticipated. C. Larcher [*Etudes sur le livre de la Sagesse*. EBib. Paris: Gabalda, 1969. 342] has remarked of Sir 24 that “the entire movement of Wisdom’s discourse depends more on a theology of presence than on a theology of revelation” (mistlike she covers the earth, and she roams the heavens and abyss with equal ease; Sir 24:3-5). But with Sir 24:23 Lady Wisdom has become the book of the Torah. Although [141] Wisdom’s origins and existence had been closely associated with the Lord, there was always the nagging question “where?” (Job 28:12, 20; Bar 3:14; Eccl 7:23-24; Wis 6:22.) Now she is definitively located by Ben Sira. Mysterious and touching is the portrayal of Wisdom accepting the Lord’s “order” in Sir 24:8, and then being involved in the divine “liturgy” before God in v 10. If the development and identification of Wisdom in Sirach is surprising, the author of the Book of Wisdom has even more surprises in store for those in quest of Lady Wisdom. Ultimately Prov 8 lies behind Sir 24 and Wis 7-9, but the elaboration of the figure of Lady Wisdom is unique in both cases: Torah for Sirach, and pneuma or spirit for the author of the Book of Wisdom.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 141-42)

1. **Baruch 3:9-4:4**
   1. Bar 3:9-4:4, “Hear the commandments of life, O Israel; give ear, and learn wisdom! 10Why is it, O Israel, why is it that you are in the land of your enemies, that you are growing old in a foreign country, that you are defiled with the dead, 11that you are counted among those in Hades? 12You have forsaken the fountain of wisdom. 13If you had walked in the way of God, you would be living in peace forever. 14Learn where there is wisdom, where there is strength, where there is understanding, so that you may at the same time discern where there is length of days, and life, where there is light for the eyes, and peace.

15Who has found her place? And who has entered her storehouses? 16Where are the rulers of the nations, and those who lorded it over the animals on earth; 17those who made sport of the birds of the air, and who hoarded up silver and gold in which people trust, and there is no end to their getting; 18those who schemed to get silver, and were anxious, but there is no trace of their works? 19They have vanished and gone down to Hades, and others have arisen in their place.

20Later generations have seen the light of day, and have lived upon the earth; but they have not learned the way to knowledge, nor understood her paths, nor laid hold of her. 21Their descendants have strayed far from her way. 22She has not been heard of in Canaan, or seen in Teman; 23the descendants of Hagar, who seek for understanding on the earth, the merchants of Merran and Teman, the story-tellers and the seekers for understanding, have not learned the way to wisdom, or given thought to her paths.

24O Israel, how great is the house of God, how vast the territory that he possesses! 25It is great and has no bounds; it is high and immeasurable. 26The giants were born there, who were famous of old, great in stature, expert in war. 27God did not choose them, or give them the way to knowledge; 28so they perished because they had no wisdom, they perished through their folly.

29Who has gone up into heaven, and taken her, and brought her down from the clouds? 30Who has gone over the sea, and found her, and will buy her for pure gold? 31No one knows the way to her, or is concerned about the path to her. 32But the one who knows all things knows her, he found her by his understanding. The one who prepared the earth for all time filled it with four-footed creatures; 33the one who sends forth the light, and it goes; he called it, and it obeyed him, trembling; 34the stars shone in their watches, and were glad; he called them, and they said, “Here we are!” They shone with gladness for him who made them. 35This is our God; no other can be compared to him. 36He found the whole way to knowledge, and gave her to his servant Jacob and to Israel, whom he loved. 37Afterward she appeared on earth and lived with humankind.

4:1She is the book of the commandments of God, the law that endures forever. All who hold her fast will live, and those who forsake her will die. 2Turn, O Jacob, and take her; walk toward the shining of her light. 3Do not give your glory to another, or your advantages to an alien people. 4Happy are we, O Israel, for we know what is pleasing to God.

* 1. “The poem on Wisdom in Bar 3:9-4:4 stands out in a book that is otherwise concerned with the exile, repentance, and return.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 140)
     1. Burke, D. G. *The Poetry of Baruch*. SBLSCS 10. Atlanta: Scholars, 1982. Esp. 20-23.
        1. Burke’s “Skillful analysis of the Greek text (the earliest extant text of the work) shows that it is most likely a translation from a Hebrew original, now lost. This is effectively demonstrated by Burke for 3:9-5:9.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 148 n. 14)
        2. “His study indicates the characteristic anthological style of the postexilic period, in which earlier portions of the (Hebrew) Bible are reused, and a pastiche of biblical phrases results.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 148 n. 14)
     2. Moore, Carey A. “I Baruch.” *Daniel, Esther and Jeremiah: The Additions*. AB 44. Garden City: Doubleday, 1977. 255-316.
     3. Sheppard, Gerald T. *Wisdom as a Hermeneutical Construct*. BZAW 151. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1980. 84-99. “Sheppard . . . presents a careful analysis of the wisdom poem, pointing out its biblical antecedents (Genesis, Deuteronomy, Job, especially).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 148 n. 14)
  2. “This poem is linked to the prayer of confession in 1:15-3:8 by the opening verses, 3:9-13, which explain Israel’s exilic punishment as the result of abandoning wisdom.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 140)
  3. structure of Baruch

1:1-3:8

1:1-14 introduction

1:15-2:10 “a confession made by exiles to compatriots in Jerusalem” (see Dan 9:4-19)

2:11-3:8 prayer “to the Lord to save his people Israel”

3:9-4:4 wisdom poem

4:5-5:9 “a prophetic address to the Diaspora and to Jerusalem that the exiles will return”

4:5-9 a prophet speaks (to his “people”)

4:10-29 Jerusalem speaks (to the “neighbors of Zion” [4:10-16] and to her children [4:17-29])

4:30-5:9 a prophet speaks (to Jerusalem) (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 140)

“There is a broad consensus that the opening [1:1-3:8] and closing [4:5-5:9] parts of the book are also independent pieces . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 140)

* 1. In the context of 1:1-3:8 and 4:5-5:9, “the Wisdom poem functions as a basis for the hope of restoration. . . . The theme is the “way to wisdom/understand­ing” [3:20, 23, 27, 31, 36].” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 140)
  2. “The poem is close in spirit to the identification of Wisdom and Torah made by Ben Sira (Sir 24:23; cf. Bar 4:1-2) and generally envisioned in the postexilic period (Deut 4:6; Ps 19:8; 119:97-98; Ezra 7:6, 14, 25).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 140)
     1. Sir 24:23, “All this is the book of the covenant of the Most High God, the law that Moses commanded us as an inheritance for the congregations of Jacob.”
     2. Deut 4:6, “You must observe them diligently, for this will show your wisdom and discernment to the peoples, who, when they hear all these statutes, will say, “Surely this great nation is a wise and discerning people!””
     3. Ezra 7:6, “Ezra went up from Babylonia. He was a scribe skilled in the law of Moses that the Lord the God of Israel had given; and the king granted him all that he asked, for the hand of the Lord his God was upon him.”
     4. Ezra 7:14, “you are sent by the king and his seven counselors to make inquiries about Judah and Jerusalem according to the law of your God, which is in your hand . . .”
     5. Ezra 7:25, “you, Ezra, according to the God-given wisdom you possess, appoint magistrates and judges who may judge all the people in the province Beyond the River who know the laws of your God; and you shall teach those who do not know them.”
     6. Ps 19:8, “the precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is clear, enlightening the eyes . . .”
     7. Ps 119:97-98, “Oh, how I love your law! It is my meditation all day long. 98Your commandment makes me wiser than my enemies, for it is always with me.”
  3. “The poem begins with a “shema” reminiscent of the “listen!” of Deut 5:1; 6:4—an exhortation that is also characteristic of the sage (Prov 1:8; 4:1; [140] etc.).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 140-41)
  4. “The plight of the exiles is interpreted as the result of their abandoning “the spring of wisdom,” the God from whom all wisdom comes (Sir 1:1 [“All wisdom is from the Lord”]). They must find where Wisdom and life are (Bar 3:14)—no mean task, for the ancient question of Job is echoed here: who has found the place of Wisdom (Bar 3:15; Job 28:12, 20)? [Job 28:12, “But where shall wisdom be found? And where is the place of understanding? . . . 20Where then does wisdom come from? And where is the place of understanding?”] Typically, Baruch answers this as Job did, indicating where she is *not* to be found (3:16-32). Some sources of ancient wisdom known to Israel are mentioned, only to be rejected: Canaan and Edom (v 22), the Ishmaelites (“sons of Hagar,” v 23). Wisdom is not to be found there, nor among the giants (v 24; Gen 6:4 [“The Nephilim were on the earth in those days—and also afterward—when the sons of God went in to the daughters of humans, who bore children to them. These were the heroes that were of old, warriors of renown”]). In short, no one knows the way to her (vv 20-21, 23, 27, 31). God alone knows her whereabouts (vv 32-37). The divine “knowledge” is associated in both Bar 3 and Job 28 with the divine control over the created world, which is guided by his intelligence and omniscience (v 32). The joyous response to creation by the host of heaven is noted in 4:34 (the stars shine joyfully for their creator, and they sing praise; cf. Job 38:7 [“when the morning stars sang together and all the heavenly beings shouted for joy”]).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 141)
  5. “Baruch cleverly takes up the words of Deut 30:12-13 [“It is not in heaven, that you should say, “Who will go up to heaven for us, and get it for us so that we may hear it and observe it?” 13Neither is it beyond the sea, that you should say, “Who will cross to the other side of the sea for us, and get it for us so that we may hear it and observe it?””] to show that it is only God who knows the way to Wisdom, and humans cannot find it (3:29-31). Whereas in Job 28 it is not clear just what God did with Wisdom, in Bar 3:37-4:2 it is obvious: Wisdom has been given to Jacob/Israel; indeed, she appeared upon earth and lived among men (v 37 is *not* to be eliminated as a Christian gloss!): “She is the book of the commandments of God, the Torah that stands forever” (4:1). Baruch’s treatment of Wisdom is influenced by Job 28, but the identification of this mysterious being is foursquare with Sir 24: Wisdom is the Torah.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 141)

1. **Wis 7-9**
   1. “I am indebted for the treatment of Wis 7-9 to Larcher [*Etudes sur le livre de la Sagesse*] 356-414; see esp. . . . 367-76.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 149 n. 18)
   2. “The personification of Lady Wisdom in 7:22-8:1 is one of the more famous and striking passages in the Bible, and perhaps the most mysterious.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 142)
   3. Wis 7-9 “describes the nature of Wisdom and pseudo-Solomon’s quest for her . . . This magnificent portion is introduced by 6:22-25, which assures the reader that “Solomon” will hide no “mysteries” (*mysteria*) concerning Wisdom’s nature and origin.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 142)
   4. historians of religion on the origin of Lady Wisdom in Wis 7-9
      1. “J. Kloppenborg, building on the previous studies of Burton Mack and J. Reese, has made a strong case for Isis behind the figure of Sophia in Wis 7-9 . . .” (“Isis and Sophia in the Book of Wisdom.” *HTR* 75 (1982): 57-84.) (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 148 n. 5)
   5. “The author’s emphasis on his purely human origins (“mortal”) stands in contrast to Wisdom’s godly character, but especially to the “kings” to whom the book is ostensibly addressed (recall 1:1; 6:1). [Wis 1:1, “Love righteousness, you rulers of the earth, think of the Lord in goodness and seek him with sincerity of heart”; 6:1-2, “Listen therefore, O kings, and understand; learn, O judges of the ends of the earth. 2Give ear, you that rule over multitudes, and boast of many nations.”] Along with vv 5-6 [“a holy and disciplined spirit will flee from deceit, and will leave foolish thoughts behind, and will be ashamed at the approach of unrighteousness. 6For wisdom is a kindly spirit, but will not free blasphemers from the guilt of their words”], v 1 leaves no opening for special claims of royal (divine) birth. No, one has to *pray* for Wisdom (7:7 [“I prayed, and understanding was given me; I called on God, and the spirit of wisdom came to me”]). Oddly enough, Wisdom is not explicitly prayed for in the wisdom literature (except here, and see Sir 37:15 [“above all pray to the Most High that he may direct your way in truth”]). But the model of the historical Solomon (1 Kgs 3:9 [“Give your servant therefore an understanding mind to govern your people”]) is being recalled here.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 142)
   6. “The old clichés concerning the incomparable value of Wisdom are reiterated in 7:8-12; she surpasses all riches, gems, gold, and silver, for the treasure she brings is the friendship of God (7:14). But her gifts belong to the secular world as well, for an astonishing list of intellectual achievements are given in 7:15-21: a knowledge of the structure of the world, astronomical facts, beasts, flowers, and humans—the encyclopedic knowledge of the ancient Greek sage.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 143)
   7. “In response [to his prayer for wisdom], there came to him a spirit of Wisdom (*pneuma sophias*), a relatively new way of conceiving Wisdom. Already in Job 32:8 it was stated that human understanding is due to the breath of Shaddai (*nišmat shadday*), parallel to the *ruah* that is in human beings). [*sic*] In its most general meaning, *pneuma sophias* designates the action of Wisdom upon pseudo-Solomon, but the Greek *pneuma* had acquired specific meanings in Hellenistic thought. It stood for the Platonic “soul” of the world, and in Stoicism it took on a particular nuance: “a universal divine principle which animated and penetrated the entire universe, giving it substance and unity.” [C. Larcher, *Etudes sur le livre de la Sagesse* 361] This idea is already hinted at in Wis 1:7 [“the spirit of the Lord has filled the world, . . . that which holds all things together”]. The cosmic function is specified further in 12:1, “Your imperishable spirit is in all things.” This is a real presence of the divine spirit, [142] not merely the dependence of creatures upon creator. In 9:17 Wisdom is parallel to “your holy spirit” sent from on high, and she is responsible for knowing the divine counsel.” (Wis 9:17, “Who has learned your counsel, unless you have given wisdom and sent your holy spirit from on high?”) (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 142-43)
   8. “Wisdom [is] the *technitis* . . . or maker of all . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 143)
      1. Wis 7:22, “wisdom, the fashioner of all things . . .”
      2. Wis 8:6, “who more than she is fashioner of what exists?”
      3. “. . . the author seems to understand the *´mwn* of Prov 8:30 as artisan or crafts [wo]man . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 143)
   9. Wisdom is the “maker of all” (7:22, 8:6). “Hence she is identified with God (cf. 7:25-26), and her remarkable qualities are detailed in the twenty-one attributes (seven times three, a triple perfection).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 143) Wis 7:25-26, “she is a breath of the power of God, and a pure emanation of the glory of the Almighty; therefore nothing defiled gains entrance into her. 26For she is a reflection of eternal light, a spotless mirror of the working of God, and an image of his goodness.”
   10. Wisdom as spirit
       1. “The author never explains the difference between Lady Wisdom as spirit (Wis 7:7; 9:17) and Wisdom as *having* a spirit that is qualified in 7:22-23 as “holy, intelligent, unique,” and the like. We would not be far from the mark if we conceived of Lady Wisdom as acting in the guise of a spirit, and not being merely the effect of the Lord’s spirit (as, e.g., in Isa 11:2).” (Larcher, *Etudes sur le livre de la Sagesse* 365) (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 143)
       2. “Here the cosmological ubiquity of Wisdom comes into play.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 143)
          1. “She is active within human beings . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 143)
             1. Wis 1:4-6, “wisdom will not enter a deceitful soul, or dwell in a body enslaved to sin . . . 6because God is witness of their inmost feelings . . .”
             2. Prov 2:10, “wisdom will come into your heart . . .”
             3. She is active in humans “because she is a spirit that loves humans . . .” Wis 1:6, “wisdom is a kindly spirit,” “literally, “philanthropic” . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 143)
          2. Wisdom “is hardly distinct from the spirit of the Lord that observes the human heart and “fills the world” . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 143) Wis 1:7, “the spirit of the Lord has filled the world, and that which holds all things together knows what is said . . .”
          3. “In 1:1-15 spirit and Wisdom do not seem to be distinct from the divinity; they express the ways in which God is present to the world and to humans.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 143)
       3. Wis 7:22-26
          1. Wis 7:22-26, “wisdom, the fashioner of all things, taught me. There is in her a spirit that is intelligent, holy, unique, manifold, subtle, mobile, clear, unpolluted, distinct, invulnerable, loving the good, keen, irresistible, 23beneficent, humane, steadfast, sure, free from anxiety, all-powerful, overseeing all, and penetrating through all spirits that are intelligent, pure, and altogether subtle. 24For wisdom is more mobile than any motion; because of her pureness she pervades and penetrates all things. 25For she is a breath of the power of God [nab “an aura of the might of God”], and a pure emanation of the glory of the Almighty; therefore nothing defiled gains entrance into her. 26For she is a reflection [nab “refulgence”] of eternal light, a spotless mirror of the working of God, and an image of his goodness.”
          2. “The twenty-one qualities of 7:22-23 serve to elaborate the spiritual nature of Lady Wisdom, the kind of activity she engages in. Here the most telling attribute is the pervasive character she has: penetrating all spirits (v 23) and indeed all things because of her “purity” (v 24).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 143)
          3. “This quality [purity] prepares us somewhat for the remarkable description of 7:25-26 . . . The passage leaves one rather breathless—it is impossible to convey more intimately the relationship of Lady Wisdom to God: breath, outpouring of divine glory, eternal light, mirror of divine activity, a divine image. The [143] previous chapters highlighted Wisdom’s pervasive activity in the world; now her divine character is articulated in a manner that goes beyond the traditional “begetting” in Prov 8:22-25 or “coming from the mouth of the Most High” in Sir 24:3. If previously she was the bond that cemented creation together, now her intimacy with the divine is celebrated.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 143-44)
          4. “As Addison Wright [“Wisdom.” *New Jerome Biblical Commentary* 516] observes of vv 25-26, “The author, enlarging on Prov 8 and Sir 24, seeks the most immaterial images possible to describe the origin of Wisdom,” and, one might add, to describe the intimacy of her relationship with God.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 144)
          5. “The general image is a sort of radiation from the divinity: vapor, effusion, reflection, mirror, image. As breath of the divine power, she is the outflowing of divine glory, which is usually conceived of as light or fire. The metaphor of light is continued in v 26, where she is the reflection of the “light that is forever.” According to Isa 60:19-20 [“the Lord will be your everlasting light, and your God will be your glory 20. . . the Lord will be your everlasting light”], this light is the Lord, whose radiance will replace the sun in the eschatological era. This ties in with the divine glory of v 25, since such glory in the Old Testament seems to be conceived of in terms of light. We know whence the unsullied character of Wisdom comes; she is bathed in the eternal light. She is the mirror or reflection of the divine energy (v 26). God, as it were, pours self into her in the various divine operations. Finally she is the image of the divine goodness; she is the very icon of that goodness that was celebrated in creation (Gen 1:4, 10, 12, etc.).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 144) Gen 1:4, “God saw that the light was good . . .” Gen 1:31, “God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good.”
          6. “After this really unfathomable description of Lady Wisdom, pseudo-Solomon returns to the narrative of his love affair. She led to a “sharing [*symbiōsis*] in the life of God,” just as a spouse would, because God loves her (8:3) and even depends upon her for his own designs. Indeed, she is the mother (*genetis*) of all Solomon’s benefits (7:12; cf. 8:5)—the artisan of all (7:22; 8:6), as God is termed in 13:1.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 144)
             1. Wis 7:12, “I rejoiced in them all [“All good things,” 7:11], because wisdom leads them; but I did not know that she was their mother.”
             2. Wis 7:22, “wisdom, the fashioner of all things . . .”
             3. Wis 8:5, “If riches are a desirable possession in life, what is richer than wisdom, the active cause of all things?”
             4. Wis 8:6, “she is fashioner of what exists . . .”
             5. Wis 13:1, “For all people who were ignorant of God were foolish by nature; and they were unable from the good things that are seen to know the one who exists, nor did they recognize the artisan while paying heed to his works . . .”
          7. “The close relationship of Wisdom to creation is further spelled out in 9:9: Wisdom knows God’s works and was present when he made the world. If the role of Wisdom in creation had remained ambiguous in the past (Prov 8:30), there is no longer any doubt. According to Wis 8:4 she even participates in the understanding of God, who defers to her selection in the process of creation. This is due to her common life with God, who loves her (8:3). He favors her so much that her decision is his in all his works!” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 144)
             1. Prov 8:30, “then I was beside him, like a master worker; and I was daily his delight, rejoicing before him always . . .”
             2. Wis 8:3, “She glorifies her noble birth by living with God, and the Lord of all loves her.”
             3. Wis 8:4, “For she is an initiate in the knowledge of God, and an associate in his works.”
             4. Wis 9:9, “With you is wisdom, she who knows your works and was present when you made the world; she understands what is pleasing in your sight and what is right according to your commandments.”
          8. “Larcher carefully notes [*Etudes sur le livre de la Sagesse* 391] that the author of Wisdom, thanks to Greek influence, goes far beyond his predecessors in the matter of continuous creation, and the reason is God’s special presence to the world by reason of spirit and Wisdom. Thus, “She renews everything, while perduring” (7:27), just as the breath of God creates and renews the face of the earth (Ps 104:30). She is mobile and all-pervasive by reason of her purity (7:24), and hence she “reaches from end to end mightily and governs all things well” (8:1). This means that she is in effect the providence of God, even if the term *pronoia* is used directly of God only in 14:3 and 17:2.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 144)
             1. Ps 104:30, “When you send forth your spirit, they are created; and you renew the face of the ground.”
             2. Wis 7:24, “For wisdom is more mobile than any motion; because of her pureness she pervades and penetrates all things.”
             3. Wis 7:27, “Although she is but one, she can do all things, and while remaining in herself, she renews all things; in every generation she passes into holy souls and makes them friends of God, and prophets . . .”
             4. Wis 8:1, “She reaches mightily from one end of the earth to the other, and she orders all things well.”
             5. Wis 14:3, “it is your providence, O Father, that steers its [a boat’s] course, because you have given it a path in the sea, and a safe way through the waves . . .”
             6. Wis 17:2, “when lawless people supposed that they held the holy nation in their power, they themselves lay as captives of darkness and prisoners of long night, shut in under their roofs, exiles from eternal providence.”
       4. “In view of all this, it is not surprising to read Solomon’s impassioned [144] prayer for Wisdom (9:1-12), because she “knows and understands all things,” but particularly because she enables him to “know what is pleasing” to God (9:10-11). It is no surprise that he learned the four cardinal virtues from Wisdom the teacher (8:7).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 144-45)
          1. Wis 8:7, “if anyone loves righteousness, her labors are virtues; for she teaches self-control and prudence, justice and courage nothing in life is more profitable for mortals than these.”
          2. Wis 9:10-11, “Send her forth from the holy heavens, and from the throne of your glory send her, that she may labor at my side, and that I may learn what is pleasing to you. 11For she knows and understands all things, and she will guide me wisely in my actions and guard me with her glory.”
2. **conclusion**
   1. Burton Mack (*Logos und Sophia*. SUNT 10. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1973)
      1. “One should . . . compare the independent and helpful description of Lady Wisdom by Burton Mack . . .: “She is a teacher, one who shows the way, a preacher and a disciplinarian. She seeks out human beings, meets them on the streets and invites them in for a meal. The bewildering sexual aspects include sister, lover, wife and mother. She is the tree of life, the water of life, the garment and crown of victory. She offers to human beings life, rest, knowledge and salvation.” For all these characteristics Mack offers several biblical references.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 149 n. 22)
      2. “He prefers to use a different terminology for personified Wisdom: *verborgen*, or “hidden,” for the remoteness of Wisdom in Job 28 and Bar 3:9-4:4; *nahe*, or “near,” for the intimate presence of Prov 8:22-31. Both types are in Sirach (24:3-7 would be “near”).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 149 n. 22)
   2. J. Marböck (*Weisheit im Wandel*. BBB 37. Bonn: Hanstein, 1971. 127-33)
      1. “One may prefer the terminology used by Marböck . . ., who speaks of wisdom “from above” and “from below” (categories seemingly derived from current christological discussion). Thus Sir 24 is “from above” and the table manners in 31:12-32:13 are “from below.” See also Larcher, *Etudes*, 398-414.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 149 n. 22)
   3. “There are many faces to Wisdom in the Old Testament, and it is well-nigh impossible to make a synthesis. Each book and each chapter in which she appears is conditioned by some authorial intention, some situation to which she was an appropriate response. Nonetheless, a certain profile seems desirable as a summary of the foregoing discussion.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 145)
      1. “Wisdom has a divine origin: Prov 8:22; Sir 24:3, 9; Wis 7:25-26.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 145)
      2. “She existed before creation and seems to have had a role in creation: Prov 8:22-29; Sir 1:4; Wis 9:9; Prov 8:30?; 3:19 (cf. 24:3); Sir 1:9-10 (cf. 16:24-17:7); Wis 7:22; 8:4-6 (cf. 13:1); see also 9:2, 9.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 145)
      3. “Wisdom is identified with the (divine) spirit: Wis 1:7; 9:17; 12:1; and she is also immanent in the world: 7:24; 8:1.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 145)
      4. “Wisdom accounts for the coherence and permanence of the cosmos: Wis 1:7; 7:24, 27; 8:1; 11:25.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 145)
      5. “Wisdom has a particular mission to human beings: Prov 8:4, 31-36; Sir 24:7, 12, 19-22; Wis 7:27-28; 8:2-3.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 145)
         1. “She speaks to them in the world (Prov 1, 8, 9; Sir 24:19-22; Wis 6:12-16; 7:22a; 8:7-9; 9:10-16).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 145)
         2. “She promises her followers life and prosperity, every blessing (Prov 1:32; 3:13-18; 8:1-5, 35; 9:1-6; Sir 1:14-20; 6:18-31; 15:1-8; 24:19-33; Wis 7:7-14).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 145)
      6. “Wisdom is particularly associated with Israel . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 145)
         1. “She dwells in Israel, by divine command (Sir 24:8-12).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 145)
         2. “She can be identified with the Torah (Sir 24:23 and passim: 1:25-27; 6:37; 15:1; 19:20; 33:2-3; etc.; Bar 4:1).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 145)
         3. “She was at work in Israel’s history (Wis 10:1-21).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 145)
      7. “Wisdom is a gift from God: Prov 2:6; Sir 1:9-10, 26; 6:37; Wis 7:7; 9:4). But at the same time she is associated with effort and “discipline” *(mûsar*, usually rendered *paideia*): Sir 4:17; 6:18-36; Prov 4:10-27; 6:6; Wis 1:5; 7:14.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 145)

*1A7*

* 1. “Modern scholarship speaks of a “wisdom myth,” a reconstruction based on biblical and extrabiblical data that portrays the descent and reascent of Wisdom to her heavenly home. The point to be made here is that the Bible provides only part of this alleged myth: Wisdom does come into the world (Sir 24; Bar 3:9-4:44), where she finds delight among humans (Prov 8:31) and, more specifically, dwells within Israel as the Law (Sir 24:23; Bar 4:1). But the idea of her reascending is not found in the Bible; it is expressed in 1 Enoch 42:2 [*APOT* 2.212]: “Wisdom went forth to make her dwelling among the children of men, and found no dwelling place; Wisdom returned to her place, and took her seat among the angels.”” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 146)
  2. “Merely a glimpse at the figure of Lady Wisdom in both Jewish and Christian tradition bears out a characteristic of the biblical *data*: she seems to be essentially a changeable being—that is, to be defined anew in successive generations.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 146)
  3. Wisdom’s identity
     1. “As with so many key biblical concepts, there is a temptation for us to choose, to limit ourselves to what impresses us as most important.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 147)
     2. “The first significant observation to be made about Wisdom is this: Wisdom speaks with divine accents.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 147)
     3. “For Proverbs, she is an appeal to life, to live it fully.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 147)
     4. “. . . she is a world principle, immanent and also divine, according to Wisdom.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 147)
     5. “Her identity as Law is clearly enunciated, particularly by Ben Sira and Baruch.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 147)
     6. “These various identifications are there in the Bible for us to take advantage of, to profit from.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 147)
     7. “It is not really possible to reduce all these identities to a unity. The best one can say is that Lady Wisdom is a divine communication: God’s communication, extension of self, to human beings. And that is no small insight the biblical wisdom literature bequeaths to us.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 147)

1. **personified Wisdom after the Old Testament**
   1. introduction
      1. “. . . we are limiting ourselves to the Old Testament. A discussion of Wisdom/­Sophia as she appears in the New Testament and beyond is not within our compass.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 146)
   2. in the New Testament
      1. “. . . the personification continues (cf. Luke 7:35; 11:49; Matt 11:19; and the Wisdom background to John 1:1-18).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 146)
         1. Matt 11:19, “the Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!’ Yet wisdom is vindicated by her deeds.”
         2. Luke 7:35, “Nevertheless, wisdom is vindicated by all her children.”
         3. Luke 11:49, “Therefore also the Wisdom of God said, ‘I will send them prophets and apostles, some of whom they will kill and persecute’ . . .”
         4. John 1:1-18, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2He was in the beginning with God. 3All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being 4in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. 5The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. 6There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. 7He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. 8He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. 9The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. 10He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. 11He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. 12But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, 13who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God. 14And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth. 15(John testified to him and cried out, “This was he of whom I said, ‘He who comes after me ranks ahead of me because he was before me.’”) 16From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. 17The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. 18No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father’s heart, who has made him known.”
      2. “Obviously, the Christian can infer—and, in the person of Paul, has inferred—that Christ is the Wisdom of God (1 Cor 1:24).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 147) 1 Cor 1:24, “but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.”
   3. in later Judaism
      1. Urbach, E. E. *The Sages: Their Concepts and Beliefs*. Jerusalem: Magnes, 1975. 198ff., 286ff.
      2. “. . . the Judaic tradition preserves the identification of Wisdom with Torah.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 147)
   4. in Gnosticism
      1. “Sophia has also played a large role in the development of Gnosticism.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 146)
   5. in the Church Fathers
      1. See also: Johnson, E. “Jesus, the Wisdom of God: A Biblical Basis for Non-Androcentric Theology.” *ETL* 61 (1985): 261-94.
      2. Jaeger, H. “The Patristic Conception of Wisdom in the Light of Biblical and Rabbinical Research.” *Studia Patristica IV*, ed. F. L. Cross. Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1961. 90-106. ““A brief survey of the developments in rabbinical and patristic studies . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 149 n. 24)
   6. “All these conclusions are possible and legitimate; the very fluctuation in the identity of Wisdom within the Bible justifies them.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 147)

## RETRIBUTION

1. **retribution in Proverbs**
   1. “See the careful treatment of the theme of material prosperity by Elizabeth Huwiler, “Control of Reality in Israelite Wisdom” (Duke University dissertation, 1988) chap. 3.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 30 n. 15)
   2. “. . . the teaching supports the thesis that wise conduct will be rewarded by prosperity and the good life; wisdom brings success. But reality often has it otherwise. The poor are not always to be blamed; indeed they are to be objects of particular concern, under penalty of blaspheming the creator of all (Prov 14:31; 17:5).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 20)
   3. Proverbs’ “optimistic teaching is in conflict with the Books of Job and Qoheleth. The conflict is not to be denied: the suffering of the just person is not adequately handled in Proverbs (see Prov 3:11-12 [Prov 3:11-12, “My child, do not despise the Lord’s discipline or be weary of his reproof, 12for the Lord reproves the one he loves, as a father the son in whom he delights.”]), and Qoheleth takes a harsh stand against traditional wisdom, as it does not provide the answers to the questions he is asking. But tension between various parts of the Bible (the description of the conquest in Joshua compared to chap. 1 of Judges) or within a single book (Qoheleth) is nothing new.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 29)
   4. “It would be a mistake to underrate the achievements of the sages whose heritage is gathered up in Proverbs. One may say that they share in the weakness of Deuteronomy (on the problem of retribution), but in the strength of many psalmists (e.g., Pss 16:11; 23:6).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 29)
      1. Ps 16:11, “You show me the path of life. In your presence there is fullness of joy; in your right hand are pleasures forevermore.”
      2. Ps 23:6, “Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord my whole life long.”
2. **retribution in Job**
   1. “. . . Deuteronomist theology [taught] that the good are rewarded and the evil punished . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 45)
   2. “Job is seen as an iconoclastic attack on the traditional ideas of divine justice and retribution, which are so firmly upheld in the Book of Proverbs. Such a reading is not mistaken . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 34)
   3. “It must be admitted that the author has tilted the situation in favor of Job, who clearly wins the debate. The prologue in chaps. 1-2 makes this inevitable, since Job’s innocence is assured by divine pronouncement.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 38)
   4. the problem of retribution in the Bible before Job
      1. The problem of retribution was already recognized before Job. “There is a tradition for such questioning at the heart of Israel’s faith.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 34)
      2. Gen 18:22-32: Abraham’s questions to Yahweh (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 34)
      3. the confessions of Jeremiah (e.g., Jer 12:1-5) (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 34)
      4. Habakkuk (1:4, 13) (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 34)
      5. several psalms (37, 73) (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 34)
      6. Jonah (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 34)
   5. In ancient Israel “the worldview . . . attributed to divine agency all that happens, evil as well as good . . . Hence suffering remained a mystery.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 36)
   6. “It [suffering] could be most easily accounted for as the wages of sin, as one recognizes in the Psalms (e.g., Ps 51).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 36) Ps 51:4-19, “Against you, you alone, have I sinned, and done what is evil in your sight, so that you are justified in your sentence and blameless when you pass judgment. 5Indeed, I was born guilty, a sinner when my mother conceived me. . . . 8let the bones that you have crushed rejoice. 9Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities. . . .”
   7. “But not always, and the example of the saintly Job is a case in point. How can one penetrate the mystery of divine decision, or should one say divine caprice?” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 36)
   8. “. . . the author of the book does not attempt to impose an answer. He develops various approaches to the problem in an attempt to shed as much light as possible on the issue of human suffering and divine justice. The book’s most positive teaching is at the same time negative: the application to Job of the traditional theory of divine retribution is not relevant. It is even wrong, as is made clear by the verdict of the Lord in Job’s favor against the friends (42:7). This does not mean that there is *no* truth in the traditional theory. The author spares no effort in presenting this theory as fully as possible. The very fact that Job is restored in the end (42:10-17), while surely not the main point of the book, bears witness to the author’s belief in the traditional goodness and justice of the Lord. God does care for those who are faithful to him. It is no little irony that the author destroys a simplistic understanding of this belief by demonstrating its inapplicability to Job.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 34)
   9. “The purpose of the dialogue [Job 3-31] is to allow the author to develop fully the [37] best thought on the problem of the suffering of a just person.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 37-38)
   10. “. . . the author intends to be fair to the traditional theology that the three friends represent. There is danger that a modern reader may find the position caricatured. This is not the intention of the author. He gives the three friends full rein in their learned discussion of the theme. They do the best they can on the principles that they accept. It is important to recall that they echo ideas that are fully in accord with other parts of the Bible (e.g., Ps 37). The author has no need to underscore how wrong they are when they rigidly interpret the tradition to infer that Job’s affliction is due to his sinfulness.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 38)
   11. “It has been said that ultimately Job shares in the traditional theology of the friends. [Vawter, B. *Job & Jonah*. New York: Paulist, 1983. 62. Murphy calls Vawter’s work “insightful,” 47 n. 7.] This is hardly fair to Job. First, this interpretation historicizes Job, as if his views were separate from the views of the author. Obviously the author is not locked into a reward system (not even by going along with the restoration of Job in chap. 42, which was part of the original Job legend). Second, for Job the issue is not prosperity versus the absence of it, but his relationship to God. This seems to be destroyed under the weight of the suffering that God has inflicted upon him. In his present condition he cannot even find God (chap. 23). He never once asks to be restored to his former greatness (which he vividly remembers, 30:1-31).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 40)
   12. “Freedman does not solve everything but leaves room for mystery and paradox (a lesson for all who study the book). He achieves a certain unity by recognizing four tests of Job: loss of material possessions and children; loss of health (physical suffering); the dialogue with friends, which ultimately turns out to be an exercise in futility; and finally the intervention of Elihu, who is, as it were, a disguise for Satan to press his case for the last time. The intervention of the Lord cannot be allowed to change the character of the test: God cannot “explain” or offer comfort to Job, but he can make [the] speeches of chaps. 38-41. When Job recants (whatever is the meaning of 42:6), the Lord judges that he has passed the test and he doubles Job’s former possessions (this is specified as an award for damages in cases of injustice). The final result is that Job has passed all testing, but he still has no explanation of what happened. The author seems to have created a deliberate impasse. From one point of view, the logic of the friends is correct: God is just and cannot allow unjust suffering. From another point of view (Job’s), a human being can be innocent and yet suffer. The mystery of God prevails. As Freedman puts it (p. 33), human beings “must be free of divine control and foreknowledge. Although it is highly debated in both Judaism and Christianity, the evidence of the Hebrew Bible points to a mystery at the center of the human person, a mystery that even God respects, so that the ultimate truth of human commitment can only be decided by time and testing.”” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 48 n. 17)
   13. “. . . our presuppositions concerning divine justice and divine omniscience . . . are *not* shared by the Old Testament author, and that is why such a puzzling book can be written. As for divine justice, it cannot be measured by any abstract code, much less by human standards. It is *sui generis* and beyond comprehension. As for divine omniscience, one can claim, as Freedman does [Freedman, David N. “Is It Possible to Understand the Book of Job?” *Bible Review* 4 (April 1988): 26-33, 44.], that it is not the correct presupposition for the Book of Job. If God had known that Job’s loyalty and love were not selfish, his “wager” with the Satan would have been basically unfair (to both Job and the Satan). Something (Job’s love) had to be proved or tested because by the terms of the situation it was an unknown (possibly inexistent) quality. This problem is one that exercised both Jewish and Christian theologians in the past: divine foreknowledge and human freedom. We blithely assert both of these points but cannot explain how they are to be reconciled. The Bible likewise blithely asserts both of them (not using the same terminology, of course) but does not attempt to explain them. Even more striking, in the Book of Job the issue of divine omniscience is bypassed for the sake of setting up the discussion provided by the poet. Divine omnipotence and omniscience are presuppositions of the author (and the reader?), but the tension between them remains. In a study of the “full-structure” of the work (as opposed to an interpretation guided by a piece-by-piece developmental structure), C. R. Seitz comments: “With Job, we see God testify in a whirlwind to might, power, and control over the natural realm, of which Job is a part. Yet with all this omnipotence, there is one thing the Almighty cannot do. . . . In the Prologue the reader learns something which is not revealed to Job: that God cannot coerce the love and service of mortals—or rather, precisely the best of mortals, like his servant Job. God cannot make Job serve him.”” (Seitz, C. R. “Job: Full-Structure, Movement, and Interpretation.” *Interpretation* 43 [1989]: 16 [article is 5-17].) (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 46)
3. **retribution in Qoheleth**
   1. According to the double retribution theory, “A just God prospers the good and punishes the evil; otherwise, where is the divine justice? There are many texts in Deuteronomy that enunciate this principle, and it is also the basis for the prophetic preaching against the rich who oppress the poor.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 57)
   2. “At several points Qoheleth laments the breakdown of the retribution that was a “given” in Israelite belief (e.g., 4:1-3; 7:15; 8:5-11).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 57)
      1. Qoh 4:1-3, “Again I saw all the oppressions that are practiced under the sun. Look, the tears of the oppressed—with no one to comfort them! On the side of their oppressors there was power—with no one to comfort them. 2And I thought the dead, who have already died, more fortunate than the living, who are still alive; 3but better than both is the one who has not yet been, and has not seen the evil deeds that are done under the sun.”
      2. Qoh 7:15, “In my vain life I have seen everything; there are righteous people who perish in their righteousness, and there are wicked people who prolong their life in their evil-doing.”
      3. Qoh 8:5-11, “Whoever obeys a command will meet no harm, and the wise mind will know the time and way. 6For every matter has its time and way, although the troubles of mortals lie heavy upon them. 7Indeed, they do not know what is to be, for who can tell them how it will be? 8No one has power over the wind to restrain the wind, or power over the day of death; there is no discharge from the battle, nor does wickedness deliver those who practice it. 9All this I observed, applying my mind to all that is done under the sun, while one person exercises authority over another to the other’s hurt. 10Then I saw the wicked buried; they used to go in and out of the holy place, and were praised in the city where they had done such things. This also is vanity. 11Because sentence against an evil deed is not executed speedily, the human heart is fully set to do evil.”
   3. “In 7:15 Qoheleth registers the fact that the just perish despite their goodness and the wicked survive despite their wickedness.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 57) Qoh 7:15, “In my vain life I have seen everything; there are righteous people who perish in their righteousness, and there are wicked people who prolong their life in their evil-doing.”
   4. “In 8:11 he recognizes the deleterious effect of this failure: people are emboldened to do evil because there is no penalty to be paid (“The sinner does evil a hundred times and survives,” 8:12a). This lack of proper retribution he calls a vanity (8:14, *hebel*).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 57) Qoh 8:11-14, “Because sentence against an evil deed is not executed speedily, the human heart is fully set to do evil. 12Though sinners do evil a hundred times and prolong their lives, yet I know that it will be well with those who fear God, for they stand in fear before him, 13but it will not be well with the wicked, neither will they prolong their days like a shadow, because they do not stand in fear before God. 14There is a vanity that takes place on earth, that there are righteous people who are treated according to the conduct of the wicked, and there are wicked people who are treated according to the conduct of the righteous. I said that this also is vanity.”
   5. “As he says in 9:11-12, a time of calamity comes to all, because of “falling time,” or the evil time that comes suddenly.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 57) Qoh 9:11-12, “Again I saw that under the sun the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor bread to the wise, nor riches to the intelligent, nor favor to the skillful; but time and chance happen to them all. 12For no one can anticipate the time of disaster. Like fish taken in a cruel net, and like birds caught in a snare, so mortals are snared at a time of calamity, when it suddenly falls upon them.”
   6. “Many have argued [e.g., Michel, *Qohelet* 138 n. 14, 167] that Qoheleth contradicts himself by proclaiming the judgment of God in 3:17 and 11:9b. Hence these statements must be later “corrections” from another hand. This is not necessary. Qoheleth affirms judgment because that is part of his self-understanding as an Israelite. That God is a judge over humans is one of those undeniable factors in Israelite belief (and in belief throughout the ancient Near East, in fact). Qoheleth therefore could affirm this, but he could not draw any consolation from it; the *manner* of divine judgment is wrapped in mystery. The ways of God are simply inscrutable. It is impossible for Qoheleth to make sense out of what God is doing (3:11; 8:17; 11:5). The divine judgment is obviously not what the tradition had always accepted as “just.” But Qoheleth was not one “to contend in judgment with one stronger than he” (6:10), that is, with God.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 57)
      1. Qoh 3:17, “I said in my heart, God will judge the righteous and the wicked, for he has appointed a time for every matter, and for every work.”
      2. Qoh 11:9b, “Follow the inclination of your heart and the desire of your eyes, but know that for all these things God will bring you into judgment.”
      3. Qoh 3:11, “He has made everything suitable for its time; moreover he has put a sense of past and future into their minds, yet they cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end.”
      4. Qoh 8:17, “then I saw all the work of God, that no one can find out what is happening under the sun. However much they may toil in seeking, they will not find it out; even though those who are wise claim to know, they cannot find it out.”
      5. Qoh 11:5, “Just as you do not know how the breath comes to the bones in the mother's womb, so you do not know the work of God, who makes everything.”
      6. Qoh 6:10, “Whatever has come to be has already been named, and it is known what human beings are, and that they are not able to dispute with those who are stronger.”
   7. “It is widely asserted that Qoheleth witnesses to the breakdown of the “act-consequence” view of retribution (discussed in chap. 8). But Qoheleth (and Job as well) is not interested in a chimera, a mechanical order that guarantees life’s security. His question is with the God he knows, who has disappeared into mystery: “Who can make straight what he has made crooked?” (7:13) [*sic*]” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 57)
   8. Of “this mysterious God, . . . he could write that divine love or hatred cannot be discerned by human beings (9:1-2). The usual signs of divine approval (prosperity or adversity) were not adequate for him.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 58)
4. **retribution in Sirach**
   1. introduction
      1. “The tradition confronted Sirach with a real problem in the matter of divine retribution: how does God differentiate between the faithful and the sinner in the order of providence? Scholars have used the term “theodicy” in [74] describing his understanding of the working out of divine justice. This is too ambitious a word to characterize his thought . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 74-75)
         1. Crenshaw, J. L. “The Problem of Theodicy in Sirach: On Human Bondage.” *JBL* 94 (1975): 47-64.
         2. Prato, G. L. *Il problema della teodicea in Ben Sira*. AnBib 65. Rome: Biblical Institute, 1975.
      2. Sirach “had no answer to the problems that modern (and ancient) theodicy puts before us.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 76)
   2. double retribution theory
      1. “His work resembles Proverbs not only in style but in teaching as well. Along with the sages of old, Ben Sira presented wise conduct as the means to prosperity and the good life . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 72)
      2. Sir 39:12-35 (a hymn)
         1. “Sirach reaffirms the traditional view of retribution (39:24, 27) as if the Books of Job and Qoheleth had never been written. But he stubbornly sticks to his point (39:32-35).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 71-72)
         2. Sir 39:24, “To the faithful his ways are straight, but full of pitfalls for the wicked.”
         3. Sir 39:27, “All these [the necessities of life] are good for the godly, but for sinners they turn into evils.”
         4. Sir 39:32-35, “So from the beginning I have been convinced of all this and have thought it out and left it in writing: 33All the works of the Lord are good, and he will supply every need in its time. 34No one can say, “This is not as good as that,” for everything proves good in its appointed time. 35So now sing praise with all your heart and voice, and bless the name of the Lord.”
   3. no judgment after death
      1. “. . . the reader should not be deceived by certain passages that seem at first sight to give an indication of some kind of judgment at death. The “end” does not connote judgment or a transition to a better life. It is merely a sober reminder of human mortality. One should live righteously, or one’s “end” will be somehow marked by grief, a premature death, a parting from the things one has prized more than wisdom. The Lord can repay on the day of death; hence by how one ends, one is known (11:26-28).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 72)
         1. Sir 7:36, “In all you do, remember the end of your life, and then you will never sin.”
         2. Sir 11:26-28, “For it is easy for the Lord on the day of death to reward individuals according to their conduct. 27An hour’s misery makes one forget past delights, and at the close of one’s life one’s deeds are revealed. 28Call no one happy before his death; by how he ends, a person becomes known.”
         3. Sir 28:6, “Remember the end of your life, and set enmity aside; remember corruption and death, and be true to the commandments.”
      2. “In the Greek tradition of this book, a personal eschatology was read into such passages by the translator [Kearns, “Ecclesiasticus” 549-51]. However, this view is foreign to Sirach . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 72)
   4. “the principles that govern [Sirach’s] optimistic point of view” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 75)
      1. By “optimistic,” Murphy means the double retribution theory. “. . . the optimistic note . . . sounds frequently in the work [of Proverbs]: wisdom (justice) prospers, while folly (wickedness) self-destructs.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 15)
      2. *determinism*: “First of all, he begins with the accepted biblical principle of determinism. All that happens is the Lord’s doing . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 75) Sir 33:13, “Like clay in the hand of the potter, to be molded as he pleases, so all are in the hand of their Maker, to be given whatever he decides.”
      3. *free will*: “This does not deny human responsibility. In fact, Sirach says that God has made human beings free to choose (15:14-17), and in that context he admonishes those who would try to blame God for their failings [15:11-12]. No, before us are life and death, and we receive what we choose (15:17). Like the rest of the biblical writers, Sirach makes no effort to reconcile these two factors—determinism and free choice.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 75)
         1. Sir 15:11-17, “Do not say, “It was the Lord’s doing that I fell away”; for he does not do what he hates. 12Do not say, “It was he who led me astray”; for he has no need of the sinful. 13The Lord hates all abominations; such things are not loved by those who fear him. 14It was he who created humankind in the beginning, and he left them in the power of their own free choice. 15If you choose, you can keep the commandments, and to act faithfully is a matter of your own choice. 16He has placed before you fire and water; stretch out your hand for whichever you choose. 17Before each person are life and death, and whichever one chooses will be given.”
      4. *all creation is good*
         1. Sir 39:12-35 (a hymn) “announces a definite theme: the works of God are all of them good (39:16, with inclusion in 39:33). [71] . . . Such is the refrain that opens and closes his hymn in 39:12-35 (cf. vv 16, 23 [sc. “33”—Hahn]). Indeed, he rejects the right to say that one thing is not as good as another (39:34). He points to the basic gifts of God, such as water and fire, milk and honey (39:26). These are good for the godly, but they turn out evil for sinners (here the typical law of retribution is at work).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 71, 75)
            1. Sir 39:16, “All the works of the Lord are very good, and whatever he commands will be done at the appointed time.”
            2. Sir 39:26, “The basic necessities of human life are water and fire and iron and salt and wheat flour and milk and honey, the blood of the grape and oil and clothing. 27All these are good for the godly, but for sinners they turn into evils.”
            3. Sir 39:33, “All the works of the Lord are good, and he will supply every need in its time.”
         2. “This hymn is even [71] challenging: who can say, “What is the purpose of this?” Qoheleth would have supplied him with unexpected answers.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 71-72)
      5. *the right* kairos (appointed time)
         1. “This theme is illustrated by the right *kairos*, or “time”: “In its own time every need is supplied” (vv 17b, 33b).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 71)
            1. Sir 39:16-17, “All the works of the Lord are very good, and whatever he commands will be done at the appointed time. 17No one can say, ‘What is this?’ or ‘Why is that?’—for at the appointed time all such questions will be answered. At his word the waters stood in a heap, and the reservoirs of water at the word of his mouth.”
            2. Sir 39:33-34, “All the works of the Lord are good, and he will supply every need in its time. 34No one can say, “This is not as good as that,” for everything proves good in its appointed time.”
         2. “He continually affirms the kairos, or timeliness of events (39:16, 33, 34). There is even a proper time for “fire and hail, famine and disease” (39:29). These are mere servants of God, which have their tasks to perform.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 75)
         3. “Unlike Qoheleth, he never seems to advert to the fact that God’s *kairos* is out of kilter with human ideas of time (cf. Eccl 3:11).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 71) Qoh 3:11, “He has made everything suitable for its time; moreover he has put a sense of past and future into their minds, yet they cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end.”
      6. *the doctrine of opposites* (Sir 33:7-15)
         1. Sir 33:14-15, “Good is the opposite of evil, and life the opposite of death; so the sinner is the opposite of the godly. 15Look at all the works of the Most High; they come in pairs, one the opposite of the other.”
         2. Sir 42:24-25, “All things come in pairs, one opposite the other, and he has made nothing incomplete. 25Each supplements the virtues of the other.”
         3. “The doctrine of opposites is akin to the two levels of meaning (*Doppeldeutigkeit*) that J. Marböck points out in Sirach’s writings [*Weisheit im Wandel*. BBB 37. Bonn: Hanstein, 1971. 153]: true and false shame (4:20-26; 41:14-42:8); true and false honor (10:30-11:6); the relativity of prosperity and adversity (11:25); the mixture of good and evil in a human being (10:8; 37:17-18); speech and silence (20:5-7); loans and alms (29:1-20); true and false sacrifice (34:21-35:5); true and false counselors and friends (37:1-6, 7-18). It is not for nothing that Marböck concludes his list with 37:28: “Not every food is good for everyone, nor do all dishes appeal to every taste.” Ben Sira was well trained in the discernment that the sages practiced.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 80 n. 13)
   5. no questioning
      1. Sirach, “for all his acquaintance with the previous books of the Bible, does not seem to have been affected by the Books of Job and Qoheleth.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 72)
      2. “The astonishing fact is that the only mention of Job is the casual reference in the shadow of Ezekiel in 49:8-9 (cf. Ezek 14:14, 20).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 76)
         1. Sir 49:8-9, “It was Ezekiel who saw the vision of glory, which God showed him above the chariot of the cherubim. 9For God also mentioned Job who held fast to all the ways of justice.”
         2. Ezek 14:14, “even if Noah, Daniel, and Job, these three, were in it, they would save only their own lives by their righteousness, says the Lord God. . . . 20even if Noah, Daniel, and Job were in it, as I live, says the Lord God, they would save neither son nor daughter; they would save only their own lives by their righteousness.”
      3. “Sirach was not unaware of hardships and difficult problems. In a moving passage he exclaims: “Mock not the worn cloak and jibe at no one’s bitter day; For strange are the works of the Lord, hidden from men his deeds.” (11:4) [nrsv: “Do not boast about wearing fine clothes, and do not exalt yourself when you are honored; for the works of the Lord are wonderful, and his works are concealed from humankind.”] This verse shows that Sirach, like Qoheleth (Eccl 3:11; 8:17; 11:5), appreciated the mystery of the “work of God,” but he resolutely refused to question God in the manner of Qoheleth. . . . the works of God are mysterious, hidden (11:4), despite the rhapsody of his praise in 42:15-43:33.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 76)
      4. “The hard question of (unjust) suffering is to be regarded as “trials” and testing (2:1-5). The one who trusts in God will eventually win out.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 76) Sir 2:1-5, “My child, when you come to serve the Lord, prepare yourself for testing. 2Set your heart right and be steadfast, and do not be impetuous in time of calamity. 3Cling to him and do not depart, so that your last days may be prosperous. 4Accept whatever befalls you, and in times of humiliation be patient. 5For gold is tested in the fire, and those found acceptable, in the furnace of humiliation.”
   6. “This optimism [i.e., the double retribution theory] is difficult to explain. It is aimed at the consolation and strengthening of the faithful, but it obviously does not confront the hard questions. Perhaps this is due to Sirach’s understanding of humility . . . [Sir 3:18-23, “The greater you are, the more you must humble yourself; so you will find favor in the sight of the Lord. 20For great is the might of the Lord; but by the humble he is glorified. 21Neither seek what is too difficult for you, nor investigate what is beyond your power. 22Reflect upon what you have been commanded, for what is hidden is not your concern. 23Do not meddle in matters that are beyond you, for more than you can understand has been shown you.”] One can detect here a caution against overextending oneself; one is to perform the job at hand. But what did Sirach conceive as being “sublime” and “hidden”? It has been suggested by some that he is warning against the “new wave” that Hellenism was bringing about in Palestine. [Hengel, Martin. *Judaism and Hellenism*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974. 1.139-40 (following R. Smend). Crenshaw, J. L. *Old Testament Wisdom*. Atlanta: Knox, 1981. 35.] But could it not be equally well directed against prying into the mystery of God, which was prominently discussed in his own wisdom tradition?” See Ps 131, “O Lord, my heart is not lifted up, my eyes are not raised too high; I do not occupy myself with things too great and too marvelous for me. 2But I have calmed and quieted my soul, like a weaned child with its mother; my soul is like the weaned child that is with me. 3O Israel, hope in the Lord from this time on and forevermore.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 76)
5. **retribution in the Book of Wisdom**
   1. “. . . through the all-pervading spirit of wisdom (1:6-7) God is aware of wrongdoing and will punish with death. This is really contrary to the divine plan . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 86) Wis 1:6-7, “wisdom is a kindly spirit, but will not free blasphemers from the guilt of their words; because God is witness of their inmost feelings, and a true observer of their hearts, and a hearer of their tongues. 7Because the spirit of the Lord has filled the world, and that which holds all things together knows what is said . . .”
   2. “While wisdom is merely mentioned in 1:4-7, it becomes the principal [87] concern of chap. 6. . . . According to 1:4 she [Wisdom] could not dwell with a sinner, but because she is a spirit (“the spirit of the Lord,” 1:7), she knows all that goes on, and punishment ensues for the sinner. This cosmic quality of Wisdom will appear also in 7:27-8:1.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 87-88)
   3. For the author of Wisdom, retribution exists after death, at least for the just. See the handout, “Body and Soul, and Immortality in the Book of Wisdom.”

