Dark Sayings

The contextualization of Wisdom Literature in the 7th and 8th Centuries: An Inter-textual and Stylometric approach to the book of Proverbs (Including a précis of Canticles, Qohleth and Job)

“To understand a proverb, and the interpretation; the words of the wise, and their dark sayings” (Prov 1:6).
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Introduction

Significant New Approaches to Wisdom Literature

Before the historical and literary background of Proverbs is explored it is important to understand that this commentary ultimately rests on the work commenced over a hundred years ago by James William Thirtle (1907) regarding the placement of many of the Psalms and Isaiah in the **eighth century BC** (800-701 BC). Thirtle’s work was largely dismissed by critical scholarship who regarded Isaiah as a tripartite work (chs 1-39, 40-55, 56-66) composed in different eras (the latter sections being written during and after the exile). Consequently scholarly talk about the book of Isaiah speaks of First, Second (“Deutero”), and Third (“Trito”) Isaiah(s). It is true that these three sections can be stylistically differentiated but minimal variation is not enough to posit linguistic development and therefore post-exilic authorship usually rests its case on the Cyrus prophecy. The critics argue that the Cyrus prophecy is “ex-eventu” (written after the fact) as it refers to the destruction and rebuilding of Jerusalem. Of, course this denies the possibility that the prophet actually foresaw the future and under inspiration wrote it down 150 years in advance. The critical argument is tendentious because without offering evidence it precludes the supernatural in order to establish a late date –thus the reasoning is circular – the Cyrus reference indicates late prophecy and late prophecy will contain references to Cyrus (sic). Such reasoning can be dismissed but more devastating is the realization that the prophecy was never fulfilled. **Cyrus never built the temple** it was restored by **Darius the Great** as history (and scripture) confirms. Other problems have also been noted by scholars such as the designation of the pagan Cyrus as the “anointed” (messiah).

Thirtle offered a revolutionary solution as he regarded the original Hebrew for Cyrus as an appellative for **Hezekiah** and like Cobb before him Thirtle contended that the role of Cyrus in Isaiah had been exaggerated. The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia (1915) stated that; “Dr. W. H. Cobb in the Journal of Biblical Literature and Exegesis, 1901, 79, pleads for a "shrinkage of Cyrus," because Cyrus figures only in Isa 40-48, and is then dismissed. Dr.

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1 The most important dates here are **738 BC**: King Tiglath-Pileser III of Assyria invades Israel, forcing it to pay tribute. **732 BC**: Hoshea becomes the last king of Israel. **722 BC**: Israel is conquered by Assyrian king Sargon II. **705 BC**: Sennacherib succeeds Sargon II as king of Assyria. **701 BC**: King Hezekiah of Judah, backed by Egypt, revolts against king Sennacherib of Assyria. Sennacherib sacks many cities, but fails in his attempt to take Jerusalem.
Thirtle, on the other hand, argues that the name "Cyrus" is a mere appellative, being originally not Koresh (Cyrus), but choresh ("workman," "artificer," "imagebreaker"), and that 44:27,28 is a gloss (compare Old Testament Problems, 244-64). But in opposition to these views the present writer prefers to write Cyrus large, and to allow frankly that he is the subject of extraordinary prediction”.2

On the basis of this hypothesis Thirtle proceeded to redefine how Isaiah and many of the psalms should be understood – namely as coming from the eighth century. Perhaps the most striking example of his approach is the assignment of the collection known as the “Songs of Degrees” to Hezekiah. That does not mean that they were all composed during this era, but that their arrangement was finalized by his scribes, who adapted earlier psalms into a larger framework. Dr. John Lightfoot and Dr. Thirtle independently put forward the view that Psalms 120-134 are the songs mentioned in Isa 38.20. They are ‘songs of degrees’, or steps. The only biblical reference to ‘degrees’ is in the account of Hezekiah and his father’s sundial. There are fifteen psalms of degrees corresponding to the fifteen years extension granted to Hezekiah. Ten are ‘anonymous’ relating to the ten degrees by which the sundial regressed. The central song is attributed to Solomon and four to David: fifteen in all.3

Although the “consensus” in Thirtle’s time was for the critical tripartite division of Isaiah there were contemporary scholars who defended the essential unity of Isaiah’s entire book, e.g. Strachey (1874), Nagelsbach (1877), Bredenkamp (1887), Douglas (1895), W.H. Cobb (1883-1908), W.H. Green (1892), Vos (1898-99), Thirtle (1907), Margoliouth (1910) and O.T. Allis (1912). Although scholarship has progressed since then it is still a problem causing Hays (2011) to remark; "The most prominent tension in recent scholarship on Isaiah is between interpreters and interpretations that emphasize the diversity of the book, and those that emphasize its unity".4 New approaches such as Brevard S. Childs’ Old Testament Library commentary (2001), with its canonical–theological bent are welcome additions. Hays (2011: 550) notes that, “Marvin Sweeney has also taken up the ‘especially problematic issue’ of dating prophetic texts on non-linguistic grounds, and came to similar methodological conclusions (2007; one of his case studies is Isaiah 10:5-12:6). Sweeney has furthermore