## THEODICY

Livingston, James C. *Anatomy of the Sacred: An Introduction to Religion*. New York: Macmillan, 1989. 254-84.

preview of types of theodicy:

mystic participation

tribes and totems

corporate personality

mystic absorption

samsara, karma, & dharma

dualism

future, this-worldly

future, other-worldly

monotheistic theodicies:

1. punishment

2. test

3. teach virtue

4. submission to mystery

5. predestination

1. **definition**
   1. “Theodicy” is from the Greek words *theos*, “God,” and *dike*, “justice.” It means “justify­ing the ways of God” in the face of evil. “Theodicy” was coined by the philoso­pher Leibniz in 1710. (Livingston 254)
   2. The problems of theodicy are three: moral evil, natural evil, and in­nocent suffer­ing. (Livingston 269)
2. **theodicy of mystic participation**
   1. *primitive form*: mystical participation in the ongoing life of the tribe and of nature (a totem). (Livingston 258)
   2. *corporate personality*: In ancient Israel, the “soul” was all that we associate with a name—renown, pro­perty, progeny. The “soul” may thus live on. (Livingston 258)
   3. *mystic absorption* (Livingston 258)
3. **the *karma*-*samsara* theodicy** (of Hinduism and Theravada Bud­dhism)
   1. *Samsara* (reincarnation): a soul passes through a sequence of bo­dies. (Livingston 266)
   2. *Karma* (the law of moral cause and effect): a person is the effect of previous-life actions and the archi­tect of his or her next life. (Livingston 266)
   3. Progress is by fulfil­ling the *dharma* of one’s caste. (Livingston Livingston 267)
   4. This theodicy can jus­tify the socioeconomic status quo. (Livingston 268)
4. **dualism**
   1. Zoroastrianism influenced Mithraism, Man­ichaeism, and Gnosticism. (Livingston 265)
   2. Earthly existence may be devalued to the point that immoral acts are in­different. (Livingston 266)
   3. Such pessimism lacks enduring popular ap­peal. (Livingston 266)
5. **a future, this-worldly theodicy**
   1. There will be a uto­pian future on this earth. (Livingston 260)
      1. Taborites (followers of John Huss, d. 1415) ga­thered in 1419 atop a hill they called Mt. Tabor (site of the transfiguration) because a new age of the Holy Spirit was dawn­ing. (Livingston 261)
      2. Thomas Münzer, a follower of Luther, taught that the Last Days were at hand. Only the peas­ants were elect and would serve as God’s sword to oust the princes. (Livingston 261)
   2. Obvious weakness: possible empirical disconfirmation. But explana­tions can be given: miscal­culation, the time is not ripe, God is testing faith. (Livingston 263)
6. **a future, other-worldly theodicy**
   1. a spiritual heaven (paradise) (Livingston 263)
   2. the theodicy of most reli­gions (Livingston 263)
   3. Present suf­fer­ing will be jus­tified at the resur­rec­tion and final judgment. (Livingston 275)
7. **monotheistic theodicies**
   1. The problem of theodicy in monotheism results from three assertions: evil exists, God is omnibenevolent, and God is omnipotent. (Livingston 269)
   2. *monotheistic theodicy # 1*: suffering is a punishment for sin (the usual OT answer). Perfect symmetry gives monotheistic theodicy # 1 popular appeal. (Livingston 270)
   3. *monotheistic theodicy # 2*: suffering is a test (of endurance/courage or faith). This theodicy does not stand up to the test of experience. (Livingston 271)
   4. *monotheistic theodicy # 3*: suffering is to improve us.
      1. Suffering can teach virtues (humility, pa­tience, and sympathy). [272] Courage or forti­tude can’t exist without danger or dif­fi­culty. (Livingston 272, 274)
      2. Moral growth needs a world that includes pain and loss. It could not happen in a permanent hedonistic para­dise. (273)
      3. But monotheistic theodicy # 3 does not explain innocent suffering. (Livingston 274)
   5. *monotheistic theodicy # 4*: the theodicy of submission
      1. Trust in God in face of the inexplicable presence of evil [276]; radi­cal faith in the face of the divine mystery. [273] (Livingston 273, 276)
      2. Monotheistic theodicy # 4 is the norma­l monotheistic theodicy. (Livingston 276)
      3. Monotheistic theodicy # 4 is necessary because of natural evil. (Livingston 273)
      4. Example: given the won­drous mys­tery of the whole, vast creation, Job re­pents his lack of faith. (Livingston 276)
      5. Arabic *aslama* means “to submit.” [276] All is from God, both good and evil. (Livingston 276-77)
   6. *monotheistic theodicy # 5*: predestination
      1. Calvinism
         1. God predestines some to eternal life, others to eter­nal dam­na­tion. (Livingston 277)
         2. The will is so sinful that it cannot do anything good. (Livingston 277)
         3. God so creates us that we each freely choose the path God has pre­destined for us. (Livingston 277)
      2. disadvantages
         1. It leads to determinism and fa­talism. (Livingston 277)
         2. Why should God hold us responsible for predetermined out­comes?
         3. Like Islam, Calvin must finally ap­peal to monotheistic theodicy # 4. (Livingston 278)
         4. Cal­vin “so em­phasized the sovereignty of God as possibly to call into question God’s goodness and compassion.” (Livingston 279)

## SOCIAL JUSTICE IN THE WISDOM LITERATURE

1. **social justice in Psalms**
   1. Ps 14, “Fools say in their hearts, “There is no God.” They are corrupt, they do abominable deeds; there is no one who does good. 2The Lord looks down from heaven on humankind to see if there are any who are wise, who seek after God. 3They have all gone astray, they are all alike perverse; there is no one who does good, no, not one. 4Have they no knowledge, all the evildoers who eat up my people as they eat bread, and do not call upon the Lord? 5There they shall be in great terror, for God is with the company of the righteous. 6You would confound the plans of the poor, but the Lord is their refuge. 7O that deliverance for Israel would come from Zion! When the Lord restores the fortunes of his people, Jacob will rejoice; Israel will be glad.”
2. **social justice in Proverbs**
   1. Prov 11:4, “Riches do not profit in the day of wrath, but righteousness delivers from death.”
   2. Prov 11:25, “A generous person will be enriched, and one who gives water will get water.”
   3. Prov 11:26, “The people curse those who hold back grain, but a blessing is on the head of those who sell it.”
   4. Prov 13:23, “The field of the poor may yield much food, but it is swept away through injustice.”
   5. Prov 14:21, “Those who despise their neighbors are sinners, but happy are those who are kind to the poor.”
   6. Prov 14:31, “Those who oppress the poor insult their Maker, but those who are kind to the needy honor him.” See 17:5, “Those who mock the poor insult their Maker; those who are glad at calamity will not go unpunished.”
   7. Prov 15:27, “Those who are greedy for unjust gain make trouble for their households, but those who hate bribes will live.”
   8. Prov 16:8, “Better is a little with righteousness than large income with injustice.”
   9. Prov 16:19, “It is better to be of a lowly spirit among the poor than to divide the spoil with the proud.”
   10. Prov 18:23, “The poor use entreaties, but the rich answer roughly.”
   11. Prov 19:1, “Better the poor walking in integrity than one perverse of speech who is a fool.” See 19:22, “What is desirable in a person is loyalty, and it is better to be poor than a liar.” 28:6, “Better to be poor and walk in integrity than to be crooked in one’s ways even though rich.”
   12. Prov 19:4, “Wealth brings many friends, but the poor are left friendless.”
   13. Prov 19:7, “If the poor are hated even by their kin, how much more are they shunned by their friends! When they call after them, they are not there.”
   14. Prov 19:17, “Whoever is kind to the poor lends to the Lord, and will be repaid in full.”
   15. Prov 21:13, “If you close your ear to the cry of the poor, you will cry out and not be heard.”
   16. Prov 22:2, “The rich and the poor have this in common: the Lord is the maker of them all.” See 29:13, “The poor and the oppressor have this in common: the Lord gives light to the eyes of both.”
   17. Prov 22:9, “Those who are generous are blessed, for they share their bread with the poor.”
   18. Prov 22:16, “Oppressing the poor in order to enrich oneself, and giving to the rich, will lead only to loss.”
   19. Prov 22:22, “Do not rob the poor because they are poor, or crush the afflicted at the gate; 23for the Lord pleads their cause and despoils of life those who despoil them.”
   20. Prov 28:3, “A ruler who oppresses the poor is a beating rain that leaves no food.”
   21. Prov 28:8, “One who augments wealth by exorbitant interest gathers it for another who is kind to the poor.”
   22. Prov 28:11, “The rich is wise in self‑esteem, but an intelligent poor person sees through the pose.”
   23. Prov 28:15, “Like a roaring lion or a charging bear is a wicked ruler over a poor people.”
   24. Prov 28:27, “Whoever gives to the poor will lack nothing, but one who turns a blind eye will get many a curse.”
   25. Prov 29:7, “The righteous know the rights of the poor; the wicked have no such understanding.”
   26. Prov 29:14, “If a king judges the poor with equity, his throne will be established forever.”
   27. Prov 30:14, “There are those whose teeth are swords, whose teeth are knives, to devour the poor from off the earth, the needy from among mortals.”
   28. Prov 31:9, “Speak out, judge righteously, defend the rights of the poor and needy.”
   29. Prov 31:4, “It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine, or for rulers to desire strong drink; 5or else they will drink and forget what has been decreed, and will pervert the rights of all the afflicted. 6Give strong drink to one who is perishing, and wine to those in bitter distress; 7let them drink and forget their poverty, and remember their misery no more. 8Speak out for those who cannot speak, for the rights of all the destitute. 9Speak out, judge righteously, defend the rights of the poor and needy.”
3. **social justice in Sirach**
   1. Sir 4:1-10, “My child, do not cheat the poor of their living, and do not keep needy eyes waiting. 2Do not grieve the hungry, or anger one in need. 3Do not add to the troubles of the desperate, or delay giving to the needy. 4Do not reject a suppliant in distress, or turn your face away from the poor. 5Do not avert your eye from the needy, and give no one reason to curse you; 6for if in bitterness of soul some should curse you, their Creator will hear their prayer. 7Endear yourself to the congregation; bow your head low to the great. 8Give a hearing to the poor, and return their greeting politely. 9Rescue the oppressed from the oppressor; and do not be hesitant in giving a verdict. 10Be a father to orphans, and be like a husband to their mother; you will then be like a son of the Most High, and he will love you more than does your mother.”
   2. Sir 34:25-27, ““The bread of the needy is the life of the poor; whoever deprives them of it is a murderer. 26To take away a neighbor’s living is to commit murder; 27to deprive an employee of wages is to shed blood.”
   3. Sir 35:14-26, ““Do not offer him a bribe, for he will not accept it; 15and do not rely on a dishonest sacrifice; for the Lord is the judge, and with him there is no partiality. 16He will not show partiality to the poor; but he will listen to the prayer of one who is wronged. 17He will not ignore the supplication of the orphan, or the widow when she pours out her complaint. 18Do not the tears of the widow run down her cheek 19as she cries out against the one who causes them to fall? 20The one whose service is pleasing to the Lord will be accepted, and his prayer will reach to the clouds. 21The prayer of the humble pierces the clouds, and it will not rest until it reaches its goal; it will not desist until the Most High responds 22and does justice for the righteous, and executes judgment. Indeed, the Lord will not delay, and like a warrior will not be patient until he crushes the loins of the unmerciful 23and repays vengeance on the nations; until he destroys the multitude of the insolent, and breaks the scepters of the unrighteous; 24until he repays mortals according to their deeds, and the works of all according to their thoughts; 25until he judges the case of his people and makes them rejoice in his mercy. 26His mercy is as welcome in time of distress as clouds of rain in time of drought.”

## SOCIAL JUSTICE IN THE PROPHETS

Rankin, O. S. *Israel*’*s Wisdom Literature*: *Its Bearing on Theology and the History of Religion*. New York: Schocken, 1936. Professor of OT, U of Edinburgh.

1. **conservatism**: “The prophets’ message concerning society was not evolutionist or reformist but revolu­tion­ary. *They were social revolutionaries because they were religious conserva­tives*, seeking to revive the essential ethics and social creativity of historic Yahwism.” [185] “In relation to the central religious tradition of their people they are radically conserva­tive.” (Scott, *Re­le­vance* 185, 59)
2. **influences on the prophets**
   1. “We may assume that the strong individualistic interest of the wisdom-schools did have effect upon the prophetic preaching of social justice . . .” (Rankin 71)
3. **justice and righteousness**
   1. **justice** (***mishpaṭ***): According to the prophets, “society [must] be so ordered as to make possible and to support a way of life which is *good* in the eyes of Yahweh. This good and right way of life is the *mishpaṭ*, of which Amos says: Hate evil, but love good and establish justice (*mishpaṭ*) . . .” (Scott, *Re­le­vance* 171) (But *mishpaṭ* seems to have another meaning, for Scott writes at another point, “The tradition of Moses was in their [the priests’] keeping, and the *mishpaṭ*, or code, of the commu­ni­ty . . .” [Scott, *Relevance* 178])
   2. **righteousness** (***sedāqâh***)
      1. “The foundations upon which the economic and political structure must be reared are ethical and religious—a *right-ness* of human relationships by Yahweh’s standards, and the depend­able *justice* which maintains this norm in social life.” (Scott, *Relevance* 180)
      2. “They assessed economic and social situations by their effect on the essential being of man, in his personal relationships with other men and with God.” [217] “They concerned themselves with political and economic issues because of their human consequences.” (Scott, *Relevance* 217, 233)
4. **political justice**
   1. “It was through the experience of men like Hosea and Jeremiah that there came into our tradition knowledge of the inner freedom of spirit, which creates the demand for civil and religious liberties.” (Scott, *Relevance* 237)
   2. “As a matter of historical record, Christianity has contributed much to the develop­ment of the democratic idea and its institutions. Its [Christianity’s] doctrines of the equality of all men before God, of human brotherhood, of the emancipating power of the Gospel, of the subordina­tion of all earthly authorities to God and his righteous­ness, and of property as held in trust—have given ever fresh impulses to the demo­cratic movement. Much of this came into Christianity from the Hebrew prophets [235] . . ., through the intermin­gling of the Hebrew-Christian and classical traditions.” (Scott, *Relevance* 235-36)
5. **economic justice**
   1. “The principal mainspring of economic activity cannot rightly be self-interest, if the supreme commandments are that man should love God with his whole being and his neighbor as himself.” [233] See also the discussion of Canaanite religion’s influence on Israel’s social order. [22] (Scott, *Relevance* 22, 233)
   2. “But as Jesus said of the man who thought he had found security in bigger barns, life has no final security at all apart from God. “Blessed is the man whose *confidence* is Yahweh” [Jer 17:7] . . .” (Scott, *Relevance* 234)
   3. In modern states “universal political rights are largely nullified by economic inequal­ity.” (Scott, *Relevance* 235)
6. **persons denounced**
   1. **leaders**
      1. “The weight of denunciation falls upon the chief beneficiaries of the existing system: the king and those who exercise authority; fat priests, greedy profes­sional prophets and parasitic “wise men”; those who live in luxury heedless of the destitute at their door, heartless creditors, sumptuous householers, greedy land-owners.” See Isa 3:1-3, 13-15; Hos 4:4-6, 5:1; Amos 4:1, 6:1-7; Mic 3:5-6, 11. (Scott, *Relevance* 181)
      2. “The very suggestion of change is resented by the beneficiaries of an estab­lished social order, just as the exposure and rebuke of sin is resented by sinners.” (Scott, *Re­levance* 207)
      3. “On the political side, the ethics of Yahwism would invest with authority rulers who are instruments of social justice, and who “maintain the right” in the commu­nity of their neighbors. As Jesus long afterwards expressed it: “The so-called rulers of the nations dominate them, and their great men tyrannize over them; but it is not to be so among you” [Mark 10:42-43].” (Scott, *Relevance* 189)
   2. **commoners**
      1. “The prophets’ language is often such as would arouse resentment among the powerful, and class-feeling among the victims of injustice and exploitation.” (Scott, *Relevance* 186)
      2. Yahweh “is the Great Ally of the wronged and dispos­sessed [Isa 3:15].” (Scott, *Relevance* 185)
      3. “But with anger against the oppressors and pity for the victims the prophets combine rebuke of popular apathy and degeneracy.” See Isa 1:10, 9:16; Hos 4:9. (Scott, *Relevance* 182)
7. **God’s creation of social justice in history**
   1. Yahweh’s ultimate “purpose is to create *communi­ty*, an order of relation­ships with and among men in which his righteous­ness can find fulfilment.” [185-86] “Thus, in the light of their essentially theological view of Israel’s history, the prophets hold that the nation is constitut­ed not by its political structure centered in the king, his judges and officials, his army and his laws; nor by the official cult with its priest­hood; nor yet by its economic organiza­tion and institutions. The nation is the people, constituted as such by the covenant and characterized by the social ethic “written in” to the cove­nant.” (Scott, *Relevance* 185-86, 190)
   2. “. . . God is at work in history to create for himself a people in whose hearts are his laws. Particular forms of society and govern­ment will prosper or perish according as they embody justice and right, sustain personal dignity and foster personal freedom and true community among men.” [138] “Yahweh him­self, they declared, is in the struggle for social justice.” (Scott, *Relevance* 138, 185)
8. **universalism**
   1. The prophets’ enunciated “man’s social responsibility before God—a respon­si­bility not only to the neighbor next door but to *all* his neighbors . . .” (Scott, *Relevance* 219)
   2. “. . . writers of books like Ruth and Jonah and certain of the Psalms were con­strained to protest a new rigidity and exclusiveness in the name of a universal, prophetic faith.” See Ruth 1:4, 4:13-17; Jonah 4:11; Ps 51:15-17. (Scott, *Relevance* 194)
9. **present relevance of the prophets’ social-justice teaching**
   1. “To read the prophetic books is to feel [237] . . . that social and economic justice, within and between nations, *is* the concern of religion, and every man *is* his brother’s keeper.” (Scott, *Relevance* 237-238)
   2. “Among the vast majority of our people there is little concern for, and less agreement on, the really important issues which should determine social policy: what life is for, and what are its abiding satisfactions; the priority of values; the proper motivating force of economic activity; the moral basis of civil rights and duties . . .” (Scott, *Relevance* 232)
   3. They [the prophets] knew that man is made for the shared life of community. Their intuitive appre­hension of truth still commands the assent of the religious mind . . .” (Scott, *Re­levance* 217)
   4. “But it is easier to see in a general way that the prophets are relevant to our modern social problems than it is to be more specific.” (Scott, *Relevance* 237)

## CRITICISMS OF SACRIFICE

Rankin, O.S. *Israel’s Wisdom Literature*: *Its Bearing on Theology and the History of Religion*. New York: Schocken, 1936.

1. **introduction**
   1. Before the prophets, religion was for the most part thought of as “the working re­lation­ship (through function­aries) of a people to its god. The prophets sought to transform this cor­por­ate religion . . .” (Scott, *Relevance* 222)
   2. “We have the prophets to thank for the great insight that religion is not a specialized activity of man’s life, but a quality and attitude in all his activities, a total way of living governed by the orientation of his spirit toward God. This total response demands, indeed, the spe­cialized activities of prayer and worship, but it is not to be equated with them, still less with their conventional forms.” (Scott, *Relevance* 221)
   3. “Religion is not a species of “religious” behavior independent of the moral life. It is not to be equated with a cult of ritual and sacrifice operated by a priesthood on behalf of the community, and expected to influence the deity in man’s favor in proportion to the effort and expense involved.” [208] “. . . religion is not to be equated with its operative mecha­nism and estab­lished organi­zation, with a particu­lar formulation of its theology or of its moral code, nor yet with the historic culture with which it has come to be associated.” [220] Isaiah “rejects not only sacrifices but *prayers* by men [214] who will not cease to do evil.” (Scott, *Relevance* 208, 214-15, 220)
   4. “. . . religion nevertheless requires some form of corporate expression in cult worship, pleasing to God because it genuinely serves the ends of religion in social life.” (Scott, *Relevance* 220)
      1. Micah 6:6-8, “7 Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams? . . . 8 what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?”)
      2. Micah 6:6-8 is “The most famous passage in the Book of Micah . . . the point of the passage is missed if it is taken as obviating the need for assembling to worship God. It declares that *this*, not the other, is the sacrifice which one must have to offer, *when* he comes before Yahweh and bows himself before the Most High God.” (Scott, *Relevance* 214)
   5. “. . . conflict is eventually inevitable between religious institutions that are by nature conserva­tive, and prophetic spirits alive to the demands of religion for a present that is always new. For religious like other institutions tend to develop a vested interest in their own survival, and this may oppose the very purpose of which they are meant to be the instruments.” (Scott, *Relevance* 220)
   6. “The classical prophets [except Ezekiel, and this makes him different from earlier proph­ets] lay down no requirements as to the *forms* of worship . . . The offering which God requires is a life just, merciful and humble before him. Worship, to be acceptable, must be the token and occasion of such an offering.” (Scott, *Relevance* 221)
2. **criticisms of sacrifice in the prophets**
   1. “. . . the value which the wise placed upon right conduct and possibly their mild criticism of the cult are reflected in the prophetic polemic against the religion of ceremony.” (Rankin 71)
   2. 1 Sam 15:22, “Samuel said [to Saul], “Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Surely, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams.”
   3. Micah 6:7-8, “Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams? . . . 8what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?”
3. **criticisms of sacrifice in the wisdom literature**
   1. the *Instruction for King Merikare* (lines 128-29, *ANET* 417): “More acceptable is one upright of heart than the ox of the evildoer.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 164)
   2. Prov 15:8, “The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord, but the prayer of the upright is his delight.”
   3. Prov 21:3, “To do righteousness and justice is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice.”
   4. Prov 21:27, “The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination; how much more when brought with evil intent.”
   5. Sir 34:21-24, “If one sacrifices ill-gotten goods, the offering is blemished; 22the gifts of the lawless are not acceptable. 23The Most High is not pleased with the offerings of the ungodly, nor for a multitude of sacrifices does he forgive sins. 24Like one who kills a son before his father’s eyes is the person who offers a sacrifice from the property of the poor.”

## BODY AND SOUL, AND IMMORTALITY

## IN THE BOOK OF WISDOM

1. **dust and breath**
   1. “. . . the traditional Hebrew [combination was] life breath, or spirit, and material dust . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 86)
   2. Qoh 12:7, “the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the breath returns to God who gave it.”
   3. Sir 17:27-32, “Who will sing praises to the Most High in Hades in place of the living who give thanks? 28From the dead, as from one who does not exist, thanksgiving has ceased; those who are alive and well sing the Lord’s praises. 29How great is the mercy of the Lord, and his forgiveness for those who return to him! 30For not everything is within human capability, since human beings are not immortal. 31What is brighter than the sun? Yet it can be eclipsed. So flesh and blood devise evil. 32He marshals the host of the height of heaven; but all human beings are dust and ashes.”
2. **immortality in the Old Testament outside the wisdom literature**
   1. “. . . few [statements] in the Old Testament . . . refer to immortality . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 86)
   2. Dan 12:1-3, “At that time Michael, the great prince, the protector of your people, shall arise. There shall be a time of anguish, such as has never occurred since nations first came into existence. But at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone who is found written in the book. 2Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. 3Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.”

the Book of Wisdom

1. “**life**”
   1. “This manner of thought [Wisdom’s emphasis on immortality] is also consonant with the sages’ accent on life. [See the handout, “‘Life.’”] According to Proverbs, life is the goal of the wisdom enterprise (Prov 8:35). Wisdom is a “tree of life” (3:18), not merely in the sense of “length of days” (although the sages’ teaching provided this also—cf. Prov 3:2), but qualitatively, the *kind* of life that came to the wise person: “favor and good esteem” (3:4), “honor” (3:35). This was, however, limited by the reality of Sheol, the inevitability of death; in the Book of Wisdom now the grip of death is broken by a deeper vision of the life that wisdom brings.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 87)
2. **Greek dualism**
   1. “One might have expected that the writer would have utilized the Greek notion of the natural immortality of the spiritual soul. No doubt he was aware of Greek conceptions of the soul [*psyche*] . . .” He is aware of the Greek dualism of soul and body. (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 86)
      1. Wis 1:4, “wisdom will not enter a deceitful soul, or dwell in a body enslaved to sin.”

Here humans are “designated as body/soul . . ., a Greek combination . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 86)

* + 1. Wis 9:15, “a perishable body weighs down the soul, and this earthy tent burdens the thoughtful mind.”

1. **Wis 1:15**
   1. Wis 1:15, “For righteousness is immortal.”
   2. Murphy translates, “justice [*dikaiosynē*] is undying [*athanatos*].” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 86)
   3. “The statement is electric. . . . [It refers to immortality] in a unique way. . . . he adopts a typically biblical approach. Immortality is not rooted in the human makeup, but in one’s relationship to God. Justice or righteousness is a relationship, not a human achievement: “Abraham put his faith in the Lord, who credited it to him as an act of righteousness” (Gen 15:6).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 86)
      1. nrsv of Gen 15:6: Abraham “believed the Lord; and the Lord reckoned it to him as righteousness.”
      2. “The same idea is reflected in Ps 73:23-24 . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 86) nrsv of Ps 73:23-24: “I am continually with you; you hold my right hand. 24You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will receive me with honor [nab: “in glory”].”
   4. “Admittedly, this relationship could be broken by human choice. But on the part of God, it was a situation that would be honored beyond death for those who remained faithful.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 86)
   5. “The long, dark night of Sheol, which cast its shadows across the pages of the Bible, was ended, for the just.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 86)
2. **the fate of the wicked**
   1. Skehan, P. *Studies in Israelite Poetry and Wisdom*. CBQMS 1. Washington: Catholic Biblical Association, 1971. 213-36 (a “careful discussion of Wis 2:1-11”). (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 95 n. 9)
   2. “What about the wicked? The book does not tell us much about their fate. Dire things are said about them in 4:19 [“he will dash them speechless to the ground, and shake them from the foundations; they will be left utterly dry and barren, and they will suffer anguish, and the memory of them will perish”], and their judgment is recorded in 5:1ff. [Wis 5:1-14, “Then the righteous will stand with great confidence in the presence of those who have oppressed them . . . 2When the unrighteous see them, . . . they will be amazed at the unexpected salvation of the righteous. . . . 13So we also, as soon as we were born, ceased to be . . .” 14Because the hope of the ungodly . . . is dispersed like smoke before the wind, and it passes like the remembrance of a guest who stays but a day.”] But there is no breath of immortality here. It appears as if immortality is so positive a concept (life with God before and beyond death) that the wicked are considered not to live on in any real sense. The author is not greatly interested in their fate, since they have simply failed. They have made a “covenant” with Death (1:16; obviously death is more than physical demise here), which they experience because they belong to the devil’s “lot” (*meris*, 2:24).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 86)
   3. “The description of the wicked in chap. 2 of the book (and their remorse in 5:1-13) serve as a foil for the doctrine of immortality. These are the people who have no future, whose memory will perish (Wis 4:19).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 87)
   4. “It is difficult to identify the particular Greek philosophies that lie behind their materialism and hedonism in 2:1-9 (but the author probably does not have Qoheleth in mind, as some have asserted). . . . The malice of the wicked is more clear than their identity (hostile Hellenists? renegade Jews?).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 87)
   5. Wis 2:10-20
      1. Wis 2:10-20, “Let us oppress the righteous poor man; let us not spare the widow or regard the gray hairs of the aged. 11But let our might be our law of right, for what is weak proves itself to be useless. 12Let us lie in wait for the righteous man, because he is inconvenient to us and opposes our actions; he reproaches us for sins against the law, and accuses us of sins against our training. 13He professes to have knowledge of God, and calls himself a child of the Lord. 14He became to us a reproof of our thoughts; 15the very sight of him is a burden to us, because his manner of life is unlike that of others, and his ways are strange. 16We are considered by him as something base, and he avoids our ways as unclean; he calls the last end of the righteous happy, and boasts that God is his father. 17Let us see if his words are true, and let us test what will happen at the end of his life; 18for if the righteous man is God’s child, he will help him, and will deliver him from the hand of his adversaries. 19Let us test him with insult and torture, so that we may find out how gentle he is, and make trial of his forbearance. 20Let us condemn him to a shameful death, for, according to what he says, he will be protected.”
      2. Larcher, C. *Le Livre de la Sagesse ou La Sagesse de Salomon*. EBib. Paris: Gabalda, 1983-85. 1.258-63 (“history of the exegesis of this passage”). (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 95 n. 10)
      3. “These verses seem to be a model followed by the passion narratives of the Gospels.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 87, 95 n. 10)
   6. “Chapter 5 is the counterpoint to chap. 2. In chap. 2 the wicked had given full vent to their own philosophy and hatred of the just person. Now in chap. 5 they are filled with remorse and overcome by their folly; [it is] a striking judgment scene . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 87)
3. **Wis 3:1-12**
   1. The wicked “provide the author with the contrast to the just, which he develops in 3:1-12. The just are with God. Yes, they were tried, but they showed they were worthy of God.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 87)
   2. “The explanation of the trials of the just leads into the problem of childlessness, which would normally be considered a tragedy, even a punishment, in the ancient world (“Better is childlessness with virtue,” 4:1).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 87)
   3. “Similarly, the premature death of the just is a mystery that the wicked cannot understand (4:17). But in fact, honorable age does not mean mere passing of time or years. The sage explains that premature death is due to God’s love (4:10-14).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 87)
4. **Wis 3:2-9**
   1. Wis 3:2-9, “In the eyes of the foolish they seemed to have died, . . . 3but they are at peace. . . . 4their hope is full of immortality. . . . 8the Lord will reign over them forever . . . 9the faithful will abide with him in love . . .”
   2. “In contrast to the wicked, whose “lot” (*meris*) is with the devil, the “portion” (*kleros*) of the just is with the holy ones, the “sons of [86] God” (5:5), who constitute the divine family.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 86-87)
   3. “No reference is made to the resurrection of the body. The author was interested not in the mode but in the meaning of immortality—to be with God permanently.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 87)
5. **Wis 5**
   1. “Blessed immortality had been described in 3:9 in terms of the abstract words “love,” “grace,” and “mercy.” Now it is presented concretely: one is a member of the divine family; one’s lot is “with the holy ones” (5:5).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 87)
6. **Wis 8:19-20**
   1. Wis 8:19-20, “As a child I was naturally gifted, and a good soul fell to my lot; 20or rather, being good, I entered an undefiled body.”
   2. “Verses 19-20 have been interpreted to indicate a belief in the Platonic preexistence of the soul: having a good soul, Solomon came to an unsullied body. This idea seems remote from the text. Pseudo-Solomon nowhere else gives any evidence of such a belief, and here he is explaining his noble nature by emphasizing the soul—as it were, the “ego”—which is united to the body. The point is that his noble nature does not suffice for him to be wise; for the gift of Wisdom he must pray to the Lord.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 89)
7. **Wis 9:15**
   1. Wis 9:15, “for a perishable body weighs down the soul, and this earthy tent burdens the thoughtful mind.”
   2. Wis 9:13-18 “moves off from Solomon’s immediate concern to contemplate the human condition. Our thoughts are simply remote from the divine plans, and we are worn down by our own physical weakness (v 15, a reminiscence of the Platonic notion of soul and body—in the sense of physical weakness, not the impurity, of the body).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 89)
8. **conclusion**
   1. “Whereas a blessed immortality after death was not within the purview of older wisdom, it is now proclaimed with vigor, and in a vein explored but never exploited by traditional wisdom. The sages had always taught that wisdom secured life, and now this is pressed to the full—to life that is undying, incorruptible, eternal (Wis 1:15; 2:23; 5:15). The “heavenly court” that played a large role in Hebrew thought (Ps 29; Job 1:7; etc.) now is seen as a goal, a group to whose ranks one might aspire (Wis 5:5).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 94)
   2. “Whereas a blessed immortality after death was not within the purview of older wisdom, it is now proclaimed with vigor, and in a vein explored but never exploited by traditional wisdom. The sages had always taught that wisdom secured life, and now this is pressed to the full—to life that is undying, incorruptible, eternal (Wis 1:15; 2:23; 5:15). The “heavenly court” that played a large role in Hebrew thought (Ps 29; Job 1:7; etc.) now is seen as a goal, a group to whose ranks one might aspire (Wis 5:5).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 94)

## THE WISDOM LITERATURE AND NON-CHRISTIAN RELIGIONS

1. “Wisdom literature provides a biblical model for understanding divine revelation apart from the historical mode (salvation history) in which it is usually cast. . . . the dialogue with divinity [took] place essentially via human experience and creation. . . . [Here] the Israelite encountered the Lord in a vital faith relationship that is as valid as the liturgical experience in the Temple, or the Exodus event itself.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 126)
2. “What does this model suggest for nonbiblical religions and their clients who have never heard of *yhwh* or Christ? It points to a faith response that is not explicitly related to a particular historical revelation of God. Israel learned of her Lord also through experience and through creation. This is saving faith, even if it is not centered on the promises or the Exodus. Moreover, the openness of Israelite wisdom to the wisdom of Israel’s neighbors—the clearly international character of the wisdom movement, the actual borrowings from Egyptian wisdom, the controlling references to creatures and creation—provides a biblical basis for the possibility that the non-Israelite can also respond in saving faith to the creator, who is the God revealed in Israelite and Christian experience.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 126)
3. “This theological position does not take a particular stand on truth or falsehood, or on the superiority or inferiority of any belief. It is not the theoretical expression of belief that is at the heart of the matter; rather, it is the dialogical relationship with God in which a faith response occurs, through God’s free and gracious communication. Neither does this view derogate from the centrality of Jesus Christ in the Christian understanding of the redemptive plan of God. One can still theologically affirm universal redemption through Christ. It is his redemptive, sacrificial life that makes possible and fruitful the faith engendered in the wisdom encounter. The understanding of biblical faith as reflected in the wisdom literature is a profitable insight into a relatively new (or newly appreciated) situation in a non-Christian world where God’s relationship to millions of his children is at issue.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 126)

# ANCIENT NEAR EASTERN

# WISDOM LITERATURE

ANCIENT NEAR-EASTERN WISDOM LITERATURE:

## INTRODUCTION

1. A “reason for separate treatment [of nonbiblical wisdom literature] is that both Mesopotamian and Egyptian literature deserve special attention for their own sake. They should be seen as wholes and not as mere appendages to some related ideas in the Bible.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 151)
2. “We want to see the broad picture, to establish some relationships, without necessarily claiming dependence of one upon the other. One may readily grant dependence in the specific case of Prov [22:17-24:22] and the wisdom of Amenemope. But the broader issue is to situate Israelite wisdom in its historical milieu.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 175)
3. “. . . “wisdom literature” in the ancient Near East . . . refers to common topics and often common literary forms (sayings, admonitions, etc.). Precisely because of the humanistic concerns of wisdom literature, it is to be expected that “parallels” with the Bible will appear. Riches and poverty, justice and wickedness, speech and silence, relationships between individuals and the community, relationships between the sexes—these are the common coin of human existence, and similarities are not surprising.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 151)
4. “The following sketch is limited to the pertinent texts of Mesopotamia and Egypt, concentrating on themes that are important for the background of biblical wisdom.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 152)
5. “Greek and Hellenistic documents are too diffuse and not easily available for comparison. Hence three books (Ecclesiastes, Sirach, Wisdom) will be only briefly discussed against the general background of Hellenism.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 152)

## EGYPTIAN WISDOM LITERATURE

1. **primary sources** (anthologies of English translations)
   1. Lichtheim, Miriam. *Ancient Egyptian Literature*. 3 vols. Berkeley: U of California P, 1975-80. (= *AEL*)
   2. Pritchard, James B., ed. *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*. 1950. 3rd ed. with supplement. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1978. (= *ANET*)
   3. Simpson, W. K., ed. *The Literature of Ancient Egypt*. 2nd ed. New Haven: Yale UP, 1973. (= *LAE*)
2. **secondary literature**
   1. Brunner, H. “Zentralbegriffe ägyptischer und israelitischer Weisheitslehren.” *Saeculum* 35 (1984): 185-99.
   2. Fox, Michael V. “Two Decades of Research in Egyptian Wisdom Literature.” *Zeitschrift für ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde* 107 (1980) 120-35.
   3. *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 101.1 (1981) “contains valuable summaries (with extensive bibliographies) of Hebrew, Egyptian, and Mesopotamian wisdom by Roland E. Murphy, R. J. Williams, and G. Buccellati.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 152)
   4. McKane, W. *Proverbs*. Old Testament Library. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1970. “. . . provides a summary introduction to “international wisdom,” pp. 51-208.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 152)
3. **introduction**
   1. “Since the publication of the Instruction of Amenemope by Sir E. A. Wallis Budge in 1923, it has become usual among Egyptologists to speak of Egyptian “wisdom literature,” adopting the term from biblical studies.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 159)
      1. “The “Egyptian connection” of Israelite wisdom first came to light with the publication of the Instruction of *Amenemope* in 1922. The ensuing studies established an indubitable relationship in favor of the dependence of the Hebrew upon the Egyptian sage.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 23)
      2. “The most recent history of the question can be found in G. Bryce, *A Legacy of Wisdom* (Lewisburg: Bucknell, 1979).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 31 n. 23)
   2. “But the term [“wisdom literature” for Egyptian works] is used broadly, since it embraces not only the ancient instructions but also laments, and even writings of political propaganda. Almost all the progress made in this area has occurred in the twentieth century. Particularly pertinent are the many texts of instructions or teachings (*Sebayit*) . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 159)
   3. similarities between Proverbs and Egyptian wisdom literature
      1. “In both there is reliance upon experience and tradition.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 175)
      2. “my son”
      3. “hear!”
      4. “. . . discipline—control as opposed to lack of control, the “silent” one as opposed to the rash or “heated” person . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 175)
      5. “. . . virtues shared in common: speaking well; table manners; diligence; honesty; one’s attitude toward the divinity . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 175)
4. **introduction to the instructions**
   1. “The Egyptian word *Sebayit* is not an indication of literary genre; it occurs as a heading for various types of literature (didactic treatise, tomb autobiography, etc.), and it designates the purpose, to instruct.” (See: Williams, R. J. “The Sages of Ancient Egypt in the Light of Recent Scholarship.” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 101-1 (1981): 7.) (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 160)
   2. “About a dozen extant works are usually considered to be “instruction,” and many more are known only by title.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 160)
   3. form of the *Sebayit*
      1. Brunner, H. “Die Lehren.” *Handbuch der Orientalistik*, ed. H. Spuler. Leiden: Brill, 1970. 1st Abt., I/II, 113-39.
      2. Kitchen, K. A. “Egypt and Israel During the First Millennium b.c.” *Congress Volume Jerusalem 1986*. VTSup 40. Leiden: Brill, 1988. 107-23 (esp. 119ff.).
      3. title
         1. “First, there is usually a title, often phrased as “the beginning of the instruction,” with identification of the writer by name (only a few of the instructions are anonymous). . . . The title usually describes the teaching that X has composed for his son (i.e., student) Y.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 160)
         2. “Some scholars [Miriam Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature* 1.6-7] are inclined to regard many of these indications as untrustworthy; we are really dealing with pseudepigrapha.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 160)
      4. introduction or prologue
         1. “Second, often an introduction or prologue explains the purpose of the work.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 160)
            1. Amenemope: “The beginning of the teaching of life, the testimony for prosperity, all precepts for intercourse with elders, the rules for courtiers, to know how to return an answer to him who said it, and to direct a report to one who has sent him, in order to direct him to the ways of life, to make him prosper on the earth . . .”” (*ANET* 421, *AEL* 2.148, *LAE* 242)] (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 160)
            2. Prov 1:1-6, “The proverbs of Solomon son of David, king of Israel: 2For learning about wisdom and instruction, for understanding words of insight, 3for gaining instruction in wise dealing, righteousness, justice, and equity; 4to teach shrewdness to the simple, knowledge and prudence to the young—5Let the wise also hear and gain in learning, and the discerning acquire skill, 6to understand a proverb and a figure, the words of the wise and their riddles.”
            3. Prov 22:21, “Have I not written for you thirty sayings of admonition and knowledge, 21to show you what is right and true, so that you may give a true answer to those who sent you?”
      5. body
         1. “In style, the body of the instruction consists of admonitions or imperatives, and it resembles the wisdom poems in Prov 1-9, in contrast to the discrete sayings in Prov 10ff. The instruction develops a theme in a logical and consecutive way; some sayings will appear, but they are integrated into a larger whole.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 160)
         2. “It is only when one arrives at the late demotic works (Ankhshe­shonq or Papyrus Insinger; see later) that short one-line sayings become the vehicle for the instruction.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 160)
         3. “The *Sebayit* is marked by plays on words, parallelism, and certain admonitions . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 160)
   4. themes of the *Sebayit*
      1. “. . . a certain class ethic appears that is relatively absent from the Bible: an emphasis on training courtiers. Moreover, tradition plays an important role: the teaching has been handed down and is now given to the student. Tradition is not absent in the Old Testament wisdom books, but experience is much more to the fore. It is difficult to speculate about the oral tradition that may be behind the Egyptian treatises. The extant works are very much the product of the writing exercises in the scribal schools, where they were copied in successive generations.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 160)
      2. The admonitions “will ensure the “way” (as also in the Book of Proverbs, a common term) of life: self-control (appetite, tongue), kindness, proper attitude toward riches and poverty, honesty, and other typical values.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 160)
      3. “The admonitions frequently have a motive clause (as also in Hebrew admonitions) designed to persuade the student. Very often these clauses will strike the modern reader as merely oriented to personal profit. Many [160] scholars scored this self-serving type of ethic as “eudaemonism.” However, others have rightly pointed to the religious thrust of this “reward” ethic. By following the teaching, the student is obeying and also establishing the *ma`at* (“justice,” “order”), which is ordained by the divinity.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 160-61)
      4. *ma`at*
         1. “The literature on *ma`at* is enormous.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 177 n. 12)
         2. Helck, W. “Maat.” *Lexikon der Ägyptologie*, ed. W. Helck et al. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1980. 3.1110-19.
         3. Volten, A. “Der Begriff der Maat in den ägyptischen Weisheitstexten.” *Les Sagesses du proche-orient ancient*, ed. J. Leclant. Paris: Presses universitaires, 1963. 73-101.
         4. “A classical description of *ma`at* is given by Ptah-hotep (*ANET*, 412; *AEL*, II, 64; *LAE*, 162): “Justice is great, and its appropriateness is lasting; it has not been disturbed since the time of him who made it. . . . It is the (right) path before him who knows nothing. . . . The strength of justice is that it lasts.”” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 161)
         5. “*Ma`at*, and not wisdom (*rh*??there is a “u” under the “h”*w*), is recognized as the keystone of Egyptian didactic teaching. If humans abide by this divinely established order, everything will turn out well.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 161)
         6. “*Ma`at* was divinized as a goddess, daughter of the sun-god, and the necessary guide for the reigning monarch.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 161)
         7. In the *Eloquent Peasant* “the peasant describes *ma`at* (“justice”) in these words: “For justice is for eternity: / It enters the graveyard with its doer. / When he is buried and earth enfolds him, / His name does not pass from the earth; / He is remembered because of goodness, / That is the rule of god’s command.”” (*AEL* 1.181, 8th petition) (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 161)
         8. “The role of *ma`at* is portrayed in a papyrus drawing in which the god Anubis leads the deceased toward a scale in a judgment scene. [Pritchard, James B., ed. *The Ancient Near East in Pictures Relating to the Old Testament*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1964. 210 and 326, # 639.] One side of the balance carries an image of *ma`at*. This is weighed against the heart of the deceased to determine the judgment. A life lived according to *ma`at* weighs only a feather (a symbol of truth, which *ma`at* carries on her head in her images [e.g., Pritchard, *Ancient Near East in Pictures* 188, 317, # 561]). But a wicked life will pull the scale the other way.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 161)
      5. *ma`at* and the wisdom literature
         1. “Is the Israelite understanding of wisdom to be identified with the Egyptian mind-set concerning *ma`at*? . . . many scholars have adopted this view: a kind of “ma`atizing” of biblical wisdom has taken place.” (Murphy, Roland E. “Religious Dimensions of Israelite Wisdom.” *Ancient Israelite Religion: Essays in Honor of Frank Moore Cross*, ed. P. Miller et al. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987. 449-58.) Such an interpretation is very tempting . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 161)
         2. proofs
            1. “. . . Israel was influenced by Egyptian wisdom”—e.g., Amenemope and Prov 22:17-24:22. (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 161)
            2. “The Egyptian ideal was that of the strong, silent man who has self-control. He has achieved harmonious integration with the divine order and is master of any situation. He is described more by contrast with the “heated man,” the rash and impetuous person who constantly brings trouble upon himself and others. This contrast, which is very frequent in Amenemope, is found also in Proverbs (15:18, “A hot-tempered man stirs up strife, but a patient man allays discord”; cf. 14:17, 29; 22:24-25; 29:22).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 162)
            3. “In both cultures, the right “way,” similar values, and an emphasis on the good “life” are cultivated.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 161)
            4. “And this is to be transmitted by teaching.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 161)
            5. “There seems to be reason to claim that the figure of *ma`at* had some influence on the description of Wisdom in Prov 1-9. Christa Kayatz has pointed out a number of ideas held in common between Egypt and Israel.” (Kayatz, Christa. *Studien zu Proverbien 1-9*. WMANT 22. Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1966. 86-119.) (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 161)

“The “I-style” of speech is perhaps not striking, because frequently the Lord speaks in the first person throughout the Old Testament (especially in the [161] Prophets). But within the wisdom literature, it is Lady Wisdom who speaks thus, in Prov 1, 8, 9, and with a certain divine accent . . . In both Israel and Egypt there is self-predication [Isa 42:8, “I am the Lord, that is my name; my glory I give to no other”]. . . . *ma`at* gives no such speeches; she is rather talked about, not talking, in the Egyptian literature. However, other divinities, such as Isis, deliver addresses that are comparable to those of Lady Wisdom, because they consist of a summons, a promise (such as life), and a self-description or self-recommendation.” (Kayatz, *Studien zu Proverbien 1-9* 86-92.) (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 161-62)

“The association of Wisdom and royalty is clear in Prov 8:15-16 (“By me kings reign . . .” and cf. the figure of Solomon). In a similar way, *ma`at* is the foundation of royal rule in Egypt, and the “beloved of Re.”” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 162)

“Life is the gift of Wisdom (Prov 1:33; 3:16, 18; 8:35). Similarly, *ma`at* is life, the giver of life, as shown by representations of her: holding the *ankh* sign, the symbol of life, in one hand, and a scepter, symbol of power, in the other. These symbols are found with divine kings and other divinities, as well as with the goddess *ma`at*.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 162)

“An excellent drawing of the goddess *ma`at* is found in Kayatz, *Studien zu Proverbien 1-9*, opposite 105. See also the many representations in O. Keel, *Die Weisheit spielt vor Gott* (Fribourg: Universitätsverlag, 1974), beginning with figure 20; note the insignia of *ma`at* around the necks of officials in figures 23, 24. Even in a crowd, *ma`at* is always recognizable by the feather.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 177 n. 18)

“In Prov 6:21 (cf. 1:9) the student is ordered to bind the teaching of his parents about his neck, over the heart. In 1:9 this teaching is called a necklace and in 3:22, a grace. Similarly, high officials in the Egyptian court would wear an amulet of *ma`at* about the neck.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 162)