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2 However, if that “extraordinary prediction” referred to Cyrus it failed because Cyrus did not rebuild the temple. Orr, James, M.A., D.D. General Editor. "Entry for 'ISAIAH, 8-9'". "International Standard Bible Encyclopedia". 1915.


https://www.academia.edu/1883357/The_Book_of_Isaiah_in_Contemporary_Research
lent his support to the idea that there was a significant edition of the book of Isaiah compiled during the reign of Josiah (Sweeney 1996, 2001) – a theory associated particularly with Hermann Barth (1977). Sweeney takes a straightforward approach by generally treating occurrences of the names Assyria and Egypt as references to those nations, rather than as coded allusions to the later political entities that subsumed them. He also cogently argues that not every reference to exile is to be assigned automatically to the postexilic period, since the Assyrian conquest of the northern kingdom in the eighth century and the exile of its population would have been seismic events as well—“the greatest tragedy and challenge yet experienced by the people of Israel and Judah” (Sweeney 2001, p. 238). The dismissive manner in which Thirtle’s proposals were evaluated says more about the scholarship of his day than it does about the merit or otherwise of his approach;

“The reviewer has attempted to do justice to the line of thought, and he has searched diligently for statements involving probability, as distinguished from coincidence, or possibility, but has to conclude that the first thing set forth to be proved is sustained by variety of assertion, rather than by positive evidence; that the author has passed on from that to graver conclusions without furnishing weightier considerations; and that, while such traditions of Hezekiah as we have would lead us to welcome any real evidence tending to establish the exact part of King Hezekiah in furnishing, or preserving, the literature of the Bible, the author’s attempt to define it cannot be regarded as successful”.

If those same criteria were applied to much of the “scientific criticism” of that era it would also (no doubt) be found wanting. Things have moved on since the nineteenth century and the assured results of criticism no longer look so unshakeable. If “Hezekiah” had so little input then why are “Hezekiah’s men” referred to in Proverbs 25.1? Why is the Assyrian crisis central to the book of Isaiah (37-38) and why (how?) is it related to the royal records in Kings and Chronicles? Why does Hezekiah mention singing “his songs” (plural) in the temple when not a single psalm has been attributed to him? These question are only now starting to be answered in such articles (to mention a few) as; "Who Were the “Men of Hezekiah?” (Carasik, Michael, 1994), and “‘Trust in the Lord’: Hezekiah, Kings and Isaiah” (John W. Olley, 1999), and “Was an Early Edition of the Book of Kings Composed during Hezekiah’s Reign?” (Nadav Na’am: 2017).

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5 Hays footnote: Sweeney offers a fuller list of the theory’s proponents. See Sweeney 2001, p. 236, n. 6
7 These articles can be downloaded from the page: http://www.biblaridion.info/html/dark.html
It has only taken a hundred years for scholarship to start catching up; moreover, the approach adopted by Thirtle is a modern approach where Textual Criticism, Literary Criticism and Exegesis complement one another. Serious scholars are now increasingly questioning the mention of “Cyrus” in the original text of Isaiah – perhaps Thirtle was correct after all? Thirtle was born in Pakefield, Suffolk England in 1855, and raised in the Christadelphian religion but by 1890 Thirtle had left the movement and become the editor of “the Christian”, an Evangelical Baptist weekly magazine which under his guidance became the largest circulation of any religious paper in Great Britain. Although the questions and suggestions that he raised have (until recently) been largely neglected by professional scholars his work has undergone further development by bible students from the movement that he initially left.

For example, in his insightful *Isaiah* commentary H. A. Whittaker adopted the eighth century background promoted by Thirtle, ditto for *Hezekiah the Great and the Songs of Degrees* which he co-authored with G. Booker. Moreover, a number of short articles appeared in his eclectic work, *Bible Studies, An Anthology* which suggested important new approaches to Canticles and Qohleth with the former as an allegory based on Hezekiah’s courtship of the northern tribes during the Assyrian crisis and the latter based on the memoirs of Uzziah who was quarantined as a leper. This period covers the kings introduced in Isaiah 1.1 (Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah). One of Whittaker’s greatest contributions has been his co-authorship with Booker of a commentary on the Psalms where their exegesis is guided by the approach suggested by Thirtle.