“Finally, the reciprocity formula for love (Prov 8:17, “I love those who love me”) is found in several Egyptian scarabs.” (“See Kayatz, *Studien zu Proverbien 1-9*, 98-102 for the evidence.” [177 n. 19]) (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 162, 177 n. 19)

* + - * 1. “The study of Kayatz surely suggests that there are common themes associated with *ma`at* and Hebrew wisdom, and the probability is in favor of Egyptian influence. Whether the adoption of these motifs can serve to date Prov 1-9 to the so-called Solomonic “enlightenment,” when Israel seemed to turn to Egyptian style and culture, is debatable, since the same motifs could have been as readily operative in the postexilic period. But the use of the motifs associated with *ma`at*, and thus evidence of the influence of Egyptian wisdom, seems most tangible in Prov 1-9.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 162)
      1. “But the transfer of a mind-set from one culture to another calls for careful scrutiny.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 161)
      2. the Egyptian “god”
         1. “Although Egypt was a land of many gods, only a general reference to “god” (*ntr*) is usually found in the instructions.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 162)

Michael V. Fox (“Two Decades of Research in Egyptian Wisdom Literature.” *ZAS* 107 (1980): 125 [article is 120-35]): the religion of Egyptian wisdom literature is “best designated as polytheism with a monistic perspective . . .” For B. Couroyer (“‘Le Dieu des sages’ en Egypte.” *RB* 94 (1987): 574-603; 95 (1988): 70-91, 195-210), “Egyptian “monotheism” is in fact henotheism: the worship of Thot, patron of scribes and the supreme god.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 177 n. 20)

* + - * 1. “The divinity is characterized by power, omniscience, and justice (*ma`at*), and the god stands ready to help those who pursue the divine order. There are a few references to the cultic worship of god, but the concern is with living in the here and now, without much attention to the next life. According to Hans H. Schmid (and [162] many others), this divinity is an *Urhebergott*, who created and also sustains his creation through the establishment of *ma`at*.” (Schmid, Hans H. *Wesen und Geschichte der Weisheit*. BZAW 101. Berlin: Töpelmann, 1966. 26-27. Preuss, Horst D. *Einführung in die alttestamentliche Weisheitsliteratur*. Urban-Taschenbücher 383. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1987. 50-60.) (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 162-63)

1. **Egyptian instructions**
   1. introduction
      1. “The life of the Egyptian instruction form is extraordinarily long (three millennia!), since it reaches down into the Ptolemaic period (last two centuries b.c.e.) . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 166)
      2. “This survey of the Egyptian instructions witnesses to the high premium that Egyptian civilization set upon writing and education. An important factor in all this was the office of scribe. The instructions served a double purpose: their doctrine educated the scribe into a way of life, and their transmission over the centuries gave him the wherewithal for his scribal expertise. The instructions (not to mention the other types of Egyptian literature, which are not our concern here) were copied and recopied, and fragments recorded on writing tablets are to be found throughout the Western world. Scribal art succeeded in ancient Egypt in an unparalleled fashion.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 168)
   2. *Imhotep* (c. 2600)
      1. “The earliest sage appears to be *Imhotep*, the architect for King Djoser’s famous step pyramid, of the third dynasty (ca. 2600). His repute is established, but there is no trace of any of his writings. He and Hardedef are commemorated for their wisdom in one of the Harper’s songs (*ANET*, 467; *AEL*, I, 196; *LAE*, 306).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 163)
   3. *Hardedef* (c. 2590-65)
      1. “*Hardedef* (also written Hardjedef or Djedef-Hor) was son of King Khufu (Cheops) [2590-67 bc] of the fourth dynasty [2600-2450 bc], and only fragments of his work have come [163] down. They deal with founding a family and concern for one’s grave (*AEL*, I, 58-59; *LAE*, 340).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 163-64)
   4. *Kagemni* (?)
      1. Also fragmentary is the teaching (by an unknown writer) for *Kagemni*, a vizier under King Snefru of the fourth dynasty (*AEL*, I, 59-61; *LAE*, 177-79). Restraint in eating, conduct at the table, and modesty are the topics treated.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 164)
   5. *Ptah-hotep* (c. 2450)
      1. “The Instruction of *Ptah-hotep* (*ANET*, 412-14; *AEL*, I, 61-80; *LAE*, 159-76) purports to be the teaching of a vizier under King Izezi of the fifth dynasty [2450-2300 bc].” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 164)
      2. form: “Miriam Lichtheim (*AEL*, I, 61) counts thirty-seven “maxims” that are set in the framework of a prologue and epilogue. . . . The style is primarily admonitory; commands and prohibitions are directed to the situations the teacher explicitly indicates (if . . . then . . .). In some cases there are also lines that appear to be proverbial: “He who steps gently, his path is paved. He who frets all day has no happy moment” (*AEL*, I, 70).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 164)
      3. themes: “The prologue has an interesting description of old age given by Ptah-hotep, to which the king replies concerning instruction “in the sayings of the past” that are to be communicated; “hearing” (greatly emphasized in the epilogue) is to enter into the student, because “no one is born wise.” Ptah-hotep covers a wide range of topics, for example, proper speech, self-control in dealing with disputants, blameless conduct, table etiquette, responsibility as a messenger, justice (*ma`at*), honesty, attitude toward riches (greed) and poverty, how to deal with honors and with litigation, friendship, and generosity. . . . The emphasis on hearing (i.e., docility, obedience) in the rather lengthy epilogue is extraordinary (“He who hears is beloved of god. He whom god hates does not hear,” *AEL*, I, 74). W. McKane characterizes the work as establishing “the conditions of effective and successful statesmanship in ancient Egypt.” [McKane, W. *Proverbs*. OTL. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1970. 56.] He points out that the concept of power (not arbitrary, but regulated by *ma`at*) is central to the way in which one is to exercise statesmanship. At the same time, Ptah-hotep warns, “Do not put trust in your wealth which came to you as gift of god; so that you will not fall behind one like you, to whom the same has happened” (*AEL*, I, 71).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 164)
   6. *Merikare* (c. 2200)
      1. This is “the Instruction for King *Merikare* (*ANET*, 414-18; *AEL*, I, 97-109; *LAE*, 180-92), who reputedly was the son of an unnamed Pharaoh (perhaps one of the Khetys in the ninth and tenth dynasties [toward the end of the First Intermediate Period, 2181-2025 bc]).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 164)
      2. ““The statesmanship emphasized by Ptah-hotep continues . . . Miriam Lichtheim (*AEL*, I, 97) defines the work as a royal testament. Indeed the work is primarily concerned with the problems of ruling a nation (some history appears here) and dealing with situations in the life of the court. . . . [This is all] political advice . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 164)
      3. “It ends with a hymn in honor of the sun-god.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 164)
      4. “. . . there are many familiar themes: justice, care for the weak, importance of speech (the tongue is a “sword”).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 164)
      5. “At least one saying is close to the biblical thought: “More acceptable is one upright of heart than the ox of the evildoer” [lines 128-29, *ANET* 417].” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 164)
   7. *Amenemhet* (1900s)
      1. “The Instruction of King *Amenemhet* (*ANET*, 418-19; *AEL*, I, 135-39; *LAE*, 193-97) is another royal testament, destined for his son, Sesostris (twelfth dynasty, twentieth century b.c.e.). It is important as a source for history more than as a wisdom document.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 165)
      2. “The royal advice is rather curt: don’t trust anyone. The king was apparently assassinated.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 165)
   8. *Prophecies of Neferti* (1900s)
      1. “The initial glories of his [King Amenemhet’s] reign are “prophesied” (after the fact) in the *Prophecies of Neferti* (*ANET*, 444-46; *AEL*, I, 139-45; *LAE*, 234-40). W. K. Simpson calls this latter writing “a blatant political pamphlet designed to support the new regime” (*LAE*, 234).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 165)
   9. *Khety* (c. 2000)
      1. “The Instruction of *Khety*, son of Duauf (or Dua-Khety), dated ca. 2000 in the Middle Kingdom, is known also as the Satire on Trades (*ANET*, 432-34; *AEL*, I, 184-92; *LAE*, 329-36).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 165)
      2. “Satire it is, as the father ridicules various trades (goldsmith, carpenter, barber, reed-cutter [?], potter, mason, gardener, farmer, weaver, arrow-maker, courier, cobbler, bird-catcher, fisherman) in order to enhance the vocation of the scribe: “See, there’s no profession without a boss, except for the scribe; he is the boss” (*AEL*, I, 189). . . . Miriam Lichtheim has characterized the work thus: “In short, the unrelievedly negative descriptions of the laboring professions are examples of humor in the service of literary satire. The result is obtained through unflattering comparisons and through exaggerations that rise to outright fabrications. What if not a fabrication for the sake of caricature is a bird-catcher who does not have a net—the very tool of his trade?” (*AEL*, I, 184). Needless to say, Ben Sira’s description of worker and scribe in 38:24-39:11 is cut from very different cloth.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 165)
      3. “He concludes with some general recommendations about caution, right speech, moderation, and hearing.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 165)
   10. *Ani* (c. 1500)
       1. “The Instruction of *Ani*, also spelled Any (*ANET*, 420-21; but more complete in *AEL*, II, 135-46) is dated ca. 1500. It is the work of a simple scribe . . . to his son, Khonshotep . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 165)
       2. form: “The style is generally admonitory, with an occasional saying (“Wealth accrues to him who guards it”).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 165)
       3. themes: advice “about marriage, the “strange woman” (cf. Prov 1-9), silence, moderation in drink, wealth and self-sufficiency, study, care for one’s mother, generosity to the poor, and other topics.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 165)
          1. “The admonition about sincere prayer in the temple (*ANET*, 420; *AEL*, II, 137) is reminiscent of Qoheleth . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 165) Qoh 5:1, “Guard your steps when you go to the house of God; to draw near to listen is better than the sacrifice offered by fools; for they do not know how to keep from doing evil.”
       4. “The charm of this work lies in the reaction of Ani’s son. In the epilogue he expresses his admiration for his father; he would want to be like him, but he feels that he cannot understand and obey him. Ani replies vigorously and gives him several examples of obedience (interestingly, from animals! Cf. Prov 6:6ff.). The son still remonstrates with his father, but to no avail. The rather terse ending suggests that he is worn down by the scribe, his father. Encapsulated in this little dialogue is a testing of the Egyptian style of education: the scribe insists on study and memorization and “hearing” or obedience; the son is contesting this, unsuccessfully.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 165)
   11. *Papyrus Lansing* (1200s)
       1. “. . . we find a regular schoolbook in *Papyrus Lansing* (*AEL*, II, 167-75; *LAE*, 343-47), which is a paean of praise to the art of being a scribe and a teacher of scribes. No occupation can compare with the scribal profession (as we saw earlier in the Satire on Trades), and the teacher is praised as no other educator: he possess all virtues and abilities. The Lansing concludes, “You are a man of choice words, who is skilled in saying them; all you say is right, you abhor falsehood . . . you serve your lord, you nourish your people; whatever you say soothes the heart” (*AEL*, II, 174).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 168)
   12. *Amenemope* (c. 1200)
       1. “. . . the Instruction of [165] *Amenemope* (*ANET*, 421-25; *AEL*, II, 146-63; *LAE*, 241-65) . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 165-66)
       2. form
          1. “The text has been arranged stichometrically in some copies, enabling one to see more clearly the connection of thought and especially the parallelism. The author deliberately numbers the thirty chapters (cf. “thirty” in the emended text of Prov 22:20).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 166)
          2. “The style is admonitory, but there are many sayings to be found, notably “better” sayings such as “Better is poverty in the hand of the god, than wealth in the storehouse; better is bread with a happy heart than wealth with vexation” (chap. 6; cf. chap. 12; Prov 15:16-17).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 166)
       3. themes
          1. “The topics treated by Amenemope are those traditional in many instructions: kindness and moderation, poverty and riches, self-control (the “heated man” is mentioned many times and the “silent” one is his opposite), honesty, respect for others, and modesty.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 166)
          2. god: “Twice (chaps. 21, 22; *AEL*, II, 159) there is the refrain: “Indeed you do not know the plans of god and should not weep for tomorrow; settle in the arms of the god.” The god is the giver of *ma`at*, but humans should be aware of the divine mystery: “The words men say are one thing, the deeds of the god are another” (chap. 18; *AEL*, II, 157; cf. Prov 16:1, 9; 19:21). The writer lays out “the paths of life” (prologue), but one must also pray to the Aton (sun-god) for well-being, and it will be granted.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 166)
             1. Prov 16:1, “The plans of the mind belong to mortals, but the answer of the tongue is from the Lord.”
             2. Prov 16:9, “The human mind plans the way, but the Lord directs the steps.”
             3. Prov 19:21, “The human mind may devise many plans, but it is the purpose of the Lord that will be established.”
          3. “The divine determinaism [*sic*] that is characteristic of the Bible (1 Sam 2:6-7; Prov 16:33; 22:2) appears in chap. 25: “Man is clay and straw, the god is his builder. He tears down, he builds up daily, he makes a thousand poor by his will, he makes a thousand men into chiefs” (*AEL*, II, 160).
             1. 1 Sam 2:6-7, “The Lord kills and brings to life; he brings down to Sheol and raises up. 7The Lord makes poor and makes rich; he brings low, he also exalts.”
             2. Prov 16:33, “The lot is cast into the lap, but the decision is the Lord’s alone.”
             3. Prov 22:2, “The rich and the poor have this in common: the Lord is the maker of them all.”
   13. *Chester Beatty Papyrus IV* (1100s)
       1. *AEL* 2.175-78, *ANET* 431-32
       2. A schoolbook. (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 169)
       3. “Nothing less than immortality is claimed for a scribe. The *Chester Beatty Papyrus IV* . . . claims immortality of name (note that not all of the instructions have names that have been preserved, [168] and few of the names of other writers were ever given). The scribe’s tools are his family: the reed-pen, the child; the stone surface, the wife: “Man decays, his corpse is dust, / All his kin have perished; / But a book makes him remembered / Through the mouth of its reciter. / Better is a book than a well-built house, / Than tomb-chapels in the west.” The writer goes on to ask about the famous sages of old, such as Ptah-hotep and others, and he concludes: “Death made their names forgotten / But books made them remembered!” (*AEL* [*sic*] II, 177; *ANET* 432)” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 168-69)
   14. *Ankhsheshonq* (after 700)
       1. “. . . the Instruction of *Ankhsheshonq*” is in *AEL* 3.159-84. (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 166)
       2. It is “lengthy [and] written in demotic script (a cursive Egyptian hand that arose in the seventh century).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 166)
       3. form
          1. Ankhsheshonq “consists of sayings that are more or less one line long.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 167)
          2. “The prologue describes the deplorable situation of the priest Ankhsheshonq. He tried unsuccessfully to dissuade a friend from killing the Pharaoh. When the plot was foiled, the priest was implicated as an accomplice (because he did not tell the king) and imprisoned. Here he wrote his instruction for his son “on the sherds of the jars that were brought into him containing mixed wine” (4:18). This fictional introduction (cf. the story of Ahiqar) sets the stage for a teaching that covers about twenty-eight columns. Sayings (many of them doubtless proverbial) [166] mingle with commands and admonitions almost equally. There is no logical ordering of the material, although several times a given topic is repeated in successive sentences (wealth, 8:17-23; borrowing, 16:9-12).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 166-67)
       4. “The aura of the court, which could be detected in the older instructions, is absent; Ankhsheshonq is writing for ordinary people, not for officials.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 167)
       5. examples
          1. 7:24, “Do not say right away what comes out of your heart.”
          2. 8:23, “The wealth of a wise man is his speech.”
          3. 11:19, “Do not laugh at your son in front of his mother, lest you learn the size of his father.”
          4. 14:14, “He who is bitten of the bite of a snake is afraid of a coil of rope.”
          5. 19:10, “Do a good deed and throw it in the water; when it dries you will find it.”
          6. 23:8, “It is better to dwell in your own small house than to dwell in the large house of another.”
          7. 26:14, “The plans of the god are one thing, the thoughts of men are another.” (cf. Prov 16:1, 9.)
          8. “In 26:5-8 are a series of paradoxes: “There is imprisonment for giving life. There is release for killing. There is he who saves and does not profit. All are in the hand of the fate and the god.”” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 167)
   15. *Papyrus Insinger* (323-30)
       1. “. . . the *Papyrus Insinger* (*AEL*, III, 184-217) [is] so called after the Dutchman who purchased the papyrus for the Leiden royal museum in 1895.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 167)
       2. It is “lengthy [and] written in demotic script (a cursive Egyptian hand that arose in the seventh century).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 166)
       3. It dates “from the Ptolemaic period [323-30 bc] . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 167)
       4. form
          1. “. . . it is lacking the usual title and prologue, and the first five and a half units. It consists of some twenty-seven units in all, and these are so labeled and numbered. They are provided with headings that describe the general theme of the specific teaching—thus betraying a careful organization of the material on the part of the author. It may be, as with the collections in the biblical Book of Proverbs, that many of the sayings have come from various sources. But there is no denying the fact that the unknown author has put his stamp upon them by the arrangement, and he could very well be the true author in many cases. Like the Instruction of Ankhsheshonq, this papyrus consists of sayings that are more or less one line long. There are several commands and prohibitions, but maxims or aphorisms are by far in the majority.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 167)
          2. “What is unique, as Miriam Lichtheim has pointed out, are the paradoxes and conclusions that mark the end of the various teachings. [Lichtheim, Miriam. *Ancient Egyptian Literature* 3.185. See also: Lichtheim, Miriam. “Observations on Papyrus Insinger.” *Studien zu altägyptischen Lebenslehren*, ed. E. Horning and O. Keel. OBO 28. Fribourg: Universitätsverlag, 1979. 283-305. Lichtheim, Miriam. *Late Egyptian Wisdom Literature in the International Context*. OBO 52. Fribourg: Universitätsverlag, 1983.] When the text is not disturbed one can detect a pattern: seven sentences made up of two pairs of paradoxes, followed by two conclusions and a refrain. This device serves to qualify the teaching: things may not turn out as expected. “Fate and fortune” is a phrase appearing regularly in these conclusions, [167] a refrain that indicates that the god can modify the order one naturally expects. This is clearly portrayed in the ending of the eighth teaching, which begins, “Do not be a glutton, lest you become the companion of poverty” (*AEL*, III, 189; 5:12). Many reflections on gluttony and its ill effects follow until we reach the stylized ending:

7:13—“There is one who lives on little so as to save, yet he becomes poor.

7:14—There is one who does not know, yet the fate gives (him) wealth.

7:15—It is not the wise man who saves who finds a surplus.

7:16—Nor is it the one who spends who becomes poor.

7:17—The god gives a wealth of supplies without an income.

7:18—He also gives poverty in the purse without spending.

7:19—The fate and the fortune that come, it is the god who sends them.” (*AEL*, III, 191) Even though the ambiguities of life are thus pointed out, retribution remains intact: “A lifetime is given to the impious man in order to make him encounter retaliation” (*AEL*, III, 209; 30:23).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 167)

1. **other Egyptian writings**
   1. “No one has ever equaled ancient Egypt for the extent and excellence of its instructions, but they are only a small portion of the extant works, which include autobiographies, monument inscriptions, tales, hymns, and prayers. A few more literary items should be singled out here for comparison with biblical wisdom literature.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 170)
   2. *Songs of the Harper* (c. 2000)
      1. Of “The *Songs of the Harper*, twenty-four . . . have been preserved . . . Perhaps the most famous is the Harper’s song from the tomb of King Intef (one of the Intefs of the eleventh dynasty, ca. 2000).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 169)
      2. themes
         1. “Originally they were written in praise of death and the life after death, hence they were funerary texts. But they developed a certain skepticism, and a hedonism: live it up in the here and now and forget about death (carpe diem).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 169)
         2. “Not all the songs gave into skepticism (cf. *AEL*, II, 115-16; *ANET*, 33-34). One copy of the Intef song is inscribed on a tomb wall, on which a blind harpist is depicted directing four musicians. The song begins with a reflection on the disappearance of great people of the past, and continues: “Their walls have crumbled, / Their places are gone, / As though they had never been! / None comes from there, / To tell of their state, / To tell of their needs, / To calm our hearts, / Until we go where they have gone! / Hence rejoice in your heart! / Forgetfulness profits you, / Follow your heart as long as you live! / Put myrrh on your head, / Dress in fine linen, . . . [169] / Lo, none is allowed to take his goods with him, / Lo, none who departs comes back again!” (*AEL*, I, 196-97; *ANET*, 467; *LAE*, 306-7) Echoes of this mentality can also be found, even if in a very different context and thrust, in Ps 49; but Eccl 9:7-10 is akin to the spirit of such a song (see also the treatment of the Gilgamesh epic earlier).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 169-70)
            1. Ps 49:10-20, “When we look at the wise, they die; fool and dolt perish together and leave their wealth to others. 11Their graves are their homes forever, their dwelling places to all generations, though they named lands their own. 12Mortals cannot abide in their pomp; they are like the animals that perish. 13Such is the fate of the foolhardy, the end of those who are pleased with their lot. Selah 14Like sheep they are appointed for Sheol; Death shall be their shepherd; straight to the grave they descend, and their form shall waste away; Sheol shall be their home. 15But God will ransom my soul from the power of Sheol, for he will receive me. Selah 16Do not be afraid when some become rich, when the wealth of their houses increases. 17For when they die they will carry nothing away; their wealth will not go down after them. 18Though in their lifetime they count themselves happy—for you are praised when you do well for yourself—19they will go to the company of their ancestors, who will never again see the light. 20Mortals cannot abide in their pomp; they are like the animals that perish.”
            2. Eccl 9:7-10, “Go, eat your bread with enjoyment, and drink your wine with a merry heart; for God has long ago approved what you do. 8Let your garments always be white; do not let oil be lacking on your head. 9Enjoy life with the wife whom you love, all the days of your vain life that are given you under the sun, because that is your portion in life and in your toil at which you toil under the sun. 10Whatever your hand finds to do, do with your might; for there is no work or thought or knowledge or wisdom in Sheol, to which you are going.”
   3. Egyptian love songs
      1. “The Egyptian songs are translated in *AEL*, II, 181-93; *LAE*, 296-306; 308-25; and there are excerpts in *ANET*, 467-69.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 170)
      2. “For translations and analysis, see”: White, J. B. *A Study of the Language of Love in the Song of Songs and Ancient Egyptian Poetry*. SBLDS 38. Missoula: Scholars, 1978. See especially: Fox, Michael V. *The Song of Songs and Ancient Egyptian Love Songs*. Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1985), “which combines translation and analysis with a sound commentary on the biblical Song.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 170)
      3. “They are independent poems . . ., dating from various periods . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 170)
      4. form: “each is written from the point of view of one gender only . . . they are not orchestrated in the form of a dialogue—in contrast to the Song of Songs.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 170)
      5. themes: “the Egyptian love songs . . . constitute the closest parallels that the ancient Near East has provided for the Song [of Songs]. . . . The sensuality, the imagery (flowers, exotic scents, animals), and the yearning of lovers are expressed in language that is akin to the language of the biblical Canticle. . . . The language and the spirit are remarkably similar.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 170)
   4. *Dispute Between a Man and His Ba* (c. 1800s)
      1. “. . . the *Dispute Between a Man and His Ba* (*AEL*, I, 163-69) [is] also designated as The Man Who Was Tired of Life (*LAE*, 201-9) and Dispute over Suicide (*ANET*, 405-7). . . . The various titles suggest the wide range of interpretations given to this difficult work . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 170)
      2. The “only manuscript dates from the twelfth dynasty [c. 1800s bc].” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 170)
      3. This is “Akin to the problem literature of the Old Testament . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 170)
      4. theme
         1. “Various interpretations of the work are summarized by Fox”: Fox, Michael V. “Two Decades of Research in Egyptian Wisdom Literature.” *ZAS* 107 (1980): 134 (article is 120-35). (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 178 n. 25)
         2. “The basic facts are the sufferings of a man who wants to die. But his *Ba* (his “soul”) will not hear of this and will instead leave him, depriving him of the happiness beyond the grave. The man counters the *Ba* by portraying death as a natural result (even if he desires it). But the *Ba* concentrates on life, which is to be enjoyed, and not on death such as the man envisions. To make his point the *Ba* relates two stories that are not very clear. The reply of the man consists in four poems with steady refrains (e.g., “Death is before me today,” in the third poem), the third and fourth dealing with death and the next life (“yonder”). Finally, the *Ba* replies, to the effect that they will stay together (in suicide, according to the interpretation in *ANET*; but this is not at all [170] certain). Ultimately it is not clear whether the issue is suicide or simply the desirability of death in view of life’s adversities.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 170-71)
      5. *Dispute Between a Man and His Ba* and the Bible
         1. “. . . this work has obvious parallels in the Book of Job, which brings up death (as a respite) several times (3:11-19; 7:21; 10:21-22). But there is no thought of suicide in Job (if even there is in the Egyptian work), nor of any real life in the “yonder” world. The complaints about life are simply common coin for the human condition.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 171)
   5. onomastica or lists (*Listenwissenschaft*)
      1. “The Egyptian onomastica published by A. H. Gardiner contain lists that have organized individual items in various realms, for example, offices, tribes, cities, plants, and animals. It has been conjectured that they served as textbooks . . .” (Gardiner, A. H. *Ancient Egyptian Onomastica*. London: OUP, 1947.) (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 171)
      2. “The role of onomastica . . . in ancient Egypt and Israel has been seriously questioned. . . . There is clear evidence that lists existed, but the issue here is how they functioned. Doubtless they helped a scribe to learn names and spellings; the cataloguing of names, places, and other items is a natural development. But one should not read more into this than was intended. There are “lists” in ancient Egypt, but no “science of lists.”” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 171)
      3. “. . . Gerhard von Rad [posited] the influence of a particular work—the *Satirical Letter* of Hori, preserved in the *Papyrus Anastasi I* of the thirteenth century b.c.e. (*ANET*, 475-79)—on the speeches in Job 38-39. [von Rad, Gerhard. “Job and Ancient Egyptian Wisdom.” *Studies in Ancient Israelite Wisdom*, ed. J. L. Crenshaw. New York: KTAV, 1976. 267-77.] But the interpretation of the Satirical Letter is not clear. Michael V. Fox has pointed out that most of the relevant questions (interpreted as satirical) are really negative statements. Hori is asking for information, whereas the Lord’s questions in Job 38-39 are largely rhetorical.” (See: Fox, Michael V. “Egyptian Onomastica and Biblical Wisdom.” *VT* 36 (1986): 302-10. Hillers, D. “A Study of Psalm 148.” *CBQ* 40 (1978): 323-34. Oppenheim, A. L. *Ancient Mesopotamia* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1964) 244-49.) (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 171)

## MESOPOTAMIAN WISDOM LITERATURE

Crenshaw, James L. *Ecclesiastes*: *A Commentary*. Old Testament Library. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1987. (Vanderbilt Divinity School.)

1. **primary sources** (anthologies of English translations)
   1. Lambert, W. G. *Babylonian Wisdom Literature*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1960. (*= BWL*)
   2. Pritchard, James B., ed. *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*. 1950. 3rd ed. with supplement. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1978. (= *ANET*)
2. **secondary literature**
   1. Gordon, E. I. “A New Look at the Wisdom of Sumer and Akkad.” *Bibliotheca Orientalis* 17 (1960): 122-52.
   2. *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 101.1 (1981) “contains valuable summaries (with extensive bibliographies) of Hebrew, Egyptian, and Mesopotamian wisdom by Roland E. Murphy, R. J. Williams, and G. Buccellati.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 152)
   3. McKane, W. *Proverbs*. Old Testament Library. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1970. “. . . provides a summary introduction to “international wisdom,” pp. 51-208.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 152)
3. **historical background**
   1. 3000-1792 bc: “Sumerian domination can be dated from about 3000 b.c.e. down to the rise of Babylonian culture (especially under Hammurabi [r. 1792-50] . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 153)
      1. The Elamites conquered the Sumerian capital of Ur c. 2000 bc. The Babylonian empire “began with the triumph of one Amorite tribe over its rivals in the confused period following the collapse [59] of Ur. Hammurabi may have become ruler in 1792 bc [“the first ruler to unify the whole of Mesopotamia,” 59]; his successors held things together until sometime after 1600 bc, when the Hittites destroyed Babylon . . .” (Roberts 59-60)
   2. c. 1800-539 bc: Babylonian culture “was considerably influenced by the Sumerian. Thereafter Akkadian, as opposed to the Sumerian language, became the normal medium of communication [c. 1800-539], expressed in two principal dialects, Babylonian and Assyrian. Like Sumerian, Akkadian was also written in cuneiform signs (wedge-shaped writing, impressed upon clay tablets).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 153)
   3. c. 539 bc: “In the first millennium b.c.e. Aramaic began to replace Akkadian, becoming the language of international communication.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 153)
   4. “The inherent difficulties of the Sumerian (and also Akkadian) languages demanded sophisticated training. There were schools for this purpose: the Sumerian *edubba*, or “tablet house,” was designed for the training of the scribes, who were ultimately responsible for whatever literary remains have come down to us. The existence of bilingual as well as unilingual texts should be noted. Presumably all these texts served many purposes: the learning of one or two languages, and also the inculcation of lessons about life and, especially, the inherited traditions of the people.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 153)
   5. “The proverbial wisdom of ancient Mesopotamia is instructive for biblical readers by the mere fact that it exists. It illustrates a point that can be made about most collections of sayings throughout the world: they spring from the ordinary experiences of daily life. It is not to be expected from similarities between biblical and Mesopotamian sayings that a given proverb is necessarily the source of another. In separate times and places similar situations can generate similar proverbs. As collections, the Mesopotamian sayings provide a model (like the Egyptian) for the collections of biblical sayings.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 154)
4. **appropriateness of** “**wisdom literature**”
   1. The appropriateness of applying the term “wisdom literature” to the Mesopotamian heritage has been challenged . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 153)
   2. “At the most he [G. Bucellati] is willing to speak of wisdom “themes” that occur in various types of literature. One may agree with him that wisdom is not to be identified with a literary genre, or to be limited to a specific intellectual movement. He writes, “Wisdom should be viewed as an intellectual phenomenon in itself. It is the second degree reflective function as it begins to emerge in human culture; in Mesopotamia, it takes shape in a variety of realizations and institutions, from onomastics to literature, from religion to the school.” [Buccellati, G. “Wisdom and Not: The Case of Mesopotamia.” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 101.1 (1981): 44 (article is 35-47).] These reflections indicate the difficulty of definition . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 153)
   3. “W. G. Lambert points out that the Babylonian term for “wisdom” is quite unlike the Hebrew *ḥokmāh*. It generally refers to skill in cult and magic. However, “wisdom” has been used “for a group of texts which correspond in subject-matter with the Hebrew Wisdom books, and may be retained as a convenient short description.”” (*Babylonian Wisdom Literature*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1960. 1.) (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 176 n. 1)
5. **lists** (**onomastica**)
   1. Oppenheim, A. L. *Ancient Mesopotamia*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1964. 244-49.
   2. “Lists for the various cuneiform signs were composed as an aid to the learning of the language and vocabulary. Some lists came to be topically arranged, and word lists pertinent to plants, animals, stones, and other objects came to be formed. Thus the Akkadian Charra-Chubullu lists are some [153] twenty-four cuneiform tablets that contain hundreds of names. Similar lists also exist in the so-called Egyptian Onomastica. More is made of these lists for their wisdom impact than they deserve. Some have interpreted them as an effort to establish “order” . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 153-54)
   3. Oppenheim “resolutely refuses to see here “such a quasi-mythological concept as *Ordnungswille*, according to which the scribes who made these lists aimed at ‘organizing’ the universe around them by listing what they saw of it in word signs” [*Ancient Mesopotamia* 248].” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 154)
6. **instructions**
   1. *The Instructions of Shuruppak*
      1. Alster, Bendt. *The Instructions of Suruppak*. Mesopotamica 2. Copenhagen: Akademisk Forlag, 1974.
      2. “A sample of the instruction is provided in *BWL*, 92-94, and *ANET*, 594-96.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 154)
      3. “*The Instructions of Shuruppak* was originally written in Sumerian . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 154)
      4. “It is important for two reasons: because it approximates the royal instruction genre that is common in Egypt, and because Ziusudra, who receives the instruction, is the Sumerian counterpart to Utnapishtim, the hero or “Noah” of the ancient flood stories (found in the Atra-hasis and in the Gilgamesh epics).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 154)
   2. *The Counsels of Wisdom* (1500-1200)
      1. “*The Counsels of Wisdom* is an Akkadian work (dated probably between 1500 and 1200), consisting of about 140 lines, which was once thought to be part of The Instructions of Shuruppak.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 154)
      2. “As in Egypt and in the Bible, the addressee is called “my son” . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 154)
      3. “. . . the counsels deal with such topics as bad companions, disputes and marriage.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 154)
      4. “Lines 131-34 would fit with the biblical warnings about control of the tongue: “Beware of careless talk, guard your lips; / Do not utter solemn oaths while alone, / For what you say in a moment will follow you afterwards. / But exert yourself to restrain your speech.”” (*BWL* 105, *ANET* 595) (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 154)
7. **Sumerian proverbs**
   1. Gordon, E. I. *Sumerian Proverbs*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Museum, 1959.
   2. “Many collections of unilingual Sumerian proverbs were identified by E. I. Gordon, and some of these collections have been published [in Gordon’s *Sumerian Proverbs*].” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 154)
   3. “His definition of “proverb” ranges far beyond a pithy saying, and he includes taunts, toasts, short fables, and other types. His distinctions among “maxim,” “adage,” [154] and “byword” may not suit everyone’s taste . . .” (Gordon, E. I. “A New Look at the Wisdom of Sumer and Akkad.” *Bibliotheca Orientalis* 17 (1960): 122-52.) (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 154-55)
   4. “The number of collections is high . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 155)
   5. In many collections “initial words formed the basis for gathering many proverbs together.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 155)
   6. “. . . several proverbs in both [Sumerian and Babylonian] have been preserved—the bilingual proverbs, as they are called (*BWL*, 222-75).” Examples (*BWL* 232):
      1. “It is not wealth that is your support. It is (your) God.”
      2. “Be you small or great, it is (your) God who is your support.”
      3. “A people without a king (is like) sheep without a shepherd.”
      4. “A house without an owner (is like) a woman without a husband.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 155)
8. **Babylonian proverbs**
   1. “Oddly, few Babylonian proverbs are extant, although there is some evidence that they existed in oral tradition. Lambert is of the opinion that cultivation of the bilingual proverbs created a certain level of sophistication that did not tolerate sayings from among the uneducated.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 155)
   2. “An example of a Babylonian proverb from Nippur: “And a man, so long as he does not toil, will have nothing.”” (*BWL* 277; *ANET* 593) (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 155)
9. **Epic of Gilgamesh** (c. 1600)
   1. “There is a huge literature about this personage.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 176 n. 6)
   2. Jacobsen, Thorkild. *The Treasures of Darkness*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1976. 195-219. (An “illuminating interpretation . . .”) (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 176 n. 6)
   3. “This much copied and widely known story (of about 1600) is not wisdom literature. But its dominant motif is akin to wisdom concerns. It is the story of Gilgamesh’s quest for immortality, and biblical wisdom is preoccupied with life and death.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 155)
   4. “The climax of the quest comes when Gilgamesh is about to confront Utnapishtim, the hero of the ancient flood story, who was granted immortality by the gods after escaping the waters. He is warned by a tavern keeper, Siduri, that his search is futile: “Gilgamesh, whither rovest thou? / The life thou pursuest thou shalt not find. / When the gods created mankind, / Death for mankind they set aside, / Life in their own hands retaining.” She continues immediately, in a passage that is strikingly similar to Eccl 9:7-9: [155] “Thou, Gilgamesh, let full be thy belly, / Make thou merry by day and by night. / Of each day make thou a feast of rejoicing, / Day and night dance thou and play! / Let thy garments be sparkling fresh, / Thy head be washed; bathe thou in water. / Pay heed to the little one that holds on to thy hand, / Let thy spouse delight in thy bosom! / For this is the task of [mankind]!” (*ANET* 90) (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 155-56)
   5. “The interview with Utnapishtim ultimately fails. Gilgamesh is not able to avoid sleep (the mirror of death) for six full days *(ANET*, 95-96); the gift of the plant of life, which he receives from Utnapishtim, is lost to the serpent when Gilgamesh goes into water to bathe.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 156)
10. **I Will Praise the Lord of Wisdom** (1500-1200)
    1. *BWL* 21-62, 343-45; *ANET* 596-600.
    2. “. . . in tablet 2 there is a vivid description (and lament) of a suffering person [a Babylonian nobleman named Šubši-mešre-Šakkan] who claims to be righteous.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 156)
    3. “One can catch some of the flavor of the Akkadian piece in the following lines: “What is good for oneself may be offense to one’s god, / What in one’s own heart seems despicable may be proper to one’s god. / Who can know the will of the gods in heaven? / Who can understand the plans of the underworld gods? / Where have humans learned the way of a god?”” (*ANET* 597; *BWL* 41 [see 266]) (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 156)
    4. This work “has long been compared to the Book of Job . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 156)
       1. “H. Gese [*Lehre und Wirklichkeit in der alten Weisheit*. Tübingen: Mohr/Siebeck, 1958] has found in it the literary form of the “paradigm of an answered complaint,” and attempted to find here the literary form of the Book of Job.” [156] According to Gese (63), “Essential to this form is the complaint, fully expressed, and the recourse to God by the one lamenting . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 176 n. 7)
       2. “Gese further thinks [70-78] that the Book of Job breaks through the old deed-consequence mentality [see Klaus Koch’s theory in “Wisdom as a Search for Order”] because of Yahwistic religion . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 176 n. 7)
    5. “The comparison is inadequate.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 156)
       1. “The poem is essentially a praise of Marduk (who is the “lord of wisdom”) because he has delivered his servant—a kind of psalm of thanksgiving. W. G. Lambert has suggested “The Babylonian Pilgrim’s Progress” as a better title (*BWL*, 27).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 156)
       2. “This view fails to appreciate the depth of the problem of suffering in Job, where no definitive answer is given.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 156)
       3. “The Akkadian work [is] a monologue . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 156)
       4. *I Will Praise the Lord of Wisdom* “exemplifies the innocent sufferer, but that is a tenuous basis for comparison with the full thrust of the Book of Job.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 156)
       5. “. . . the complaint . . . is as old as suffering humanity in the face of divine mystery.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 156)
       6. “The mood is closer to the acknowledgment of the rescuing god, which is found in [156] the Old Testament psalms of thanksgiving . . .” (See tablets 3 and 4, *ANET* 599-600 and *BWL* 47-62.) (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 156-57)
11. **The Babylonian Theodicy** (c. 1000)
    1. *BWL* 63-91; *ANET* 601-4.
    2. “This work is also known as The Dialogue About Human Misery.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 157)
    3. “It has been dated by Lambert on stylistic considerations to about 1000; broadly it fits between 1400 and 800.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 157)
    4. “It is an acrostic poem with twenty-seven stanzas (nineteen of which are fairly well preserved) of eleven lines each. Like Ps 119, each of the lines in the stanza begins with the same letter, or sign.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 157)
    5. “This is a dialogue between a sufferer and his friend, a relatively serene exchange in comparison to Job and his friends. The sufferer begins with his own situation: born the youngest in the family and then bereaved of his parents, and without a protector. The soft answer from the friend is the reminder that all must die, that a relationship with one’s god brings prosperity. The topics that are covered are similar to those in Job: the inequities of life, which cannot be squared with divine justice. The friend consistently returns to the theme that wrongdoing will not prosper, that worship of god will bring success. In particular, the sufferer maintains that the privileged (such as the firstborn) and the rich prevail over the honest person.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 157)
    6. “Then the friend makes an astonishing admission. When the gods made the human race, they gave them perverse speech: “With lies, and not truth, they endowed them forever” (stanza 26). Lambert (*BWL*, 65) astutely remarks that “this conclusion undermines the premisses on which the two argued. Both sufferer and friend began by assuming that the gods were responsible for maintaining justice among men. They end by admitting that these very gods made men prone to injustice. In a sense the real problem has been shelved.”” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 157)
    7. “In the final stanza the sufferer asks the gods for help. This is hardly theodicy; the case is argued in too serene a fashion, and sometimes with monotonous uniformity. The *agôn* of Job is lacking.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 157)
12. **The Dialogue of Pessimism** (c. 1300)
    1. *BWL* 139-49; *ANET* 600-1.
    2. “This is another dialogue, a most unusual one between master and slave . . . The master proposes to do a certain thing (e.g., make a home, lead a revolution, make love), and the slave replies with reasons affirming his action, sometimes with proverbial sayings. Then the master abruptly changes his mind and embraces the opposite course. The servant moves with him and gives reason for the contrary decision.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 157)
    3. “The liveliness of the exchange can be illustrated by the following: ““Slave, listen to me.” / “Here I am, sir, here I am.” / “I will perform a public benefit for my country.” / “So perform, sir, perform. / The man who performs a public benefit for his country, / His deeds are placed in the ring of Marduk.” / “No, slave, I will by no means perform a public benefit for my country.” / “Do not perform, sir, do not perform. / Go up on to the ancient ruin heaps and walk about; / See the skulls of high and low. / Which is the malefactor, and which is the benefactor?”” (lines 70-78 *BWL* 149, *ANET* 601) (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 158)
    4. “In “A Pessimistic Dialogue Between a Master and Servant” the master asks, “What is good?” and the slave responds: “To break my neck, your neck, throw (both) into the river—(that) is good.” When the master retorts that he will break the [26] servant’s neck, he hears a poignant question: “(Then) would my lord (wish to) live even three days after me?”” (Crenshaw 26-27)
    5. “At the end, the master raises the question of what is good, and proposes death. The slave seems to accept this with a saying: “Who is so tall that he can reach to the heavens? Who is so broad that he can encompass the underworld?” This reply seems ambiguous, pointing out human limitations, and thus accepting the proposal of death somewhat stoically. But then the master proposes to kill the servant first—to which the versatile slave replies by saying that the master would not outlive the servant even by three days. This ending is tantalizing. Does it propose suicide, or does the slave question whether suicide is the answer (since the [157] slave claims the master could not continue to live without him)?” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 157-58)
    6. serious or satirical?
       1. “Scholars have disputed about the nature of the dialogue, whether it is intended seriously (W. G. Lambert) or as a farce (E. Speiser). There is no mistaking the satirical edge to the unsteadiness of human reasoning, shown in the flip-flop of the servant’s replies.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 158)
       2. “Scholarly debate has not resolved the question whether this text is serious or humorous. In any event, it makes the point that a clever sage can relativize any issue, providing a justification for every alternative course of action. The result is resignation and ennui, for the attitude morally cripples.” (Crenshaw 27 n. 10)
    7. “The work has been deservedly compared with the Book of Ecclesiastes. In both, extreme positions are taken. Qoheleth consistently rejects values if he can show even one disadvantage; the author of the Babylonian piece operates in a similar way—what seems to be a good has a negative side. There is no question but that Qoheleth’s verdict is deadly serious: all things are vanity.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 158)
13. **The Words of Ahiqar** (500s)
    1. *ANET* 427-30.
    2. Lindenberger, J. M. *The Aramaic Proverbs of Ahiqar*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1983. (“A new translation from the Aramaic, with detailed notes and introduction . . .”) (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 176 n. 8)
    3. Lindenberger, J. M. “The Words of Ahiqar.” *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*. Ed. J. Charlesworth. Garden City: Doubleday, 1983-85. 2 vols. 2.479-93. (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 176 n. 8)
    4. The story of Ahiqar “reflects an Assyrian background. More probably, it was written in Aramaic—not in Akkadian—in the sixth century. It has had an extraordinary history, being reproduced in many ancient languages (Syrian, Armenian, Arabic, etc.) and expanded in the process. The Aramaic text was discovered among the fifth century b.c.e. papyri found at the start of the twentieth century on the island of Elephantine in the Nile.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 158)
    5. “The story deals with the betrayal of Ahiqar by Nadin, a nephew he has raised, who frames him with a charge of treason. King Sennacherib of Assyria orders the death penalty, but the executioner, whose life had once been saved by Ahiqar, keeps him alive and has another killed in his place. Later, when the king is put in an impossible situation and yearns for the wise Ahiqar, the executioner comes forth and informs Sennacherib of his existence. The happy monarch dispatches Ahiqar on the mission to fulfill the impossible task, which Ahiqar successfully accomplishes. Upon his return, Ahiqar refuses all honors and merely wants to discipline Nadin. This he does, severely, and also with his “words” or sayings, and Nadin dies.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 158)
    6. “One must distinguish between the story and the sayings. . . . The relationship between the sayings [158] and the story is not clear, and many think that the proverb collection once existed independently. . . . it is the sayings that are relevant to biblical wisdom.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 158-59)
    7. “Ahiqar has also entered the Book of Tobit (1:22; 2:10; 11:17; 14:10; Greek numbering).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 159)
       1. Tob 1:21-22, “two of Sennacherib’s sons killed him, and they fled to the mountains of Ararat, and his son Esar-haddon reigned after him. He appointed Ahikar, the son of my brother Hanael over all the accounts of his kingdom, and he had authority over the entire administration. 22Ahikar interceded for me, and I returned to Nineveh. Now Ahikar was chief cupbearer, keeper of the signet, and in charge of administration of the accounts under King Sennacherib of Assyria; so Esar-haddon reappointed him. He was my nephew and so a close relative.”
       2. Tob 2:10, “For four years I remained unable to see. All my kindred were sorry for me, and Ahikar took care of me for two years before he went to Elymais.”
       3. Tob 11:18, when Tobias and Sarah returned, “Ahikar and his nephew Nadab were also present to share Tobit’s joy. With merriment they celebrated Tobias’s wedding feast for seven days, and many gifts were given to him.”
       4. Tob 14:10-11, “See, my son, what Nadab did to Ahikar who had reared him. Was he not, while still alive, brought down into the earth? For God repaid him to his face for this shameful treatment. Ahikar came out into the light, but Nadab went into the eternal darkness, because he tried to kill Ahikar. Because he gave alms, Ahikar escaped the fatal trap that Nadab had set for him, but Nadab fell into it himself, and was destroyed. 11So now, my children, see what almsgiving accomplishes, and what injustice does—it brings death! But now my breath fails me.”
    8. “The sayings of Ahiqar are in the mold typical of ancient Near Eastern wisdom. There are fables (rare in the Old Testament), numerical sayings, admonitions, a prayer, and popular sayings. Parallelism is frequent. The content is familiar to us from the Book of Proverbs: sayings about the king, control of speech, discipline for the young, diligence, retribution for good and evil deeds, riches, and honesty.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 159)
    9. similarities between *Ahikar* and the wisdom literature
       1. disciplining children
          1. Ahikar lines 81-82
          2. Prov 23:13-14, “Do not withhold discipline from your children; if you beat them with a rod, they will not die. 14If you beat them with the rod, you will save their lives from Sheol.”
       2. “the rich man glorying in his riches” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 159)
          1. Ahikar line 207
          2. Jer 9:23-24, “Thus says the Lord: Do not let the wise boast in their wisdom, do not let the mighty boast in their might, do not let the wealthy boast in their wealth; 24but let those who boast boast in this, that they understand and know me, that I am the Lord; I act with steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth, for in these things I delight, says the Lord.”
       3. “. . . the power of a soft tongue . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 159)
          1. Ahikar lines 105-6
          2. Prov 15:1, “A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.”
          3. Prov 25:15, “With patience a ruler may be persuaded, and a soft tongue can break bones.”
          4. Sir 28:17, “The blow of a whip raises a welt, but a blow of the tongue crushes the bones.”
       4. “. . . in case of hunger, the bitter is sweet . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 159)
          1. Ahikar line 188
          2. Prov 27:7, “The sated appetite spurns honey, but to a ravenous appetite even the bitter is sweet.”
       5. “There is also a famous statement about personified Wisdom (lines 94b-95), but the text is uncertain . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 159)
          1. Ahikar 94b-95 (H. L. Ginsberg trans., *ANET* 428): “To gods also she is dear. F[or all time] the kingdom is [hers]. In he[av]en is she established, for the lord of holy ones has exalted [her].” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 159)
          2. “Wisdom is precious; she is associated with a kingdom (eternal?) and the “lord of holy ones.” All this seems comparable with the personification of Wisdom in Prov 8 and elsewhere . . . But it must be remembered that the term “wisdom” is partially restored in the text (although it occurs twice in the preceding lines, 92 and 94a).” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 159)
    10. “There is no way to establish the dependence of one source upon another, because these themes are so frequent in wisdom literature.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 159)
        1. E.g., “Parental discipline is treated in other sayings of Ahiqar, as also in Prov 13:24; 19:18; 22:15; 29:15, 17; cf. Sir 30:1-13.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 159)
        2. E.g., humility (“the rich man glorying in his riches”) is “a frequent theme: cf. Sir 3:17; 4:8; and James 1:9-10.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 159)
    11. “J. M. Lindenberger concludes his study of Ahiqar by saying that the “genuinely close parallels between the Aramaic Proverbs and the Bible are few.” (*Proverbs of Ahiqar* 25) (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 159)

## GREEK WISDOM LITERATURE

1. **introduction**
   1. “For a fuller orientation to wisdom in this period [Hellenism], see”: Küchler, Max. *Frühjüdische Weisheitstraditionen*. OBO 26. Fribourg: Universitätsverlag, 1979. (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 178 n. 29)
   2. “*Sophia*, or “wisdom,” played a large role in the thought of ancient Hellas, and there is an extensive Greek gnomic and ethical wisdom with which the Bible might be and has been compared.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 171)
   3. “Hesiod (ca. 700, the author of *Works and Days*) may be considered the father of didactic poetry in Greece.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 171)
   4. “This is not the place for a description of this abundant and far-flung literature. Our purpose here is quite modest, merely to indicate the state of the question as regards the relationship of Hellenism to Qoheleth, Sirach, and the Wisdom of Solomon. All three books are clearly Jewish, but also the product of the Hellenistic age.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 171)
   5. “In his valuable study of the encounter of Judaism and Hellenism in the early Hellenistic period [171] [400-100 bc], Martin Hengel wisely states that it is “extraordinarily difficult” to demonstrate direct “Hellenistic influences” in the Jewish (Hebrew and Aramaic) literature of the period. He has recourse to the Hellenistic Zeitgeist, or “spirit of the times,” as a factor in the literature under consideration. This would be preeminently true of these three works [Qoheleth, Sirach, and Wisdom].” (Hengel, Martin *Judaism and Hellenism*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974. 1.107.) (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 171-72)
   6. *Sentences of Pseudo-Phocylides* (c. 300-30)
      1. “Phocylides of Miletus (ca. 550), “the wisest of men,” was imitated in the pseudepigraphical *Sentences of Pseudo-Phocylides*, a Jewish wisdom collection of the Hellenistic period.” (Charlesworth, J., ed. *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*. Garden City: Doubleday, 1983-85. 2 vols. 2.565-82.) (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 171)
   7. *Sentences of pseudo-Menander* (c. 300-30)
      1. “Menander (ca. 300), the great representative of the “new comedy,” was similarly honored later by the Jewish-Hellenistic sentences of pseudo-Menander (or Syriac Menander . . .).” (Charlesworth, J., ed. *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*. Garden City: Doubleday, 1983-85. 2 vols. 2.583-607.) (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 171)
2. **non-Jewish cultural influences on Qoheleth**
   1. “It is well to eliminate at the outset [the] extreme view [of] the Phoenician background urged by M. Dahood . . . [It has not] rallied support.” (Dahood, Mitchell. “Canaanite-Phoenician Influence in Qoheleth.” *Bib* 33 (1952): 30-52, 191-221 [and later studies].) (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 172)
   2. “It is well to eliminate at the outset [the] extreme view [of] a dating after Ben Sira, with Epicurean influence, advocated by C. F. Whitley. [It has not] rallied support.” (Whitley, C. F. *Koheleth*. BZAW 148. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1979. 165-75.) (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 172)
   3. Mesopotamian influence
      1. Loretz, O. *Qohelet und der alte Orient*. Freiburg: Herder, 1964. 90-134.
      2. “We have already indicated a certain “similarity” between Qoheleth and the Dialogue of Pessimism, and also between Eccl 9:7-9 and the advice given to Gilgamesh.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 172)
      3. “Loretz adds [to the *Dialogue of Pessimism* and *Gilgamesh* parallels] many other considerations, such as the importance attached to name and memory in both cultures, and the relationship between *hebel* (breath, wind, vanity) and Akkadian *śāru*.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 172)
      4. But “Mesopotamian influence, urged emphatically by O. Loretz, is remote and does not really explain the novelty or the peculiar emphases of Qoheleth on the wisdom scene of ca. 300. . . . His arguments show that Qoheleth remains a genuine Semite and a Hebrew thinker; they do not eliminate the question of Hellenistic influence.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 172)
   4. Egyptian influence
      1. “Egyptian influence upon Ecclesiastes was strenously argued by P. Humbert and to a certain extent by K. Galling. It is not seriously considered today, except for the possible influence of demotic literature (Ankhsheshonq and Papyrus Insinger, treated earlier), which is rather to be classified with Hellenistic Egypt (reign of the Ptolemies). The real issue remains that of Greek influence upon Qoheleth.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 172)
         1. Humbert, P. *Recherches sur les sources égyptiennes sur la litérature sapientiale d’Israël*. Neuchatel: Delachaux & Niestle, 1929.
         2. Galling, K. “Der Prediger.” *Die fünf Megilloth*. HAT 18. Tübingen: Mohr/Siebeck, 1969. 77.
   5. Greek influence
      1. “. . . alleged Grecisms and parallels between Qoheleth and Greek philosophy—arguments that flourished at the beginning of the twentieth century . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 173)
      2. O. Loretz “answers effectively the older arguments (from the turn of the century) about Greek influence.” (Loretz, O. *Qohelet und der alte Orient*. Freiburg: Herder, 1964.) (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 178 n. 31)
      3. “In his commentary on Ecclesiastes, N. Lohfink has made some debatable inferences about the author and the book. Lohfink states that the work is basically a compromise, attempting to preserve biblical wisdom but with liberal inspiration from Greek writers, and that it was written for a Jerusalem Temple school in the third century (before Sirach). This rather detailed reconstruction of Qoheleth and his activity remains very hypothetical.” (Lohfink, N. *Kohelet*. Die Neue Echter Bibel. Wurzbürg: Echter, 1980. 11-13.) (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 173)
      4. “In his erudite study *Judaism and Hellenism*, Martin Hengel wrote [1.115-26], “Influence from the Greek world of ideas is seen [this is stronger than the original German, which has only *vermutet*] in Koheleth more than in any other Old Testament work.” He seems to agree that the alleged Grecisms and parallels [from early in] the twentieth century . . . are not on target, but he also regards the criticisms of O. Loretz as too one-sided. For various reasons (and these are highly inferential) he is inclined to date Ecclesiastes between 270 and 220 b.c.e. He is not interested in “direct dependence,” but rather in illustrating the *Zeitgeist und Lebensgefühl* (the spirit and the feeling for life) of early Hellenism. The first evidence of this *Zeitgeist* is “the personally engaged, *critical individuality* of an acute and independent thinker.” Secondly, there is Qoheleth’s universalism, expressed among other ways by his [172] use of the generic *hā´ĕlōhîm* (eight out of forty times without the article), by the use of “under the sun” (twenty-seven times)—which indicates the breadth of his observations—and by the broad use of “man” and “children of men.” Hengel concludes with enumerating several aspects of Qoheleth’s thought “in which contacts with the spirit of early Hellenism might be visible”: (1) individuality of personality; (2) detached observations and rational thought in his attack on the traditional doctrine of retribution; (3) the distancing of God, eliminating a trustful relationship; (4) arbitrariness of human existence, governed by fate; (5) the resulting necessity of humans to be resigned, exercising a middle way in life’s course, with the possibility of carpe diem, however fleeting; (6) a certain “bourgeois ethic” in Qoheleth, who belonged to the upper class of society. All in all, Hengel’s arguments remain impressionistic, and dependent for the most part on secondary sources.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 172-73)
      5. “R. Braun has tried a different approach, adducing an astonishing number of parallels between Ecclesiastes and Greek thought from Homer to Menander. [Braun, R. *Kohelet und die frühhellenistische Populärphilosophie*. BZAW 130. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1973. 156-59 lists Hellenistic parallels.] But therein lies the difficulty. Few have taken the time to evaluate these examples.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 173)
      6. O. Kaiser cuts down Braun’s list to a third, and he also points out that the similarities may not be due to a literary knowledge, but merely reflect common themes and problems of life.” (Kaiser, O. “Judentum und Hellenismus.” *Der Mensch unter dem Schicksal*. BZAW 161. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1985. 138-40.) (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 173)
      7. J. Loader “grants that Ecclesiastes contains “elements from early Hellenistic philosophy” . . .” [178 n. 36] But for him “the question is really “how” Greek thought functions within the book. In other words, elements of Greek thought can be found, but how are they used by Qoheleth?” [178 n. 36] (Loader, J. *Polar Structures in the Book of Qohelet*. BZAW 152. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1979. 129.) (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 173, 178 n. 36)
      8. “At the present time the verdict on Qoheleth and Hellenism is still out.38 The general judgment is that he was a Jewish sage who was influenced by the Hellenistic spirit of his time, but the precise details for this position are difficult to establish.” [173] “Diethelm Michel observes that for the moment the pendulum has swung toward acceptance of Hellenistic influence . . .” (Michel, Diethelm. *Qohelet*. EF 258. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1988. 52 [see 58-65].) [178 n. 38] (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 173, 178 n. 38)
3. **Sirach and Hellenism**
   1. In “the first quarter of the second century . . . The process of Hellenization was being vigorously mounted in Jerusalem (1 Macc 1:11-15; 2 Macc 4:7-17) under Jason the high priest (174-171 b.c.e.). This was clearly a Hellenistic world, and the question arises: What was [173] Sirach’s relation to this culture?” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 173-74)
   2. Miriam Lichtheim (*Late Egyptian Wisdom Literature in the International Context*. OBO 52. Fribourg: Universitätsverlag, 1983.)
      1. Lichtheim (*Late Egyptian Wisdom Literature* 185): “Ben Sira’s knowledge of Hellenistic culture is beyond dispute; only its extent and the attitude in which he responded to Hellenism have been variously interpreted.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 178 n. 40)
      2. “. . . Miriam Lichtheim’s study [is] of the Egyptian demotic literature roughly contemporary with Ben Sira. She concludes that the Instruction of Ankhsheshonq draws on “widely shared international sapiential topics, treated in the prevailing modes of aphoristic gnomologia.” [*Late Egyptian Wisdom Literature* 65] This work reflects the sayings of Ahiqar as well as Hellenistic themes and concerns. Similarly for the Papyrus Insinger, which has many themes in common with Ben Sira: both have “reworked traditional sapiential topics in a modern spirit, one which reveals acquaintance with the internal culture of Hellenism.” [*Late Egyptian Wisdom Literature* 185] (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 174)
   3. Martin Hengel (*Judaism and Hellenism*. 2 vols. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974.)
      1. “Martin Hengel entitles his treatment of Sirach “Ben Sira and the controversy with hellenistic liberalism in Jerusalem.” (*Judaism and Hellenism* 1.131) Hengel assumes that Sirach was in “controversy” with Hellenistic culture. (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 178 n. 39)
      2. Sirach “is very much a conservative and traditionalist, relying strongly on the Book of Proverbs, emphasizing the Torah and Jewish fidelity. He does not appear as an “apostle to the Gentiles,” or even as speaking to Jews in the Diaspora. Hengel concludes that his “controversy is with those groups of the Jerusalem upper classes who as a result of their assimilation to foreign culture had become almost completely alienated from the belief of their ancestors.”” (*Judaism and Hellenism* 1.249) (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 174)
      3. “If “controversy” there was, it was positive, not negative (but cf. Sir 41:8-9), because Sirach believed that the tradition is its own best argument.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 174) Sir 41:8-9, “Woe to you, the ungodly, who have forsaken the law of the Most High God! 9If you have children, calamity will be theirs; you will beget them only for groaning. When you stumble, there is lasting joy; and when you die, a curse is your lot.”
   4. Theodor Middendorp (Middendorp, Theodor. *Die Stellung Jesu Ben Siras zwischen Judentum und Hellenismus*. Leiden: Brill, 1973.)
      1. Middendorp lists about a hundred parallels “between Sirach and Hellenism [Middendorp, *Stellung* 8-24] . . . In his view, these wide-ranging sources (especially Theognis, Euripides, and even Homer) were probably available to Sirach in a chrestomathy, and he read Theognis directly. But one may question if such a hypothesis really explains the alleged parallels.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 174)
      2. “Middendorp characterizes Sirach as a schoolbook executed according to Hellenistic standards. However, there is only one such schoolbook [178] that can be dated approximately from this period (ca. 225); it is an anthology of selections from Euripides, Homer, and other Greek writers. From such a work, Middendorp thinks, Ben Sira would presumably have drawn some of his knowledge of Hellenistic culture (he already knew Theognis). See the conclusions on pp. 32-34, 48-49.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 178 n. 40)
   5. J. Marböck (*Weisheit im Wandel*. BBB 37. Bonn: Hanstein, 1971.)
      1. “As a balance [to Middendorp], see the moderate conclusions of J. Marböck [*Weisheit im Wandel* 160-73].” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 178 n. 40)
   6. J. T. Sanders (Sanders, J. T. *Ben Sira and Demotic Wisdom*. SBLMS 28. Chico: Scholars, 1983.)
      1. “J. T. Sanders agrees with several of Middendorp’s conclusions about Sirach and Theognis, and he also discusses the relationship that authors have made between Sirach and the Isis texts (H. Conzelmann), Stoicism (R. Pautrel), and other Greek sources.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 174)
      2. “But Sanders’s main concern is to show an even greater dependence of Sirach upon the Papyrus Insinger, which he calls Phibis, the name of the apparent author that Lichtheim renders as Phebhor (*AEL*, III, 213). He reviews the work of previous scholars (P. Humbert, W. Fuss) on this question, and he offers some new examples of dependence. But this remains very hypothetical; how could Sirach have known of this work, which so far has been transmitted only in its original demotic?” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 174)
   7. “This entire matter of parallels with Ben Sira is a difficult area. Is the alleged dependence a literary one, or due to the common cultural legacy (e.g., attitude toward women), or to commonsense attitudes of daily experience (e.g., judgment on friends and friendship)? The picture seems too complex to be settled by lines of simple dependence. . . . In short, much more study is needed to detect the lines of dependence.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 174)
4. **Wisdom of Solomon**
   1. “. . . the writer was considerably influenced by Greek thought . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 175)
   2. See “the studies of C. Larcher, J. Reese, D. Winston, and Burton Mack,” discussed in the handout on Qoheleth. (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 175)
   3. M. Gilbert (“Wisdom Literature.” *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period*, ed. M. E. Stone. CRJNT 2. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984. 183-324.)
      1. M. Gilbert (“Wisdom Literature” 312): “The originality of Wisdom may be seen from the way it assimilates Hellenistic culture. Not only does the author write in Greek, use a Greek literary genre and take over, with due modifications, the Stoic doctrine of *pneuma*, but closely akin to the Bible though he is, he adopts the imagery, vocabulary and theories of contemporary Stoicism, a component of Middle Platonism. But he shows no mastery of these philosophies. His knowledge, indirect, seems to derive only from his general education. This may be illustrated by two points.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 179 n. 43)
         1. M. Gilbert (“Wisdom Literature” 312): “In Wis 13:1-9, the author seems clearly to be discussing a doctrine coming from the lost works of Aristotle, according to which the nature of the divine can be known from the world as a starting-point. But he eliminates the pantheistic tendencies of this doctrine by stating that recourse must also be made to the analogy of proportionality.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 179 n. 43)
         2. M. Gilbert (“Wisdom Literature” 312): “Then, he adopts the Hellenistic doctrine of “philanthropia”. This virtue, composed of goodness, kindness and mercy, is found, he says, in God (12:8) and in wisdom (1:6; 7:23). And Israel should imitate its God by practising it towards its enemies (12:19). The universalism of the author of Wisdom goes beyond that of his predecessors in the Bible.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 179 n. 43)
   4. “. . . the dependence of the writer on Greek ideas is not mechanical. The author remained intensely Jewish, while writing in a Hellenistic milieu and borrowing freely from it.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 175)
5. **conclusions**
   1. “First, it is important to recognize that a precedent for this kind of literature existed long before Israel.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 175)
   2. “Second, although the precise life setting varies from one area to another, a great similarity lies in the didactic situation that is common to all. The similarity can be more or less outstanding from culture to culture, but a certain common basis is provided. The hard question is the determination of the influence of one upon another . . .” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 175)
   3. “Finally, [comparisons] enable us to understand more clearly the issues in the Bible itself.” (Murphy, *Tree of Life* 175)

## PRIMARY TEXTS

### THE HYMN TO THE ATON

“The Hymn to the Aton.” *Old Testament Parallels: Laws and Stories from the Ancient Near East*. Ed. Victor H. Matthews and Don C. Benjamin. New York: Paulist, 1991. 153-56.

“The Hymn to the Aton” was inscribed in Egyptian hieroglyphics on the wall of The Tomb of Eye, which Pharaoh Akhenaton (1365-1348 bce) built for Queen Nefertiti’s father at Tell el-Amarna. The Egypt Exploration Fund excavated the site in 1891 and the German Orientgesellschaft continued the work from 1911-1914.

The hymn contains some lines from older hymns celebrating The Aton, The Sun Disc, and some conventional literary formulas typical of the genre. However, Akhenaton emphasized the exclusive worship of The Aton and his son, The Pharaoh. Akhenaton’s religious reform cannot be called “monotheism,” because The Aton and The Pharaoh are divine and, furthermore, The Aton is a combination of gods like Ra, Har-of-the-Horizon and Shu.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| _Pic2 | *Fig*. *80*. King Akhenaton with his wife and daughters worshiping the sun disk, the Aton, who extends life giving rays, pictured as hands. [153] . . . |

As you rise over the horizon, O Aton, First Among The Gods

Your beauty is made manifest, O Giver of Life.

You rise in the east

You fill every land with beauty.

Your glory shines high above every land,

Your rays enrich all the lands you created.

O Ra, you reach to the ends of the earth,

You bestow them on Akhenaton, your beloved son.

Although you are far away,

Your rays touch the earth.

Although you shine on every human face,

No one sees you go.

When you set upon the western horizon,

The earth lies in darkness and death.

Sleepers lie beneath their covers,

Seeing no one around them.

Their pillows could vanish,

They would not even notice.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| The lion leaves his cave,  The serpent strikes,  The darkness blankets the land.  The lands lie silent,  He who made them rests on the horizon.  At daybreak, you rise again over the horizon,  You shine as The Aton bringing day.  Your rays chase away the darkness.  The Two Lands of Egypt rejoice! | Ps 104:19-23, “You have made the moon to mark the seasons; the sun knows its time for setting. 20You make darkness, and it is night, when all the animals of the forest come creeping out. 21The young lions roar for their prey, seeking their food from God. 22When the sun rises, they withdraw and lie down in their dens. 23People go out to their work and to their labor until the evening.” |

Awake and erect,

You raise them up.

Bathed and dressed,

They raise their hands in praise.

The whole land goes to work . . . [154]

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Cattle graze contented,  Trees and plants turn green.  Birds fly to their nests,  They spread their wings to praise your Ka.  All things come to life,  When you have risen. | Ps 104:10-17, “You make springs gush forth in the valleys; they flow between the hills, 11giving drink to every wild animal; the wild asses quench their thirst. 12By the streams the birds of the air have their habitation; they sing among the branches. 13From your lofty abode you water the mountains; the earth is satisfied with the fruit of your work. 14You cause the grass to grow for the cattle, and plants for people to use, to bring forth food from the earth, 15and wine to gladden the human heart, oil to make the face shine, and bread to strengthen the human heart. 16The trees of the Lord are watered abundantly, the cedars of Lebanon that he planted. 17In them the birds build their nests; the stork has its home in the fir trees.” |
| Ships and barges sail up and down,  Canals open at your rising.  Fish swim the river,  Your rays penetrate even dark waters. | Ps 104:25-26, “Yonder is the sea, great and wide, creeping things innumerable are there, living things both small and great. 26There go the ships, and Leviathan that you formed to sport in it.” |
| O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name, | Ps 8:1, “O Lord, our Sovereign, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens.” |
| You join a woman and a man,  You form the fetus in its mother’s womb, | Ps 139:13, “For it was you who formed my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother’s womb.” |

You soothe the crying child unborn,

You nurse the hungry infant in the womb,

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| You breathe into its nostrils the breath of life. | Gen 2:7, “then the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being.” |

You open the newborn’s mouth on the day of its birth

You meet every human need.

. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .

In Khor [Syria-Palestine], Kush and Egypt,

You assign each a place.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| You allot to each both needs and food,  You count out to each the days of life. | Ps 104:27, “These all look to you to give them their food in due season . . .” |

You made the heavens in which to rise,

That you might observe all things.

You alone are The Aton,

Yet you alone rise—The Source of Life.

You alone are so far away,

. . . and yet so near.

Your manifestations are numberless

You are The Aton, The Source of Life.

Every town, harbor, field, road and river sees your light,

. . . feels your warmth.

You are The Aton,

You are The Daylight of The Earth.

. . . You are my desire,

No one knows you except Akhenaton, your son.

You have revealed yourself to me,

You have shown me your plans and your power. [155]

Your hand made The Earth,

You created it.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| When you rise,  The Earth lives.  When you set,  The Earth dies. | Ps 104:29-30, “When you hide your face, they are dismayed; when you take away their breath, they die and return to their dust. 30When you send forth your spirit, they are created; and you renew the face of the ground.” |

You are Life itself,

All live through you.

Every eye sees clearly until you set,

All work must wait until you rise again.

At your rising, every arm works for The Pharaoh,

At your creation, every foot sets off to work.  
You raise up the people for the son of your body,

. . . for The Pharaoh of Upper and Lower Egypt,

Who rules with the spirit of Maat, The God of Truth.

. . . Akhenaton and her royal highness, Nefertiti.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| _Pic6 | *Fig*. *81*. An Egyptian noble hunts birds in the Nile marshes and papyrus thickets. Beni Hasan tomb 3. 19th century b.c.e. [156] |

### EGYPTIAN LOVE SONGS

??

“Love Poems.” *Ancient Egyptian Literature: A Book of Readings*. Vol. 2: *The New Kingdom*. Trans. Miriam Lichtheim. 3 vols. Berkeley: U of California P, 1976. 181-93.

Four manuscripts containing love poems are known. They are: Papyrus Chester Beatty I; Papyrus Harris 500; a Turin Papyrus fragment; and a fragmentary Cairo Museum Vase.

The handsome and well-preserved *Papyrus Chester Beatty I* contains, along with other texts, three collections of love poems. They are: (I.a) An integrated cycle of seven stanzas, each with a numbered stanza heading, and the whole introduced by a title. The cycle occupies Section C 1-5 on the *verso* of the papyrus. (I.b) A sequence of three poems, lacking a numbering device but held together by their interrelated content. It occupies Section G 1-2 of the *verso*. (I.c) A loose collection of seven poems, not integrated as a cycle but held together by an introductory title. It occupies a page and a half on pages 16 and 17 of the *recto*. The translations given below contain the complete cycles I.a and I.b, and poems 3, 4, 6, and 7 of collection I.c.

*Papyrus Harris 500* (= P. British Museum 10060) also has three collections of love poems. Unfortunately, the papyrus is in a very poor state of preservation, and the poems have many lacunae, scribal errors, and other obscurities. The first collection consists of eight poems not connected with one another. There probably was an introductory heading but it is lost. Of the eight poems, numbers 5, 6, and 7 are rendered below. The second collection (II.b) also has eight poems. These too are essentially independent of one another, but there is some continuity of themes and the introductory heading is preserved. Of this group. numbers 2, 3, 6, 7, and 8 are translated here. The third collection (II.c) is an integrated cycle of three poems, each beginning with the name of a flower. The first two poems are complete, the third is a fragment. Numbers 1 and 2 are given below.

The short and fragmentary collection of the Turin Papyrus has been omitted here. Our final selection (III) consists of two poems from the *Cairo Vase*.

In their introductory titles some of the collections are called “sayings,” others are called “songs.” Calling them “love poems” rather than “love songs” is not meant to deny the probability that many of them were sung, but is designed to emphasize their literary origin. The freshness, immediacy, and universality of these poems should not mislead the reader into believing them to be the spontaneous outpourings of unlettered young lovers. Their style, prosody, and choice of words, all bear the stamp of deliberate, literate artistry.

The form basic to all the poems is the direct first-person speech of either a young man or a young woman. It is a monologue addressed to the speaker’s own heart. In the seven stanzas of the first Chester Beatty cycle there is a regular alternation of male and female speakers. The other collections do not have this regularity. The lovers refer to each other as “brother” and “sister,” these words being the normal terms of endearment in ancient Egyptian usage.

Though sophisticated in the context of their own times, the poems have the conceptual simplicity and the terseness of language that are the hallmarks of ancient Egyptian literature. That simplicity and terseness must be retained in the translations. Some recent renderings of Egyptian love poems exhibit a typically modern lush and mannered eroticism which is quite alien to the ancient Egyptian. These renderings are so [181] unfaithful to the letter and spirit of the originals as to be undeserving of the name “translations.”

Publication: I. The poems of P. Chester Beatty I: Gardiner, *Chester Beatty I*, pp. 27-38 and pls. 16-17, 22-26, and 29-30.

II. The poems of P. Harris 500: Müller, *Liebespoesie*, pp. 14-28 and pls. 2-15. E. A. W. Budge, *Facsimiles of Egyptian Hieratic Papyri in the British Museum*, *Second Series* (London, 1923), pls. 41-46.

III. The Cairo Vase: Posener, *Ostr. hiér*., Vol. II, fasc. 3 (1972), pp. 43-44 and pls. 75-79a.

Translation: P. Gilbert, *La poésie égyptienne*, (2d ed.; Brussels, 1949), pp. 42-79. Schott, *Liebeslieder*, pp. 39-69. Simpson, *Literature*, pp. 296-325.

Study: A. Hermann, *Altägyptische Liebesdichtung* (Wiesbaden, 1959).

FROM PAPYRUS CHESTER BEATTY I

**I.a** **A Cycle of Seven Stanzas**1

Beginning of the sayings of the great happiness

The *One*, the sister without peer,

The handsomest of all!

She looks like the rising morning star

At the start of a happy year.

Shining bright, fair of skin,

Lovely the look of her eyes,

Sweet the speech of her lips,

She has not a word too much.

Upright neck, shining breast,

Hair true lapis lazuli;

Arms surpassing gold,

Fingers like lotus buds.

Heavy thighs, narrow waist,

Her legs parade her beauty;

With graceful step she treads the ground,

Captures my heart by her movements.

She causes all men’s necks

To turn about to see her;

Joy has he whom she embraces,

He is like the first of men!

When she steps outside she seems

Like that other *One*!2

Second Stanza

My *brother* torments my heart with his voice,

He makes sickness take hold of me; [182]

He is neighbor to my mother’s house,

And I cannot go to him!

Mother is right in charging him thus:

“Give up seeing her!”

It pains my heart to think of him,

I am possessed by love of him.

Truly, he is a foolish one,

But I resemble him;

He knows not my wish to embrace him,

Or he would write to my mother.

Brother, I am promised to you

By the Gold3 of women!

Come to me that I see your beauty,

Father, Mother will rejoice!

My people will hail you all together,

They will hail you, O my *brother*!

Third Stanza

My heart *devised* to see her beauty

While sitting down in her house;

On the way I met Mehy on his chariot,

With him were his young men.

I knew not how to avoid him:

Should I stride on to pass him?

But the river was the road,

I knew no place for my feet.

My heart, you are very foolish,

Why accost Mehy?

If I pass before him,

I tell him my movements;

Here, I’m yours, I say to him,

Then he will shout my name,

And assign me to the first . . .

Among his *followers*.4

Fourth Stanza

My heart *flutters* hastily,

When I think of my love of you;

It lets me not act sensibly,5

It leaps <from> its place.

It lets me not put on a dress,

Nor wrap my scarf6 around me;

I put no paint upon my eyes,

I’m even not anointed. [183]

“Don’t wait, go there,”7 says it to me,

As often as I think of him;

My heart, don’t act so stupidly,

Why do you play the fool?

Sit still, the brother comes to you,

And many eyes as well!8

Let not the people say of me:

“A woman fallen through love!”

Be steady when you think of him,

My heart, do not *flutter*!

Fifth Stanza

I *praise* the Golden,9 I worship her majesty

I extol the Lady of Heaven:

give adoration to Hathor,

Laudations to my Mistress!

I called to her, she heard my plea,

She sent my mistress to me;

She came by herself to see me,

O great wonder that happened to me!

I was joyful, exulting, elated,

When they said: “See, she is here!”

As she came, the young men bowed,

Out of great love for her.

I make devotions to my goddess,

That she grant me my sister as gift;

Three days now10 that I pray11 to her name,

*Five* days since she went from me!

Sixth Stanza

I passed12 before his house,

I found his door ajar;

My brother stood by his mother,

And all his brothers with him.

Love of him captures the heart

Of all who tread the path;

Splendid youth who has no peer,

Brother outstanding in virtues!

He looked at me as I passed by,

And I, by myself, rejoiced;

How my heart exulted in gladness,

My brother, at your sight!

If only the mother knew my heart,

She would have understood by now; [184]

O Golden, put it in her heart,

Then will I hurry to my brother!

I will kiss him before his companions,

I would not weep before them;

I would rejoice at their understanding

That you acknowledge me!

I will make a feast for my goddess,

My heart leaps to go;

To let me see my brother tonight,

O happiness in *passing*!

Seventh Stanza

*Seven* days since I saw my sister.

And sickness invaded me;

I am heavy in all my limbs,

My body has forsaken me.

When the physicians come to me,

My heart rejects their remedies;

The magicians are quite helpless.

My sickness is not discerned.

To tell me “She is here” would revive me!

Her name would make me rise;

Her messenger’s coming and going,

That would revive my heart!

My sister is better than all prescriptions,

She does more for me than all medicines;

Her coming to me is my amulet,

The sight of her makes me well!

When she opens her eyes my body is young,

Her speaking makes me strong;

Embracing her expels my malady—

*Seven* days since she went from me!

notes

1. Text: Gardiner, *op. cit*., pls. 22-26: *Verso*, C 1-5. The cycle consists of seven stanzas, each headed by the word “house,” which means “stanza,” or, “chapter,” followed by a numeral. In addition, the first line of each stanza repeats the appropriate numeral, or uses a homophone of the numeral; and the same word recurs as the final word of the stanza. Thus the first stanza begins and ends with the word “one,” while the second begins and ends with the word “brother,” which is a homophone of the numeral “two,” and so on. The stanzas are spoken by a young man and a young woman in alternating sequence.

The texts are written with verse-points; sometimes these are misplaced. The sentences form distichs and quatrains. [185]

2. The “One” is the sun, viewed as the sole eye of heaven.

3. Hathor, patroness of love, was called “the gold” or “the golden one.”

4. This whole stanza is unfortunately rather obscure. It has been concluded that Mehy, spelled like the word *mḥy*, “flax,” is the name of a prince (see P. C. Smither, *JEA*, 34 (1948), 116, and A. Hermann, *op. cit*., pp. 105-108), but his role is enigmatic. Nor is it clear what the consequences of encountering him are, for the phrase *t3 kpyw tpy* is obscure. I agree with Hermann that the speaker of the stanza is the young man, not the young woman. The final *m-h* ?? unaccent-mark “u” under “h” *t* hardly matches the beginning *h* ?? unaccent-mark “u” under “h” *mt*.

5. Literally, “go about like a person.”

6. *Bhn* has been rendered “fan.” But the word for fan is *bht* and is written with the fan determinative, while the word written here as *bhn* has the cloth determinative.

7. *Pḥ hnw* can hardly mean “go home,” for the girl’s monologue indicates that she is in her home. I take it to mean “go to *his* home.” The verse-point after *hnw* is misplaced.

8. I.e., Many people will be watching you.

9. Ever since I found “O golden” in the poem “Calypso’s Island” by Archibald MacLeish (“She is not beautiful as you, O golden”) I think it permissible to write “golden” rather than “golden one.”

10. Literally, “Three days till yesterday.”

11. The verse-point is misplaced.

12. The scribe wrote, “He passed,” which is clearly wrong. The masculine and feminine suffixes are frequently garbled by the scribes of these texts.

FROM PAPYRUS CHESTER BEATTY I

**I.b Three Poems**1

I

O that you came to your sister swiftly!

Like a swift envoy of the king;

The heart of his lord frets for his message,

His heart is anxious to hear it.

All stables are held ready for him,

He has horses at the stations;

The chariot is harnessed in its place,

He may not pause on the road.

When he arrives at his sister’s house,

His heart will jubilate!

II

O that you came to <your sister swiftly>!

Like a horse of the king; [186]

Picked from a thousand steeds of all kinds,

The choicest of the stables.

It is singled out in its feed,

Its master knows its paces;

When it hears the sound of the whip,

There’s no holding it back.

There’s no chief of charioteers

Who could overtake it.

Sister’s heart is aware:

He is not far from her!

III

O that you came to your sister swiftly,

Like a bounding gazelle in the wild;

Its feet reel, its limbs are weary,

Terror has entered its body.

A hunter pursues it with his hounds,

They do not see <it in> its dust;

It sees a resting place as a ⌐trap¬2

It takes the river as road.

May you attain her hiding-place,

Before your hand is kissed four times;

As you pursue your sister’s love,

The Golden gives her to you, my friend!

notes

1. Text: Gardiner, *op. cit*., pls. 29-30: *Verso*, G 1-2.

2. An illegible word.

FROM PAPYRUS CHESTER BEATTY 1

**I.c A Collection**1

Beginning of the sweet sayings found in a text collection, made by2 the scribe of the necropolis, Nakht-Sobk.

3

How well she knows to cast the noose,

And yet not pay the cattle tax!

She casts the noose on me with her hair,

She captures me with her eye;

She curbs me with her necklace,

She brands me with her seal ring. [187]

4

Why do you argue with your heart?

Go after her, embrace her!

As Amun lives, I come to you,

My cloak over my arm.

6

What my sister did to me!

Why keep silent about it?

Left me to stand at her house door.

While she herself went inside!

She didn’t say, “Come in, young man,”

She was deaf tonight.

7

I passed by her house in the dark,

I knocked and no one opened;

A good night to our doorkeeper,

Bolt, I will open!

Door, you are my fate,

You are my own good spirit;

Our ox will be slaughtered inside,

Door, do not show your strength!

We’ll offer a long-horn to the bolt,

A short-horn to the lock,

A wild goose to the door-posts,

Its fat to the key.

And the choice cuts of our ox

Are for the carpenter’s boy;

So he’ll make for us a bolt of reeds,

And a door of woven grass.

Now any time the brother comes,

He’ll find her house is open;

He’ll find a bed laid with fine sheets,

A lovely girl is with them.

The girl will tell me: “My house here,

Its owner is the mayor’s son!”

notes

1. Text: Gardiner, *op. cit*., pls. 16-17: *Recto*, 16-17. The text is written with verse-points and paragraph signs. The poems in this collection are gay, light, and humorous. [188]

2. The formula *ir.n* [*sic*] usually means “copied by” a scribe who is not the author. But U. Luft in a new study *(ZÄS*, 99 (1973), 108-116) concludes that in Ramesside times *ir.n* could also convey the claim of authorship, whether or not the claim was true.

FROM PAPYRUS HARRIS 500

**II.a The First Collection**1

5

I fare north in the ferry

By the oarsman’s stroke,

On my shoulder my bundle of reeds;

I am going to Memphis

To tell Ptah, Lord of Truth:

Give me my sister tonight!

The river is as if of wine,

Its rushes are Ptah,

Sakhmet is its foliage,

Iadet2 its buds,

Nefertem its lotus blossoms.

[The Golden] is in joy

When earth brightens in her beauty;

Memphis is a bowl of fruit

Placed before the fair-of-face!3

6

I shall lie down at home

And pretend to be ill;

Then enter the neighbors to see me,

Then comes my sister with them.

She will make the physicians unneeded,

She understands my illness!

7

The mansion of my sister,

With door in the center of her house,

Its door-leaves are open,

The bolt is sprung,

My sister is angry!

If only I were made doorkeeper!

Then I would make her rage at me, [189]

Then I would hear her angry voice,

And be a child in fear of her!

notes

1. Text: Müller, *op. cit*., pls. 4-5: *Recto*, 2. No verse-points are used; but the poems are separated by paragraph signs.

2. An unknown divinity.

3. Epithet of Ptah.

FROM PAPYRUS HARRIS 500

**II.b The Second Collection**1

Beginning of the delightful, beautiful songs of your beloved sister as she comes from the fields.

2

The voice of the wild goose shrills,

It is caught by its bait;

My love of you pervades me,

I cannot loosen it.

I shall retrieve my nets,

But what do I tell my mother,

To whom I go daily,

Laden with bird catch?

I have spread no snares today,

I am caught in my love of you!

3

The wild goose soars and swoops,

It alights on the net;

Many birds swarm about,

I have work to do.

I am held fast by my love,

Alone, my heart meets your heart,

From your beauty I’ll not part!

6

The voice of the dove is calling,

It says: “It’s day! Where are you?” [190]

O bird, stop scolding me!

I found my brother on his bed,

My heart was overjoyed;

Each said: “I shall not leave you,

My hand is in your hand;

You and I shall wander

In all the places fair.”

He makes me the foremost of women,

He does not aggrieve my heart.

7

My gaze is fixed on the garden gate,

My brother will come to me;

Eyes on the road, ears straining,

I wait for him who neglects me.2

I made my brother’s love my sole concern,

About him my heart is not silent;

It sends me a fleet-footed messenger

Who comes and goes to tell me:

“He deceives you, in other words,3

He found another woman,

She is dazzling to his eyes.”

Why vex another’s heart to death?4

8

My heart thought of my love of you,

When half of my hair was braided;

I came at a run to find you,

And neglected my hairdo.

Now if you let me braid my hair,

I shall be ready in a moment.

notes

1. Text: Müller, *op. cit*., pls. 8-13: *Recto*, 4-6.

2. Not a personal name, but the verb *mhi*, “neglect,” preceded by the article. Except for Prince Mehy (spelled *mḥy*) no personal names occur in the love poems.

3. For *m ky dd*, as recognized by Müller, *op. cit*., p. 25 n. 8, and discussed by Gardiner, *JEA*, 24 (1938), 243-244.

4. The whole second half of the poem is difficult and has been rendered in various ways. [191]

FROM PAPYRUS HARRIS 500

**II.c The Third Collection**1

Beginning of the songs of delight

Portulaca:2 apportioned to you is my heart,

I do for you what it desires,

When I am in your arms.

My longing for you is my eye-paint,

When I see you my eyes shine;

I press close to you to look at you,

Beloved of men, who rules my heart!

O happiness of this hour,

Let the hour go on forever!

Since I have lain with you,

You raised up my heart;

Be it sad or gay,

Do not leave me!

2

*Saam*-plants here summon us.

I am your sister, your best one;

I belong to you like this plot of ground

That I planted with flowers

And sweet-smelling herbs.

Sweet is its stream,

Dug by your hand,

Refreshing in the northwind.

A lovely place to wander in,

Your hand in my hand.

My body thrives, my heart exults

At our walking together;

Hearing your voice is pomegranate wine,

I live by hearing it.

Each look with which you look at me

Sustains me more than food and drink.

notes

1. Text: Müller, *op.* *cit*., pls. 14-15: *Recto*, 7.

2. Each poem begins with the name of a flower, followed by a verb of similar sound. These wordplays cannot be imitated adequately. The *mh* ?? unaccent-mark “u” under “h” *mh* ?? unaccent-mark “u” under “h” -flower has been guessed to be the portulaca. [192]

FROM THE CAIRO VASE 1266 + 25218

**III. A Collection**1

My sister’s love is on yonder side,

The river is between our bodies;

The waters are mighty at [flood]-time,

A crocodile waits in the shallows.

I enter the water and brave the waves,

My heart is strong on the deep;

The crocodile seems like a mouse to me,

The flood as land to my feet.

It is her love that gives me strength,

It makes a water-spell for me;

I gaze at my heart’s desire,

As she stands facing me!

My sister has come, my heart exults,

My arms spread out to embrace her:

My heart bounds in its place,

Like the red fish in its pond.

O night, be mine forever,

Now that my queen has come!

notes

1. Before it was broken, this tall vase had been inscribed with a large collection of love poems. Three fragments of the vase have been known since 1897. Twenty-eight more fragments were found in the excavation of Deir el-Medina in 1949-1951. The thirty-one pieces have now been published as an integrated text by C. Posener in his *Ostr*. *hiér*., II/3, pp. 43-44 and pls. 74-79a. The vase is still far from complete, hence most of the poems have lengthy lacunae. The poems are separated by paragraph signs; there are no verse-points.

Two complete poems are translated here. Both had been known in part from the original three fragments. But in translating them the lacunae, now filled by the new fragments, had not been correctly gauged and restored. Hence the earlier translations are obsolete. The two poems begin on plate 76, line 11. [193]

### THE INSTRUCTION OF PTAHHOTEP

“The Instruction of Ptahhotep.” *Ancient Egyptian Literature: A Book of Readings*. Ed. Miriam Lichtheim. 3 vols. Berkeley: U of California P, 1973. 1: 61-80.

This long work has survived in four copies, three of which are written on papyrus rolls while the fourth, containing only the beginning, is on a wooden tablet. The only complete version is that of Papyrus Prisse of the Bibliothèque Nationale, which dates from the Middle Kingdom. The other two papyri, both in the British Museum, are from the Middle and New Kingdoms, respectively. The wooden tablet, Carnarvon Tablet I in the Cairo Museum, also dates from the New Kingdom. The version of P. Prisse differs considerably from that of the other three copies. The translation here given reproduces the text of P. Prisse only.

The work consists of thirty-seven maxims framed by a prologue and an epilogue. Each maxim is developed as a unit of at least four, and rarely more than twelve, sentences and clauses. In one case, maxims 2-4, a theme is developed over three consecutive maxims thus forming a larger whole. Some themes and topics recur several times, an indication of their importance in the scale of values. [61]

Taken together, the thirty-seven maxims do not amount to a comprehensive moral code, nor are they strung together in any logical order. But they touch upon the most important aspects of human relations and they focus on the basic virtues. The cardinal virtues are self-control, moderation, kindness, generosity, justice, and truthfulness tempered by discretion [*sic*] These virtues are to be practiced alike toward all people. No martial virtues are mentioned. The ideal man is a man of peace.

As stated in the Introduction, in my opinion the most plausible date for the composition of this work is the latter part of the Sixth Dynasty,[[3]](#footnote-3) a time in which Old Egyptian had evolved considerably in the direction of Middle Egyptian, a time in which the autobiographies in private tombs show an intellectual and literary capability comparable with the Maxims of Ptahhotep, and a time in which the monarchy was still serene and society ordered and secure. . . .

The text is exceedingly difficult, and the translations differ widely. The best translation is that of Žába in his new and standard edition of 1956. I have frequently departed from all translations without mentioning these departures in notes, so as not to create an excessively heavy apparatus of annotations.

The numbers in parentheses are the line numbers that were assigned by Devaud and Žába, which are equated with the page and line numbers of Papyrus Prisse, where the text begins on page 4. The numbers in the margin identify the individual maxims.

(I = 4, I) Instruction of the Mayor of the city, the Vizier Ptahhotep, under the Majesty of King Isesi, who lives for all eternity. The mayor of the city, the vizier Ptahhotep, said:

O king, my lord!

Age is here, old age arrived, [62]

Feebleness came, weakness grows,

(10) ⌐Childlike¬ one sleeps all day.

Eyes are dim, ears deaf,

Strength is waning through weariness,

The mouth, silenced, speaks not,

The heart, void, recalls not the past,

The bones ache throughout.

Good has become evil, all taste is gone,

(20 = 5, 2) What age does to people is evil in everything.

The nose, clogged, breathes not,

⌐Painful¬ are standing and sitting.

May this servant be ordered to make a staff of old age,

(30) So as to tell him the words of those who heard,

The ways of the ancestors,

Who have listened to the gods.

May such be done for you,

So that strife may be banned from the people,

And the Two Shores may serve you!

Said the majesty of this god:

Instruct him then in the sayings of the past,

May he become a model for the children of the great,

(40) May obedience enter him,

And the devotion of him who speaks to him,

No one is born wise.

Beginning of the formulations of excellent discourse spoken by the Prince, Count, God’s Father, God’s beloved, Eldest Son of the King, of his body, Mayor of the city and Vizier, Ptahhotep, in instructing the ignorant in knowledge and in the standard of excellent discourse, as profit for him who will hear, (50) as woe to him who would neglect them. He spoke to his son:

1. Don’t be proud of your knowledge,

Consult the ignorant and the wise;

The limits of art are not reached,

No artist’s skills are perfect;

Good speech is more hidden than greenstone,

Yet may be found among maids at the grindstones.

2. If you meet a disputant in action,

(61 = 5, 11) A powerful man, superior to you, [63]

Fold your arms, bend your back,

To flout him will not make him agree with you.

Make little of the evil speech

By not opposing him while he’s in action;

He will be called an ignoramus,

Your self-control will match his pile (of words).

3. If you meet a disputant in action

Who is your equal, on your level,

(70) You will make your worth exceed his by silence,

While he is speaking evilly,

There will be much talk by the hearers,

Your name will be good in the mind of the magistrates.

4. If you meet a disputant in action,

A poor man, not your equal,

Do not attack him because he is weak,

Let him alone, he will confute himself.

Do not answer him to relieve your heart,

Do not vent yourself against your opponent,

(81 = 6, 3) Wretched is he who injures a poor man,

One will wish to do what you desire,

You will beat him through the magistrates’ reproof.

5. If you are a man who leads,

Who controls the affairs of the many,

Seek out every beneficent deed,

That your conduct may be blameless.

Great is justice, lasting in effect,

Unchallenged since the time of Osiris.

(90) One punishes the transgressor of laws,

Though the greedy overlooks this;

Baseness may seize riches,

Yet crime never lands its wares;

In the end it is justice that lasts,

Man says: “It is my father’s ground.”

6. (99 = 6, 8) Do not scheme against people,

God punishes accordingly:

If a man says: “I shall live by it,”

He will lack bread for his mouth. [64]

If a man says: “I shall be rich,”

He will have to say: “My cleverness has snared me.”

If he says: “I will snare for myself,”

He will be unable to say: “I snared for my profit.”

(111) If a man says: “I will rob someone,”

He will end up being given to a stranger.

People’s schemes do not prevail,

God’s command is what prevails;

Live then in the midst of peace,

What they give comes by itself.

7. (119 = 6, 11) If you are one among guests

At the table of one greater than you,

Take what he gives as it is set before you;

Look at what is before you,

Don’t shoot many glances at him,

Molesting him offends the *ka*.

Don’t speak to him until he summons,

One does not know what may displease;

Speak when he has addressed you,

(130) Then your words will please the heart.

The nobleman, when he is behind food,

Behaves as his *ka* commands him;

He will give to him whom he favors,

It is the custom when night has come.

It is the *ka* that makes his hands reach out,

(140) The great man gives to the chosen man;

Thus eating is under the counsel of god,

A fool is who complains of it.

8. If you are a man of trust,

Sent by one great man to another,

Adhere to the nature of him who sent you,

Give his message as he said it.

Guard against reviling speech,

(150) Which embroils one great with another;

Keep to the truth, don’t exceed it,

But an outburst should not be repeated.

Do not malign anyone,

(160 = 7, 5) Great or small, the *ka* abhors it. [65]

9. If you plow and there’s growth in the field,

And god lets it prosper in your hand,

Do not boast at your neighbors’ side,

One has great respect for the silent man:

Man of character is man of wealth.

If he robs he is like a crocodile in court.

Don’t impose on one who is childless,

(170) Neither decry nor boast of it;

There is many a father who has grief,

And a mother of children less content than another;

It is the lonely whom god fosters,

While the family man prays for a follower.

10. If you are poor, serve a man of worth,

That all your conduct may be well with the god.

Do not recall if he once was poor,

Don’t be arrogant toward him

For knowing his former state;

Respect him for what has accrued to him,

For wealth does not come by itself.

It is their law for him whom they love,

His gain, he gathered it himself;

It is the god who makes him worthy

And protects him while he sleeps.

11. Follow your heart as long as you live,

Do no more than is required,

Do not shorten the time of “follow-the-heart,”

Trimming its moment offends the *ka*.

(190) Don’t waste time on daily cares

Beyond providing for your household;

When wealth has come, follow your heart,

Wealth does no good if one is glum!

12. If you are a man of worth

And produce a son by the grace of god,

(199) If he is straight, takes after you,

Takes good care of your possessions,

Do for him all that is good,

He is your son, your *ka* begot him,

Don’t withdraw your heart from him. [66]

But an offspring can make trouble:

If he strays, neglects your counsel,

(210) Disobeys all that is said,

His mouth spouting evil speech,

Punish him for all his talk!

They hate him who crosses you,

His guilt was fated in the womb;

He whom they guide can not go wrong,

Whom they make boatless can not cross.

13. (220 = 8, 2) If you are in the antechamber,

Stand and sit as fits your rank,

Which was assigned you the first day.

Do not trespass—you will be turned back,

Keen is the face to him who enters announced,

Spacious the seat of him who has been called.

The antechamber has a rule,

All behavior is by measure;

It is the god who gives advancement,

(231) He who uses elbows is not helped.

14. If you are among the people,

Gain supporters through being trusted;

The trusted man who does not vent his belly’s speech,

He will himself become a leader.

A man of means—what is he like?

(240) Your name is good, you are not maligned,

Your body is sleek, your face benign,

One praises you without your knowing.

He whose heart obeys his belly

Puts contempt of himself in place of love,

His heart is bald, his body unanointed;

The great-hearted is god-given,

He who obeys his belly belongs to the enemy.

15. Report your commission without faltering,

(250 = 8, 12) Give your advice in your master’s council.

If he is fluent in his speech,

It will not be hard for the envoy to report,

Nor will he be answered, “Who is he to know it?”

As to the master, his affairs will fail [67]

If he plans to punish him for it,

He should be silent upon (hearing): “I have told.”

16. If you are a man who leads,

Whose authority reaches wide,

You should do outstanding things,

(260 = 9, 2) Remember the day that comes after.

No strife will occur in the midst of honors,

But where the crocodile enters hatred arises.

17. If you are a man who leads,

Listen calmly to the speech of one who pleads;

Don’t stop him from purging his body

Of that which he planned to tell.

A man in distress wants to pour out his heart

More than that his case be won.

(273) About him who stops a plea

One says: “Why does he reject it?”

Not all one pleads for can be granted,

But a good hearing soothes the heart.

18. If you want friendship to endure

In the house you enter

As master, brother, or friend,

(280) In whatever place you enter,

Beware of approaching the women!

Unhappy is the place where it is done,

Unwelcome is he who intrudes on them.

A thousand men are turned away from their good:

A short moment like a dream,

Then death comes for having known them.

Poor advice is “shoot the opponent,”

When one goes to do it the heart rejects it.

He who fails through lust of them,

No affair of his can prosper.

19. (298 = 10, 1) If you want a perfect conduct,

To be free from every evil,

Guard against the vice of greed:

A grievous sickness without cure,

There is no treatment for it. [68]

It embroils fathers, mothers,

And the brothers of the mother,

It parts wife from husband;

It is a compound of all evils,

A bundle of all hateful things,

That man endures whose rule is rightness,

Who walks a straight line;

(314) He will make a will by it,

The greedy has no tomb.

20. Do not be greedy in the division,

Do not covet more than your share;

Do not be greedy toward your kin,

The mild has a greater claim than the harsh.

Poor is he who shuns his kin,

He is deprived of ⌐interchange¬.

Even a little of what is craved

Turns a quarreler into an amiable man.

21. (325) When you prosper and found your house,

And love your wife with ardor,

Feed her belly, clothe her back,

Ointment soothes her body.

Gladden her heart as long as you live,

She is a fertile field for her lord.

Do not contend with her in court,

Keep her from power, restrain her—

Her eye is her storm when she gazes—

Thus will you make her stay in your house.

———.

22. (339 = 11, 1) Sustain your friends with what you have,

You have it by the grace of god;

Of him who fails to sustain his friends

One says, “a selfish *ka*.”

One plans the morrow but knows not what will be,

The (right) *ka* is the *ka* by which one is sustained.

If praiseworthy deeds are done,

Friends will say, “welcome!”

One does not bring supplies to town,

One brings friends when there is need. [69]

23. (350 = 11, 5) Do not repeat calumny,

Nor should you listen to it,

It is the spouting of the hot-bellied.

Report a thing observed, not heard,

If it is negligible, don’t say anything,

He who is before you recognizes worth.

⌐If a seizure is ordered and carried out,

Hatred will arise against him who seizes;¬

Calumny is like a dream against which one covers the face.

24. (362) If you are a man of worth

Who sits in his master’s council,

Concentrate on excellence,

Your silence is better than chatter.

Speak when you know you have a solution,

It is the skilled who should speak in council;

Speaking is harder than all other work,

He who understands it makes it serve.

25. If you are mighty, gain respect through knowledge

(371) And through gentleness of speech.

Don’t command except as is fitting,

He who provokes gets into trouble.

Don’t be haughty, lest you be humbled,

Don’t be mute, lest you be chided.

When you answer one who is fuming,

Avert your face, control yourself.

The flame of the hot-heart sweeps across,

He who steps gently, his path is paved.

He who frets all day has no happy moment,

He who’s gay all day can’t keep house.

———.

26. (388) Don’t oppose a great man’s action,

Don’t vex the heart of one who is burdened;

If he gets angry at him who foils him,

The *ka* will part from him who lives him.

Yet he is the provider along with the god,

What he wishes should be done for him.

When he turns his face back to you after raging,

There will be peace from his *ka*; [70]

As ill will comes from opposition,

So goodwill increases love.

27. Teach the great what is useful to him,

(400 = 12, 10) Be his aid before the people;

If you let his knowledge impress his lord,

Your sustenance will come from his *ka*.

As the favorite’s belly is filled,

So your back will be clothed by it,

And his help will be there to sustain you.

For your superior whom you love

And who lives by it,

He in turn will give you good support.

Thus will love of you endure

In the belly of those who love you,

He is a *ka* who loves to listen.

28. (415 = 13, 1) If you are a magistrate of standing,

Commissioned to satisfy the many,

⌐Hew a straight line.¬

When you speak don’t lean to one side,

Beware lest one complain:

“Judges, he distorts the matter!”