The Assyrian crisis provoked a deluge of prophetic writings; Jonah, Amos, Hosea, Isaiah and Micah. Even critical scholars would agree that the bulk of these books were formulated in the eighth century even if they had not obtained their “final canonical form” by then. Sweeney is most certainly correct in regarding the reign of Josiah as an important terminus at least for the “draft” versions of the prophetic literature of this era. However, what can be said of the sapiential literature? Not only did the Assyrian crisis inspire prophetic activity, it also acted as a catalyst for wisdom literature. This commentary will demonstrate on stylistic and inter-textual grounds that Proverbs belongs to the same period.

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8 On this see, Johann Cook, The Relationship between Textual Criticism, Literary Criticism and Exegesis – An Interactive One? [Textus24 (2009) 119-132]
10 Harry Whittaker and George Booker, Hezekiah the Great and the Songs of Degrees, (Birmingham : Christadelphian, 1985)
Recently Andrew Perry has offered an inter-textual reading of the book of Job that compares Job with the Book of Isaiah and argues that Job is a prophetic and political commentary about Hezekiah and Judah during the days of the Assyrian Crisis. This prophetic and political discourse is set within the parabolic framework of the prologue and epilogue, in which the details of the patriarch Job’s experience have been chosen in such a way so as to represent Hezekiah and Judah.\(^\text{13}\) Perry’s proposal is similar to that of Wolfers. According to Wolfers, Job is “an allegorical figure representing the people of Judah and their King Hezekiah in the time of the Assyrian conquests” (p. 15). The book, therefore, “is the veiled story of national disaster, the rupture of Covenants between the tribal desert God and His Chosen people, and the trial of faith of Israel in exile. . . while the superficial layer, treating of personal disaster, betrayal and temptation, is merely an exceptionally effective and compelling disguise and vehicle” (p. 15). Thus, Wolfers sees the composition of Job as having taken place “during the 8th century BCE culminating in the siege of Jerusalem in 701 (or 700)” (p. 53).\(^\text{14}\)

If this is correct the eighth century proved to be fertile ground for Biblical literature as it saw if not the canonical forms, at the very least the drafting of the prophetic writings of Jonah, Amos, Hosea, Isaiah and Micah (Joel?) and also the development of wisdom literature – Job, Canticles, Qohleth and Proverbs. The following commentary will place Proverbs firmly within this wider context and will offer brief excurses on the contemporary biblical literature with which it is connected. Hopefully this will act as a corrective on a sadly neglected period.


Stylometrics

Repetition and Comparative Linguistics
Resources

The following resources and software was employed in the analysis. Excel Work Books are referred to as described below. The Excel resources are all available for download in a compressed folder: http://biblaridion.info/Proverbs/DARK_RESOURCES.zip

Software

Excel 2007 is an Electronic Spreadsheet Program by Microsoft

BibleWorks (v.5) is the premier original languages Bible software program for Biblical exegesis and research.

Free Software Employed

TANAGRA is free DATA MINING software for academic and research purposes. It proposes several data mining methods from exploratory data analysis, statistical learning, machine learning and databases area. Can be used as an Excel add-in http://eric.univ-lyon2.fr/~ricco/tanagra/en/tanagra.html

Real Statistics is free statistics software which extends Excel’s built-in statistical capabilities so that you can more easily perform a wide variety of statistical analyses in Excel. http://www.real-statistics.com/

PAST is free software for scientific data analysis, with functions for data manipulation, plotting, univariate and multivariate statistics, ecological analysis, time series and spatial analysis, morphometrics and stratigraphy. http://folk.uio.no/ohammer/past/

Weka 3 is Data Mining Software in Java is a collection of machine learning algorithms for data mining tasks. http://www.cs.waikato.ac.nz/ml/weka/

python (x,y) 2.7.9.0 a free scientific and engineering development software based on the Python programming language with Scikit-learn plugin (formerly scikits.learn) a free software machine learning library for the Python programming language plug-in https://python-xy.github.io/downloads.html http://scikit-learn.org/stable/install.html
General Information

All the files listed below are in a zipped folder and can be downloaded from; http://www.biblaridion.info/Proverbs/DARK_RESOURCES.zip

Files in Dark resources folder

PCA_DA_STEPWISE.xlsx
(Excel Workbook)
Explanation of Principle Component Analysis (PCA), Eigenvectors, Covariance and Correlation, Linear Discriminant analysis and the DA add-in.

Ru_mix.xlsx
(Excel Workbook)
A mixture of Ruth and Esther – experiments in separating mixtures. Workbook contains cut and paste Python Scripts etc. Data is also posted as a separate notepad text data file (as an example) “pcarumix.txt” and the “silhouette code” is also included as a text file for use in the Python Spyder console (in case copying from excel causes problems).