And your deed turns into a judgment (of you).

29. If you are angered by a misdeed,

Lean toward a man on account of his rightness;

Pass it over, don’t recall it,

Since he was silent to you the first day.

30. (428) If you are great after having been humble,

Have gained wealth after having been poor

In the past, in a town which you know,

⌐Knowing¬ your former condition,

Do not put trust in your wealth,

Which came to you as gift of god;

So that you will not fall behind one like you,

To whom the same has happened.

31. (441) Bend your back to your superior,

Your overseer from the palace;

Then your house will endure in its wealth, [71]

Your rewards in their right place.

Wretched is he who opposes a superior,

One lives as long as he is mild,

Baring the arm does not hurt it.

Do not plunder a neighbor’s house,

Do not steal the goods of one near you,

Lest he denounce you before you are heard.

A quarreler is a mindless person,

If he is known as an aggressor

The hostile man will have trouble in the neighborhood.

32. *This maxim is an injunction against illicit sexual intercourse*. *It is very obscure and has been omitted here*.

33. If you probe the character of a friend,

Don’t inquire, but approach him,

Deal with him alone,

So as not to suffer from his manner.

Dispute with him after a time,

(470) Test his heart in conversation;

If what he has seen escapes him,

If he does a thing that annoys you,

Be yet friendly with him, don’t attack;

Be restrained, don’t let fly,

Don’t answer with hostility,

Neither part from him nor attack him;

His time does not fail to come,

One does not escape what is fated.

34. (481) Be generous as long as you live,

What leaves the storehouse does not return;

It is the food to be shared which is coveted,

One whose belly is empty is an accuser;

One deprived becomes an opponent,

Don’t have him for a neighbor.

Kindness is a man’s memorial

For the years after the function.

35. (489 = 15, 3) Know your helpers, then you prosper,

Don’t be mean toward your friends,

They are one’s watered field,

And greater then one’s riches, [72]

For what belongs to one belongs to another.

The character of a son-of-man is profit to him;

Good nature is a memorial.

36. Punish firmly, chastise soundly,

Then repression of crime becomes an example;

Punishment except for crime

Turns the complainer into an enemy.

37. (499) If you take to wife a *špnt*

Who is joyful and known by her town,

If she is ⌐fickle¬ and likes the moment,

Do not reject her, let her eat,

The joyful brings ⌐happiness.¬

*Epilogue*

If you listen to my sayings,

All your affairs will go forward;

In their truth resides their value,

Their memory goes on in the speech of men,

Because of the worth of their precepts;

If every word is carried on,

They will not perish in this land.

If advice is given for the good,

The great will speak accordingly;

It is teaching a man to speak to posterity,

He who hears it becomes a master-hearer;

It is good to speak to posterity,

It will listen to it.

(520 = 15, 12) If a good example is set by him who leads,

He will be beneficent for ever,

His wisdom being for all time.

The wise feeds his *ba* with what endures,

So that it is happy with him on earth.

The wise is known by his wisdom,

The great by his good actions;

His heart ⌐matches¬ his tongue,

His lips are straight when he speaks;

(530) He has eyes that see,

His ears are made to hear what will profit his son,

Acting with truth he is free of falsehood. [73]

Useful is hearing to a son who hears;

If hearing enters the hearer,

The hearer becomes a listener,

Hearing well is speaking well.

(540 = 16, 5) Useful is hearing to one who hears,

Hearing is better than all else,

It creates good will.

How good for a son to grasp his father’s words,

He will reach old age through them.

He who hears is beloved of god,

He whom god hates does not hear.

(550) The heart makes of its owner a hearer or non-hearer,

Man’s heart is his life-prosperity-health!

The hearer is one who hears what is said,

He who loves to hear is one who does what is said.

How good for a son to listen to his father,

How happy is he to whom it is said:

“The son, he pleases as a master of hearing.”

The hearer of whom this is said,

He is well-endowed

And honored by his father;

His remembrance is in the mouth of the living,

Those on earth and those who will be.

(564) If a man’s son accepts his father’s words,

No plan of his will go wrong.

Teach your son to be a hearer,

One who will be valued by the nobles;

One who guides his speech by what he was told,

One regarded as a hearer.

This son excels, his deeds stand out,

While failure follows him who hears not.

The wise wakes early to his lasting gain,

While the fool is hard pressed.

(575) The fool who does not hear,

He can do nothing at all;

He sees knowledge in ignorance,

Usefulness in harmfulness.

He does all that one detests [74]

And is blamed for it each day;

He lives on that by which one dies,

His food is distortion of speech.

His sort is known to the officials,

Who say: “A living death each day.”

One passes over his doings,

Because of his many daily troubles.

(588 = 17, 10) A son who hears is a follower of Horus,

It goes well with him when he has heard.

When he is old, has reached veneration,

He will speak likewise to his children,

Renewing the teaching of his father.

Every man teaches as he acts,

He will speak to the children,

So that they will speak to their children:

Set an example, don’t give offense,

If justice stands firm your children will live.

As to the first who gets into trouble,

(600) When they see (it) people will say:

“That is just like him.”

And will say to what they hear:

“That’s just like him too.”

To see everyone is to satisfy the many,

Riches are useless without them.

Don’t take a word and then bring it back,

Don’t put one thing in place of another.

Beware of loosening the cords in you,

Lest a wise man say:

“Listen, if you want to endure in the mouth of the hearers,

Speak after you have mastered the craft!”

If you speak to good purpose,

All your affairs will be in place.

(618) Conceal your heart, control your mouth,

Then you will be known among the officials;

Be quite exact before your lord,

Act so that one will say to him: “He’s the son of that one.”

And those who hear it will say:

“Blessed is he to whom he was born!” [75]

Be deliberate when you speak,

So as to say things that count;

Then the officials who listen will say:

“How good is what comes from his mouth!”

Act so that your lord will say of you:

“How good is he whom his father taught;

When he came forth from his body,

He told him all that was in (his) mind,

And he does even more than he was told.”

(633 = 19, 5) Lo, the good son, the gift of god,

Exceeds what is told him by his lord,

He will do right when his heart is straight.

As you succeed me, sound in your body,

The king content with all that was done,

May you obtain (many) years of life!

Not small is what I did on earth,

I had one hundred and ten years of life

As gift of the king,

Honors exceeding those of the ancestors,

By doing justice for the king,

Until the state of veneration!

(645 = 19, 9) *Colophon*: It is done from its beginning to its end as it was found in writing.

#### SUMMARY OF THEMES

#### IN THE INSTRUCTION OF PTAHHOTEP

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| prologue: old age  1 skillful speech  2 a superior disputant  3 an equal disputant  4 an inferior disputant  5 justice, not crime, lasts  6 man proposes, God disposes  7 table manners  8 be a good messenger  9 do not boast  10 respect the nouveau riche; wealth is from the gods  11 enjoy life (follow your heart)  12 good son; bad son; determinism  13 behave as befits your rank; determinism  14 disciplined vs. undisciplined  15 be a good messenger  16 be a good leader  17 be a leader who listens  18 control sexual impulses  19 the greedy vs. the upright  20 greed  21 wife  22 friends  23 speech: calumny | 24 speech: control  25 speech: moderation  26 don’t oppose superiors  27 advise your superior  28 be just  29 forgiveness  30 stay humble when wealthy  31 serve your superior; stealing; speech: quarreling  32 illicit sexual intercourse  33 friendship: testing a friend; moderation  34 generosity  35 friends (servants); be good natured  36 punish firmly but justly  37 wife  epilogue:  heed my sayings  a good son hears wisdom  a good son hears, a fool doesn’t  the fool  a good son hears, then teaches his sons  the fool  speech: control  son succeeds father |

#### PARALLELS BETWEEN

#### THE INSTRUCTION OF AMENEMOPE

#### AND THE BOOK OF PROVERBS

(esp. Prov 22:17-24:22)

“The Instruction of Amen-em-opet.” Trans. John A. Wilson. *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*. Ed. James B. Pritchard. 3rd ed. with supplement. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1969. 421-25 (italics deleted). Proverbs are nrsv.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| *Amenemope* | *Proverbs* |
| 1:5-6, know how to return an answer to him who said it, and to direct a report to one who has sent him . . . | 22:21, Do not say, “I will repay evil”; wait for the Lord, and he will help you. |
| 1:7, in order to direct him to the ways of life . . . | 22:19, So that your trust may be in the Lord, I have made them known to you to­day—yes, to you. |
| 3:9-11, 16, Give thy ears, hear what is said, Give thy heart to understand them. To put them in thy heart is worth while . . . They shall be a mooring-stake for thy tongue. | 22:17-18, The words of the wise: Incline your ear and hear my words, and apply your mind to my teaching; 18for it will be pleasant if you keep them within you, if all of them are ready on your lips. |
| 4:4-5, Guard thyself against robbing the oppressed And against overbearing the disabled. | 22:22, Do not rob the poor because they are poor, or crush the afflicted at the gate . . . |
| 5:1-6, For we shall not act like him [the wicked man]—Lift him up, give him thy hand; Leave him (in the arms of the god; Fill his belly with bread of thine, So that he may be sated and may be ashamed. | 24:29, Do not say, “I will do to others as they have done to me; I will pay them back for what they have done.”  25:21-22, 21If your enemies are hungry, give them bread to eat; and if they are thirsty, give them water to drink; 22for you will heap coals of fire on their heads, and the Lord will reward you. |
| 6:1-12, As for the heated man of a temple, He is like a tree growing in the open. In the completion of a moment (comes) its loss of foliage, And its end is reached in the shipyards; (Or) it is floated far from its place, And the flame is its burial shroud. (But) the truly silent man holds himself apart. He is like a tree growing in a garden. It flourishes and doubles its yield; It (stands) before its lord. Its fruit is sweet; its shade is pleasant; And its end is reached in the garden. | See Ps 1, Happy are those who do not follow the advice of the wicked, or take the path that sinners tread, or sit in the seat of scoffers; 2but their delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law they meditate day and night. 3They are like trees planted by streams of water, which yield their fruit in its season, and their leaves do not wither. In all that they do, they prosper. 4The wicked are not so, but are like chaff that the wind drives away. 5Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous; 6for the Lord watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.  See Jer 17:5-8, Thus says the Lord: Cursed are those who trust in mere mortals and make mere flesh their strength, whose hearts turn away from the Lord. 6They shall be like a shrub in the desert, and shall not see when relief comes. They shall live in the parched places of the wilderness, in an uninhabited salt land. 7Blessed are those who trust in the Lord, whose trust is the Lord. 8They shall be like a tree plan­ted by water, sending out its roots by the stream. It shall not fear when heat comes, and its leaves shall stay green; in the year of drought it is not anxious, and it does not cease to bear fruit. |
| 7:12-15, Do not carry off the landmark at the boundaries of the arable land, Nor disturb the position of the measuring-cord; Be not greedy after a cubit of land, Nor en­croach upon the boundaries of a widow.  8:9-10, Guard against encroaching upon the boundaries of the fields, Lest a terror carry thee off. | 22:28, Do not remove the ancient landmark that your ancestors set up.  23:10, Do not remove an ancient landmark or encroach on the fields of orphans . . . |
| 8:11-12, One satisfies god with the will of the Lord, Who determines the boun­dar­ies of the arable land. | 23:11, for their redeemer is strong; he will plead their cause against you. [“The thought is gen­er­ally that of Prov. 23:11.” 423 n. 14] |
| 9:5-8, Better is poverty in the hand of the god Than riches in a storehouse; Better is bread, when the heart is happy, Than riches with sorrow. | 15:16-17, Better is a little with the fear of the Lord than great treasure and trouble with it. 17Better is a dinner of vegetables where love is than a fatted ox and hatred with it. |
| 9:14-10:5, Do not strain to seek an excess, When thy needs are safe for thee. If riches are brought to thee by robbery, They will not spend the night with thee; At day­break they are not in thy house: Their places may be seen, but they are not. The ground has opened its mouth . . . that it might swallow them up, And might sink them into the underworld. (Or) they have made themselves a great breach of their (own) size And are sun­ken down into the underworld. (Or) they have made them­selves wings like geese And are flown away to the hea­vens. | 23:4-5, Do not wear yourself out to get rich; be wise enough to desist. 5When your eyes light upon it, it is gone; for suddenly it takes wings to itself, flying like an eagle toward heaven. |
| 11:6-7 [Not in Pritchard.] | 24:11, if you hold back from rescuing those taken away to death, those who go staggering to the slaughter . . . |
| 11:13-14, Do not associate to thyself the heated man, Nor visit him for con­ver­sa­tion. | 22:24, Make no friends with those given to anger, and do not associate with hotheads . . . |
| 13:8-9, Do not leap to hold to such a one [a heated man], Lest a terror carry thee off. | 22:25, or you may learn their ways and entangle yourself in a snare. |
| 13:11, Do not greet thy heated (opponent) in thy violence. | 27:14, Whoever blesses a neighbor with a loud voice, rising early in the morning, will be counted as cursing. (“Prov. 27:14 has been cited as a parallel, with the alteration of Hebrew re´e(hu), “his friend,” to ra´, “an evil (man).”) |
| 14:5-10, Be not greedy for the property of a poor man, Nor hunger for his bread. As for the property of a poor man, it (is) a blocking to the throat, It makes a vo­mit­ing to the gullet. If he has obtained it by false oaths, His heart is perverted by his belly. | 23:6-7, Do not eat the bread of the stingy; do not desire their delicacies; 7for like a hair in the throat, so are they. “Eat and drink!” they say to you; but they do not mean it. |
| 14:17-18, The mouthful of bread (too) great thou swallowest and vomitest up, And art emptied of thy good. | 23:8, You will vomit up the little you have eaten, and you will waste your pleasant words. |
| 16:11-14, Better is praise as one who loves men Than riches in a storehouse; Better is bread, when the heart is happy, Than riches with sorrow. | 16:8, Better is a little with righteousness than large income with injustice. |
| 17:18-19, Do not lean on the scales nor falsify the weights, Nor damage the fractions of the measure. | 20:23, Differing weights are an abomination to the Lord, and false scales are not good. |
| 18:4-5, Make not for thyself weights which are deficient; They abound in grief through the will of god. | 16:11, Honest balances and scales are the Lord’s; all the weights in the bag are his work. |
| 19:14-17, God is (always) in his success, Whereas man is in his failure; One thing are the words which men say, Another is that which the god does. | 19:21, The human mind may devise many plans, but it is the purpose of the Lord that will be established.  16:9, The human mind plans the way, but the Lord directs the steps. |
| 22:5-8, For surely thou knowest not the plans of god, Lest thou be ashamed on the morrow. Sit thou down at the hands of the god, And thy silence will cast them [enemies] down. | 20:22, Do not say, “I will repay evil”; wait for the Lord, and he will help you.  27:1, Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring. |
| 22:11-12, Empty not thy belly to everybody, Nor damage (thus) the regard for thee. | 23:9, Do not speak in the hearing of a fool, who will only despise the wisdom of your words. |
| 22:13-14, Spread not thy words to the common people, Nor associate to thyself one (too) outgoing of heart. | 23:9, Do not speak in the hearing of a fool, who will only despise the wisdom of your words.  20:19, A gossip reveals secrets; therefore do not associate with a babbler. |
| 22:15-16, Better is a man whose talk (re­mains) in his belly Than he who speaks it out injuriously. | 12:23, One who is clever conceals knowledge, but the mind of a fool broadcasts folly. |
| 23:13-18, Do not eat bread before a noble Nor lay on thy mouth at first. If thou art sat­is­fied with false chewings, They are a pas­time for thy spittle. Look at the cup which is before thee, And let is serve thy needs. | 23:1-3, When you sit down to eat with a ruler, observe carefully what is before you, 2and put a knife to your throat if you have a big appetite. 3Do not desire the ruler’s deli­ca­cies, for they are deceptive food. |
| 27:7-8, See thou these thirty chapters: They entertain; they instruct . . . | 22:20, Have I not written for you thirty sayings of admonition and knowledge . . .? |
| 27:16-17, As for the scribe who is experienced in his office, He will find himself worthy (to be) a courtier. | 22:29, Do you see those who are skillful in their work? They will serve kings; they will not serve common people. |

*Amenemope* Proverbs

(Vertical lines show where verses in Proverbs are in the same

sequence as in *Amenemope*.)

1:5-6 22:21

1:7 22:19

3:9-11, 16 22:17-18 |

4:4-5 22:22 |

7:12-13 22:28 |

7:12-15, 8:9-10 23:10-11 |

9:14-10:5 23:4-5

11:6-7 24:11

11:13-14 22:24 |

13:8-9 22:25 |

14:5-10 23:6-7 |

14:17-18 23:8 |

22:11-12 23:9 |

23:13-18 23:1-3

27:7-8 22:20 |

27:16-17 22:29 |

THE WORDS OF AHIQAR[[4]](#footnote-4)1

“Ahiqar (Seventh to Sixth Century b.c.): A New Translation and Introduction.” Trans. J. M. Lindenberger. *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*. Ed. James Charlesworth. Garden City: Doubleday, 1985. 2: 479-507.

The text known as “The Words of Ahiqar” was one of the best-known and most widely disseminated tales in the ancient Mediterranean world. It [probably antedates] the post-exilic portions of the Old Testament. . . . The oldest extant version, translated here, was found among the ruins of a Jewish settlement in Egypt dating from the fifth century b.c. The author of Tobit evidently knew a version according to which Ahiqar was an exiled Jew. . . .

The work is in two parts. The first is the story of Ahiqar, wise scribe and counselor to the kings of Assyria. The sage, advanced in years and having no son to succeed him, decides to adopt his nephew Nadin and teach him all his wisdom. The young man is educated and presented to Esarhaddon, and in time takes his uncle’s place at court. Nadin, instead of dealing kindly with his uncle, plots to discredit him and manages to convince Esarhaddon that the old man is scheming to overthrow the throne. In a rage, the king orders Ahiqar killed. However, the officer sent to carry out the death sentence turns out to be an old friend of Ahiqar, whom the latter once rescued from death. The two of them concoct a plan by which a slave is substituted for Ahiqar and killed in his place. Evidently the plan succeeds, but the end of the story is lost. Presumably it related the restoration of Ahiqar to favor and the punishment of Nadin.

The second part contains the wisdom of Ahiqar, a collection of slightly over a hundred aphorisms, riddles, fables, instructions, and other brief sayings of various kinds, arranged in a more or less haphazard manner. Many of them are fragmentary and difficult to understand. They cover a wide range of topics such as family discipline, respect for the [479] king, prudent speech, and righteous behavior, and many of the individual sayings are similar to proverbs known from the Bible and the wisdom of the ancient Near East. . . .

Much later and more elaborate recensions of the Ahiqar text are found in versions from the Christian era in Syriac, Arabic, Armenian, Karshuni, and Old Church Slavonic, with fragments in Ethiopic and still later translations into Georgian, Old Turkish, Romanian, Russian, Serbian, and neo-Syriac. There was also a Greek version, now lost, . . . [that] served as the basis for a portion of the Life of Aesop. . . .

**Relation of narrative and sayings**

. . . the sayings were evidently not integrated into the narrative at all. They seem to have been simply collected at the end without any explicit link to the story. [480] . . .

**Original language**

. . . it is most likely that the text in its entirety was composed in Aramaic. A close study of the two parts of the text reveals that they are written in slightly differing dialects. The narrative is written in the official, or “Imperial,” Aramaic dialect of the neo-Assyrian and neo-Babylonian periods. The proverbs are in a somewhat more archaic dialect with a greater similarity to the Canaanite family of languages [481] . . .

**Date**

. . . The Elephantine manuscript is dated by paleography and archaeological context to the late fifth century b.c., but it is likely that the combined text (narrative and sayings) was in existence for at least a century before that. . . .

The earliest possible date for the narrative is provided by the mention of Esarhaddon (reigned 681-669 b.c.). . . . the more archaic flavor of the language of the sayings indicates that they are at least as old as the narrative and probably older. Since the Imperial Aramaic of the Persian period and later shows a great many Persian words, the absence of such Persian loans in Ahiqar suggests a date of composition before the mid-sixth century. Both parts of the text (and probably the editorial joining of them) must have been fixed in writing during the latter seventh or early sixth century b.c.

**Provenance**

. . . it is likely that the narrative originated in Mesopotamia. The proverbs are another matter. . . . The dialect of the proverbs is closer to the language of the very oldest Imperial Aramaic texts and the latest phase of Old Aramaic, a transition which took place roughly around the beginning of the seventh century b.c. In a number of features, particularly the vocabulary, the dialect of the sayings has affinities with the Canaanite languages of ancient Syria-Palestine. The most likely explanation of this is that the proverbs (or an earlier collection containing most of them) originated in northern Syria, where several Aramaic-speaking kingdoms flourished during the first part of the first millennium b.c. A further argument in favor of a north Syrian origin of the wisdom portion of the text is the appearance of a pantheon of gods whose names often appear together in other texts from that region. [482] . . .

**Historical importance**

. . . Sennacherib and Esarhaddon are, of course, well-known historical figures. The name Ahiqar (sometimes vocalized Ahuqar) occurs in cuneiform texts of the neo-Assyrian period, as do the names Nadin and Nabusumiskun. In fact, there was a Nadin accused of subversive activities during the reign of Ashurbanipal, and Esarhaddon is known to have had a high-ranking army officer named Nabusumiskun. But . . . the names are rather common, and the cuneiform texts never associate the various individuals with one another, so the apparent correspondence may be mere coincidence.

The question of the historicity of Ahiqar has more recently been thrown into a new perspective by the discovery at the site of ancient Uruk of a cuneiform tablet in which the name appears in a context which immediately links it to the Aramaic story. The Akkadian text, from the Seleucid period, is a list of a number of distinguished court scholars (*ummānū*) of various Babylonian and Assyrian kings. The relevant line reads: “[In the time of] King Esarhaddon, Aba-enlil-dari, [whom] the Arameans call Ahuqar, was *ummānu*.” The name, nationality, role, and date in the cuneiform and Aramaic traditions match, making it appear extremely likely that there was, in fact, such an Ahiqar at the Assyrian court.

It may be possible to go even beyond this. A number of the *umānnū* listed are noted Mesopotamian literary figures, among them the reputed authors of the Gilgamesh Epic and “The Exaltation of Inanna.” This suggests that Ahiqar, too, was remembered in Mesopotamia, not only as an official of Esarhaddon, but also as an author. That is not to say that the details of the story are necessarily historical; much of the narrative is characteristic of folklore. (In particular, the themes of the ungrateful nephew and the downfall and restoration of a minister are known elsewhere in Mesopotamian literature.) Much less does it demonstrate that the historical Ahiqar was the author of our story. But it does suggest that the story is not pure fiction. It is better classified as a historical novel, or still better as a literary folktale about a historical figure.

A plausible—though partly conjectural—reconstruction of the early development of the text may be made as follows: The oldest components, the individual sayings, circulated orally among the Aramaic-speaking peoples of Syria in the earlier part of the first millennium [483] b.c. At some time during this period, a written collection of these sayings was made, probably by scribes in the court of one of the Aramean kings. The collection would presumably have been brought to Assyria in the aftermath of the Assyrian conquests of Aramean territory in the course of the eighth century. By the time of Sennacherib (704-681) or Esarhaddon (681-669) the proverbs would have been known, and perhaps had been re-edited, in Assyria, by circles of Aramaic-speaking literati associated with the imperial court. Ahiqar himself may have been the editor; that would account for his literary reputation in Mesopotamian tradition and the linking of his name with the proverbs in the Aramaic text. On the other hand, the collection could have been attributed to him after his lifetime, in the same way that various collections of Israelite wisdom from all periods came to be linked to the name of Solomon.

The narrative may have been composed completely independently of the sayings, with a later editor joining the two parts which make up the present text. Or the story may from the beginning have been intended to introduce an already existing collection of sayings; i.e. its author would also be the editor of the composite text in its earliest form. . . . the author [of the narrative] was most likely an Aramean scribe living in the latter days of the neo-Assyrian Empire or early in the time of the neo-Babylonian (Chaldean) Empire. To this author (or the later editor mentioned above) may also be attributed the addition to the wisdom collection of those proverbs which appear to be inspired by the narrative (50-52, 76, 80). He may have added a few others as well, such as 34. Insofar as the story is an exemplary tale of a wise and virtuous hero who rose to prominence in the court of a foreign king, it is comparable to the biblical stories of Joseph, Esther, and Daniel.[[5]](#footnote-5)34

**Theological importance**

The theological background of the Aramaic Ahiqar is that of the ancient Near East. In it we encounter not the God of Israel but the gods of Aram, Canaan, and Mesopotamia. The theology is concentrated in the wisdom sayings. The narrative, though edifying, says nothing directly about the gods. But the proverbs mention them often, frequently by name, usually portraying them in roles similar to those which they play elsewhere in the religious literature of the ancient Orient.

Several sayings refer to “the gods”—without further specification—as instructors, judges, and protectors of humanity. These gods give eloquence to the inexperienced (32), requite evil speech (37), and punish those who persecute the righteous (39, 41). Not only the liar and the evildoer (46) but also the fool (38) is subject to their judgment. It is only the gods who can protect a person from inner wickedness (69), and it is they who are the ultimate source of wisdom (13). . . .

**Relation to canonical books**

. . . Folk themes, figures of speech, and entire proverbs migrate across geographical and cultural boundaries by routes which are often impossible to trace or document. Parallels, even quite close ones, between books such as Ahiqar and the canonical and apocryphal books may indicate nothing whatever about the direct knowledge of one document by the author of another. In every case, the burden of proof is on the one who would claim to see signs of literary influence.

Leaving aside wisdom themes . . ., close parallels between the Elephantine Ahiqar and the canonical books are very few. The address “My Son” (sayings 4, 14a, 40, 42, 60, frequent in biblical proverbs) simply belongs to wisdom diction. It is found in Near Eastern texts as old as the third millennium b.c. Similarly the form of the numerical proverb, “There are two things . . . and a third . . .” (saying 12; cf. Prov 30:15-19, 21-31), and the comparison of a word to a dagger or sword (saying 18; Pss 52:2; 57:4, etc.) are well attested literary devices in ancient oriental literature.

Only in two cases are there parallels which justify raising the question of possible dependence. The first is the pair of sayings 3-4:

Spare not your son from the rod, otherwise, can

you save him [from *wickedness*]?

If I beat you, my son,

you will not die; [486]

but if I leave you alone,

[you will not live].

Compare Proverbs 23:13-14:

Do not withhold discipline from a child,

if you beat him with a rod, he will not die.

If you beat him with the rod

you will save his life from Sheol. (rsv)

Though parental discipline and the desirability of corporal punishment are common enough themes in wisdom literature, the close verbal similarity (even closer in the original than appears in translation) is greater than could be accounted for by similarity of theme alone. It cannot be claimed that either saying is borrowed from the other, but it is likely that some common oral or written tradition underlies both.

The second close biblical parallel is to saying 109:

Let not the rich man say, “In my riches I am glorious.”

This is very similar to the last clause of Jer 9:22:

Let the sage boast no more of his wisdom,

. . . nor the rich man of his riches!

[nrsv 9:23, “Do not let the wise boast in their wisdom, do not let the mighty boast in their might, do not let the wealthy boast in their wealth . . .”]

In this case, the saying is brief and its theme universal. It is probably part of the common stock of ancient Near Eastern folk wisdom. [487] . . .

The most that can be said with confidence is that there is evidence in Ahiqar and the Bible of a common reliance upon similar idioms, literary conventions, and wisdom themes. . . . The conclusion drawn by some older writers that Jesus and the evangelists must have known Ahiqar goes considerably beyond the evidence. . . .

The author of Tobit is well acquainted with the story of Ahiqar and his deceitful kinsman (“Nadab”). Chapter 1, verses 21-22 depicts Tobit as the uncle of Ahiqar[[6]](#footnote-6)58 and lists the latter’s official titles: [488]

Ahiqar, the son of my brother Anael, was appointed chancellor of the exchequer for the kingdom and given the main ordering of affairs. Ahiqar then interceded for me and I was allowed to return to Nineveh, since Ahiqar had been chief cupbearer, keeper of the signet, administrator and treasurer under Sennacherib, king of Assyria, and Esarhaddon had kept him in office.

At the end of the book, Tobit concludes his deathbed instructions to Tobias by drawing a moral from the story of Ahiqar:

Consider, my child, all that Nadab did to his fosterfather [*sic*] Ahiqar. Was he not forced to go underground, though still a living man? But God made the criminal pay for his outrage before the eyes of his victim, since Ahiqar came back to the light of day, while Nadab went down to everlasting darkness in punishment for plotting against Ahiqar’s life. Because of his good works (*eleēmosynē*) Ahiqar escaped the deadly snare Nadab had laid for him, and Nadab fell into it to his own ruin. (14:10)

Ahiqar’s name is also mentioned briefly in 2:10 (“. . . Ahiqar provided for my upkeep for two years, till he left for Elymais”) and 11:18.[[7]](#footnote-7)59

Evidently the author of Tobit knew Ahiqar in a form not identical with either the Elephantine text or the later versions. Unlike the late recensions, Tobit has Sennacherib and Esarhaddon in the correct order. . . . The elaboration of the original story which characterizes the late versions has already begun in the version known by Tobit, which mentions Ahiqar’s underground hiding place (14.10), a detail not found in the Elephantine text. Tobit’s version must also have suppressed the polytheistic traits of the original.[[8]](#footnote-8)60 This is inferred from the fact that Tobit, a devout Jew, is said to be related to Ahiqar (1:21-22) and to have lived with him for two years (2:10). He also has high praise for Ahiqar’s virtue (14:10). It is entirely possible that Tobit’s version explicitly described Ahiqar as Jewish. Even if not, it can hardly have depicted him as a gentile worshiper of other gods, as the late recensions (particularly the Arm.) still do.[[9]](#footnote-9)61

It is not clear whether Tobit may also allude to additional events in the career of his distinguished relative which are not found in any of the extant versions of Ahiqar. The reference to Ahiqar’s departure “to Elymais” (2:10) is perplexing. No such incident is otherwise known. The words could refer to a lost episode in the narrative, but it is more likely that they are an error in the Greek of Tobit[[10]](#footnote-10)62 or that they simply refer to the Egyptian[[11]](#footnote-11)63 episode with the locale changed.[[12]](#footnote-12)64

At least one of the sayings of Ahiqar from the late versions is found also in Tobit, albeit [489] in a somewhat distorted form: “Pour out your wine [Gk.: “Place your bread”] on the grave of the righteous, but give not to sinners” (4:17).[[13]](#footnote-13)65 This comes directly from the Ahiqar saying “My son, pour out thy wine on the graves of the righteous, rather than drink it with evil men” (Syr. 2:10; cf. Arm. 2:7; Ar. 2:13).[[14]](#footnote-14)66 The statement in Tobit 14:10 that Nadab fell into his own trap probably comes from “He that digs a pit for others, himself falls into the pit” (Arm. Ah 8:27; cf. Syr. 8:41; Ar. 8:38), though the idea is known elsewhere (cf. Ps 141:10 [see Matt 15:14 par. Luke 6:39—Hahn]). And the quotation of the golden rule in negative form in Tobit 4:15 is very possibly derived from Ahiqar: “Son, that which seems evil unto thee, do not to thy companion” (Arm. 8:88).[[15]](#footnote-15)67

Ben Sira, like the canonical Book of Proverbs, contains a considerable number of general parallels to the sayings in the Elephantine Ahiqar, but none so explicit as to suggest a direct relationship. As for relations with the late versions, Sirach 4:26, “. . . Do not strive against the current of a river,” is often cited, though probably not correctly, as a borrowing from Syriac Ahiqar 2:65, “. . . Stand not against a river in its flood.” The metaphor is a natural one and is used for quite different purposes in the two contexts.

Another possible, though uncertain, point of contact is found in Ben Sira 22:14-15:

What is heavier than lead,

and what is its name if not “fool”?

Sand, and salt, and a lump of iron

are all easier to bear than a dolt.

This may be compared to Armenian Ahiqar 2:69c: “I have lifted iron and I have lifted stones upon my shoulders, and it was better for me, than to dwell with the ignorant and the fool.”[[16]](#footnote-16)68 But the saying in Ben Sira may derive from a general wisdom cliché or may be a reformulation of Proverbs 27:3:

Heaviness of stone, weight of sand,

heavier than both: annoyance from a fool.

It has been suggested that the figure of Achior the Ammonite in Judith (Jdt 5-6; 11:9-10; 14:5-10), who cautions Holofernes against attacking Israel and later is converted to Judaism, is patterned on Ahiqar.[[17]](#footnote-17)69 But apart from the name (Ahiqar is called Achior in some of the versions of Tobit),[[18]](#footnote-18)70 there is little similarity in the two figures beyond the fact that both are wise pagans who give advice to kings. . . .

**Cultural importance**

The story of Ahiqar blends two literary themes: the disgrace and rehabilitation of a wise minister, and the treachery of an ungrateful kinsman. Both, particularly the former, are [490] well-known motifs in the folklore of many peoples[[19]](#footnote-19)72 and can be documented in Babylonian literature originating well before the composition of Ahiqar.[[20]](#footnote-20)73 The wisdom traditions to which the sapiential portion of the text is heir are also extremely ancient in the Near East. Collections of instructions attributed to wise viziers of famous kings and designed to edify young men being trained for court service were being composed in Egypt before the beginning of the second millennium, and the Sumerians and Babylonians were writing proverbs almost as early.[[21]](#footnote-21)74 The narrative and sayings of Ahiqar were written in a cultural world in which their genre and themes were already ancient.

If it is correct that the proverbial portion of the text represents sayings current among the Aramaic-speaking population of Syria in the sixth or seventh century (or even earlier), that is of particular importance for the study of Old Testament wisdom literature. It means that in this text, as in no other, we have an independent record of the wisdom traditions of one of Israel’s immediate neighbors, dating from the period when much of Israel’s own wisdom literature was being formed and collected.[[22]](#footnote-22)75 . . .

Just when the Greek Life of Aesop, a portion of which is extracted from a Greek version of Ahiqar, was written is not known. L. W. Daly [*Aesop Without Morals* 21-22] dates it as early as the fifth century b.c. Diogenes Laertius (3rd cent. a.d.) includes a book entitled *Akicharos* in his list of the works of Theophrastus (4th to 3rd cent. b.c.), and Strabo (1st cent. b.c. to 1st cent. a.d.) also makes mention of Ahiqar.

Ahiqar was [well] known in Jewish circles . . . Several of the sayings from the Syriac can be found in the Talmud and Midrash, one of which is also found in the Elephantine text (30). In the Koran (Sura 31) there are several sayings by the legendary Arab wise man Luqman, one of which appears to be derived from Ahiqar, and there is evidence from elsewhere in Muslim traditions that the figure of Luqman is patterned upon Aesop and Ahiqar. Traces of the story have been detected in the folklore of Persia and India. [491]

The continued popularity of the work in the Near East is evidenced by the fact that it was still being copied in Arabic as late as the eighteenth century and in Syriac as late as the end of the nineteenth. . . . The Armenian version went through numerous printed editions in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. . . .

But the influence of Ahiqar on Western culture in general has been very slight. . . . the twelfth-century Fables of Marie de France contain a Norman French versification of the story of the wolf who went to school (Syr. Ah 8:36 and parallels). Otherwise, Ahiqar does not appear to have had any impact on Western literature and art. . . .

**I**. **THE NARRATIVE**

**Introduction**

***Col. I*** 1These are the wor]ds of one Ahiqar, a wise and skillful scribe, which he taught his son. Now he did not have offspring 2of his own, but he said, “I shall nevertheless have a son!” Prior to his, Ahiqar had become a great man; he had become counselor of all Assyria 3and keeper of the seal of Sennacherib, king of Assyria. [Tob 1:21-22, “He [Esar-haddon] appointed Ahiqar, the son of my brother Hanael over all the accounts of his kingdom, and he had authority over the entire administration. 22Ahiqar interceded for me, and I returned to Nineveh. Now Ahiqar was chief cupbearer, keeper of the signet, and in charge of administration of the accounts under King Sennacherib of Assyria . . .”] He used to say, “I may not have any sons, but Sennacherib, king of Assyria, relies on my counsel and advice.”

**Death of Sennacherib. Ahiqar trains his nephew to succeed him**

At that time Sennacherib, king of Assyria, died, and 5his son Esarhaddon arose and became king in Assyria in place of his father Sennacherib. Then I said (to myself), 6“I am growing old.” So I sent for my nephew, so that he might succeed me at my death and become 7scribe and keeper of the seal for King Esarhaddon just as I was for Sennacherib, 8king of Assyria. Then I adopted Nadin, my nephew, as my son. I reared him and trained him] 9and taught him wisdom. And I was generous to him and installed him in the palace gate with me before the king in the midst of 10his courtiers.

**Nadin is presented to Esarhaddon**

I brought him before Esarhaddon, king of Assyria, and the king questioned him concerning wisdom, and he told him everything 11he asked. Then Esarhaddon, king of Assyria, gave him his approval and said (to me), “May your life be prolonged, 12Owise scribe, counselor of all Assyria, [494] who raised up his nephew to be his son, since he had no son of his own.” 13When the king of Assyria said this, I, Ahiqar, bowed low in obeisance to Esarhaddon, king of Assyria.

**Nadin succeeds Ahiqar at the court**

14Some time later, when I, Ahikar, saw that Esarhaddon, king of Assyria, was favorably disposed, I addressed 15the king and said, “I served your father, King Sennacherib, who ruled before you 16Now [***Col. II***] 17I am growing old. I can no longer perform my duties in the palace gate or continue my service to you. 18But my son Nadin has grown up. Let him succeed me as scribe and counselor of all Assyria, 19and let him be keeper of the seal for you! For I have taught him my wisdom and counsel.” Esarhaddon, 20king of Assyria, replied to me, “Very well, your son shall be scribe and counselor and keeper of the seal for me 21in your place. He shall do your work for me.” Now when I, Ahiqar, heard him promise this, I went back home and went into retirement there.

**The treachery of Nadin**

And as for this son of mine, 23whom I had reared and installed in the palace gate before Esarhaddon, king of Assyria, in the midst of 24his courtiers, I thought, “He will promote my welfare, just as 1 did his.” (But) then 25my nephew, whom I reared, devised a wicked plot against me and thought to himself, 26“This is what I can say (to the king): ‘This old Ahiqar, who was keeper of the seal 27for your father, King Sennacherib, is subverting the land against you, for he is a wise counselor and scribe, 28on whose counsel and advice all Assyria used to rely.’ Then, when Esarhaddon 29hears my report, he will be greatly enraged, and will order Ahiqar killed.” So 30when this false son of mine had devised this lie against me . . .31

**Ahiqar is placed under death sentence**

***Col. III*** 32Then Esarhaddon, king of Assyria, flew into a rage, and said, 33 “Bring me Nabusumiskun, one of my father’s officers, who was on his staff.” [495] 34 (Then) the king said (to Nabusumiskun), “Seek Ahiqar out, (and) wherever you find (him), 35kill him! Otherwise that old Ahiqar—wise scribe 36and counselor of all Assyria that he was—is liable to subvert the land against us.” When 37the king of Assyria had said this, he appointed two other men with him to observe how 38 (the execution) should be carried out. (Then) officer Nabusumiskun rode away on a swift horse, 39accompanied by those men.

**Ahiqar is** **found and hears of Nadin’s treachery**

After three days had gone by, 40he and the other men accompanying him caught sight of me as I was walking along among the vineyards. 41As soon as officer Nabusumiskun saw me, he tore his cloak and lamented: 42 “Is it you, O wise scribe and master of good counsel, who used to be a righteous man, 43and on whose counsel and advice all Assyria used to rely? 44Your son whom you reared, whom you installed in the palace gate, has denounced you. He has ruined you, and turned 45on you wickedly.”

**Ahiqar asks to** **be spared**

Suddenly I, Ahiqar, was afraid, and I answered officer Nabusumiskun, 46“Indeed, I am the same Ahiqar who once long ago rescued you from an undeserved death, 47when King Esarhaddon’s father Sennacherib was so angry with you 48that he sought to kill you. I took you directly to my own house and provided for you there, ***Col. IV*** 49as a man would care for his own brother. I concealed you from him, saying, ‘I have killed him,’ until an opportune time. Then, after 50a long time, I presented you to King Sennacherib and cleared you of the charges against you in his presence, so that 51he did you no harm. Indeed, King Sennacherib was grateful to me for having kept you alive rather than killing you. Now it is your turn 52to treat me as I treated you. Do not kill me, (but) take me to your house until the times change. 53King Esarhaddon is known to be a merciful man. He will eventually think of me and wish for my counsel. Then you 54can bring me to him and he will let me live.” [496]

**Nabusumiskun agrees, and a ruse is contrived**

Then officer Nabusumiskun replied to me, “Have no fear, 55my lord Ahiqar, father of all Assyria, on whose counsel King Sennacherib and all the Assyrian Army 56used to rely!” At once officer Nabusumiskun said to his companions, those two men who were accompanying him, 57 “Listen! Come near to me and I will tell you my plan, and a very good plan it is.” 58Then those two men replied to him, “You tell us, officer Nabusumiskun, 59what you think, and we will obey you.” Then officer [Nabusumiskun said in reply to them, “Listen to me: 60This Ahiqar was a great man. He was King Esarhaddon’s keeper of the seal, and 61all the Assyrian army used to rely on his counsel and advice. Far be it from us to kill him! There is a eunuch-slave of mine. 62Let him be killed between these two mountains in place of this Ahiqar. When it is reported, the king will send other men 63after us to see the body of this Ahiqar. Then they will see the body of this eunuch-slave of mine (and that will be the end of the matter) ***Col. V*** 64until eventually King Esarhaddon thinks of Ahiqar and wishes for his counsel, and grieves 65over him. (Then) King Esarhaddon’s thoughts will turn to me, and he will say to his officers and courtiers, 66‘I would give you riches as numerous as grains of sand, if only you could find Ahiqar.’” Now this plan 67seemed good to his two companions. They replied to officer Nabusumiskun, 68“Do as you suggest. Let us not kill him, but you give us 69that eunuch-slave in place of this Ahiqar. He shall be killed between these two mountains.”

**Ahiqar is hidden and the king is deceived**

70At that time word spread through the land *of Assyria that Ahiqar*, King *Esarhaddon’s scribe*, 71had been put to death. Then officer Nabusumiskun took me to his house and hid me.[[23]](#footnote-23)d Indeed, 72he provided for me there as a man would care for his own brother. *And he said to me* . . . “Bread and water 73will be provided to my lord. If . . .” 74He gave me plenty of food and abundant supplies. Then officer Nabusumiskun 75went to King Esarhaddon and said, “I have done as you commanded me. 76I went and found that Ahiqar and put him to death.” Now when King Esarhaddon heard this, 77he questioned the two men whom he had appointed along with Nabusumiskun. And they said, “It happened just as he said.” Then, while King Esarhaddon . . . [497]

[*At this point, the narrative breaks off. According to the later versions, when the king of Egypt hears that Ahiqar is dead, he writes the Assyrian monarch challenging him to send a wise man who can answer a series of riddles and supervise the construction of a palace between heaven and earth. Nadin declares that not even the gods themselves could meet the challenge.*

*The Assyrian is at his wits’ end, and laments his lost sage, offering a rich reward if only Ahiqar could be returned to him alive. The officer, seeing the time is ripe, brings the old scribe out of hiding to receive the king’s profuse apologies and reinstatement at the court. After a series of adventures in Egypt, Ahiyar returns to Assyria and asks permission to discipline Nadin. The young man is put in chains and beaten, after which Ahiqar addresses him with a long series of reproaches. The speech concluded, Nadin swells up and dies.*

*It cannot be ascertained how much of this was included in the Elephantine version. No doubt it was much shorter. The surviving fragments of the Aram. text have no trace of the Egyptian episode, and there may have originally been only a rather brief statement of Ahiqar’s rehabilitation and the disgrace and punishment of his adopted son*.]

**II. THE SAYINGS**

***Col. VI*** 79 *1* What is stronger than a braying ass? . . .

80 *2* The son who is instructed and restrained, and on whose foot the *bar* is placed, will prosper in life. [Sir 6:23-24, “Listen, my child, and accept my judgment; do not reject my counsel. 24Put your feet into her fetters, and your neck into her collar.”]

81 *3* Spare not your son from the rod; otherwise, can you save him from wickedness?

[Prov 13:24, “Those who spare the rod hate their children, but those who love them are diligent to discipline them.”]

[Prov 19:18, “Discipline your children while there is hope; do not set your heart on their destruction.”]

[Prov 22:15, “Folly is bound up in the heart of a boy, but the rod of discipline drives it far away.”]

[Prov 23:13-14, “Do not withhold discipline from your children; if you beat them with a rod, they will not die. 14If you beat them with the rod, you will save their lives from Sheol.”]

[Prov 29:7, “The righteous know the rights of the poor; the wicked have no such understanding.”]

[Prov 29:15, “The rod and reproof give wisdom, but a mother is disgraced by a neglected child.”]

[Sir 30:1-13, “He who loves his son will whip him often, so that he may rejoice at the way he turns out. 2He who disciplines his son will profit by him, and will boast of him among acquaintances. 3He who teaches his son will make his enemies envious, and will glory in him among his friends. 4When the father dies he will not seem to be dead, for he has left behind him one like himself, 5whom in his life he looked upon with joy and at death, without grief. 6He has left behind him an avenger against his enemies, and one to repay the kindness of his friends. 7Whoever spoils his son will bind up his wounds, and will suffer heartache at every cry. 8An unbroken horse turns out stubborn, and an unchecked son turns out headstrong. 9Pamper a child, and he will terrorize you; play with him, and he will grieve you. 10Do not laugh with him, or you will have sorrow with him, and in the end you will gnash your teeth. 11Give him no freedom in his youth, and do not ignore his errors. 12Bow down his neck in his youth, and beat his sides while he is young, or else he will become stubborn and disobey you, and you will have sorrow of soul from him. 13Discipline your son and make his yoke heavy, so that you may not be offended by his shamelessness.”]

82 *4* If I beat you, my son,

you will not die:

but if I leave you alone,

you will not live.

83 *5* A blow for a serving-boy,

a rebuke for a slave-girl,

and for all your servants, discipline!

[Prov 26:3, “A whip for the horse, a bridle for the donkey, and a rod for the back of fools.”]

84 *3* He who acquires a runaway slave or a thievish maid. . . and ruins 85the reputation of his father and his progeny by his own corrupt reputation. [498]

*7* The scorpion finds 86bread and will not eat it; but (if he finds) something foul, he is more pleased than if he were (sumptuously) fed.

87 *8* . . . hind . . .

88 *9* The lion catches the scent of the stag in his hidden den, and he . . . 89and sheds its blood and eats its flesh. Just so is the meeting of men.[[24]](#footnote-24)l . . . the lion . . . 90 *10* The ass abandons his load and will not carry it. He will be shamed by his fellow and will have to carry a burden which is not his own; 91he will be laden with a camel’s load.[[25]](#footnote-25)n

*11* The ass mounts the jenny out of lust for her. But the birds . . .

92 *12* There are two things which are good,

and a third which is pleasing to Shamash:

one who drinks wine and shares it,

one who masters wisdom and observes it

93 and one who hears a word but tells it not.

Now that is precious to Shamash.

But one who drinks wine and shares it not,

94 whose wisdom fails,

who has seen . . .?[[26]](#footnote-26)t

*13* From heaven the peoples are favored;

Wisdom is of the gods.

***Col. VII***

95 Indeed, she is precious to the gods;

her kingdom is eternal.

She has been established by Shamayn,

yea, the Holy Lord has exalted her.

96 *14a* My son, do not curse the day

until you have seen the night. [499]

97 *14b* <My son, do not utter everything> which comes into your mind, for there are eyes and ears everywhere. But keep watch over your mouth, lest it bring you to grief!

[Sir 22:27, “Who will set a guard over my mouth, and an effective seal upon my lips, so that I may not fall because of them, and my tongue may not destroy me?”]

[Qoh 10:20, “Do not curse the king, even in your thoughts, or curse the rich, even in your bedroom; for a bird of the air may carry your voice, or some winged creature tell the matter.”]

98 *15* Above all else, guard your mouth; and as for what you have heard, be discreet![[27]](#footnote-27)f For a word is a bird,[[28]](#footnote-28)g and he who releases it is a fool.

[Ps 141:3, “Set a guard over my mouth, O Lord; keep watch over the door of my lips.”]

[Sir 22:27, “Who will set a guard over my mouth, and an effective seal upon my lips, so that I may not fall because of them, and my tongue may not destroy me?”]

[Sir 27:16-21, “Whoever betrays secrets destroys confidence, and will never find a congenial friend. 17Love your friend and keep faith with him; but if you betray his secrets, do not follow after him. 18For as a person destroys his enemy, so you have destroyed the friendship of your neighbor. 19And as you allow a bird to escape from your hand, so you have let your neighbor go, and will not catch him again. 20Do not go after him, for he is too far off, and has escaped like a gazelle from a snare. 21For a wound may be bandaged, and there is reconciliation after abuse, but whoever has betrayed secrets is without hope.”]

99 *16* Choose the sayings you shall utter, then speak them to your brother to help him. For the treachery of the mouth is more dangerous than the treachery of battle.

100 *17* Quench not the word of a king;

let it be a balm for your heart.

*18* A king’s word is gentle, but keener and more cutting than a double-edged dagger.[[29]](#footnote-29)n [see 103 *20*, 106 *23*]

101 *19* Here is a difficult thing before you: Do not stand opposed to the king. His anger is swifter than lightning; look out for yourself! 102Let him not kindle it against your words, lest you depart before your time.[[30]](#footnote-30)q

[Prov 16:14, “A king’s wrath is a messenger of death, and whoever is wise will appease it.”]

103 *20* When a royal command is given you, it is a burning fire. Execute it at once, lest it flare up against you and singe your hands. 104But rather (let) the king’s command (be your) heart’s delight. [see 100 *18*, 106 *23*]

*21* How can logs strive with fire,

meat with a knife,

or a man with a king?

[Qoh 6:10b, “it is known what human beings are, and that they are not able to dispute with those who are stronger.” Isa 10:15, “Shall the ax vaunt itself over the one who wields it, or the saw magnify itself against the one who handles it? As if a rod should raise the one who lifts it up, or as if a staff should lift the one who is not wood!”] [500]

105 *22* I have tasted even the bitter medlar,[[31]](#footnote-31)y

and have eaten endives,[[32]](#footnote-32)z

but there is nothing more bitter than poverty.

106 *23* The king’s tongue is gentle, 106but it breaks a dragon’s ribs. It is like death, which is invisible. [see 100 *18*, 103 *20*]

[Prov 25:15, “a soft tongue can break bones.”]

*24* Exult not over a multitude of sons,

nor be sad over a meager number of them.

[Sir 16:1, “Do not desire a multitude of worthless children, and do not rejoice in ungodly offspring.”]

107 *25* A king is like the Merciful;

even his voice is haughty.

Who is there who could withstand him,

but one with whom El is?

108 *26* A king is as splendid to see as Shamash;

and his majesty is glorious

to them that tread the earth in peace.

109 *27* A good container keeps a thing within it,

but a broken one lets it out.

[Sir 21:14, “The mind of a fool is like a broken jar; it can hold no knowledge.”]

110 *28* The lion approached to greet the ass: “Peace be unto you!” The ass replied to the lion, . . .

***Col. VIII***

111 *29* I have carried sand and hauled salt,

but there is nothing more burdensome than debt.[[33]](#footnote-33)a

112 *30* I have carried straw and lifted bran,

but there is nothing taken more lightly than a foreigner. [501]

113 *31* A sword stirs up quiet waters between good neighbors.

114 *32* If a young man utter great words, they will soar above him when his utterance exalts 115the gods. If he is beloved of the gods, they will give him something worthwhile to say.

[Exod 4:10-12, “But Moses said to the Lord, “O my Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor even now that you have spoken to your servant; but I am slow of speech and slow of tongue.” 11Then the Lord said to him, “Who gives speech to mortals? Who makes them mute or deaf, seeing or blind? Is it not I, the Lord? 12Now go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you are to speak.””]

[Jer 1:6-9, “Then I said, “Ah, Lord God! Truly I do not know how to speak, for I am only a boy.” 7But the Lord said to me, “Do not say, ‘I am only a boy’; for you shall go to all to whom I send you, and you shall speak whatever I command you, 8Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you, says the Lord.” 9Then the Lord put out his hand and touched my mouth; and the Lord said to me, “Now I have put my words in your mouth.””]

[Mark 13:11 (par. Luke 12:11-12), “When they bring you to trial and hand you over, do not worry beforehand about what you are to say; but say whatever is given you at that time, for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit.”]

116 *33* The [s]tar[s in the sky] are so numerous [that] no one knows their names.[[34]](#footnote-34)g Just so, no one knows man.

117 *34* There is no lion in the sea;

therefore the sea-snake is called *labbu*.

118 *35* (Once upon a time) a leopard came upon a she-goat who was cold. The leopard said to the goat, “Won’t you let me cover you with my pelt?” 119The goat replied to the leopard, “Why should I do that, my lord? Don’t take my own hide away from me! For (as they say), ‘A leopard does not 120greet a gazelle except to suck its blood.’”

*36* (Once upon a time) a bear came to the lambs and said, “Let me take just one of you and 121I will be content.” The lambs replied to him, “Take whichever of us you will. We are only sheep, but you are a bear! 122For it is not in men’s own power to lift their feet or set them down apart from the gods . . .”

[Gen 41:44, “Moreover Pharaoh said to Joseph, “I am Pharaoh, and without your consent no one shall lift up hand or foot in all the land of Egypt.””]

[Jer 10:23 I know, O Lord, that the way of human beings is not in their control, that mortals as they walk cannot direct their steps.”]

123 (*Variant ending*:) “For it is not in your power to lift your foot or set it down.”

*37* If good comes forth from men’s mouths,

(it is a fine thing).[[35]](#footnote-35)n

124 But if evil comes forth from their mouths,

then the gods will bring evil upon them.

*38* If the eyes of the gods are on men, 125a man who chops wood in the dark when he cannot see is like a thief who breaks into a house and is caught.

***Col. IX***

126 *39* Do not draw your bow

and shoot your arrow at the righteous man, [502]

lest the gods come to his aid

and turn it back against you.

127 *40* Hear, O my son:

harvest any harvest,

and do any job;

then you may eat your fill

and provide for your children. [see 129 *42*]

[Prov 12:11, “Those who till their land will have plenty of food, but those who follow worthless pursuits have no sense.”]

[Prov 28:19, “Anyone who tills the land will have plenty of bread, but one who follows worthless pursuits will have plenty of poverty.”]

[Qoh 2:24, “There is nothing better for mortals than to eat and drink, and find enjoyment in their toil. This also, I saw, is from the hand of God . . .”]

[Qoh 3:13, “it is God’s gift that all should eat and drink and take pleasure in all their toil.”]

[Qoh 3:22, “So I saw that there is nothing better than that all should enjoy their work, for that is their lot; who can bring them to see what will be after them?”]

[Qoh 5:18-19, “This is what I have seen to be good: it is fitting to eat and drink and find enjoyment in all the toil with which one toils under the sun the few days of the life God gives us; for this is our lot. 19 Likewise all to whom God gives wealth and possessions and whom he enables to enjoy them, and to accept their lot and find enjoyment in their toil—this is the gift of God.”]

[Qoh 9:7-10, “Go, eat your bread with enjoyment, and drink your wine with a merry heart; for God has long ago approved what you do. 8Let your garments always be white; do not let oil be lacking on your head. 9Enjoy life with the wife whom you love, all the days of your vain life that are given you under the sun, because that is your portion in life and in your toil at which you toil under the sun. 10Whatever your hand finds to do, do with your might; for there is no work or thought or knowledge or wisdom in Sheol, to which you are going.”]

[Sir 7:15, “Do not hate hard labor or farm work, which was created by the Most High.”]

128 *41* If you have drawn your bow and shot your arrow at a more righteous man than yourself, it is a sin against the gods. [see 126 *39*]

129 *42* Hear, O my son: borrow grain and wheat, that you may eat your fill and provide for your children with you. [see 127 *40*]

130 *43* Do not take a heavy loan from an evil man. And if you take a loan (at all), give yourself no peace until 131you have repaid it. A loan is pleasant as . . .,but paying it back is a houseful.[[36]](#footnote-36)i

[Prov 6:1-5, “My child, if you have given your pledge to your neighbor, if you have bound yourself to another, 2you are snared by the utterance of your lips, caught by the words of your mouth. 3So do this, my child, and save yourself, for you have come into your neighbor's power: go, hurry, and plead with your neighbor. 4Give your eyes no sleep and your eyelids no slumber; 5save yourself like a gazelle from the hunter, like a bird from the hand of the fowler.”]

132 *44* . . . it with your ears,

for truthfulness renders a man admirable,

but lying speech makes him repulsive.

133 *45* At first the throne is comfortable for the liar; but in the end, his lies will overtake him, and they will spit in his face.

134 *46* The liar should have his throat cut, like a temple virgin who exposes her face; like a man who does evil, 135contrary to the will of the gods.

136 *47* Do not despise that which is your lot, nor covet some great thing which is withheld from you.

[Ps 131:1, “O Lord, my heart is not lifted up, my eyes are not raised too high; I do not occupy myself with things too great and too marvelous for me.”] [503]

137 *48* Do not amass wealth,

lest you pervert your heart.

[Deut 8:13-14, “when your herds and flocks have multiplied, and your silver and gold is multiplied, and all that you have is multiplied, 14then do not exalt yourself, forgetting the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery . . .”]

[Ps 62:10, “Put no confidence in extortion, and set no vain hopes on robbery; if riches increase, do not set your heart on them.”]

[Ezek 28:5, “By your great wisdom in trade you have increased your wealth, and your heart has become proud in your wealth.”]

[Luke 12:13-21, “Someone in the crowd said to him, “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me.” 14But he said to him, “Friend, who set me to be a judge or arbitrator over you?” 15And he said to them, “Take care! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of possessions.” 16Then he told them a parable: “The land of a rich man produced abundantly. 17And he thought to himself, ‘What should I do, for I have no place to store my crops?’ 18Then he said, ‘I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. 19And I will say to my soul, ‘Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.’ 20But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your life is being demanded of you. And the things you have prepared, whose will they be?’ 21So it is with those who store up treasures for themselves but are not rich toward God.”]

[1 Tim 6:10, “For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, and in their eagerness to be rich some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pains.”]

138 *49* Whoever takes no pride in his father’s and mother’s name may Shamash not shine on him, for he is an evil man.

[Exod 20:12, “Honor your father and your mother, so that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you.”]

Deut 5:16, “Honor your father and your mother, as the Lord your God commanded you, so that your days may be long and that it may go well with you in the land that the Lord your God is giving you.”]

[Prov 20:20, “If you curse father or mother, your lamp will go out in utter darkness.”]

[Sir 3:1-16, “Listen to me your father, O children; act accordingly, that you may be kept in safety. 2For the Lord honors a father above his children, and he confirms a mother’s right over her children. 3Those who honor their father atone for sins, 4and those who respect their mother are like those who lay up treasure. 5Those who honor their father will have joy in their own children, and when they pray they will be heard. 6Those who respect their father will have long life, and those who honor their mother obey the Lord; 7they will serve their parents as their masters. 8Honor your father by word and deed, that his blessing may come upon you. 9For a father’s blessing strengthens the houses of the children, but a mother’s curse uproots their foundations. 10Do not glorify yourself by dishonoring your father, for your father’s dishonor is no glory to you. 11The glory of one’s father is one’s own glory, and it is a disgrace for children not to respect their mother. 12My child, help your father in his old age, and do not grieve him as long as he lives; 13even if his mind fails, be patient with him; because you have all your faculties do not despise him. 14For kindness to a father will not be forgotten, and will be credited to you against your sins; 15in the day of your distress it will be remembered in your favor; like frost in fair weather, your sins will melt away. 16Whoever forsakes a father is like a blasphemer, and whoever angers a mother is cursed by the Lord.”]

139 *50-52* My distress is my own fault,

before whom will I be found innocent?[[37]](#footnote-37)y

My own son spied out my house,

what shall I say to strangers?

140 He was a false witness against me;

who, then, will declare me innocent?

My poisoner came from my own house;

before whom can I press my complaint?

[Ps 41:9, “Even my bosom friend in whom I trusted, who ate of my bread, has lifted the heel against me.”]

[Ps 55:12-14, “It is not enemies who taunt me—I could bear that; it is not adversaries who deal insolently with me—I could hide from them. 13But it is you, my equal, my companion, my familiar friend, 14with whom I kept pleasant company; we walked in the house of God with the throng.”]

[Jer 9:3-6, “They bend their tongues like bows; they have grown strong in the land for falsehood, and not for truth; for they proceed from evil to evil, and they do not know me, says the Lord. 4Beware of your neighbors, and put no trust in any of your kin; for all your kin are supplanters, and every neighbor goes around like a slanderer. 5They all deceive their neighbors, and no one speaks the truth; they have taught their tongues to speak lies; they commit iniquity and are too weary to repent. 6Oppression upon oppression, deceit upon deceit! They refuse to know me, says the Lord.”]

[Jer 12:6, “For even your kinsfolk and your own family, even they have dealt treacherously with you; they are in full cry after you; do not believe them, though they speak friendly words to you.”]

[Micah 7:6, “for the son treats the father with contempt, the daughter rises up against her mother, the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; your enemies are members of your own household.”]

[John 13:18, “I am not speaking of all of you; I know whom I have chosen. But it is to fulfill the scripture, ‘The one who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me.’”]

141 *53* Do not reveal your secrets before your friends, lest your reputation with them be ruined.

[Prov 25:9b-10, “Argue your case with your neighbor directly, and do not disclose another’s secret; 10or else someone who hears you will bring shame upon you, and your ill repute will have no end.”]

***Col X***

142 *54* With one who is more exalted than yourself, do not pick a quarrel.

[Sir 8:1, “Do not contend with the powerful, or you may fall into their hands.”]

[Mat 5:25-26 Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are on the way to court with him, or your accuser may hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you will be thrown into prison. 26Truly I tell you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny.”]

143 *55* With one who is nobler and stronger than yourself, do not . . .[[38]](#footnote-38)b, for he will take 144from your portion and add to his own. [see 142 *54*]

*56* . . . 145Just so is a little man who contends with a great one. [504]

146 *57* Do not remove wisdom from yourself, lest . . .

147 *58* Do not be overly foolish, lest . . . be extinguished.

148 *59* Do not be too sweet lest you be swallowed;

do not be too bitter lest you be spat out.

149 60 If you wish to be exalted, my son, humble yourself before Shamash, 150who humbles the exalted and exalts the humble.[[39]](#footnote-39)g

151 *61* How can human lips curse

what the gods have not cursed?[[40]](#footnote-40)h

152 *62* It is better to master wisdom than . . .

*63* . . . 153yourself. Do not let him/it love . . .

*64* . . . 154who can *heal* them but one with whom El is?

155 *65* . . . my hands . . . my mouth . . .

156 *66* May El twist the mouth of the treacherous and tear out his tongue.

Pros 10 32

[Prov 10:32, “The lips of the righteous know what is acceptable, but the mouth of the wicked what is perverse.”]

157 *67* May good eyes not be dimmed,

may good ears not be stopped,

and may a good mouth love 158the truth and speak it.

***Col. XI***

159 *68* A man of fine character and a happy disposition is like a mighty city which is built on a hill.

160 69 If a man is not under the care of the gods, then how can he guard himself against his inner wickedness?

*70* . . . 161. . ., but as for him with whom El is not, who would accept his oath? [505]

162 *71* . . . and man. And the peoples pass through them, and do not leave them, and their hearts are . . .

163 72 No one knows what is in the heart of another; and when the good man sees the wicked man, let him beware! 164He shall not accompany him on the road nor shall he become his employer. (Thus shall) the good man (act) toward the wicked one.

165 *73* The bramble sent a message to the pomegranate as follows: “Dear Pomegranate, what good are all your thorns to him who touches your fruit?” 166The pomegranate replied to the bramble, “You are nothing but thorns to him who touches you!”[[41]](#footnote-41)m

167 *74* It is best to support a righteous man; all who clash with him are laid low. [see 126 *39*]

168 *75* The city of the wicked will be swept away in the day of storm, and its gates will fall into ruin; for the spoil 169of the wicked shall perish.

[Prov 11:11, “By the blessing of the upright a city is exalted, but it is overthrown by the mouth of the wicked.”]

Prov 14:11, “The house of the wicked is destroyed, but the tent of the upright flourishes.”]

[Ezek 13:11, “Say to those who smear whitewash on it that it shall fall. There will be a deluge of rain, great hailstones will fall, and a stormy wind will break out.”]

[Amos 1:14, “So I will kindle a fire against the wall of Rabbah, fire that shall devour its strongholds, with shouting on the day of battle, with a storm on the day of the whirlwind . . .”]

*76* My eyes which I lifted up upon you,

and my heart which I gave you in wisdom,

170 you have despised, and have brought

my name into disrepute.

171 *77* If a wicked man grasps the fringe of your garment, leave it in his hand. Then appeal to Shamash; he 172will take what is his and will give it to you.[[42]](#footnote-42)v

[Exod 22:25-26, “If you lend money to my people, to the poor among you, you shall not deal with them as a creditor; you shall not exact interest from them. 26If you take your neighbor's cloak in pawn, you shall restore it before the sun goes down . . .”]

[Deut 24:10-13, “When you make your neighbor a loan of any kind, you shall not go into the house to take the pledge. 11You shall wait outside, while the person to whom you are making the loan brings the pledge out to you. 12If the person is poor, you shall not sleep in the garment given you as the pledge. 13You shall give the pledge back by sunset, so that your neighbor may sleep in the cloak and bless you; and it will be to your credit before the Lord your God.”]

***Col XII***

173 *78* Establish me, O El, as a righteous man with you! To . . .[[43]](#footnote-43)b

[Ps 7:8-10, “The Lord judges the peoples; judge me, O Lord, according to my righteousness and according to the integrity that is in me. 9O let the evil of the wicked come to an end, but establish the righteous, you who test the minds and hearts, O righteous God. 10God is my shield, who saves the upright in heart.”]

174 *79* My enemies will die, but not by my sword.[[44]](#footnote-44)d

175 *80* I left you in the shelter of the cedar,[[45]](#footnote-45)e and . . . 176You have abandoned your friends and have honored my enemies . . .

177 *81* Pity a man who does not know what he wants!

178 *82* The wise man speaks, for the opening of the mouth . . .

179-86 (Unintelligible). [506]

187 *89* My soul does not know the path, therefore . . .

188 *90* Hunger makes the bitter sweet,

and thirst makes the sour palatable.

[Prov 27:7, “The sated appetite spurns honey, but to a ravenous appetite even the bitter is sweet.”]

189 *91* Let the angry man gorge himself on bread,

and the wrathful get drunk on wine.

[Prov 31:6-7, “Give strong drink to one who is perishing, and wine to those in bitter distress; 7let them drink and forget their poverty, and remember their misery no more.”]

190 *92* (Unintelligible).

***Col. XIII***

191 *93* One drew his bow and shot his arrow, but it did not . . . [see 126 *39*, 128 *41*]

[Ps 7:12-13, “If one does not repent, God will whet his sword; he has bent and strung his bow; 13he has prepared his deadly weapons, making his arrows fiery shafts.”]

192 *94* If your master entrusts you with water to keep and you are not trustworthy with it, how can he 193leave gold in your hand?

[Matt 25:14-30 (par. Luke 19:12-27), “For it is as if a man, going on a journey, summoned his slaves and entrusted his property to them; 15to one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. 16The one who had received the five talents went off at once and traded with them, and made five more talents. 17In the same way, the one who had the two talents made two more talents. 18But the one who had received the one talent went off and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master’s money. 19After a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. 20Then the one who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five more talents, saying, ‘Master, you handed over to me five talents; see, I have made five more talents.’ 21His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.’ 22And the one with the two talents also came forward, saying, ‘Master, you handed over to me two talents; see, I have made two more talents.’ 23His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.’ 24Then the one who had received the one talent also came forward, saying, ‘Master, I knew that you were a harsh man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you did not scatter seed; 25so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.’ 26But his master replied, ‘You wicked and lazy slave! You knew, did you, that I reap where I did not sow, and gather where I did not scatter? 27Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and on my return I would have received what was my own with interest. 28So take the talent from him, and give it to the one with the ten talents. 29For to all those who have, more will be given, and they will have an abundance; but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away. 30As for this worthless slave, throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’”]

194 *96* . . . and he does not . . . “Come near to me!” And let him not say to you, “Go away from me!”

195 (Unintelligible).

196 *99* A slave who has a bar on his feet or who is a thief should not be bought. [see 84 *6*]

197-203 (Unintelligible).

204 *106* A man said one day to the wild ass, “Let me ride on you, and I will provide for you!” 205The wild ass replied, “Keep your care and fodder; I want nothing to do with your riding!”[[46]](#footnote-46)d

206 *107* Between skin and my sandal, may no pebble get into my foot.

207 *108* (Unintelligible).

*109* Let not the rich man say, “In my riches I am glorious.”[[47]](#footnote-47)f

[Jer 9:23, “Do not let the wise boast in their wisdom, do not let the mighty boast in their might, do not let the wealthy boast in their wealth . . .”]

***Col. XIV***

208 *110* Do not show an Arab the sea or a Sidonian the steppe, for their occupations are different.

209 *111* He who treads[[48]](#footnote-48)a wine is the one who should taste it. And . . . he shall guard it.

210-23 (Unintelligible). [507]

### SUMMARY OF THEMES IN *AHIQAR*

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1 a donkey’s strength  2 discipline a son  3 discipline a son  4 discipline a son  5 discipline servants  6 avoid bad servants  7 a scorpion’s food  8 a hind  9 the lion and the stag  10 the donkey’s double load  11 donkey and jenny  12 control speech  13 Wisdom is divine  14a things could be  worse  14b control speech  15 control speech  16 control speech  17 relations with a king  18 relations with a king  19 relations with a king  20 relations with a king  21 relations with a king  22 poverty  23 relations with a king  24 having many sons  25 relations with a king  26 relations with a king  27 a good container  28 the lion and the ass  29 debt  30 a foreigner | 31 sword and neighbors  32 great speech is divine  33 man is a mystery  34 lion and sea-snake  35 leopard and she-goat  36 bear and lambs;  determinism  37 control speech  38 the gods punish  39 the gods punish  40 feed your children  41 the gods punish  42 feed your children  43 debt  44 speech: lying  45 speech: lying  46 speech: lying  47 do not covet  48 riches pervert the heart  49 honor father, mother  50 honor father, mother  51 honor father, mother  52 honor father, mother  53 speech: secrets  54 relations with superior  55 relations with superior  56 relations with superior | 57 be wise  58 be wise  59 not too sweet or bitter  60 humble are exalted  61 men curse what gods don’t  62 be wise  63 [unintelligible]  64 healing is divine  65 [unintelligible]  66 may the gods punish  67 speech: truth  68 good deeds are seen  69 inclination to sin  70 oaths  71 [unintelligible]  72 good should avoid wicked  73 bramble, pomegranate  74 support the righteous  75 the gods punish  76 speaker betrayed  77 the gods punish  78 El, make me righteous  79 the gods punish  80 speaker betrayed  81 know what you want  82 the wise man | 83 [unintelligible]  84 [unintelligible]  85 [unintelligible]  86 [unintelligible]  87 [unintelligible]  88 [unintelligible]  89 [unintelligible]  90 want causes appreciation  91 the angry man  92 [unintelligible]  93 [unintelligible]  94 trustworthy with a  little and a lot  95 [missing]  96 relations w. superior  97 [unintelligible]  98 [unintelligible]  99 buying a slave  100 [unintelligible]  101 [unintelligible]  102 [unintelligible]  103 [unintelligible]  104 [unintelligible]  105 [unintelligible]  106 man and donkey  107 pebble in sandal  108 [unintelligible]  109 trusting in riches  110 different occupations  111 just wages  112-25 [unintelligible] |

### DISPUTE BETWEEN A MAN AND HIS *BA*

“Dispute between a Man and His *Ba*.” *Ancient Egyptian Literature: A Book of Readings*. Ed. Miriam Lichtheim. 3 vols. Berkeley: U of California P, 1973. 1: 163-69.

This famous text is preserved in a single manuscript [Papyrus Berlin 3024] which dates from the Twelfth Dynasty.[[49]](#footnote-49) The first portion is missing. In its present form it consists of 155 vertical columns, broken by a number of lacunae. An exceedingly difficult and intriguing work, it has engendered a great deal of controversy. In translating it for this anthology I had two choices: to provide sentence-by-sentence summaries and discussions of the widely diverging translations and interpretations—this would have required may pages of annotations—or to dispense with notes altogether. I have chosen the latter course. Scholars familiar with the text know its problems. Those unfamiliar with it who wish to study it in detail are advised to consult all translations and commentaries [*sic*].

My translation owes much to that of Faulkner, though I differ from him on a number of points, especially on the rendering of the crucial word *ỉhm*, where I hold with those scholars who take it to mean “lead toward,” not “hold back from.”

Given the great variety of interpretations, I also refrain from a general discussion of the meaning of the work and content myself with a bald and brief sketch of what I believe to be its *plot*.

A man who suffers from life longs for death. Angered by his complaints, his *ba* threatens to leave him. This threat fills the man with horror, for to be abandoned by his *ba* would mean total annihilation, instead of the resurrection and immortal bliss that he envisages. He therefore implores his *ba* to remain with him, and not to oppose him in his longing for death, a death that he does not appear to contemplate as a suicide but rather as a natural, though greatly welcomed, death, to be followed by a traditional burial. The *ba* counters his pleas by telling him that death is a sad business, and that those who have fine tombs are no better off than those who have none. It urges him to stop complaining and to enjoy life. And it tells two parables designed to drive home the point that life is worth living. The man’s final answer is delivered through four exquisite poems, in which he deplores the miseries of life and exhalts [*sic*] death and resurrection. In a brief concluding speech the *ba* agrees to remain with him.

As I see it, the work is composed of a mixture of the three main styles of Egyptian literature: prose, symmetrically structured speech, and lyric poetry. . . . [163]

——— (1) your —— in order to say ——— [their tongue] is not partial ——— payment; their tongue is not partial.

I opened my mouth to my *ba*, to answer what it had said:

(5) This is too great for me today,

My *ba* will not converse with me!

It is too great for exaggeration,

It is like deserting me!

My *ba* shall not go,

It shall attend to me in this!

———

—— in my body with a net of cord.

(10) It shall not be able to flee on the day of pain!

Look, my *ba* misleads me—I do not listen to it—

Drags me toward death before <I> come to it,

Casts <me> on fire so as to burn me!

———

(15) It shall be near me on the day of pain!

It shall stand on that side as does a . . .

It is he who comes forth,

⌐He has brought himself.¬

My *ba*, too ignorant to still pain in life,

Leads me toward death before I come to it!

Sweeten (20) the West for me!

Is that difficult?

Life is a passage; trees fall.

Tread on the evil, put down my misery!

May Thoth judge me, he who appeases the gods!

May Thoth defend me, (25) he who writes truly!

May Re hear my speech, he who calms the sun-bark!

May Isdes defend me in the sacred hall! [164]

For my suffering is ⌐too heavy a burden to be borne by me¬. May it please that the gods (30) repel my body’s secrets!

What my *ba* said to me: “Are you not a man? Are you not alive? What do you gain by complaining about life like a man of wealth?” I said: “I will not go as long as this is neglected. Surely, if you run away, you will not (35) be cared for. Every criminal says: “I shall seize you.” Though you are dead, your name lives. Yonder is the place of rest, the heart’s goal. The West is a dwelling place, a voyage ———.

If my *ba* listens to me ⌐without (40) malice¬, its heart in accord with me, it shall be happy. I shall make it reach the West like one who is in his tomb, whose burial a survivor tends. I shall make a ⌐shelter¬ over your corpse, so that you will make envious another *ba* (45) in weariness. I shall make a ⌐shelter¬—it shall not be freezing—so that you will make envious another *ba* which is hot. I shall drink water at the pond over which I made shade, so that you will make envious another *ba* that hungers.

But if you lead (50) me toward death in this manner, you will not find a place on which to rest in the West. Be patient, my *ba*, my brother, until my heir comes, one who will make offerings, who will stand at the tomb on the day of burial, having prepared the bier (55) of the graveyard.

My *ba* opened its mouth to me, to answer what I had said: If you think of burial, it is heartbreak. It is the gift of tears by aggrieving a man. It is taking a man from his house, casting (him) on high ground. You will not go up to see (60) the sun. Those who built in granite, who erected halls in excellent tombs of excellent construction—when the builders have become gods, their offering-stones are desolate, as if they were the dead who died on the riverbank for lack of a survivor. (65) The flood takes its toll, the sun also. The fishes at the water’s edge talk to them. Listen to me! It is good for people to listen. Follow the feast day, forget worry!

A man plowed his plot. He loaded his harvest into (70) a boat. He towed the freight. As his feast day approached, he saw rising the darkness of a north wind. Watching in the boat, as the sun went down, (he) came out with his wife and children and foundered on the lake infested at (75) night with crocodiles. When at last he sat down, he broke out saying: “I do not weep for that mother, for whom there is no coming from the West for another being-on-earth. I grieve for her children broken in the egg, who have seen the face of the Crocodile (80) before they have lived.” [165]

A man asked for an early meal. His wife said: “It is for supper.” He went outdoors to . . . a while. When he came back to the house he was like another (person). His wife beseeches him and he does not listen to her. He . . . (85) heedless of the household.

I opened my mouth to my *ba*, to answer what it had said:

I

Lo, my name reeks

Lo, more than carrion smell

On summer days of burning sky.

Lo, my name reeks

Lo, more than a catch of fish

(90) On fishing days of burning sky.

Lo, my name reeks

Lo, more than ducks smell,

More than reed-coverts full of waterfowl.

Lo, my name reeks

Lo, more than fishermen smell,

More than the (95) marsh-pools where they fish.

Lo, my name reeks

Lo, more than crocodiles smell,

More than a shore-site full of crocodiles.

Lo, my name reeks

Lo, more than that of a wife

About whom lies are told to the husband.

Lo, my name (100) reeks

Lo, more than that of a sturdy child

Who is said to belong to one who rejects him.

Lo, my name reeks

Lo, more than a king’s town

That utters sedition behind his back.

II

To whom shall I speak today?

Brothers are mean,

The friends of today do not love. [166]

To whom (105) shall I speak today?

Hearts are greedy,

Everyone robs his comrade’s goods.

<To whom shall I speak today?>

Kindness has perished,

Insolence assaults everyone.

To whom shall I speak today?

One is content with evil,

Goodness is cast to the ground everywhere.

To whom shall I speak (110) today?

He who should enrage men by his crimes—

He makes everyone laugh <at> his evildoing.

To whom shall I speak today?

Men plunder,

Everyone robs his comrade.

To whom shall I speak today?

The criminal is one’s intimate,

The brother with whom one dealt is (115) a foe.

To whom shall I speak today?

The past is not remembered,

Now one does not help him who helped.

To whom shall I speak today?

Brothers are mean,

One goes to strangers for affection.

To whom shall I speak today?

Faces are blank,

Everyone turns his face from (120) his brothers.

To whom shall I speak today?

Hearts are greedy,

No man’s heart can be relied on.

To whom shall I speak today?

None are righteous,

The land is left to evildoers. [167]

To whom shall I speak today?

One lacks an intimate,

One resorts to an unknown (125) to complain.

To whom shall I speak today?

No one is cheerful,

He with whom one walked is no more.

To whom shall I speak today?

I am burdened with grief

For lack of an intimate.

To whom shall I speak today?

Wrong roams the earth,

(130) And ends not.

III

Death is before me today

<Like> a sick man’s recovery,

Like going outdoors after confinement.

Death is before me today

Like the fragrance of myrrh,

Like sitting under sail on breeze day.

Death is before me today

(135) Like the fragrance of lotus,

Like sitting on the shore of drunkenness.

Death is before me today

Like a well-trodden way,

Like a man’s coming home from warfare.

Death is before me today

Like the clearing of the sky,

As when a man discovers (140) what he ignored.

Death is before me today

Like a man’s longing to see his home

When he has spent many years in captivity.

IV

Truly, he who is yonder will be a living god,

Punishing the evildoer’s crime. [168]

Truly, he who is yonder will stand in the sun-bark,

Making its bounty flow (145) to the temples.

Truly, he who is yonder will be a wise man,

Not barred from appealing to Re when he speaks.

What my *ba* said to me: “Now throw complaint on the ⌐wood-pile¬, you my comrade, my brother! Whether you offer on the brazier, (150) whether you bear down on life, as you say, love me here when you have set aside the West! But when it is wished that you attain the West, that your body joins the earth, I shall alight after you have become weary, and then we shall dwell together!”

*Colophon*: It is finished (155) from beginning to end, as it was found in writing.

### I WILL PRAISE THE LORD OF WISDOM

(THE POEM OF THE RIGHTEOUS SUFFERER)

(*LUDLUL BĒL NĒMEQI*)

??

“The Poem of the Righteous Sufferer—*Ludlul bēl nēmeqi*.” *Babylonian Wisdom Literature*. Ed. W. G. Lambert. Oxford: Clarendon, 1960. 21-62.

introduction

*Ludlul bēl nēmeqi* is a long monologue in which a certain noble relates how he met with every conceivable calamity, and was eventually restored to health and prosperity by Marduk. Originally the poem seems to have consisted of four tablets constituting together 400-500 lines.[[50]](#footnote-50)\* Of the first tablet the beginning and end are missing. The second tablet is preserved complete. Much of the third is preserved. There is a general opinion that part of the fourth is contained in some fragments from Assur, now joined by a piece from Sultantepe, but a careful consideration of the surviving material throws doubt on this conclusion, and there is no certainty even that this section is part of the work.

The plot of the first three tablets so far as preserved is clear: . . .

(*a*) Introduction . . .

(*b*) The narrator is forsaken by his gods.

(*c*) All his fellow men from the king to his slaves turn against him.

(*d*) Every kind of disease afflicts him.

(*e*) His deliverance is promised in three dreams.

(*f*) He is freed of all the diseases.

\* \* \* \* \*

The first problem arises from the loss of the introduction. Who is the speaker? The opening words, “I will praise the lord of wisdom”, i.e. Marduk, which are known from their use as the title, show the general atmosphere, and one presumes that, without in any way sparing praise, the speaker must eventually have introduced himself, and perhaps gave some biographical details. The only surviving section which provides information is (e), where, in the narration of the dreams, three names occur: Laluralimma, Urnindinlugga, and Šubši-mešrê‑Šakkan. To anticipate our conclusion, it is Šubši-mešrê‑Šakkan who speaks. It is clear that he was once a man of affluence and authority. He occupied several high offices (I. 60, 61, 103, 104), owned slaves and fields (I. 89, 101), had a family (I. 99), and even speaks of “my city” as though it belonged to him (I. 102). His whole personal bearing had been that of a man of authority (I. 70-78). At the same time he had been a model of piety both to the gods and to the king (II. 23-32). The three names quoted belong to the Cassite period [c. 1500-1200 bc], and we should probably conclude that the writer, who also belonged to this period, set the scene in the recent past. No doubt a modern author would have put such a story into the distant past, [21] but that is no criterion for judging an ancient poem. The author had sufficient learning to find old Sumerian names, had he wished, instead of employing names in current use. One may conjecture that Šubši-mešrê‑Šakkan was a feudal lord ruling a city for the Cassite monarch.

When the text first becomes coherent this noble describes how he was forsaken by his whole pantheon (I. 41-46). This calls to mind the *Tukulti-Ninurta Epic*, where all the gods of Babylonia forsake their cities in their anger at the wickedness of Kaštiliaš (BM 98730 obv. 33-46, in *AfO* 18/1.42-43). Just as Kaštiliaš discovered his plight by failure to obtain a good omen, so our noble is beset by ominous signs (I.49-54). The fulfilment of these ensues. The king becomes irreconcilably angry, and the seven courtiers seize the opportunity to plot every kind of mischief against him (55-69). The result is a total eclipse of his previous position (70-76), and he becomes a social outcast, hated by his friends, abused by his slaves, and disowned by his family (77-92). In this situation his persecutors are public heroes, while any kindness to him meets with a fell reward (93-98). Meanwhile all his property is confiscated and his duties are taken over by others (99-104). At this the sufferer gives himself up wholly to lamentation (105-10), which we cannot follow since the text breaks off at this point.

The first tablet then, so far as it is preserved, deals with the narrator’s suffering at the hands of his fellow men. The second tablet is quite different. The first few lines intimate that suffering from those supernatural agencies which were thought responsible for disease is the theme of this part of the work. First, however, the speaker complains that his consultation of those clergy who were concerned with the exorcizing of evil demons has been of no avail (4-9). Then by a quick change the writer leaves the field of magic and incantations and addresses himself to the problem of the suffering of the righteous—another clear indication that these people had no dichotomy of ethical and cultic values. The sufferer, assuming that the gods repay good and evil, complains at some length that he has met the fate of a wrongdoer (12-22), a sentiment expressed more succinctly elsewhere, and then reassures himself by stressing the pious tenor of his past life (23-32). What solution then can he find? He takes hold of the old theologoumena about the remoteness and inscrutability of the gods, and turns them round to mean that all values must be inverted with the gods, so that what is considered right among men must be wrong with the gods, and vice versa (33-38). This in itself, however, is more a complaint than an answer, and he follows it up by pointing out the very uncertain nature of human existence, and the preponderating influence which circumstances, such as famine and prosperity, have in human conduct (39-47). In the face of all this the sufferer expresses blank resignation (48). He has, however, no time to ponder, for Disease, a theme with which the writer deals thoroughly *con amore*, is upon him.

There now follows a long section reminiscent of incantations. It begins with a recital of the diseases, conceived as evil spirits, which arrive from their several other-world dwellings (49-58), and then lists the many disabilities which they inflict upon him (59‑107). [22] The listing of the parts of the body affected begins apparently in the conventional Babylonian manner, commencing with the head downwards,[[51]](#footnote-51)1 but after a few lines the desire to include a good selection of the stock phrases of the incantation literature necessitated a breaking off of this plan and several changes of metre. When the recital is over, the narrator again stresses the helplessness of the priests who were consulted and the gods who were petitioned (108-13), mentions the outrageous behaviour of those who exploited his downfall (114-18), and concludes the tablet with what seems to be a confession of faith in his ultimate recovery ( 119-20). This confession, if it be such, brings to mind Job’s outburst, “I know that my redeemer liveth”, but it must be observed that there are textual difficulties in both passages.

With the third tablet we reach the very heart of the work. The opening phrase, “His hand was heavy upon me”, is of great importance for the understanding of the whole poem. Whose hand? The following lines repeat the “his” but offer no explanation. The writer gives dark hints, but avoids openly using the name Marduk in this connexion. Marduk, with whose praise the poem began, is not mentioned during the 200 lines describing the suffering. Yet it was not the king, the courtiers, household, slaves, or demons that were really responsible. The almighty Marduk was at the root of the trouble, and although the pious hero dare not openly expostulate with him, he cannot leave the subject without a guarded allusion to the cause of his sufferings. Next come the dreams (9-44). The first begins very abruptly, and there is cause for asking if these were really dreams, and not psychic experiences in a semi-conscious state. In the first and third phenomena Šubši-mešrê‑Šakkan speaks to the visitant (17, 34), which was not usual in dreams.[[52]](#footnote-52)2 Yet the second and third are expressly called dreams. The first experience is the appearance of a young man of superlative physique; his message is not preserved. In the second another young man appears, but in the part of an exorcist priest, who duly performs rites on the sufferer after announcing that Laluralimma of Nippur has sent him. The last dream begins with the appearing of a divine-looking young woman, who answers the sufferer’s pleas with a message of consolation. Then in the same dream a man Urnindinlugga, from Babylon if the traces have been read correctly, appears. He is described as bearded, though this was usual in the Cassite period, and he is specifically called an incantation priest. Appropriately he carries a tablet, no doubt written with incantations. He announces that he is the messenger of Marduk, and that he has brought prosperity to Šubši-mešrê‑Šakkan, thus giving the name of the hero of the poem. The two named figures are very arresting. We know of nothing that lends support to the idea that these were dead worthies who in their disembodied state cared for this unfortunate man. The shades of the Babylonians troubled the living if not provided with burial and offerings, but never helped them. It is probable that all five who appeared were, in the story, religious dignitaries of the time. The young woman may have been intended as an *entu*-priestess. The man from Nippur [23] who sent his representative may have been the author’s ruse for calling in the help of the ancient sanctuary of Nippur without conceding any of Marduk’s supremacy to Enlil, which would have happened if Enlil had sent the messenger. This also throws light on the nature of the dreams. A god may appear in a dream, but gods themselves did not perform ritual curing. This was the task of priests, and they did not normally practise their rites in other people’s sleep. So the writer resorts to a succession of none too convincing dreams as a means of bringing the necessary priests to the sick man’s bedside.

All these experiences are signs that Marduk’s wrath is now appeased (50-53), another confirmation that he was held responsible. After a gap in the text the undoing of the evil begins, and each of the disease demons is sent away in the same florid style (Si 55 rev.). The text breaks off before this process is finished, but lines quoted in the cuneiform commentary allow us to follow it to the end, at least in excerpts (a-k). According to the next two lines (l, m) the healed man underwent the river ordeal, and then had his slave mark removed. However, we do not know if he had ever been sold into slavery, and it is probable that these lines are not to be interpreted more literally than q, which speaks of a lion which had been devouring him. Next he proceeds along the processional streets of Babylon to the temple of Marduk, declaring himself an example to all who have sinned against Marduk, a none too clear declaration. Marduk then begins to suppress his human enemies, and with this the Commentary breaks off.

Many scholars, following B. Landsberger . . ., connect the three Assur and one Sultantepe fragments and regard them as part of Tablet IV (here cited as ‘Tablet IV(?)’). [But] A minute examination of the two passages shows that their identification is a mistake. [24]

. . . Whatever uncertainties may arise about its connexions, this text lacks nothing in [25] interest. The narrator begins by declaring how Marduk has saved him (1-4). After a gap the citizens of Babylon, seeing his recovery, burst into acclamation of Marduk and his consort (29-48). After a further gap the sufferer passes through eleven gates of the Esagil temple complex in Babylon, and at each receives a blessing corresponding with the Sumerian names of the gates (77-90). Having arrived inside, the speaker supplicates his saviour, makes for him a veritable feast of fat things, at which the manuscripts end. The text, however, is not ended, for the last preserved line is a catch-line (on u; cf. p for a similar style of tablet). The suitability of this text for the end of *Ludlul* can readily be appreciated. It should, however, be pointed out that a plan does emerge from what is preserved of the first three tablets, and if this plan was carried through, further problems are raised. There is an orderly procedure through the departure of the gods to the persecutions, first by human, and secondly by demonic agencies. After the turning-point, the dreams, the writer starts to take up these topics in reverse order. First the diseases are driven out. Now surely he must pass on to the human tormentors: the estates and offices must be returned, the insulting slaves must bow again, the family must recognize the outcast, the courtiers must repent, and the king must receive him back. Next should come the return of the personal deities. If the author did follow out this scheme he must have written with a quite unusual brevity at the end.

The first attestation the poem receives is in the libraries of Ashurbanipal. Nine manuscripts come from this source, and the Commentary. The latter is listed on an Ashurbanipal tablet of literary titles . . . Late Assyrian copies from Assur and Sultantepe con­firm that *Ludlul* was a classic of Babylonian literature in the seventh century b.c. The copies from Babylon and Sippar are probably later. The date of composition is almost certainly Cassite period. The three names do not permit an earlier date, and stylistic considerations are opposed to one later.

The whole work shows to an extreme degree the characteristics of Cassite-period scholarship (see p. 14). The range of vocabulary is far wider than in most religious texts, and *hapax legomena* or meanings not otherwise attested occur frequently. The author has certainly not coined these rare words himself. He was steeped in the magic literature and seems to have culled from it all the obscure phrases and recondite words. Even the extensive lexical work *H*?? soft-accent “u” under “H”*arra* does not know so many terms for parts of the body. As literature the originality of the work lies in the overall design rather than in its parts. Much of the material, even complete couplets, and the themes are traditional. The Babylonians had long been accustomed to mention or expatiate on their troubles both in letters addressed to their gods and in literary prayers. The first tablet seems to have drawn much inspiration from these two genres. The many lines devoted to the arrival and departure of the demons, however, are clearly based on incantations. Among these there are many examples of a story of healing: a man is set upon by a demon; he does not know how to be rid of it; the aid of Marduk is sought, who goes to his father Ea for advice; the prescription, a ritual, is given by which the sufferer will be made whole. The chief formal difference is that the [26] incantations are written in the third person. In individual cases there are very close parallels. The arrival of the demons reads just like *CT* 17.12 or *Šurpu* VII. Their seizing parts of the body is told in the same style as, for example, *Maqlû* 1.97-102. At the point where, if *Ludlul* were an incantation, the prescriptions for the ritual would be found, the dreams occur in which the ritual is performed and an incantation priest presents himself. Though it is rare in incantations to find as much attention given to the clearing up of a malady as to its onset, there is a short piece directed against a sorceress which first gives the members affected, and then repeats the list as they are cured (*ZA* 45.25-26).

One legitimate criticism of the style is that the abundance of verbiage blunts the edge of the argument. Some explanation comes from the general theme of the work. For a long time it has been customary to refer to *Ludlul* as “The Babylonian Job”, and so long as knowledge was restricted to the second tablet such a description was justified. Seen now in a more complete form it will not bear the title so readily. Quantitatively the greater part of the text is taken up with showing how Marduk restores his ruined servant, and only a small part with trying to probe the reason for the suffering of the righteous. In places the writer deliberately sheers away from plainly facing this problem because of its blasphemous implications. Perhaps “The Babylonian *Pilgrim’s Progress*” would be a better title. Under the surface, however, the writer is perplexed by the same problem as Job. The world is ruled by the lord Marduk, from whom justice is expected by his servants. Yet Marduk allows even the most devoted to suffer. The author of *Ludlul* finds no answer adequate to solve this mystery. All he can say is that though it be the lord who has smitten, yet it is the lord who will heal. [27] . . .

TABLET I [31] . . .

“. . . the opening section consists of a hymn of praise to Marduk. After two repetitive couplets introducing the god, his attributes are described in couplets, the first line of which stresses his greatness and severity, and the second his merciful aspects. In the words of the Apostle, we are invited to “Behold the goodness and severity of God”.[[53]](#footnote-53)\* This is a very appropriate introduction to the following monologue, which describes in much detail Marduk’s severity to his slave, followed by his mercy. . . .

1 I will praise the lord of wisdom, the [deliberative?] god,

2 Who lays hold on the night, but lets free the day,

3 Marduk, the lord of wisdom, the [deliberative god,]

4 Who lays hold on the night, but lets free the day,

5 Whose fury surrounds him like the blast of a tornado,

6 Yet whose breeze is as pleasant as a morning zephyr, [343]

7 His anger is irresistible, his rage is a hurricane,

8 But his heart is merciful, his mind forgiving,

9 The . . . of whose hands the heavens cannot hold back,

10 But whose gentle hand sustains the moribund,

11 Marduk, the . . of whose hands the heavens cannot hold back,

12 But whose gentle hand sustains the moribund.” [344]

41 The lord [. . . . . . . . . . the] confusion

42 And the warrior . . . . . . [. . . . . . .]

43 My god has forsaken me and disappeared,

44 My goddess has failed me and keeps at a distance.

45 The benevolent angel who (walked) beside [me] has departed,

46 My protecting spirit has taken to flight, and is seeking someone else.

47 My strength is gone; my appearance has become gloomy;

48 My dignity has flown away, my protection made off.

49 Fearful omens beset me.

50 I am got out of my house and wander outside.

51 The omen organs are confused and inflamed for me every day.

52 The omen of the diviner and dream priest does not explain my condition.

53 What is said in the street portends ill for me.

54 When I lie down at night, my dream is terrifying.

55 The king, the flesh of the gods, the sun of his peoples,

56 His heart is enraged (with me), and cannot be appeased.

57 The courtiers plot hostile action against me,

58 They assemble themselves and give utterance to impious words.

59 Thus the first, “I will make him pour out his life.”

60 The second says, “I will make him vacate his post.”

61 On this wise the third, “I will seize his position.”

62 “I will take over his estate”, says the fourth.

63 The fifth . . . . . . . .

64 The sixth and seventh will persecute . . . .

65 The clique of seven have assembled their forces,

66 Merciless like a demon, equal to . . .

67 One is their flesh, united in purpose. [33] . . .

68 Their hearts rage against me, and they are ablaze like fire.

69 They combine against me in slander and lies.

7o My lordly mouth have they held as with reins,

71 So that I, whose lips used to prate, have become like a mute.

72 My sonorous shout is [reduced] to silence,

73 My lofty head is bowed down to the ground,

74 Dread has enfeebled my robust heart.

75 A novice has turned back my broad chest.

76 My arms, (though once) strong, are both paralysed.

77 I, who strode along as a noble, have learned to slip by unnoticed.

78 Though a dignitary, I have become a slave.

79 To my many relations I am like a recluse.

80 If I walk the street, ears are pricked;

81 If I enter the palace, eyes blink.

82 My city frowns on me as an enemy;

83 Indeed my land is savage and hostile.

84 My friend has become foe,

85 My companion has become a wretch and a devil.

86 In his savagery my comrade denounces me,

87 Constantly my associates furbish their weapons.

88 My intimate friend has brought my life into danger;

89 My slave has publicly cursed me in the assembly.

90 My house . . . ., the mob has defamed me.

91 When my acquaintance sees me, he passes by on the other side.

92 My family treat me as an alien.

93 The pit awaits anyone who speaks well of me,

94 While he who utters defamation of me is promoted.

95 My slanderer slanders with god’s help;

96 For the . . . who says, “God bless you”, death comes at the gallop.

97 While he who utters a libellous cry is sustained by his guardian spirit.

98 I have no one to go at my side, nor have I found a helper.

99 My household has been enslaved, [35] . . .

100 And the oxen which I . . . . . . . .

101 They have excluded the harvest cry from my fields,

102 And silenced my city like an enemy city.

103 They have let another take my offices,

104 And appointed an outsider in my rites.

105 By day there is sighing, by night lamentation,

106 Monthly—wailing, each year—gloom.

107 I moan like a dove all my days;

108 [For a] song I emit groans.

109 My eyes . . . . [through] constant weeping,

110 My lower eyelids are distended [through abundance of ] tears.

111 [. . . . . . . .] . the fears of [my] heart

112 [. . . . . . . . .] . panic [. . . . . . .] [36] . . .

TABLET II [37] . . .

1 I survived to the next year; the appointed time passed.

2 As I turn round, it is terrible, it is terrible;

3 My ill luck has increased, and I do not find the right.

4 I called to my god, but he did not show his face,

5 I prayed to my goddess, but she did not raise her head.

6 The diviner with his inspection has not got to the root of the matter,

7 Nor has the dream priest with his libation elucidated my case.

8 I sought the favour of the *zaqīqu*-spirit, but he did not enlighten me;

9 And the incantation priest with his ritual did not appease the divine wrath against me.

10 What strange conditions everywhere!

11 When I look behind, there is persecution, trouble.

12 Like one who has not made libations to his god,

13 Nor invoked his goddess at table,

14 Does not engage in prostration, nor takes cognizance of bowing down;

15 From whose mouth supplication and prayer is lacking,

16 Who has done nothing on holy days, and despised sabbaths,

17 Who in his negligence has despised the gods’ rites,

18 Has not taught his people reverence and worship,

19 But has eaten his food without invoking his god,

20 And abandoned his goddess by not bringing a flour offering,

21 Like one who has grown *torpid* and forgotten his lord,

(like such an one) do I appear.

22 Has frivolously sworn a solemn oath by his god,

23 For myself, I gave attention to supplication and prayer:

24 To me prayer was discretion, sacrifice my rule.

25 The day for reverencing the god was a joy to my heart;

26 The day of the goddess’s procession was profit and gain to me. [39] . . .

27 The king’s prayer—that was my joy,

28 And the accompanying music became a delight for me.

29 I instructed my land to keep the god’s rites,

30 And provoked my people to value the goddess’s name.

31 I made praise for the king like a god’s,

32 And taught the populace reverence for the palace.

33 I wish I knew that these things were pleasing to one’s god!

34 What is proper to oneself is an offence to one’s god,

35 What in one’s own heart seems despicable is proper to one’s god.

36 Who knows the will of the gods in heaven?

37 Who understands the plans of the underworld gods?

38 Where have mortals learnt the way of a god?

39 He who was alive yesterday is dead today.

40 For a minute he was dejected, suddenly he is exuberant.

41 One moment people are singing in exaltation,

42 Another they groan like professional mourners.

43 Their condition changes like opening and shutting (the legs).

44 When starving they become like corpses,

45 When replete they vie with their gods.

46 In prosperity they speak of scaling heaven,

47 Under adversity they complain of going down to hell.

48 I am *appalled* at these things; I do not understand their significance.

49 As for me, the exhausted one, a tempest is driving me!

50 Debilitating Disease is let loose upon me:

51 An Evil Wind has blown [from the] horizon,

52 Headache has sprung up from the surface of the underworld,

53 An Evil Cough has left its *Apsy*,

54 The irresistible [Ghost] left *Ekur*,

55 [The *Lamaštu*-demon came] down from the Mountain, [41] . . .

56 Cramp set out [from . . . .] the flood,

57 Impotence cleaves the ground along with the grass.

58 [. . . . . .] their host, together they came on me.

59 [. . . .] head, they enveloped my skull;

60 [My face] is gloomy, my eyes are in flood.

61 They have wrenched my neck muscles and taken the strength from my neck.

62 They struck [my chest,] drubbing my breast.

63 They affected my flesh and caused convulsions,

64 [In] my epigastrium they kindled a fire.

65 They upset my bowels . . . . . . [.]

66 Causing the discharge of phlegm, they brought on a fever in my [lungs.]

67 They caused fever in my limbs and made my fat quake.

68 My lofty stature they destroyed like a wall,

69 My robust figure they laid down like a bulrush,

70 I am thrown down like a bog plant and cast on my face.

71 The *alû*-demon has clothed himself in my body as with a garment;

72 Sleep covers me like a net.

73 My eyes stare, but do not see,

74 My ears are open, but do not hear.

75 Feebleness has seized my whole body,

76 Concussion has fallen upon my flesh.

77 Paralysis has grasped my arms,

78 Impotence has fallen on my knees,

79 My feet forget their motion.

80 [A stroke] has got me; I choke like someone prostrate.

81 [. .] . . . death, it has covered my face.

82 The dream priest mentions me, but I do not respond.

83 [. . .] . weep, but I have no control of my faculties.

84 A snare is laid on my mouth,

85 And a bolt bars my lips.

86 My ‘gate’ is barred, my ‘drinking place’ blocked, [43] . . .

87 My hunger is prolonged, my throat stopped up.

88 When grain is served, I eat it like stinkweed,

89 Beer, the life of mankind, is distasteful to me.

90 My malady is indeed protracted.

91 Through lack of food my countenance is changed,

92 My flesh is flaccid, and my blood has ebbed away.

93 My bones have come apart, and are covered (only) with my skin.

94 My tissues are inflamed, and have caught the . . . .-disease.

95 I take to a bed of bondage; going out is a pain;

96 My house has become my prison.

97 My arms are stricken—which shackles my flesh;

98 My feet are limp—which fetters my person.

99 My afflictions are grievous, my wound is severe.

100 A scourge has thrown me down, the *stroke* is *intense*.

101 The crop pierces me and the spur is severe.

102 All day long the tormentor torments [me,]

103 Nor at night does he let me relax for a minute.

104 Through twisting my sinews are parted,

105 My limbs are splayed and knocked apart.

106 I spend the night in my dung like an ox,

107 And wallow in my excrement like a sheep.

108 My complaints have exposed the incantation priest,

109 And my omens have confounded the diviner.

110 The exorcist has not diagnosed the nature of my complaint,

111 Nor has the diviner put a time limit on my illness. [45] . . .

112 My god has not come to the rescue in taking me by the hand,

113 Nor has my goddess shown pity on me by going at my side.

114 My grave was waiting, and my funerary paraphernalia ready,

115 Before I had died lamentation for me was finished.

116 All my country said, “How he is crushed!”

117 The face of him who gloats lit up when he heard,

118 The tidings reached her who gloats, and her heart rejoiced.

119 But I know the day for my whole family,

120 When, among my friends, their Sun-god will have mercy. [46] . . .

TABLET III [47] . . .

1 His hand was heavy upon me, I could not bear it.

2 My dread of him was alarming, it [ . . . . . . . . . me]

3 His fierce [.] . . was a tornado [. . . . . . .]

4 His stride was . . ., it . . . [. . . . . .]

5 . . the severe illness does not . . [. .] my person,

6 I forget . . . [. .] makes my mind stray.

7 Day and night alike I groan,

8 In dream and waking moments I am equally wretched.

9 A remarkable young man of outstanding physique,

10 Massive in his body, clothed in new garments—

11 Since in waking moments . . . . . . . .

12 Clad in splendour, robed in dread,

13 [. .] . . he stood over me,

14 [I . . .] and [my] body was numbed.

15 [“. . . .] the lady has sent [me]

16 [. . .] . . . . . . [. . .”]

17 [. .] . . I said [. . . . .] . . [. . . .]

18 [.] . . . sent [. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .]

19 They were silent and did not [. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .]

20 . . . . . . [. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .]

21 A second time [I saw a dream,]

22 And in [my night dream which] I [saw]

23 A remarkable young [man ]

24 Holding in his hand a tamarisk rod of purification—

25 “Laluralimma, resident of Nippur,

26 Has sent me to cleanse you.”

27 The water he was carrying he threw over me,

28 Pronounced the life-giving incantation, and rubbed [my body.]

29 A third time I saw a dream,

30 And in my night dream which I saw—

31 . . . a young woman of shining countenance,

32 A queen of . . . ., equal to a god. [49] . . .

[From p. 345 (“Addenda”): “Lines 30-33. . . . After 30 the text should read: . . .

30a A certain young woman of shining countenance,

31 . . . . . . ., equal to a god,

32 A queen of the peoples [. .] . [. . .] . . . [. .],

33 She entered and [sat down . . .] . . [. . .]”]

33 She entered and [sat down] . [. . .] . . . [. .]

34 “Speak my deliverance [. . . . .] . . [. . .]

35 “Fear not,” she said, “I [will . . . . . . .]

36 *Whatever of a dream saw* [. . . . . . . . . . . . . .]

37 She said, “Be delivered from your very wretched state,

38 Whoever has seen a vision in the night time.”

39 In the dream Urnindinlugga, the *Babylonian* [. . . .]

40 A bearded young man with his turban on his head.

41 An incantation priest, carrying a tablet,

42 “Marduk has sent me.

43 To Šubši-mešrê‑Šakkan I have brought prosperity,

44 From Marduk’s pure hands I have brought prosperity.”

45 He (Marduk) had entrusted me into the hands of my ministrant.

46 [In] waking hours he sent the message

47 And showed his favourable sign to my peoples.

48 In the protracted malady . . [. .]

49 My illness was quickly over and [my *fetters*] were broken.

50 After the mind of my Lord had quietened

51 And the heart of merciful Marduk was appeased,

52 [After he had] received my prayers [.] . . [. . . . .]

53 And his pleasant [smile] [. . . . . . . . .]

54 [After he had said,] “Be delivered, you [who are in great] toils!”

55 [. . .] to extol . [. . . . . . . . . .] . .

56 [. .] . to worship and [. . . . . . . . . . .] .

]

] ]

57 [. .] . my guilt [. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .]

58 [. .] . my iniquity [. . . . . . . . . . . . . .]

59 [. .] my transgression . [. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .]

]

60 He made the wind bear away my offences. [51] . . .

Si 55 (q), Reverse

4 [He brought] near his spell which binds . [. . . .]

5 [He drove] away the Evil Wind to the horizon,

To the surface of the underworld he took [the Headache,]

6 [He sent] down the Evil Cough to its *Apsû*,

7 The Irresistible Ghost he returned [to] *Ekur*,

8 He overthrew the *Lamaštu-demon*, dismissing it to the Mountain,

9 In the Flood of the Sea he replaced Cramp,

10 He tore up the root of Impotence like a plant.

11 Bad Sleep, the pouring out of slumber,

12 He took far [away] like smoke with which the heavens get filled.

13 Woe and Alas, . . . . . .,

He drove away like a rain storm so that it . [. .] the underworld.

14 The persistent complaint in the head which . . like . .

15 He expelled like a shower in the night, and removed it from me.

16 My clouded eyes, which were cloaked in a deathly shroud—

17 He drove it a thousand leagues away and lightened [my] vision.

18 My ears which were clogged and blocked like a deaf man’s—

19 He removed their wax and opened my hearing.

20 My nose, whose [breathing] was choked by the onset of fever—

21 He soothed its affliction and now I breathe [freely.]

22 My raving lips which had . . . . [.]

23 He wiped away their terror and loosed their shackles.

24 My mouth, which was blocked so that talking was diffi[cult,]

25 He polished like copper and . [. .] its dirt.

26 My teeth, which were gripped and held together,

27 [He split] their bond and . . [. .] their roots.

28 My tongue, which was bound and [could] not converse,

29 [He] wiped away its . . . . . . and my speech *became plain*.

30 My throat, which was tight and choking like something inanimate, [53] . . .

31 He restored, and let it *sing* songs like a flute.

32 My wind-pipe, which was swollen so that it could not take [in air,]

33 Its swelling diminished, and he opened its blockage.

34 My [. .] . which . . . . . . . [. . . . .] . [. . .]

35 [. .] . . . . above . . [. . . . .] . . [. . .]

36 [. . . which] was darkened like . . . . [. . . . . . . .] . . [. . .]

*Lines quoted in the Commentary*

a The greater intestine, which was always empty through lack of food, and was twined like a reed basket,

b It receives food and takes drink.

c My neck, which was prolapsed and slouched in the collar,

d He erected it a mountain and set it up like a *pillar*.

e He made my physique like that of one consummate in strength.

f He made my finger nails scratch like the rash of . . .

g He drove out their fatigue and put to right their . . .

h My knees, which were fettered and [bound like] the *būṣu*-bird’s,

i The frame of my body he . . . [. .] .

j He wiped away the gangrene and purged its filth.

k My gloomy appearance was filled with light.

l Beside the River, where the judgement of the people is decided,

m My brow was shaved and my slave mark removed.

n [. . . . . . . . . . . . . . .] . . [.] . pity. [55] . . .

o I proceeded along the Kunuš-kadru Street—redeemed!

p He who has done wrong in respect of Esagil, let him learn from my example!

q It was Marduk who put a muzzle on the mouth of the lion who was eating me.

r Marduk despoiled my pursuer of his sling and turned aside his slingstone. [56]

TABLET IV(?) [57] . . .

1 The Lord . . . . me,

2 The Lord took hold of me,

3 The Lord set me on my feet,

4 The Lord gave me life,

5 He rescued me [from the pit,]

6 He summoned me [from] destruction,

7 [. . .] he pulled me from the *Hsoft-accent “u” under “H”ubur* river,

8 [. . .] . he took my hand.

9 [He who] smote me,

10 Marduk, he restored me.

11 He smote the hand of my smiter,

12 It was Marduk who made his weapon fall.

13 [He] . . . the lion, my . [.],

14 It was Marduk who . . [. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .]

\* \* \* \* \*

25 [.] . golden corn [. . . . . . . . . .]

26 [I] anointed myself with sweet cedar perfume, upon . [. . . . . . .]

27 The banquet of the Babylonians . . [. . . . . . .]

28 The grave I had made [. . . . .] in the banquet.

29 The Babylon<ians> saw how [Marduk] restores to life,

30 And all quarters extolled [his] greatness:

31 “Who thought that he would see his Sun?

32 Who imagined that he would walk along his street?

33 Who but Marduk restores his dead to life?

34 Apart from Ṣarpānītum which goddess grants life?

35 Marduk can restore to life from the grave,

36 Ṣarpānītum knows how to save from destruction.

37 Wherever the earth is laid, and the heavens are stretched out,

38 Wherever the sun god shines, and the fire god blazes,

39 Wherever water flows and wind blows,

40 Creatures whose clay Aruru took in her fingers,

41 Those endowed with life, who stride along, [59] . . .

42 Mortals, as many as there are, give praise to Marduk!

43 [. . . . . . ., who give utterance,

44 [. . . . . . .] . [. . . . . .] may he rule all the peoples,

45 [. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .] shepherd of all dwellings.

46 [. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .] . floods from the deep,

47 [. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .] . the gods . . [.] .,

48 [. . . . . . . . . . . . . . .] the extent of heaven and earth.

\* \* \* \* \*

76 [. . .] . . which in my prayers . . [. . . . . . .]

77 [With] prostration and supplication [. . . .] to Esagil.

78 [I who went] down to the grave have returned to the “Gate of the [Sun Rise.”]

79 [In the] “Gate of Prosperity” prosperity was [given me,]

8o [In the] “Gate of the . . Guardian Spirit” a guardian spirit drew [nigh to me,]

8i [In the] “Gate of Well-being” I found well-being,

82 In the “Gate of Life” I was granted life,

83 In the “Gate of the Sun Rise” I was reckoned among the living,

84 In the “Gate of Splendid Wonderment” my omens were very plain,

85 In the “Gate of Release of Guilt” I was released from my bond,

86 In the “Gate of Worship” my mouth inquired,

87 In the “Gate of Resolving of Sighs” my sighs were resolved,

88 In the “Gate of Pure Water” I was sprinkled with water of purification,

89 In the “Gate of Well-being” I communed with Marduk,

90 In the “Gate of Exuberance” I kissed the foot of Ṣarpānītum.

91 I persisted in supplication and prayer before them,

92 Fragrant incense I placed before them,

93 I presented an offering, a gift, accumulated donations,

94 I slaughtered fat oxen, and butchered *fattened sheep*,

95 I repeatedly libated honey-sweet beer and pure wine.

96 The protecting genius and guardian spirit, divine attendants of the brickwork of Esagil,

97 [. .] . libation I made their hearts glow,

98 [With] the succulent [meals] I made them exultant.

99 [The threshold, the bolt] socket, the bolt, the doors,

100 [I . .] . oil, curds, and choicest grain.

101 [. . . . . . .] . . . . . the rites of the temple. [61]

### THE BABYLONIAN *THEODICY*

??

“The Babylonian *Theodicy*.” *Babylonian Wisdom Literature*. Ed. W. G. Lambert. Oxford: Clarendon, 1960. 63-89.

introduction

The *Theodicy* is an acrostic poem of twenty-seven stanzas of 11 lines each. It takes the form of a dialogue between a sufferer, who exposes the evils of current social injustice, and a friend, who tries to reconcile these facts with established views on the justice of the divine ordering of the universe. Nineteen of the stanzas are preserved either completely or sufficiently for the trend of the argument to be apparent. The other eight are either totally lost or inadequately preserved. The acrostic itself can, however, be restored completely, and it reads:

*a-na-ku sa-ag-gi-il-ki-*[*i-na-am-u*]*b-bi-ib ma-áš-ma-šu ka-ri-bu ša i-li ú šar-ri*

“I, Saggil-kīnam-ubbib, the incantation priest, am adorant of the god and the king.”

A fair number of manuscripts have turned up both from Assyria and Babylonia, and a commentary from Sippar confirms that this composition received much attention in learned circles of the late periods. The earliest datable manuscripts are from the Ashurbanipal libraries, and the latest is probably m, which gives the impression of being Seleucid or even Parthian. The text itself, as will be shown, was probably written about 1000 b.c. The manuscript tradition is nowhere perfect. Even the Ashurbanipal copies, which are usually impeccable, have two errors (D: 248; C: 276), while the copies from Assur and Babylonian cities have many more corrupt passages (a: 23, 24, 25, 28, 264, 268, 277, 279; f: 213; j: 217, 219; m: 285, 286, 288, 289, 290, 294). The Commentary alone seems to be free from error, apart from a trivial slip in the comment on line 1. It is indeed a very thorough piece of work, and one cannot but admire the consummate learning of its author and regret that it has not survived in its entirety. Apart from the manuscripts and Commentary, the poem is attested in two other places.

First, a Late Assyrian fragment of a catalogue of literary texts cites it: . . .

1 [. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . let] me tell you”

2 [According to . . . . . . . son of . . . .] x-iddina, the incantation priest, scholar of Babylon. . . .

Here the first line of the poem is given as the title, and this is followed by the ascription [63] of authorship or editorship, the outline of which can be restored from the rest of the catalogue. The writing of this line is cramped compared with that of the first line, which shows that the name ending in -iddina must have been preceded by that of his “son”. What cannot be ascertained is whether Saggil-kīnam-ubbib, the author, or another name, that of an editor, has to be restored. See the discussion by the present writer in *JCS* 11.5-12. The occurrence of (E)saggil, the Marduk temple in Babylon, in the author’s name strongly suggests that he was a citizen of Babylon.

The second attestation comes from a Late Babylonian exercise tablet from Sippar (BM 76479 = a.h. 83-1-18, 1847, *PSBA* 18, pl. iv, col. III) where the name Esaggil-kīna-ubbib is used for writing practice, and is copied out in different orthographies. As these seem to be the only occurrences of the name, it is a plausible assumption that the teacher who assigned the name to the pupil consciously used our author’s name.

The sufferer begins the debate by addressing his friend with the greatest respect, a politeness which the two speakers maintain to the end. Then he begins his tale of woe: he was born late to his parents, who soon left him an unprotected orphan (I). Already the chief topics have been adumbrated. Why do the gods not protect those who cannot protect themselves? Why do the powerful oppress such? Why has the first-born advantages over the later child? In reply the friend chides the sufferer with unnecessary despondency, and points out that the death of his parents was nothing more than a sharing in the common lot of mankind. The hard life of the sufferer he counters by asserting that prosperity is always the result of piety (II). The answer of the sufferer (III) shows that he considers that his desperate state has not been appreciated, and so he elaborates this point, stressing that he knows no way out. The friend reiterates that a life of piety will not go unrewarded (IV). Against this the sufferer cites examples of crimes which pay, both from the animal kingdom and from human society (V). The friend now draws on the traditional teaching about the remoteness and inscrutability of the divine mind. What it amounts to is that eventually criminals meet a dire end, and so he warns the sufferer not to be tempted into crime, but to cultivate the gods (VI). This explanation is altogether unacceptable to the sufferer, who describes how his life of dedication to religion has only resulted in his present state (VII). This the friend reckons as blasphemy, and he amplifies his statement that it is a hard thing to grasp the wisdom of the gods (VIII).

After a gap, the friend is trying to point out the joys of a life of simple piety, of performing the duties to society and the gods (XII). In desperation the sufferer retorts that all he desires is to escape from settled life and to live as a vagrant (XIII). The text again breaks off, and when it resumes in XVII the sufferer is emphasizing how easily the richest and the poorest change positions. XVIII and XIX cannot be followed, but in XX the friend is repeating his old contention that piety does pay. The sufferer replies that the unscrupulous are those who become wealthy (XXI). The friend repeats that in the end they are discomfited, but makes a concession to his opponent, since he now insists that the god-fearing never starve, though they may not have an abundance (XXII). The sufferer is still not convinced, and now he contrasts the privileges and arrogance of the [64] first-born as compared with others. He ends with a further assertion that his abject state is the outcome of his piety (XXIII). The friend, however, has an answer to the argument from the first-born, and one which he gives as another example of divine wisdom not being apparent to a superficial observer: the first-born is physically inferior to later offspring, and so the privileges are offset (XXIV). There is no need to seek statistics on the physiological truth or otherwise of this proposition. The writer had none. However, common observation is adequate to show that there is some empirical proof of this idea, and this would be more apparent in the ancient Near East where women commenced childbirth at the earliest possible age, and so before they were fully grown. This argument seems to be accepted by both speakers since it is not disputed, but now the sufferer plays his trump. The rich and the powerful, he says, are always upheld in the false witness which they bring against the poor, and thus they grind them down (XXV). With this the friend is compelled to agree. He explains that lies and false witness are part of human nature as the gods made it (XXVI). Having won his point, the sufferer concludes the dialogue with a plea that his friend contemplate his grief, and that the gods resume their protection (XXVII).

A conclusion, then, has been reached, however pathetic the last stanza may sound. But this conclusion undermines the premisses on which the two argued. Both sufferer and friend began by assuming that the gods were responsible for maintaining justice among men. They end by admitting that these very gods made men prone to injustice. In a sense the real problem has been shelved. The view that the wicked ultimately receive their due was stated, and the practical experience that evil men prosper was set against it. Apparently the author could not resolve the conflict between the deep-seated conviction and actual life, so his way out was to assert a thesis which seemed to him logically irrefutable, and in some way related to the problem. Whatever evil men do, he argues, is done because the gods made them that way. Where the author fails is in not seeing clearly the relationship of this thesis to the main problem.

In both form and content the dialogue is a very original composition. The writer seems to be unique in preaching against the privileges of the first-born, and one wonders if he himself had experienced a selfish elder brother. As a whole, however, there are objections to supposing that the writer mirrors his own life. The downtrodden orphan cannot have been the learned author and incantation priest. If it is supposed that he rose to high rank from a very humble origin, there is the difficulty that his writing betrays no optimism, nor any confidence in the saving power of the gods.

The style was apparently intended to be simple. The author is not carried away by words, but makes an economic use of them to force his points home. Even though he employs repetition to gain emphasis (e.g. 245-50, 267-74), there is nothing like the verbosity of parts of *Ludlul*. The vocabulary contains a fair sprinkling of rare words, e.g. *bēl pāni* (52, 63, 275) ‘nouveau riche’, *in qá-bal* (189) ‘formerly, since’, and *qadmu* (251, 276) ‘god’, but never to excess. The difficulties which the work presents at a first reading are due largely to the constricting influence of metre. Some of the lines are epigrammatic [65] to the extent that their meaning only becomes clear after careful study. Lines of four main stresses are hardly long enough for the development of a smooth chain of reasoning such as the author attempts.

The metrical form of the work is outstanding. Each of the 11 lines of the stanzas begins with the same sign, like Psalm 119. To achieve this a few *tours de force* were necessary. A pseudo-archaic pronoun is used in 25 to provide the required first syllable, and throughout the author allows himself the liberty of using a little of the polyphony of the signs. If a stanza has an initial *bu*, he permits words beginning with the same sign, but pronounced *pu*. The other values of the *bu* sign, however, *gíd* and *sír*, are not used. The 11-line stanza is unique. That of ten lines is common, and scribes sometimes rule a line after every tenth line of the text even when there are no metrical grounds for so doing, as in *Ludlul* iv(?). The 11-line stanza has a purpose. It is made up of five couplets and an odd line. There is no rule about the position of the odd line in the stanza, though it never occurs at the beginning. Commonly it is reserved for an emphatic statement, though exceptions occur. The individual lines have a metre of four principal stresses, and some of the Babylonian manuscripts (aijl) have the space divided into four columns and distribute the words into their compartments. Other poetic works have their lines divided into hemistichs in some manuscripts, an arrangement technically known as *ṣullupu*, . . . though in fact the division is often made at the wrong point in the line (e.g. *Ludlul* m; *Counsels of Wisdom* C). Despite this misuse, there can be little doubt that in origin at least this dividing into hemistichs had metrical significance. It is to be regretted that no Babylonian manuscript of line 238 has survived, which has only three words! Other lines too can only be made to have four principal stresses by unnatural means (72, 235). In 72 the first word seems to have been unusually stressed as if to make it serve for a whole hemistich, and probably the other lines which seem to lack four stresses should be understood as exceptions within four-stress metre, rather than as odd three-stress lines.

The date of composition cannot be earlier than the Cassite period. The name Saggil-kīnam-ubbib is of a type only common since Cassite times (J. J. Stamm, *MV AG* 44.172), and the language shows plain influence of Middle or Late Babylonian, though some scribes have substituted Standard Babylonian forms . . . The question, then, is whether it is Cassite period or later. Von Soden in 1935 suggested [66] that the author lived not earlier than Boo b.c. (*ZDMG* 89.1661). This is the latest possible date since the *Theodicy* is an established work in the Ashurbanipal libraries. There is no strong reason to compel any date in particular between about 1400 and 800. One consideration which has been urged in favour of a late date within this range is the acrostic. Only four other acrostics have been recovered from Akkadian literature:

(i) DT 83 (T. Pinches, *Texts in the Bab. Wedge Writing*, pp. 15-16 = *PSBA* 17.133-4), a hymn to Marduk with reference to an unnamed king. The stanzas are of five lines beginning with the same syllable.

(ii) BM 55469 = 82-7-4, 42 (*PSBA* 20.154-62), a hymn to Nābû, written in honour of Nebuchadnezzar II. It consists of five 10-line stanzas. The lines begin with the same sign and the acrostic reads d*na-bu-ú*.

(iii) K 8204 (*PSBA* 17.137-41), a prayer to Nābû in stanzas of four lines. Both the first and last syllables of each line form one and the same acrostic.

(iv) Acrostic hymn of Ashurbanipal to Marduk (last edition *KB* vi/2.108-17). It is made up of thirty sections of elevated prose, each of which begins with the sign forming the acrostic.

(K 14022 (*ZA* 10.20; *ABRT* 1.53) is a very small fragment of an acrostic prayer.)

Outside Akkadian there are the Hebrew alphabetic acrostics in the Psalter, Proverbs, Lamentations, and Nahum, and from the Hellenistic period onwards both word and alphabetic acrostics appear in the Semitic and Classical languages (see the literature cited by R. Marcus, *JNES* 6.109-15). Even if it could be shown that the Biblical examples antedate the seventh century b.c.—and it cannot—it would still seem that the Babylonian word and sentence acrostic is a native invention. Although the two dated examples were written for Ashurbanipal and Nebuchadnezzar II, nothing whatever can be deduced from this about the century in which the acrostic was first used. This approach to the problem of dating the *Theodicy* is devoid of result.

On purely stylistic considerations the writer would place it about 1000 b.c. The language shows a certain reconditeness and a measure of striving for rarity which is characteristic of a group of texts which the writer would place in the late Cassite period (see p. 14). On the other hand, the *Theodicy* is not completely under this influence and uses some colloquial forms instead of the standard literary dialect.

One curiosity which the text displays is that the scribes commonly write “gods” when the context, singular suffixes, or a parallel “goddess” leave no doubt that the personal god is meant (49, 82, 219, 241, 295). In some cases not all the manuscripts have been affected. Scribes of *Ludlul* do the same II.12, 25, 33). A similar phenomenon can be observed in personal names. . . . [67] . . .

Sufferer I

1 O sage [. . . . . . . .] come, [let] me tell you.

2 [. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . let] me inform you.

3 [. . . . .] . . . . . . [. . . . .] . . . you,

4 I [. . . .], the suffering, will not cease to reverence you.

5 Where is the wise man of your calibre?

6 Where is the scholar who can compete with you?

7 Where is the counsellor to whom I can relate my grief?

8 I am finished. Anguish has come upon me.

9 I was a youngest child; fate took my father;

10 My mother who bore me departed to the Land of No Return.

11 My father and mother left me without a guardian.

Friend II

12 Respected friend, what you say is gloomy.

13 You let your *mind* dwell on evil, my dear fellow.

14 You make your fine discretion like an imbecile’s;

15 You have reduced your beaming face to scowls.

16 Our fathers in fact give up and go the way of death.

17 It is an old saying that they cross the river Hsoft-accent “u” under “H”ubur.

18 When you consider mankind as a whole,

19 . . . it is not . . . that has made the impoverished first-born rich.

20 Whose favourite is the fattened rich man?

21 He who waits on his god has a protecting angel,

22 The humble man who fears his goddess accumulates wealth.

Sufferer III

23 My friend, your mind is a river whose spring never fails,

24 The accumulated mass of the sea, which knows no decrease. [71] . . .

25 I will ask you a question; listen to what I say.

26 Pay attention for a moment; hear my words.

27 My body is a wreck, emaciation darkens [me,]

28 My success has vanished, my *stability* has gone.

29 My strength is enfeebled, my prosperity has ended,

30 Moaning and grief have blackened my features.

31 The corn of my fields is far from satisfying [me,]

32 My wine, the life of mankind, is too little for satiety.

33 Can a life of bliss be assured? I wish I knew how!

Friend IV

34 What I say is restrained . . . . [. .]

35 But you [. . .] your balanced reason like a madman.

36 You make [your . . . .] diffuse and irrational,

37 You [turn] your select . . blind.

38 As to your persistent unending desire for . . [. .]

39 [The former] security . . [. .] by prayers.

40 The appeased goddess returns by . [. .]

41 [. . . . who did not uphold takes pity on . [. .]

42 Ever seek the [correct standards] of justice.

43 Your . ., the mighty one, will show kindness,

44 [. . . . . . . . . .] will grant mercy.

Sufferer V

45 I bow to you, my comrade, I grasp your wisdom.

46 [. . . . . . . . . . .] . . the utterance of [your words.]

47 [. . . . . . . . . . .] . . come, let me [say something to you.]

48 The onager, the wild ass, who filled itself with . . [.] [73] . . .

49 Did it pay attention to *the giver of assured* divine oracles?

50 The savage lion who devoured the choicest flesh,

51 Did it bring its flour offering to appease the goddess’s anger?

52 [. .] . the nouveau riche who has multiplied his wealth,

53 Did he weigh out precious gold for the goddess Mami?

54 [Have I] held back offerings? I have prayed to my god,

55 [I have] pronounced the blessing over the goddess’s regular sacrifices, . . . . [. . .]

Friend VI

56 O palm, tree of wealth, my precious brother,

57 Endowed with all wisdom, jewel of [gold,]

58 You are as stable as the earth, but the plan of the gods is remote.

59 Look at the superb wild ass on the [plain;]

60 The arrow will follow the gorer who trampled down the fields.

61 Come, consider the lion that you mentioned, the enemy of cattle.

62 For the crime which the lion committed the pit awaits him.

63 The opulent nouveau riche who heaps up goods

64 Will be burnt at the stake by the king before his time.

65 Do you wish to go the way these have gone?

66 Rather seek the lasting reward of (your) god!

Sufferer VII

67 Your mind is a north wind, a pleasant breeze for the peoples.

68 Choice friend, your advice is fine.

69 Just one word would I put before you.

70 Those who neglect the god go the way of prosperity,

71 While those who pray to the goddess are impoverished and dispossessed. [75] . . .

72 In my youth I sought the will of my god;

73 With prostration and prayer I followed my goddess.

74 But I was bearing a profitless corvée as a yoke.

75 My god decreed instead of wealth destitution.

76 A cripple is my superior, a lunatic outstrips me.

77 The rogue has been promoted, but I have been brought low.

Friend VIII

78 My reliable fellow, holder of knowledge, your thoughts are perverse.

79 You have forsaken right and blaspheme against your god’s designs.

80 In your mind you have an urge to disregard the divine ordinances.

81 [. . . . . . . . .] the sound rules of your goddess.

82 The plans of the god [. . . . . . . .] like the centre of heaven,

83 The decrees of the goddess are not [. . . . . . . . . . . . .]

84 To understand properly . [. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .]

85 Their ideas [. . . . . . . . . . . . .] to mankind;

86 To grasp the way of a goddess [. . . . . . . . . . . .]

87 Their reason is close at hand [. . . . . . . . . . . .]

88 . . [. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .]

Friend XII

125 [I] . . [. . .

126 [I] made white . . [. . .

127 [I] *cared for* . . [. . .

128 [I] looked after the young [ones . . .

129 [I] made the people *prosperous* [. . .

130 [I] gathered . . [. . .

131 [I] gave heed to the god [. . .

132 [I] sought that which was necessary [. . .

Sufferer XIII

133 I will abandon my home [. . . . . . . . . . . . . .]

134 I will desire no property [. . . . . . . . . . . . .] [77] . . .

135 I will ignore my god’s regulations and trample on his rites.

136 I will slaughter a calf and . . . . food,

137 I will take the road and go to distant parts.

138 I will bore a well and let loose a flood,

139 Like a robber I will roam over the vast open country.

140 I will go from house to house and ward off hunger;

141 Famished I will walk around and patrol the streets.

142 Like a beggar I will [. . . .] inwards [. . . . . . . . . . .]

143 Bliss is far away . . [. . . . . . . . . . . . . . .]

Friend XIV

]

144 My friend, [your mind] dwells on [. . . . . . . .]

145 Human activity, which you do not want [. . . . . . . . .]

146 In [your] mind there are [. . . . . . . . . . . .]

147 Your reason has left you [. . . . . . . . . . . .]

\* \* \* \* \*

Sufferer XV

159 The daughter speaks [. . . . . .] to her mother.

160 The fowler who cast [his net] is fallen.

161 Taking everything, which one [. . . . . .] luck?

162 The many wild creatures which . . [. . . . . . . .]

163 Which among them has [. . . .?]

]

164 Should I seek a son and daughter [. . . . . .]

165 May I not lose what I find . . [. . . . . . . .] [79] . . .

Friend XVI

166 Humble and submissive one . . . [. . . . . . .]

167 Your will ever submits [. . . . . .] precious.

168 [. .] . your mind . . . . [. . . . . . .]

\* \* \* \* \*

Sufferer XVII

181 The crown prince is clothed in [. . . .,]

182 The son of the destitute and naked is robed in . [. . . . .]

183 The watchman of malt . . [.] gold,

184 While he who counted his shining gold in a bushel measure is carrying . . [. . .]

185 The vegetarian [devours] a noble’s banquet,

186 While the son of the notable and the rich [subsists] on carob.

187 The owner of wealth is fallen. [His . . . .] . is far away.

\* \* \* \* \* [81] . . .

Sufferer XIX

199 . [. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .] wisdom.

200 You embrace the totality of wisdom, you counsel the peoples.

\* \* \* \* \*

Friend XX

212 You have let your subtle mind go astray.

213 [. . . . . . . . .] . you have ousted wisdom,

214 You despise propriety, you profane ordinances.

215 [. . . . . . . .] head a mitre, the carrying-hod is far away from him.

216 [. . . . . . . . .] . is made a person of influence.

217 [. . . . . . . . . .] is called a savant;

218 He is looked after and obtains his wishes.

219 Follow in the way of the god, observe his rites,

220 [. . . . . . . . .] . is counted as righteousness.

Sufferer XXI

221 [. . . . . . . . . . . . . .] . . . . rogues,

222 [. . . . . . . . . . . . . .] . all are cheats. [83] . . .

223 They amass goods . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .

\* \* \* \* \*

Friend XXII

235 As for the rogue whose favour you seek,

236 His . . . . . . . soon vanishes.

237 The godless cheat who has wealth,

238 A death-dealing weapon pursues him.

239 Unless you seek the will of the god, what luck have you?

240 He that bears his god’s yoke never lacks food, though it be sparse.

241 Seek the kindly wind of the god,

242 What you have lost over a year you will make up in a moment.

Sufferer XXIII

243 I have looked around society, but the evidence is contrary.

244 The god does not impede the way of a devil.

245 A father drags a boat along the canal,

246 While his first-born lies in bed.

247 The first-born son pursues his way like a lion,

248 The second son is happy to be a mule driver.

249 The heir stalks along the road like a bully,

250 The younger son will give food to the destitute. [85] . . .

251 How have I profited that I have bowed down to my god?

252 I have to bow beneath the base fellow that meets me;

253 The dregs of humanity, like the rich and opulent, treat me with contempt.

Friend XXIV

254 O wise one, O savant, who masters knowledge,

255 In your anguish you blaspheme the god.

256 The divine mind, like the centre of the heavens, is remote;

257 Knowledge of it is difficult; the masses do not know it.

258 Among all the creatures whom Arum formed

259 The prime offspring is altogether . . .

260 In the case of a cow, the first calf is lowly,

261 The later offspring is twice as big.

262 A first child is born a weakling,

263 But the second is called an heroic warrior.

264 Though a man may observe what the will of the god is, the masses do not know it.

Sufferer XXV

265 Pay attention, my friend, understand my ideas.

266 Heed the choice expression of my words.

267 People extol the word of a strong man who is trained in murder,

268 But bring down the powerless who has done no wrong.

269 They confirm the wicked whose crime is . [. . .,]

270 Yet suppress the honest man who heeds the will of his god.

271 They fill the [store house] of the oppressor with gold,

272 But empty the larder of the beggar of its provisions.

273 They support the powerful, whose . . . is *guilt*,

274 But destroy the weak and drive away the powerless.

275 And as for me, the penurious, a nouveau riche is persecuting me. [87] . . .

Friend XXVI

276 Narru, king of the gods, who created mankind,

277 And majestic Zulummar, who dug out their clay,

278 And mistress Mami, the queen who fashioned them,

279 Gave perverse speech to the human race.

28o With lies, and not truth, they endowed them for ever.

281 Solemnly they speak in favour of a rich man,

282 “He is a king,” they say, “riches go at his side.”

283 But they harm a poor man like a thief,

284 They lavish slander upon him and plot his murder,

285 Making him suffer every evil like a criminal, because he has no *protection*.

286 Terrifyingly they bring him to his end, and extinguish him like a flame.

Sufferer XXVII

287 You are kind, my friend; behold my grief.

288 Help me; look on my distress; know it.

289 I, though humble, wise, and a suppliant,

290 Have not seen help and succour for one moment.

291 I have trodden the square of my city unobtrusively,

292 My voice was not raised, my speech was kept low.

293 I did not raise my head, but looked at the ground,

294 I did not worship even as a slave in the company of my associates.

295 May the god who has thrown me off give help,

296 May the goddess who has [abandoned me] show mercy,

297 For the shepherd Šamaš guides the peoples like a god. [89]

### THE SATIRICAL LETTER OF HORI

“An Egyptian Letter.” Trans. John A. Wilson. *Ancient* *Near* *Eastern* *Texts* *Relating* *to* *the* *Old* *Testament*. Ed. James B. Pritchard. 3rd ed. with supplement. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1969. 475-79.

“The scribe, choice of heart, persevering of counsel, for whose utterances there is rejoicing when they are heard, skilled in the Word of God,[[54]](#footnote-54)1 (for) there is nothing which he does not know. . . . He greets his friend, his excellent brother, the royal scribe of orders to the victorious army, choice of heart, goodly of character, wise of understanding . . .

When I [looked] at thy letter, I found that it was neither praises nor insults. Thy statements mix up this with that; all thy words are upside-down; they are not connected. [475] . . . Thy letter abounds in *cutting speeches*, is loaded with big words. See, thou art rewarded with that which was sought—a greater load for thee than thou hast [476] wished. “I am a scribe, a *mahir*!”[[55]](#footnote-55)27 thou sayest again. If there be truth in what thou sayest, come out (5) that thou mayest be tested! A horse is harnessed for thee, swift as a jackal . . . It is like a whirlwind when it goes forth. Thou loosest the reins and takest the bow. Let us see what thy hand can do. I shall explain for thee the nature of a *mahir* and let thee see what he has done.

Thou hast not gone to the land of Hatti,[[56]](#footnote-56)28 thou hast not seen the land of Upi.[[57]](#footnote-57)29 Khedem, thou knowest [not] its nature, nor Yegdy either. What is it like, the Simyra of Sessi[[58]](#footnote-58)30—life, prosperity, health!? On which side of it is the city of Aleppo? (xix 1) What is its stream like? Thou hast not gone forth to Kadesh and Tubikhi.[[59]](#footnote-59)31 Thou hast not gone to the region of the Bedouin with the bowmen of the army. Thou hast [not] trodden the road to *the* *Magur*, where the sky is darkened by day and it is overgrown with *cypresses* and oaks and cedars which reach the heavens. Lions are more numerous than leopards or *bears*, (and it is) surrounded by Bedouin on (every) side of it. . . .

Let me tell thee of another strange city, named Byblos. What is it like? And its goddess? Once again—[thou] hast not trodden it. Pray, instruct me about Beirut, about Sidon and Sarepta. Where is the stream (xxi 1) of the Litani? What is Uzu like?[[60]](#footnote-60)35 They say another town is in the sea, named Tyre-the-Port. Water is taken (to) it by the boats, and it is richer in fish than the sands.

Let me tell thee another difficult case—the crossing of Seram.[[61]](#footnote-61)36 Thou wilt say: “It burns more than a sting!” Very sick is the *mahir*. Come, set (me) on the way southward to the region of Acre. Where does the Achshaph road come? (5) *At* what town? Pray, teach me about the mountain of User. What is its head[[62]](#footnote-62)37 like? Where does the mountain of Shechem come? . . . Where does the *mahir* make the journey to Hazor? What is its stream like? Put me (on) the track to Hamath, Deger, and Deger-El, the promenade ground of every *mahir*. (xxii 1) Pray, teach me about its road and show me *Yan*. If one is traveling to *Adummim*, which way is the face? Do not *shrink* *from* thy teaching! Guide *us* (*to*) know them! [477] . . .

Nekhes and Hebret,[[63]](#footnote-63)53 thou hast not seen them since thy birth. O *mahir*, where are they? Raphia—what is its wall like? How many *iters* march is it as far as Gaza?[[64]](#footnote-64)54 Answer quickly! Make me a report, that I may call thee *mahir* and boast to (xxviii r) others of thy name *maryanu*[[65]](#footnote-65)55—so shall I speak to them.

*Conclusion*

Thou art angry at what [I] say to thee. (But) I am competent of heart in every office. My father taught me what he knew and instructed me a million times. I know how to take the reins—even beyond thy experience! There is no hero who can compare himself to myself. I am initiated in the *service* of Montu.[[66]](#footnote-66)56

How damaged is everything which comes forth over thy tongue! How futile are thy speeches! Thou comest to me wrapped up in confusions, loaded down with mistakes. Thou splittest words apart in charging ahead, and thou dost not weary of *fumbling*. Be strong! Forward! *Make* *haste*! Thou wilt not fall. . . .

Now how will this end? Should I withdraw? Behold, I have arrived! Submit thou! If (5) thy heart is heavy, (still) thy heart is composed. Do not be angry. . . . Thy speeches . . . are confused when heard, and there is no interpreter who can explain them. They are like the words of a man of the Delta marshes with a man of Elephantine.[[67]](#footnote-67)57

Now thou art a scribe of the Great Double Door, [478] reporting the affairs of the lands, good and fair, [to him] who may see it. Thou shouldst not say, “Thou hast made my name to stink before the rabble and everybody!” See, I have told thee the nature of the *mahir*. I have traversed for thee the *roads of foreign countries*.[[68]](#footnote-68)58 I have marshaled for thee the foreign countries all together and the towns according to their *order*. Pray, *let thyself* look at them calmly, that thou mayest find thyself (able) to recount them, that thou mayest become with us a . . .[[69]](#footnote-69)59 [479]

THE DIALOGUE OF PESSIMISM[[70]](#footnote-70)1

“The Dialogue of Pessimism.” *Babylonian Wisdom Literature*. Ed. W. G. Lambert. Oxford: Clarendon, 1960. 139-49.

introduction

This composition is unique in cuneiform, and is a very effective piece. It takes the form of a dialogue between a master and his slave. The master, evidently a man of means, announces to his slave that he is about to engage in some activity, and the discreet slave promptly points out the benefits of the proposed course of action. But the master has already tired of the idea and declares that he will certainly not do the thing, whereupon the slave equally promptly mentions some of the unpleasant consequences which might have followed the realization of the plan. When the master has thus disposed of all the ideas which he can summon, he finally asks the slave what is worth doing. Now the slave takes the initiative and declares that death is the only desirable end.

Quite diverse interpretations of this composition have been advanced. Prior to 1954 most scholars took it as a serious philosophical tractate. Böhl, however, has regarded it as a skit reflecting the Babylonian “Saturnalia”, a reversal of social statuses, which took place, he believes, on a day during the New Year festival. Speiser has independently reached the conclusion that it is a burlesque or farce. Many scholars have been won to Speiser’s general position. This new interpretation has certainly done good in drawing attention to the satire on the relations of master and slave. The old view seemed blind to the vivid realism of the portrait of these two types, which gives to the piece its timeless appeal. The same types exist today. The writer once worked for an employer whose plans changed as rapidly as the master’s in the *Dialogue*, and whose employees’ apparently placid assent to the whim of the moment fully equalled the slave’s smooth tongue. It would be a serious mistake to regard the slave as a mere yes-man. We are poor students of human nature if we cannot recognize that the slave is laughing up his sleeve from the very start. His final retort is the expression of his real self, which he had seen fit to suppress up to that point.

This piece, then, should be regarded as satire, and can very properly be compared with Juvenal. The outstanding question is how seriously the philosophic content is to be taken. In this connexion comparison with Juvenal is fallacious, since he was using a well-established [139] literary form which demanded denunciation, and so the adoption of a traditional morality. Our author has no known literary antecedents and displays most unorthodox views. Speiser brings three arguments in favour of the view that the content of the discussion is not to be taken seriously: (i) that the blasphemy of the piece is inconceivable in a canonical work, (ii) that the pessimism is merely one side of the debate, and is offset by the equally stated opposite view, and (iii) that various passages are inconsistent with serious purpose.

In answer to the first it must be stressed that ‘canonical’ in this connexion does not mean ‘accepted into a body of sacred literature’, but only ‘commonly found in late libraries’. As to the blasphemy, Speiser’s own dictum, “the Mesopotamian’s idea of reverence was plainly not the same as ours” (*JCS* 8.103), gives a lead. Many things are found in cuneiform literature that are blasphemy by our standards. The *Gilgameš Epic* records a speech in which Gilgameš heaps abuse on the goddess Ištar, and Enkidu later follows suit (Tablet 6). After the flood the gods, who had been deprived of offerings during the destruction of mankind, collected over the sacrificing hero’s head “like flies” (*Gilg*. 161), which is scarcely a reverent simile. Also it may be asked in what way the presence or absence of humour affects the nature of blasphemous words. Is irreverence less heinous for being funny? The possibility of a completely nihilistic view of life in ancient Babylonia cannot be peremptorily excluded. There is a famous discussion of the advantages of suicide in Egyptian literature, which is certainly serious. Although no other work of Mesopotamian literature goes so far in denying all values, teaching approximating to this extreme occurs. The sufferer in the *Theodicy* is on the verge of it when he resolves to accept no social responsibilities (lines 133-43), and that dialogue ends not “on a note of hope” (*JGS* 8.104), but with a desperate plea from the sufferer. See further p. 17.

The second objection is difficult to understand. Pros and cons are freely stated by many dramatists, but that does not prevent scholars from writing on their views of life. In this case there is no possible ambiguity. In each section, excluding the last, the master begins with a burst of enthusiasm for life, and ends in despondency. The slave’s words merely reflect the master’s changing moods. The final section drives home the pessimistic tone even more forcefully. The whole manner of the writing is dramatic, and the repeated contrast between the initial interest and the final dejection is neither close reasoning nor “outright ambivalence” (Speiser, p. 104), but a dramatic way of throwing the conclusion into relief.

The third objection consists of a variety of interpretations. It is maintained that the slave replies in irrelevant stock phrases. Here, as elsewhere, Speiser underestimates the extent, and exaggerates the importance, of clichés in Babylonian literature. We are in no position to know if the author cites “Go up on to the ancient ruin heaps and walk about” (76) from the *Gilgameš Epic*. It appears at the very beginning and end of the *Epic*, and is presumably one of the latest elements. The words may have been a stock phrase before [140] the author of the Epic used them, so that the two known occurrences may be dependent on a common source. No one considers the phrase humorous in the epic context. “Perhaps the strongest proof of the mechanical nature of the replies” (*JCS* 8.105) consists of two plural suffixes which are contained on no manuscript, and one of which rests on a very recondite textual reconstruction. The one certain quotation of a proverb is, *pace* Speiser, very apposite (see note on 83, 84). The point of the last line is not that the master could not live for three days without a slave, but that if the slave were put to death first, as the master had proposed, death is so attractive that the master would soon follow.

There is one real objection which can be raised to taking the text seriously. We may overlook the inconsistency of taking suicide as the ultimate good in life and of not acting promptly upon this attitude. However, if a writer seriously held such views, would he be likely to express them in a witty satire? It can be granted that the dramatic satire gives the views a forcefulness and appeal which any other presentation would have lacked. An answer to the question must be very subjective. In a normal person a desire for death and an abundance of wit would be incompatible, but on any view the writer of this dialogue was an extraordinary person. It is the opinion of the present writer that the work is intended seriously, but with one qualification. It has been argued so far that the text must be one of two alternatives: either a serious rational tractate, or a joke. There is in fact a third possibility, which is adopted here. It is that the writer was in earnest, but owed his outlook to his emotional state. The whole atmosphere of the text is reminiscent of contemporary western adolescents, and particularly those of high intelligence. Extensive study has revealed that many bright youths have sudden changes from exuberance to brooding depression, and that suicide is often in their thoughts, though rarely acted upon.[[71]](#footnote-71)2 The writer of this piece may well have been of abnormal personality, a genius given to fits of morbid depression. His work should perhaps be studied by a psychologist as well as an Oriental scholar.

Two pieces of evidence suggest that this is a comparatively late composition. The mention of the “iron dagger” (52) excludes the Old Babylonian period, and the early part of the Cassite period. The manuscripts frequently disagree in the division of the text into lines, which suggests that the copying tradition was not so long or so firmly established as that of other literary works. [141] . . .

1 [“Slave, listen to me.”] “Here I am, sir, here [I am.”]

2 [“Quickly, fetch me the] chariot and hitch it up so that I can drive to the palace.”

3 [“ Drive, sir, drive . . .] . . . . will be for you;

4 [. . . . . . . . . . . .] will pardon you.”

5 [“No, slave, I] will by no means drive to the palace.”

6 [“ Do not drive,] sir, do not drive.

7 [. . . .] . . . will send you [. . . .]

8 And will make you take a [route] that you do not know;

9 He will make you suffer agony [day and] night.”

10 “Slave, [listen] to me.” “Here I am, sir, here I am.”

11 “Quickly, [fetch] me water for my hands, and give it to me so that I can dine.”

12 “Dine, sir, dine. Repeated dining relaxes the mind.

13 . [. . .] . his god’s repast; Šamaš accompanies washed hands.”

14 “No, [slave,] I will certainly not dine.”

15 “Do not dine, sir, do not dine.

16 Hunger and eating, thirst and drinking, come upon a man.”

17 “Slave, listen to me.” “Here I am, sir, here I am.”

18 “Quickly, fetch me the chariot and hitch it up so that I can drive to the open country.”

19 “Drive, sir, drive. A hunter gets his belly filled.

20 The hunting dogs will break the (prey’s) bones,

21 The hunter’s falcon will settle down,

22 And the fleeting wild ass . . . [.] .”

23 “No, slave, I will by no means [drive] to the open country.”

24 “Do not drive, sir, do not drive.

25 The hunter’s luck changes:

26 The hunting dog’s teeth will get broken,

27 The home of the hunter’s falcon is in [. . .] wall,

28 And the fleeting wild ass has the uplands for its lair.”

29 “Slave, listen [to me.” “Here I am, sir, here I am.”]

30 “I am going to set up [a home and have] children.”

31 “Have some, [sir,] have some. [The man who sets] up a home [. . .] . .

32 [. . . . .] a door called ‘The Snare’.

33 [. . . .] . robust, two-thirds a weakling.”

34 [“. . . .] I will burn, *go* and return.

35 I will give way to my prosecutor.” [145] . . .

36 “So give way, sir, give way.”

37 “So, so, I will make a home.” “Do not make a home.

38 A man who follows this course breaks up his father’s home.”

(The preceding section seems to be in some disorder; in particular 35 and 36 are probably from another section dealing with litigation. The end of what appears to be a variant form of this assumed paragraph appears in another manuscript as follows:

2´ “Remain silent, sir, remain silent. [. . . . . . . . . .”]

3´ “No, slave, I . [. . . . . . will not remain silent.”]

4´ “Do not stay silent, sir, [do not stay silent.]

5´ Unless you open your mouth . [. . . . . . . . .]

6´ Your prosecutors will be savage to you [. . .”])

39 “Slave, listen to me.” “Here I am, sir, here [I am.”]

40 “I will lead a revolution.” “So lead, sir, lead.

41 Unless you lead a revolution, where will your clothes come from?

42 Who will enable you to fill your belly?”

43 “No, slave, I will by no means lead a revolution.”

44 “The man who leads a revolution is either killed, or flayed,

45 Or has his eyes put out, or is arrested, or is thrown into jail.”

46 “Slave, listen to me.” “Here I am, sir, here I am.”

47 “I am going to love a woman.” “So love, sir, love.

48 The man who loves a woman forgets sorrow and fear.”

49 “No, slave, I will by no means love a woman.”

50 [“ Do not] love, sir, do not love.

51 Woman is a pitfall—a pitfall, a hole, a ditch,

52 Woman is a sharp iron dagger that cuts a man’s throat.”

53 “Slave, listen to me.” “Here I am, sir, here I am.”

54 “Quickly, fetch me water for my hands, and give it to me

55 So that I can sacrifice to my god.” “Sacrifice, sir, sacrifice.

56 The man who sacrifices to his god is satisfied with the bargain:

57 He is making loan upon loan.”

58 “No, slave, I will by no means sacrifice to my god.”

59 “Do not sacrifice, sir, do not sacrifice. [147] . . .

60 You can teach your god to run after you like a dog,

61 Whether he asks of you rites, or ‘Do not consult your god’, or anything else.”

62 “Slave, listen to me.” “Here I am, sir, here I am.”

63 “I am going to make loans as a creditor.” “So make loans, sir, [make loans.]

64 The man who makes loans as a creditor—his grain remains his grain, while his interest is enormous.”

65 “No, slave, I will by no means make loans as a creditor.”

66 “Do not make loans, sir, do not make loans.

67 Making loans is like loving [a woman;] getting them back is like having children [.].

68 They will eat your grain, curse [you] without ceasing,

69 And deprive you of the interest on your grain.”

(Another recension of the preceding section is also attested:

29´ “Slave, listen to me.” “Here I am, sir, here I am.”

30´ “I will loan food to my country.” “So loan, sir, loan.

31´ The man who loans food to his country, his grain

32´ Is grain [[72]](#footnote-72)\* enormous.” “No, slave, I will not loan food to my country.”

33´ “Do not loan, sir, do not loan. They will eat your grain,

34´ Diminish the interest on your grain, and curse you without ceasing in addition.”)

70 “Slave, listen to me.” “Here I am, sir, here I am.”

71 “I will perform a public benefit for my country.” “So perform, sir, perform.

72 The man who performs a public benefit for his country,

73 His deeds are placed in the ring of Marduk.”

74 “No, slave, I will by no means perform a public benefit for my country.”

75 “Do not perform, sir, do not perform.

76 Go up on to the ancient ruin heaps and walk about;

77 See the skulls of high and low.

78 Which is the malefactor, and which is the benefactor?”

79 “Slave, listen to me.” “Here I am, sir, here I am.”

80 “What, then, is good?”

81 “To have my neck and your neck broken

82 And to be thrown into the river is good.

83 ‘Who is so tall as to ascend to the heavens?

84 Who is so broad as to compass the underworld?’”

85 “No, slave, I will kill you and send you first.”

86 “And my master would certainly not outlive me by even three days.”

SONGS OF THE HARPERS[[73]](#footnote-73)1

“A Harper’s Song from the Tomb of Neeerhotep.” *Ancient Egyptian Literature: A Book of Readings*. Ed. Miriam Lichtheim. 3 vols. Berkeley: U of California P, 1973. 2: 115-16.

“Songs and Hymns.” *Ancient Egyptian Literature: A Book of Readings*. Ed. Miriam Lichtheim. 3 vols. Berkeley: U of California P, 1973. 1: 193.

“Three Harpers’ Songs.” *Ancient Egyptian Literature: A Book of Readings*. Ed. Miriam Licht­heim. 3 vols. Berkeley: U of California P, 1973. 1: 193-97.

Songs and Hymns

While the distinction between poems and songs is sometimes uncertain, we may first claim as songs those poems that are indicated as being recited to the accompaniment of a musical instrument. Second, it is customary to treat as religious songs, i.e., hymns, those poems that show a clear connection with the temple cult and with festivals. Third, we may class as songs the short pieces of poetry carved above scenes of labor depicted in tomb reliefs. Such workmen’s songs are in fact comparable to songs sung by Egyptian workmen by this day.

The few snatches of workmen’s songs that have survived—they are not included in this anthology—are the only truly secular songs that can be identified for the periods of the Old and Middle Kingdoms. All other songs come from the cultic sphere, the cult of the dead, and the cult of gods and kings.

The instrument that accompanied the songs sung to the dead was almost always the harp; hence these compositions are known as *Harper’s Songs*. Carved on tomb walls and on mortuary stelae, Harper’s Songs are part of the mortuary repertoire, albeit a very special part. Their theme was death. But they were reflections on death, and not ritual texts required in the ceremonies of burial and revivification. Hence their authors were free to pursue the theme of death in an imaginative way. Their main approach was to sing a praise of death and of the tomb, and to reassure the owner of the tomb about his fate. But their freedom from ritual requirements produced an unexpected and startling innovation: a song that lamented the passing of life and urged enjoyment of life while it lasts! This song, the famous *Harper’s Song from the Tomb of King Intef*, went so far as to cast doubt on the reality of the afterlife and on the usefulness of tombs. Once this note of hedonism coupled with skepticism had been sounded, it continued to occupy the minds and to be reflected both in Harpers’ Songs and in other compositions—notably in the *Dispute between a Man and His Ba*, in which the *ba* voices precisely the same opinion.

Songs and hymns were functional compositions, designed to serve in a particular setting. At the same time they could become literature in the narrow sense of writings transmitted on papyrus and appreciated as works of imaginative art. This was the fate of the *Harper’s Song from the Tomb of King Intef*, and of some of the hymns to gods and kings. In some cases, notably in the *Hymn to the Nile*, the literary character is so dominant that one may doubt whether it ever had a cultic function.

Three Harpers’ Songs

Funerary Stela of Iki

Leiden V 68

A stela in door form which is divided into three registers. On the left side of the upper register, the deceased Iki is seated at the offering-table [193] while his wife stands behind him. Before him squats a very fat harper. Eight columns of text above the couple contain the prayer for offerings. In front of the harper is his song in four short columns. In the two lower registers, the deceased and several of his children receive offerings. In this song as in a number of others, the harper identifies himself by name, thus reflecting his personal relation to the tomb-owner, as well as his own professional identity. The harper Neferhotep of this stela had a memorial stela of his own, also preserved in the Leiden Museum (V 75). Both memorial stelae were the work of the same sculptor, who signed his name on the latter monument. . . .

*This is the song:*

O Tomb, you were built for festivity,

You were founded for happiness!

The singer Neferhotep, born of Henu.

Stela of Nebankh from Abydos

Cairo Museum

The Harper’s Song, in eight horizontal lines, fills the upper portion of the round-topped stela. In the lower left corner, the deceased is seated at the offering-table, and the harper squats before him. . . .

(I) The singer Tjeniaa says:

How firm you are in your seat of eternity,

Your monument of everlastingness!

It is filled with offerings of food,

It contains every good thing.

Your *ka* is with you,

It does not leave you,

O Royal Seal-bearer, Great Steward, (5) Nebankh!

Yours is the sweet breath of the northwind!

So says his singer who keeps his name alive,

The honorable singer Tjeniaa, whom he loved,

Who sings to his *ka* every day.

The Song from the Tomb of King Intef

The song is preserved in two New Kingdom copies. First, on pages vi, 2-vii, 3, of the Ramesside Papyrus Harris 500 (= P. British Museum 10060); and, second, carved on a wall of the tomb of Paatenemheb from [194] Saqqara, now in Leiden, which dates from the reign of Amenhotep IV (Akhenaten). The latter copy, which is incomplete, is written above the heads of a group of four musicians led by a blind harpist. The song’s introductory line states that it reproduces a song inscribed in the tomb of a King Intef—a name that was borne by a number of kings of the Eleventh and of the Seventeenth Dynasties. Since the two New Kingdom copies reproduce a genuinely Middle Egyptian text, we need not doubt that an original text, carved in a royal tomb of the Middle Kingdom, existed.

The phrase “make holiday” (*ỉr hrw nfr*), which the singer of the *Intef Song* addresses to the audience, was a term employed in situations of daily life as well as in reference to death and the afterlife. Furthermore, it is known that funerary banquets were held in the cemeteries on feast days. It is thus quite possible that Harpers’ Songs were sung at such funerary banquets, and that they employed the “make holiday” theme in its multiple meanings. In the context of the funerary banquet the various meanings would blend into one.

The theme of sorrow over death properly belonged to the Laments on Death which were an integral part of the burial ceremony. What is noteworthy is that these laments juxtapose sorrow and joy in a manner similar to the *Intef Song* and subsequent Harpers’ Songs, and move rapidly back and forth between grief and joy:

I have wept, I have mourned!

O all people, remember getting drunk on wine,

With wreaths and perfume on your heads!

The dead too had joy: “How good is this which happens to him!”

Given the multiple meanings of the “make holiday” theme, it follows that it was not the use of this theme which made the *Intef Song* so startling, but rather its skepticism concerning the reality of the afterlife and the effectiveness of tomb-building. It was this skepticism which injected a strident note of discord into a class of songs that had been designed to praise and reassure. The incongruity is of the same order as that which one observes in the *Dispute between a Man and His Ba*. For there the *ba*, though itself the guarantor of immortality, is given the role of denigrating death and immortality, denying the worth of tombs, and counseling enjoyment of life. The incongruity was not lost on the Egyptians, as the subsequent development of Harpers’ Songs reveals. The Harpers’ Songs of the New Kingdom show two responses to the *Intef Song*: an outright rejection of its “impious” thoughts, and a toning down of its skepticism so as to remove the sting. Both solutions are found side by side in two Harpers’ Songs carved on the walls of the New Kingdom tomb of a priest Neferhotep.

The objection to the skeptic-hedonistic message is phrased thus:

I have heard those songs that are in the tombs of old,

And what they relate in extolling life on earth,

And in belittling the land of the dead.

Why is this done to the land of eternity,

The just and fair that holds no terror?

There follows the praise of eternal life. [195]

The toning down of the skeptical approach took various forms, and resulted in Harpers’ Songs that were eclectic and lacked unity. But though toned down, the note of skepticism could be heard, sometimes faintly, sometimes clearly, in Harpers’ Songs and in other compositions, as a haunting suspicion that the struggle to win immortality was at best beset by uncertainties and at worst, futile. . . .

(vi, 2) Song which is in the tomb of King Intef, the justified, in front of the singer with the harp.

He is happy, this good prince!

⌐Death is a kindly fate¬.

A generation passes,

Another stays,

Since the time of the ancestors.

The gods who were before rest in their tombs,

Blessed (5) nobles too are buried in their tombs.

(Yet) those who built tombs,

Their places are gone,

What has become of them?

I have heard the words of Imhotep and Hardedef,5

Whose sayings are recited whole.

What of their places?

Their walls have crumbled,

Their places are gone,

As though they had never been!

None comes from there,

To tell of their state,

To tell of their needs,

To calm our hearts,

Until we go where they have gone!

Hence rejoice in your heart!

Forgetfulness profits you,

Follow your heart as long as you live!

(10) Put myrrh on your head,

Dress in fine linen, [196]

Anoint yourself with oils fit for a god.7

Heap up your joys,

Let your heart not sink!

Follow your heart and your happiness,

Do your things on earth as your heart commands!

When there comes to you that day of mourning,

The Weary-hearted8 hears not their mourning,

Wailing saves no man from the pit!

*Refrain* (vii, 2): Make holiday,

Do not weary of it!

Lo, none is allowed to take his goods with him,

Lo, none who departs comes back again!

notes

5. The two famous sages of the Old Kingdom, who were worshiped as gods. An Instruction ascribed to Imhotep, the vizier of King Djoser, has not come to light.

7. Literally, “with the genuine marvels that belong to a god.”

8. The god Osiris. [197]

A Harper’s Song From The Tomb Of Neeerhotep

(Theban Tomb No. 50, Reign of Haremhab)

When they first appeared in the Middle Kingdom, the texts known as Harper’s Songs were designed to praise death and the life after death. But in the famous *Harper’s Song from the Tomb of King Intef*, preserved in a papyrus copy, the praises of the afterlife were replaced by anxious doubts about its reality, and by the advice to make merry while alive and to shun the thought of death. Such a skeptic-hedonistic message may have originated in songs sung at secular feasts; but when transmitted as a funerary text inscribed in a tomb and addressed to the tomb-owner, the message became incongruous and discordant. The incongruity did not pass unnoticed. In the tomb of the priest Neferhotep there are three Harper’s Songs, each expressing a particular response. One song continued the skeptic-hedonistic theme but blended it with elements of traditional piety in an attempt to tone down and harmonize the contrary viewpoints. The second song is an outright rejection of skepticism and hedonism, coupled with a praise of the land of the dead. The third is a description of life after death in traditional ritualistic terms. Thus, the three songs in one and the same tomb reflect the Egyptian preoccupation with the nature of death and the varying and conflicting answers and attitudes which continued side by side.

The second and third songs, and the figures of the harpers who recite them, form part of a banquet scene on the left rear wall of the hall. The first song occurs in the context of an offering-table scene, in the passage leading from the hall to the inner shrine. The second song, the one that deliberately rejects the skeptic message, is translated below.

Publication: A. H. Gardiner, *PSBA*, 35 (1913), 165-170.

Translation: Erman, *Literature*, pp. 253-254.

M. Lichtheim, *JNES*, 4 (1945), 197-198.

J. A. Wilson in *ANET*, pp. 33-34.

Study of Harper’s Songs:

M. Lichtheim, *JNES*, 4 (1945), 178-212 and pls. i-vii.

*Idem*, *Ancient Egyptian Liteature*, 1, 193-137.

Says the singer-with-harp of the divine father of Anton, Neferhotep,1 justified:

All ye excellent nobles and gods of the graveyard,

Hearken to the praise-giving for the divine father,

The worship of the honored noble’s excellent *ba*,

Now that he is a god ever-living, exalted in the West;

May they2 become a remembrance for posterity,

For everyone who comes to pass by.

I have heard those songs that are in the tombs of old,

What they tell in extolling life on earth,

In belittling the land of the dead.3

Why is this done to the land of eternity, [115]

The right and just that has no terrors?

Strife is abhorrent to it,

No one girds himself against his fellow;

This land that has no opponent,

All our kinsmen rest in it

Since the time of the first beginning.

Those to be born to millions of millions,

All of them will come to it;

No one may linger in the land of Egypt,

There is none who does not arrive in it.4

As to the time of deeds on earth,

It is the occurrence of a dream;5

One says: “Welcome safe and sound,”

To him who reaches the West.

notes

1. The name and priestly title of the tomb-owner. The harpist remains unnamed.

2. The praises.

3. In these lines the singer explicitly refers to harper’s songs that express skepticism.

4. The thought expressed in this quatrain occurs in almost identical terms in hymns to Osiris, where it is the god, rather than the land of the dead, to whom all must come; see Louvre Stela C 218 (Pierret, *Recueil*, II, 134-138) and British Museum Stela 164 (*Hieroglyphic Texts*, 9, pp. 25-26 and pls. xxi-xxiA [*sic*]). . . .

5. Note the appearance of the thought that life is a dream. [116]

### THE SATIRE OF THE TRADES

“The Satire of the Trades.” *Ancient Egyptian Literature: A Book of Readings*. Ed. Miriam Licht­heim. 3 vols. Berkeley: U of California P, 1973. 1.184-92.

Like the other Instructions, this work has a prologue and an epilogue which frame the actual teaching and set its stage. A father conducts his young son to the residence in order to place him in school, and during the journey he instructs him in the duties and rewards of the scribal profession. In order to stress the amenities and advantages that accrue to the successful scribe, he contrasts the scribal career with the hardships of other trades and professions, eighteen of which are described in the most unflattering terms.

Ever since Maspero called this Instruction “Satire des Métiers,” scholars have understood it to be a satire, that is to say, a deliberately derisive characterization of all trades other than the scribal profession. Helck, however, in his new edition of the text has denied its satiric character and has claimed it to be a wholly serious, non-humorous work. I continue to think of it as a satire. What are the stylistic means of satire? Exaggeration and a lightness of tone designed to induce laughter and a mild contempt. Our text achieves its satirical effects by exaggerating the true hardships of the professions described, and by suppressing all their positive and rewarding aspects.

If it were argued that the exaggerations were meant to be taken seriously, we would have to conclude that the scribal profession practiced deliberate deception out of a contempt for manual labor so profound as to be unrelieved by humor. Such a conclusion is, however, belied by all the literary and pictorial evidence. For tomb reliefs and texts alike breathe joy and pride in the accomplishments of labor. Moreover, the principal didactic works, such as *Ptahhotep* and the *Eloquent Peasant*, teach respect for all labor.

In short, the unrelievedly negative descriptions of the laboring professions are examples of humor in the service of literary satire. The result is obtained through unflattering comparisons and through exaggerations that rise to outright fabrications. What if not a fabrication for the sake of caricature is a bird-catcher who does not have a net—the very tool of his trade? What if not a caricature is a potter who is compared to a grubbing pig, a cobbler whose hides are termed “corpses,” a courier terrorized out of his wits by the dangers of the road, and a fisherman blinded by his fear of crocodiles?

The text is preserved entirely in P. Sallier II, and partially in P. Anastasi [184] VII (both in the British Museum), both of which were written by the same Nineteenth Dynasty scribe. Small portions are preserved on an Eighteenth Dynasty writing board in the Louvre, the Eighteenth Dynasty P. Amherst in the Pierpont Morgan Library, P. Chester Beatty XIX of the British Museum, and numerous, mostly Ramesside, ostraca.

Though ample, the textual transmission is exceedingly corrupt. Helck’s comprehensive new edition has advanced the understanding considerably. But the corruptions are so numerous and so extreme that there remains much room for differing conjectures and interpretations. . . .

(3, 9) Beginning of the Instruction made by the man of Sile, whose name is ⌐Dua-khety¬, for his son, called Pepi, as he journeyed south (4, 1) to the residence, to place him in the school for scribes, among the sons of magistrates, with the elite of the residence. He said to him:

I have seen many beatings—

Set your heart on books!

I watched those seized for labor—

There’s nothing better than books!

It’s like a boat on water.

Read the end of the *Kemit*-Book,

You’ll find this saying there:

A scribe at whatever post in town,

He will not suffer in it;

As he fills another’s need,

He will ⌐not lack rewards¬.

I don’t see a calling like it

Of which this saying could be (5) said.

I’ll make you love scribedom more than your mother,

I’ll make its beauties stand before you;

It’s the greatest of all callings,

There’s none like it in the land. [185]

Barely grown, still a child,

He is greeted, sent on errands,

Hardly returned he wears a gown.

I never saw a sculptor as envoy,

Nor is a goldsmith ever sent;

But I have seen the smith at work

At the opening of his furnace;

With fingers like claws of a crocodile

He stinks more than fish roe.

The carpenter who wields an adze,

He is wearier than a field-laborer;

His field is the timber, his hoe the adze.

There is no end to his labor,

He does more (5, 1) than his arms can do,

Yet at night he kindles light.

The jewel-maker bores with his chisel

In hard stone of all kinds;

When he has finished the inlay of the eye,

His arms are spent, he’s weary;

Sitting down when the sun goes down,

His knees and back are cramped.

The barber barbers till nightfall,

He betakes himself to town,

He sets himself up in his corner,

He moves from street to street,

Looking for someone to barber.

He strains his arms to fill his belly,

(5) Like the bee that eats as it works.

The reed-cutter travels to the Delta to get arrows;

When he has done more than his arms can do,

Mosquitoes have slain him,

Gnats have slaughtered him,

He is quite worn out.

The potter is under the soil,

Though as yet among the living;

He grubs in the mud more than a pig,

In order to fire his pots.

His clothes are stiff with clay, [186]

His girdle is in shreds;

If air enters his nose,

It comes straight from the fire.

He makes a pounding with his feet,

And is himself crushed;

He grubs the yard of every house

And roams the public places.

(6, I) I’ll describe to you also the mason:

His loins give him pain;

Though he is out in the wind,

He works without a cloak;

His loincloth is a twisted rope

And a string in the rear.[[74]](#footnote-74)1

His arms are spent from exertion,

Having mixed all kinds of dirt;

When he eats bread [with] his fingers,

⌐He has washed at the same time¬.

The carpenter also suffers much

. . . . . .

The room measures ten by six cubits.

A month passes after the beams are laid,

. . . . . .

And all its work is done.

(5) The food which he gives to his household,

It does not ⌐suffice¬ for his children.

The gardener carries a yoke,

His shoulders are bent as with age;

There’s a swelling on his neck

And it festers.

In the morning he waters vegetables,

The evening he spends with the herbs,

While at noon he has toiled in the orchard.

He works himself to death

More than all other professions.

The farmer wails more than the guinea fowl,

His voice is louder than a raven’s;

His fingers are swollen

And stink to excess. [187]

He is weary . . . . . .

. . . (7, 1) . . .

He is well if one’s well among lions.

. . . . . .

When he reaches home at night,

The march has worn him out.

The weaver in the workshop,

He is worse off than a woman;

With knees against his chest,

He cannot breathe air.

If he skips a day of weaving,

He is beaten fifty strokes;

He gives food to the doorkeeper,

To let him see the light of day.

The arrow-maker suffers much

As he goes out (5) to the desert;

More is what he gives his donkey

Than the work it does for him.

Much is what he gives the herdsmen,

So they’ll put him on his way.

When he reaches home at night,

The march has worn him out.

The courier goes into the desert,

Leaving his goods to his children;

Fearful of lions and Asiatics,

He knows himself (only) when he’s in Egypt.

When he reaches home at night,

The march has worn him out;

Be his home of cloth or brick,

His return is joyless.

The ⌐stoker¬, his fingers are foul,

Their smell is that of corpses;

His eyes are inflamed by much smoke,

(8, 1) He cannot get rid of his dirt.

He spends the day cutting reeds,

His clothes are loathsome to him.

The cobbler suffers much

Among his vats of oil; [188]

He is well if one’s well with corpses,

What he bites is leather.

The washerman washes on the shore

With the crocodile as neighbor;

⌐ “Father, leave the flowing water,”¬

Say his son, his daughter,

⌐It is not a job that satisfies¬

. . . . . .

His food is mixed with dirt,

No limb of his is clean

⌐He is given¬ (5) women’s clothes,

. . . . . .

He weeps as he spends the day at his washboard

. . . . . .

One says to him, “Soiled linen for you,”

. . . . . .

The bird-catcher suffers much

As he watches out for birds;

When the swarms pass over him,

He keeps saying, “had I a net!”

But the god grants it not,

And he’s angry with his lot.

I’ll speak of the fisherman also,

His is the worst of all the jobs;

He labors on the river,

Mingling with crocodiles.

When the time of reckoning comes,

He is full of lamentations;

He does not say, “There’s a (9, 1) crocodile,”

Fear has made him blind.

⌐Coming from¬ the flowing water

He says, “Mighty god!”

See, there’s no profession without a boss,

Except for the scribe; he is the boss.

Hence if you know writing,

It will do better for you

Than those professions I’ve set before you,

Each more wretched than the other. [189]

A peasant is not called a man,

Beware of it!

Lo, what I do in journeying to the residence,

Lo, I do it for love of you.

The day in school will profit you

Its works are for ever . . .

. . . (5) . . .

. . . . . .

I’ll tell you also other things,

So as to teach you knowledge.

Such as: if a quarrel breaks out,

Do not approach the contenders!

If you are chided . . . . . .

And don’t know how to repel the heat,

⌐Call the listeners to witness¬,

And delay the answer.

When you walk behind officials,

Follow at a proper distance.

When you enter a man’s house,

And he’s busy with someone before you,

Sit with your hand over your mouth.

Do not ask him for anything,

Only do as he tells you,

Beware of rushing to the table!

Be weighty and very dignified,

Do not speak of (10, 1) secret things,

Who hides his thought[[75]](#footnote-75)2 shields himself.

Do not say things recklessly,

When you sit with one who’s hostile.

If you leave the schoolhouse

When midday is called,

And go roaming in the streets,

⌐All will scold you in the end¬.

When an official sends you with a message,

Tell it as he told it,

Don’t omit, don’t add to it.[[76]](#footnote-76)3

He who neglects to praise,

His name will not endure;

He who is skilled in all his conduct, [190]

From him nothing is hidden,

He is not ⌐opposed¬ anywhere.

Do not tell lies (5) against your mother,

The magistrates abhor it.

The descendant who does what is good,

His actions all emulate the past.

Do not consort with a rowdy,

It harms you when one hears of it.

If you have eaten three loaves,

Drunk two jugs of beer,

And the belly is not sated, restrain it!

When another eats, don’t stand there,

Beware of rushing to the table!

It is good if you are sent out often,

And hear the magistrates speak.

You should acquire the manner of the wellborn,[[77]](#footnote-77)4

As you follow in their steps.

The scribe is regarded as one who hears,

For the hearer becomes a doer.

You should rise when you are addressed,

Your feet should hurry when you go;

⌐Do not¬ (II, I)⌐trust¬.

Associate with men of distinction,

Befriend a man of your generation.

Lo, I have set you on god’s path,

A scribe’s Renenet[[78]](#footnote-78)5 is on his shoulder

On the day he is born.

When he attains the council chamber,

The court . . . . . .

Lo, no scribe is short of food

And of riches from the palace.

The Meskhenet assigned to the scribe,

She promotes him in the council.

Praise god for your father, your mother,

Who set you on the path of life!

This is what I put before you,

Your children and their children.

*Colophon*: (5) It has come to a happy conclusion. [191]

## ABBREVIATIONS

Murphy, Roland E. *The Tree of Life: An Exploration of Biblical Wisdom Literature*. Anchor Bible Reference Library. New York: Doubleday, 1990.

AB Anchor Bible

*AEL* Miriam Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975-80) 3 vols.

AnBib Analecta Biblica

*ANET* James B. Pritchard (ed.), *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950; 3rd ed. with supplement, 1978)

AnGreg Analecta Gregoriana

AOAT Alter Orient and Altes Testament

*APOT* R. H. Charles (ed.), *Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1913)

ATD Altes Testament Deutsch

*BASOR* *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*

BBB Bonner Biblische Beitrage

BES Biblical Encounter Series

BETL Bibliotheca ephemeridum theologicarum lovaniensium

BevT Beiträge zur evangelischen Theologie

*Bib* *Biblica*

BKAT Biblischer Kommentar: Altes Testament

BLS Bible and Literature Series

*BN* *Biblische Notizen*

*BO* *Bibliotheca Orientalis*

*BWL* W. G. Lambert, *Babylonian Wisdom Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1960)

BZAW Beihefte zur *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*

*CBQ* *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*

CBQMS Catholic Biblical Quarterly—Monograph Series [181]

CCSL Corpus Christianorum—Series Latina

CRJNT Compendia Rerum Judaicarum ad Novum Testamentum

CTM Calwer theologische Monographien

*DBSup* *Dictionnaire de la Bible*, *Supplement*

EBib Etudes Bibliques

EF Erträge der Forschung

Eng. English translation

*ETL* *Ephemerides theologicae lovanienses*

FOTL Forms of the Old Testament Literature

GHAT Göttingen Handkommentar zum Alten Testament

*HAR* *Hebrew Annual Review*

HAT Handbuch zum Alten Testament

*HBC* J. L. Mays (ed.), *Harper’s Bible Commentary* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988)

*HBMI* D. Knight and G. Tucker (eds.), *The Hebrew Bible and Its Modern Interpreters* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985)

*HBT* *Horizons in Biblical Theology*

*HTR* *Harvard Theological Review*

*HUCA* *Hebrew Union College Annual*

ICC International Critical Commentary

*IDBSup* Supplementary volume to *The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible*

*Int* *Interpretation*

IRT Issues in Religion and Theology

*ISBE* *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*

*JAAR* *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*

*JAOS* *Journal of the American Oriental Society*

*JSOT* *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*

JSOTSup Journal for the Study of the Old Testament—Supplementary Series

*JTS* *Journal of Theological Studies*

KAT Kommentar zum Alten Testament

KBW Katholisches Bibelwerk

*LAE* W. K. Simpson (ed.), *The Literature of Ancient Egypt* (2nd ed.; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973)

LSB La Sacra Bibbia

LUA Lunds universitets årsskrift [182]

LXX Septuagint

MT Masoretic text

*NAB* *New American Bible*

*NEB* *New English Bible*

*NJB* *New Jerusalem Bible*

*NJBC* R. E. Brown, J. A. Fitzmyer, and Roland E. Murphy (eds.), *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1990)

*NJV* *New Jewish Version* (*Tanakh—The Holy Scriptures*)

*NRSV* *New Revised Standard Version*

OBO Orbis biblicus et orientalis

*OTA* *Old Testament Abstracts*

OTL Old Testament Library

*OTP* J. Charlesworth (ed.), *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1983-85) 2 vols.

*RB* *Revue biblique*

*RSV* *Revised Standard Version*

*SAIW* *Studies in Ancient Israelite Wisdom*, ed. J. L. Crenshaw. New York: KTAV, 1976.

SANT Studien zum Alten and Neuen Testament

SB Sources Bibliques

SBL Society of Biblical Literature

SBLDS SBL Dissertation Series

SBLMS SBL Monograph Series

SBLSCS SBL Septuagint and Cognate Studies

SBS Stuttgarter Bibelstudien

SBT Studies in Biblical Theology

SPCK Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge

*S.T*. *Summa Theologica*

SUNT Studien zur Umwelt des Neuen Testaments

SWBAS The Social World of Biblical Antiquity Series

TB Theologische Bücherei

*TD* *Theology Digest*

*TDNT* *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*

*TDOT* *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*

TEH Theologische Existenz heute [183]

*THAT* *Theologisches Handwörterbuch zum Alten Testament*

TOTC Tyndale Old Testament Commentary

*TQ* *Theologische Quartalschrift*

*TS* *Theological Studies*

VSAT Verbum Salutis Ancien Testament

*VT* *Vetus Testamentum*

VTSup Vetus Testamentum Supplements

WF Wege der Forschung

WMANT Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten and Neuen Testament

*ZAS* *Zeitschrift für ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde*

*ZTK* *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* [184]

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

“Ahiqar (Seventh to Sixth Century b.c.): A New Translation and Introduction.” Trans. J. M. Lindenberger. *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*. Ed. James Charlesworth. Garden City: Doubleday, 1985. 2: 479-507.

*American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*. 3rd ed. New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1996.

Anderson, G. W. *Criti­cal Introduction to the Old Testament*. London: Duckworth, 1959.

“Babylonian *Theodicy*, The.” *Babylonian Wisdom Literature*. Ed. W. G. Lambert. Oxford: Clarendon, 1960. 63-89.

Cosby, Michael R. *Sex in the Bible: An Introduction to What the Scriptures Teach Us about Sexuality.* Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1984. Ch. 4, “Song of Songs: A Celebration of the Sensuous,” pp. 53-81. BS 680 .S5 C66 1984

“Dialogue of Pessimism, The.” *Babylonian Wisdom Literature*. Ed. W. G. Lambert. Oxford: Clarendon, 1960. 139-49.

“Dispute between a Man and His *Ba*.” *Ancient Egyptian Literature: A Book of Readings*. Ed. Miriam Lichtheim. 3 vols. Berkeley: U of California P, 1973. 1: 163-69.

“Egyptian Letter, An.” Trans. John A. Wilson. *Ancient* *Near* *Eastern* *Texts* *Relating* *to* *the* *Old* *Testament*. Ed. James B. Pritchard. 3rd ed. with supplement. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1969. 475-79.

Gillingham, S[usan] E. *The Poems and Psalms of the Hebrew Bible.* Oxford Bible Series. Oxford: OUP, 1994.

Hahn, Paul. *Structure in Rhetorical Criticism and the Struc­ture of the Sermon on the Plain* (*Luke 6:20-49*). Marquette University. Unpublished dissertation, 1990.

“Harper’s Song from the Tomb of Neeerhotep, A.” *Ancient Egyptian Literature: A Book of Readings*. Ed. Miriam Lichtheim. 3 vols. Berkeley: U of California P, 1973. 2: 115-16.

Herrick, Robert. “To the Virgins, to make much of Time.” C. 1650. *The Oxford Book of English Verse: 1250–1900*. Ed. Arthur Quiller-Couch. Oxford: OUP, 1919.

“Hymn to the Aton, The.” *Old Testament Parallels: Laws and Stories from the Ancient Near East*. Ed. Victor H. Matthews and Don C. Benjamin. New York: Paulist, 1991. 153-56. BS 1180 .M42 1991

“Instruction of Amen-em-opet, The.” Trans. John A. Wilson. *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*. Ed. James B. Pritchard. 3rd ed. with supplement. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1969. 421-25.

“Instruction of Ptahhotep, The.” *Ancient Egyptian Literature: A Book of Readings*. Ed. Miriam Lichtheim. 3 vols. Berkeley: U of California P, 1973. 1: 61-80.

Livingston, James C. *Anatomy of the Sacred: An Introduction to Religion*. New York: Macmillan, 1989. 254-84.

“Love Poems.” *Ancient Egyptian Literature: A Book of Readings*. Ed. Miriam Lichtheim. 3 vols. Berkeley: U of California P, 1973. 2: 181-93.

Murphy, Roland E. *The Tree of Life: An Exploration of Biblical Wisdom Literature*. Anchor Bible Reference Library. New York: Doubleday, 1990.

Oldys, William. “On A Fly Drinking Out Of His Cup.” Book of Days. 3 Jan. 2006. <http://­www.thebookofdays.com/months/april/15.htm>.

“Poem of the Righteous Sufferer, The—*Ludlul bēl nēmeqi*.” *Babylonian Wisdom Literature*. Ed. W.G. Lambert. Oxford: Clarendon, 1960. 21-62.

Raleigh, Walter. “Even Such Is Time.” *Prerogative of Parliaments*, 1628. Lumenarium. 3 Jan. 2006. <http://www.luminarium.org/renlit/evensuch.htm>.

Rankin, O.S. *Israel’s Wisdom Literature: Its Bearing on Theology and the History of Religion*. 1936. Rpt. New York: Schocken, 1969.

“Satire of the Trades, The.” *Ancient Egyptian Literature: A Book of Readings*. Ed. Miriam Licht­heim. 3 vols. Berkeley: U of California P, 1973. 1: 184-92.

Scott, R.B.Y. *The Way of Wisdom in the Old Testament*. London: Collier Macmillan; New York: Macmillan, 1971.

Scott, R.B.Y. *The Relevance of the Prophets*. 1944. Rev. ed. New York: London: Collier Macmillan; New York: Macmillan, 1968.

“Songs and Hymns.” *Ancient Egyptian Literature: A Book of Readings*. Ed. Miriam Lichtheim. 3 vols. Berkeley: U of California P, 1973. 1: 193.

“Three Harpers’ Songs.” *Ancient Egyptian Literature: A Book of Readings*. Ed. Miriam Lichtheim. 3 vols. Berkeley: U of California P, 1973. 1: 193-97.

Wansbrough, Henry, gen. ed. *The New Jerusalem Bible*. New York: Doubleday, 1986.

Wright, Addison G., Roland E. Murphy, and Joseph A. Fitzmyer. “A History of Israel.” *New Jerome Biblical Commentary*. Ed. Raymond E. Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, and Roland E. Murphy. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1990.

1. Qoh 2:18, 22, 26; 6:1-2, “I hated all my toil in which I had toiled under the sun, seeing that I must leave it to those who come after me . . . 21sometimes one who has toiled with wisdom and knowledge and skill must leave all to be enjoyed by another who did not toil for it. . . . 26to the sinner he [God] gives the work of gathering and heaping, only to give to one who pleases God. . . . 6:1There is an evil that I have seen under the sun, and it lies heavy upon humankind: 2those to whom God gives wealth, possessions, and honor, so that they lack nothing of all that they desire, yet God does not enable them to enjoy these things, but a stranger enjoys them. This is vanity; it is a grievous ill.” [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Ps 39:5-7 mt (= 6-8 Vg), “You have made my days a few handbreadths, and my lifetime is as nothing in your sight. Surely everyone stands as a mere breath. Selah 6Surely everyone goes about like a shadow. Surely for nothing they are in turmoil; they heap up, and do not know who will gather. 7“And now, O Lord, what do I wait for? My hope is in you.” [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Dynasty 6 existed from 2300-2181 bc. (“Chronology [of Egyptian History].” University College of London. 19 Nov. 2005. <http://www.­digitalegypt.ucl.ac.uk//chronology/index.html>.) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. 1 [Note by Hahn:] Most footnotes have been eliminated. Only those that are especially helpful or that refer to the Bible have been kept. That is why footnote numbers are not sequential.

   In the text of “Ahiqar,” Lindenberger uses square brackets and italics to indicate less than certain text [480 n. 5]. These have been eliminated to facilitate reading. Similarly, ellipses of varying length to indicate varying amounts of missing text have all been reduced to standard, three-period ellipses.

   Scriptural citations that Lindenberger gives in the margins of “Ahiqar” are quoted in full (all such quotations are nrsv). Scriptural citations that he gives in footnotes are not quoted, since they are more distant parallels. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. 34 A common literary structure has also been discerned in these stories; see J. J. Collins, “The Court-Tales in Daniel and the Development of Apocalyptic,” *JBL* 94 (1975) 224-27. There is some evidence that parallels between Ah, Aesop, and Joseph were observed in antiquity. One of the Syr. MSS of Ah also contains a collection of Aesop’s fables attributed to “Josephus”; J. R. Harris et al., *Aḥiḳar*, p. lxxx, p. 2. [484 n. 34] [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. 58 The Tob tradition seems to be confused also in the matter of the relationship of Ahiqar, Nadab, and Tobit. In [488] 11:18, Ahiqar and Nadab appear to be cousins of Tobit. Because of the various forms in which the name of Ahiqar’s kinsman appears, it is quite possible that at some stage in the editing of the text of Tob the hero’s cousin (11:18) and Ahiqar’s foster son (14:10) were understood as two different individuals. [488-89 n. 58] [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. 59 In Sinaiticus, his name is repeated again in 14:15. [489 n. 59] [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. 60 It is assumed that the version of Ah known to the author of Tob contained both narrative and sayings, since at least one of the sayings [no. ] is found in Tob. Note that in the Elephantine version the polytheistic features are found only in the *sayings*, whereas in the late versions they appear only in the *narrative*. [489 n. 60] [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. 61 The details of Ahiqar’s Jewish ancestry may, of course, have been invented by the author of Tob to integrate Ahiqar more closely into his story. [489 n. 61] [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. 62 It has been suggested that the Gk. translator of Tob misunderstood a Heb phrase in his *Vorlage* to the effect that Ahiqar went “to his hiding place” (a form of the root `*lm*) as saying he went to Elymais (Heb `*lmyn*). For a critical evaluation of the proposal. see F. Zimmerman, *The Book of Tobit* (New York, 1958) p. 58n. [489 n. 62] [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. 63 D. C. Simpson in R. H. Charles, *APOT*, vol 1, p. 186, has made the less plausible suggestion that the author of Tob (or possibly the adapter of the version of Ah which he knew) intentionally altered “Egypt” to “Elymais” on theological grounds: It was unthinkable that a righteous Jewish sage should travel to the wicked Egyptian court to demonstrate his wisdom. [489 n. 63] [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. 64 Also unclear is the source of the reference in Tob 14:10 to Ahiqar’s being saved from death because of his *eleēmosynē* (the Gk. word may be translated either “good works” or “almsgiving”). None of the versions of Ah stresses his “good works” (though of course he did save Nahusumiskun), and none of them speaks at all of his “almsgiving,” the sense in which Tob uses *eleēmosynē* elsewhere in the passage. The Syr Ah does, however, say that the sage was kept alive because of his righteousness (*k*´*nwt*´; 8:2, 37); and J. R. Harris is probably correct in seeing an original Semitic *ṣdqh* (“righteousness” and “almsgiving” in post-biblical Heb. and Aram.) behind Ahiqar’s *eleēmosynē* in the Tob passage (*Aḥiḳar*, pp. l-lii). One need not agree with Harris’s suggestion to translate *k*´*nwt*´ as “almsgiving” in the Syr. Ah. To the phrase in question, cf. the statement at Prov 11:4 that “virtuous conduct (*ṣdqh*) delivers from death,” and the use of *ṣdqh* in Elephantine saying 78. [489 n. 64] [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. 65 Translation of F. Zimmerman, *Tobit*, p. 71; cf. 70 n. The Jerusalem Bible follows the Vulgate (cf. also Old Latin) in translating “Be generous with bread and wine on the graves of virtuous men, but not for the sinner.” [490 n. 65] [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. 66 . . . The confusion of the text in Tob 4:17 was probably abetted by Jewish uneasiness about a positive reference to this pagan custom (cf. Jub 22:17). [490 n. 66] [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. 67 Cf. Mt 7:12, Lk 6:31. That Ah was the source of Tob 4:15 seems likely in view of the proximity of the Ah quotation in Tob 4:17. But this is by no means certain, since the maxim (in positive and negative form) is widely attested in classical and Jewish literature. The earliest known occurrence is in Herodotus (5th cent. b.c.), and it is found often in later Gk. and Lat. writings. The earliest Jewish reference is in LetAris 207. A famous passage in the Talmud places the saying in the mouth of Hillel (b.Shab 31a), and it occurs also in TargYer on Lev 19:18. For further references and bibliography, see D. M. Beck, “Golden Rule, The,” *IDB* 2, p. 438, and R. G. Hamerton-Kelley, “Golden Rule, The,” *IDBS* pp. 369f. [490 n. 67] [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. 68 The pairing of sand and salt as heavy burdens in Sir 22:15 could even be traced back to Elephantine saying 29. [490 n. 68] [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. 69 The Jerusalem Bible, p. 825, n. 5b. [490 n. 69] [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. 70 See n. 57. [490 n. 70] [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. 72 A. H. Krappe, “Is the Story of Ahiqar the Wise of Indian Origin?” *JAOS* 61 (1941) 280-84. See further Stith Thompson, *Motif-Index of Folk Literature* (Indiana University Studies 19-22; Blomington, 1932-36) K 2101, K 2214.3, K 2214.3.1. [491 n. 72] [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. 73 E. Reiner, “The Etiological Myth of the ‘Seven Sages.’” *Orientalia* N.S. 30 (1961) 1-11. [491 n. 73] [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. 74 The best collections of this literature are E. Gordon, *Sumerian Proverbs* (Philadelphia, 1959); W. G. Lambert, *Babylonian Wisdom Literature* (Oxford, 1960); and the section on “Didactic and Wisdom Literature” in *ANET*. [491 n. 74] [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. 75 Note that Hezekiah, whose name is linked by biblical tradition with the transmission of Israelite wisdom (Prov 25:1) and under whose sponsorship a collection of older Israelite wisdom was probably made, is a contemporary of Sennacherib and therefore of Ahiqar. [491 n. 75] [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. d In the Syr. and other late recs., Ahiqar is concealed by his benefactor in a tiny underground hiding place. This detail is known to the author of Tob (Tob 14:10); see “Relation to Apocryphal Books.” [497 n. d] [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. l Cf. Aesop’s fable of the Deer and the Lion. “A deer that was running away from hunters came to a cave where there was a lion and went in to hide. As she was seized by the lion and was being killed she said, ‘How ill-fated I am! Running away from men only to throw myself into the clutches of a wild animal.’” L. W Daly, *Aesop Without Morals*, p. 126 (no. 76). [499 n. l] [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. n If you don’t pull your own weight, you will end up with a heavier task. Cf. Aesop’s fable of the mule that was unwilling to help the ass carry its burden. The ass fell over a cliff and died, and the owner forced the mule to carry both the ass’s load and the hide of the dead animal. L. W. Daly, *Aesop Without Morals*, pp. 170f. (n. 181). [499 n. n] [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. t . . . The type of numerical parallelism found in this saying is frequently found in biblical and ancient Near Eastern literature; see W. Roth, “The Numerical Sequence x/x + 1 in the Old Testament,” *VT* 12 (1962) 300-31. [499 n. t] [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. f Lit “harden (your) heart.” [500 n. f] [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. g The image of the word as a bird occurs also in Prov 26;2; cf. Eccl 10:20. . . . Cf. also the “winged words” of Homeric cliché. [500 n. g] [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. n The comparison of the spoken word to a sword or knife is a recurring image: Pss 52:2; 57:4; Wis 18:15f.; Heb 4:12. [500 n. n] [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. q Cf. the Egyptian Instructions of Ptah-Hotep 445: “Opposition to a superior is a painful thing, [for] one lives as long as he is mild . . .” J. Wilson in *ANET*, 414a. The theme of the king’s anger appears in various ways in the wisdom literature; cf. Prov 14:35; 19:12; 20:2; Eccl 10:4. [500 n. q] [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. y The bitter fruit of the medlar tree is similar to a small apple, although it is brown and edible only when it begins to decay. [501 n. y] [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. z The second verb should probably be read *w*[´*kj*]*i*, based on context and later parallels. This requires an emendation, since the fragmentary last letter seems to be *aleph.* The precise identification of *hsyn* is uncertain. The usual meaning of Jewish Aram. hiker [Syr. *hasseta’]* is “lettuce.” Context here demands something bitter. Note that in the Talmud [b.Pes 39a] *hs’* is considered suitable for use as the “bitter herbs” in the Passover ritual “Endive” is based on the Arm. parallel; see n. a2. [501 n. z] [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. a The saying is closely paralleled by Syr. 2:45: “My son, I have carried salt and removed lead; and I have not seen anything heavier than that a man should pay back a debt [*ḥwbt*´] which he did not borrow.” . . . Prov 27:3 and Sir 22:14f. compare human folly with a heavy load. . . . [501 n. a] [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. g Isa 40:26; Ps 147:4. [502 n. g] [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. n . . . cf. Dan 3:15. [502 n. n] [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. i I.e. it may cost you everything you own. For a similar idiom, cf. Num 22:18; 24:13. [503 n. i] [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. y The phraseology of the second clause is similar to that of Job 9:2: 25:4. [504 n. y] [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. b . . . Probably the warning is against entering into financial dealings with the powerful (cf. Sir 8:12a) or provoking his hostility (Ar. Ah 2:38). One might also compare the parable of the talents (especially Mt 25:28f.; Lk 19:24-26). [504 n. b] [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. g The reconstruction of this saying (cf. Arm. Ah 2:35) is largely conjectural. If it is correctly understood, cf. Ps 18:27 and *Derek* ´*Ereṣ Zuṭa* 9:11: “If you have humbled yourself, the Holy One, blessed be He, will lift you up; if you have exalted yourself before your fellow, the Holy One, blessed be He, will set you low.” Similarly Job 5:11; 22:29; Mt 23:11f.; Lk 1:52; 14:11; 18:14; 1Pet 5:5; cf. Prov 3:34. [505 n. g] [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. h The restoration is based on Num 23:8a. Other possible readings: “What men’s lips curse, the gods do not curse” (cf. Ginsberg) and “Why do the lips of man curse? The gods do not curse” (Grelot, *Documents*). [505 n. h] [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. m Aesop’s fable of the Pomegranate, the Apple Tree and the Bramble (L. W. Daly, *Aesop Without Morals*, p. 182 [# 213]) is probably related. Cf. also the Mesopotamian fable of the Tamarisk and the Palm, in which the palm reproaches its rival: “You, Tamarisk are a useless tree. What are your branches? Wood without fruit!” (W. G. Lambert, *Babylonian Wisdom Literature*, pp. 162f.). Two such plant fables are found in the OT: Judg 9:8-15 and 2Kgs 14:9. [506 n. m] [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. v See “Theological Importance.” It is not clear whether the “wicked man” is a robber taking a garment by force or an unscrupulous creditor taking the fringe (perhaps actually the entire cloak) as a pledge. [506 n. v] [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. b Evidently a prayer to El requesting righteousness or vindication. See “Theological Significance.” The insertion of a prayer into a wisdom collection occurs also in Sir (23:1, 4; 36:1-17; 51:1-12). [506 n. b] [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. d If the saying is complete, the reason for the speaker’s confidence is not explained. Perhaps it is simply the belief that disaster overtakes the wicked (Prov 11:21; 12:7; 14:11; 21:7, 12). [506 n. d] [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. e Perhaps a metaphorical reference to the king; cf. Ezek 17:22f.; 31:2-9; Dan 4:7-9, 17-19. [506 n. e] [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. d Lit. “as for me, let me not see your riding.” The issue is fodder versus freedom. The onager, or wild ass, (`*rd*) is a proverbially untamable beast; see Job 39:5-8. Compare Aesop’s fable of the Wild Boar, the Horse, and the Hunter; L. W. Daly, *Aesop Without Morals*, p. 205 (# 269). [507 n. d] [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. f Cf. the final saying in the Life of Aesop: “Rejoice not at great wealth, and grieve not at small.” L. W. Daly, *Aesop Without Morals*, p. 81. [507 n. f] [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. a Restoring conjecturally [`*ṣr*]. If that is correct, cf. Deut 25:4. [507 n. a] [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. Dynasty 12 existed from 1976-1793/92 bc. (“Chronology [of Egyptian History].” University College of London. 19 Nov. 2005. <http://www.­digitalegypt.ucl.ac.uk//chronology/index.html>.) [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. \* [Lambert later (p. 25) notes that manuscripts j and k “appear to be parts of one big tablet containing the whole work . . . these two pieces allow the deduction [of] a maximum of about 540 lines. This agrees very well with the deduction that the poem is of four tablets of about 120 lines each, a total of 480.”] [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. 1 This procedure is found in the series *ana marṣi ina ṭeh??soft accent “u” under hêka* (Labat, *TDP*, pp. 18 ff.), *CT* 17.9, and the hymn *KAR* 102.10-33. Contrast Song of Songs vii. 1-5. [23 n. 1] [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. 2 For an exhaustive study of dreams in the ancient Near East see A. L. Oppenheim, *Dreams*. [23 n. 2] [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. \* Rom 11:22 nrsv, “Note then the kindness and the severity of God: severity toward those who have fallen, but God’s kindness toward you, provided you continue in his kindness; otherwise you also will be cut off.” [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. 1 The divine order as revealed in the sacred writings. Hence, skilled at writing. [475 n. 1] [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. 27 Semitic “swift, skillful,” here used of the Egyptian courier to foreign lands. [477 n. 27] [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. 28 The Hittite territory of Anatolia and north Syria. [477 n. 28] [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. 29 Or Ube, the Damascus area. Some of the following place names cannot be identified. [477 n. 29] [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. 30 Simyra was a north Phoenician town. Sessi was a nickname of Ramses II, who must have had some special interest in that town. [477 n. 30] [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. 31 Since Tubikhi was in Syria and the other towns here identifiable are northern, this Kadesh is probably that on the Orontes. [477 n. 31] [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. 35 Old Tyre on the mainland. [477 n. 35] [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. 36 . . . If the geographic progress south along the Phoenician coast applies here, this should be Ras Naqura, the “Ladder of Tyre.” It has been pointed out that there is here a pun on the Hebrew word *sir*’*ah* “hornet.” with the crossing of Scram stinging like a hornet. [477 n. 36] [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. 37 The Semitic word *ras* is used for “head.” [477 n. 37] [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. 53 These two occur as stations having water under Seti I. [478 n. 53] [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. 54 Raphia (Rafa) is the first frontier town of Palestine, about 20 mi. southwest of Gaza. The length of an *iter* is not absolutely certain, but may have been six and a half miles. [478 n. 54] [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. 55 See n. 40 above. [478 n. 56] [477 n. 40 says, “From the Vedic *márya* “Man, noble.”] [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. 56 God of war. [478 n. 56] [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. 57 At the two extremities of Egypt dialectical differences were marked. [478 n. 57] [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. 58 Papyrus Anastasi I gives *tenu*, probably to be emended to *Retenu* “Syria-Palestine,” but a Turin parallel text gives *metenu* . . . . perhaps “roads . . .” [479 n. 58] [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. 59 Here Papyrus Anastasi I breaks off. The Turin parallel continues with a few disconnected phrases. [479 n. 59] [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
70. 1 Perhaps I may be allowed to point out that my retention of this accepted title has no partisan motive. . . . The work is in fact a dialogue stressing pessimism, and those who consider that it has no serious purpose are at liberty to understand the title as the “(Humorous) Dialogue of Pessimism”. [139 n. 1] [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
71. 2 W. D. Wall, *The Adolescent Child* (London, 1948), especially pp. 84-86. [141 n. 2] [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
72. \* The text is clearly defective at this point. [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
73. 1 [Note by Hahn:] Only non-linguistic footnotes have been kept. Hence the footnote numbers are not sequential. [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
74. 1 192 n. 7 says: “This seems to refer to the narrow strip of cloth tied in front, with its ends hanging down to cover the genitals, which was worn by some laborers. The dangling ends were sometimes tucked into the waistband or turned to the back. The resulting nudity may have aroused the derision of the well-dressed scribes.” [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
75. 2 192 n. 16 says of “thought”: “Literally, “his belly.”” [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
76. 3 192 n. 18 says: “Compare the eighth maxim of the *Instruction of Ptahhotep*.” [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
77. 4 192 n. 19 says: “Literally, “the children of people,” which is the plural counterpart of the term *s3 s*, “son of man.”” [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
78. 5 192 n. 20 says: “Renenet (Thermuthis) was a goddess of bounty and good luck. She was frequently associated with the goddess Meskhenet who presided over births.” [↑](#footnote-ref-78)