Old Testament Data Sets

OT_DATASET.xlsx
(Excel Workbook)
Hebrew Function Words, Counts(WTM), Synonym Overview, KJV Function Word, YLT Function Words, POS Tags (any stem) n-grams, Key Words. The KJV/YLT English Function Words are useful for experiments but obviously not as accurate as using the Hebrew original.

VERBS.xlsx
(Excel Workbook)
verbs (complete based on POS tags), Nouns, Participles etc, Direct Object Marker (DOM), aser and Pr, counts WTM.

Gutenburg Dataset and Information

Wallace_FW.pdf
Table of English Function Words and list of books downloaded for the experiment.

Word.Counter.pdf
How to make an Excel Function Word Counter

GUTENBURG_COUNT.xlsx
(Excel Workbook)
Zane (author), Pride (Pride and Prejudice), Sense (Sense and Sensibility), Mixed Distribution (Experiment with mixing results from two books) and Experiment with Separating Mixed Distributions.

**GUTENBURG.xlsx**
(Excel Macro Enabled Workbook):
PCA_DA_Gutenburg applied to the dataset, Covariance and Correlation applied to the dataset, How DA.xla Works, Kardi LDA, Eigenvalues, Original Count (3,300 Gutenburg books; texts sorted for Function Words).

**Comparative Stylometrics**

**REPETITION.xlsx**
(Excel Macro Enabled Workbook):
Demonstrates all the repetitions in Proverbs at the touch of a button - shows the links between each section based on the work done by Snell.

**COMPARATIVE.xlsx**
(Excel Workbook)
Supervised multiple groups (LDA) reduced dataset (PCA) supplemented as well as comparison with Sklandy & NV Ratios, Yahweh, Sekel, Batach etc.

**ELIMINATION_REDUCED.xlsx**
(Excel Workbook)
Employs PCA reduced Pos tags dataset therefore supervised 1 to 1 (LDA) reduced dataset.

**X-MEANS.xlsx**
(Excel Macro Enabled Workbook):
Unsupervised multiple group (X-Means) full dataset re-processed (LDA/MDS)
Unsupervised multiple group (X-Means) book averages re-processed (LDA)

**MGD.xlsx**
(Excel Workbook)
The construction of Mixed Gaussian Distributions for experimental work on methodology – the “books” of Tom, Rick and Harry constructed and then separated.
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1. Description and aims of the analysis

Although this analysis employs computational, statistical, and mathematical tools to derive results (often expressed as percentages) it should not be thought of as a quantitative analysis as it is primarily exploratory research. The objective is to determine the presence or absence of stylistic affinity between the varied prophetic and sapiential writings of the seven century BC. Stylistic correspondence would suggest a shared developmental and compositional history and provide insights into textual relationships. Such a qualitative approach should enable the development of ideas or hypotheses for potential further quantitative research. Insights gained from comparative stylometric, linguistic and semantic analysis also supports intra- and inter textual analyses.

The datasets employed are available as downloads and free software is recommended in the hope that this initial research will function as a “manual” that will encourage other (more qualified) candidates to establish a research environment to further the work. The problem is that such an endeavour requires specialized skill sets and few have the necessary inter-disciplinary linguistic, statistic and exegetical skills equal to such a task (including me).

The ultimate goal of this entire study is to demonstrate the importance of this period of history which should be regarded as the Israelite version of the axial age where Israel experienced an as yet unrecognized explosion of prophetic, philosophical, poetic and wisdom writings. The Assyrian crisis functioned as the catalyst for an intense period of creative fusion and the arrangement of sacred literature.
2. The Datasets

1. Gutenberg datasets using Mosteller and Wallace
2. Hebrew Function Words using WTM
3. Pos Tags using WTM
4. Function words using the KJV
5. Synonyms using the KJV
6. Function words using YLT
7. 3-ngrams using YLT
8. Key Words based on Proverbs YLT
9. Extracted Proverbs Datasets

The Gutenburg Dataset

The Gutenburg dataset was created as a “control” sample as the authorship of the books is already known. Many researchers use the relative frequency of function words in their research papers\(^{15}\) as a result of the success achieved by Mosteller and Wallace\(^{16}\) in using relative frequencies of function words for solving authorship attribution problems. Function words act as a “fingerprint” as this set of features remains relatively constant among a number of writings by a particular author. Function words are often “content-free” features derived from people’s personal habits of organizing sentences. Authorship analysis is a process of categorizing articles by authors’ writing style and is often viewed in the context of stylometric research. This research field can be categorized into authorship identification, authorship characterization, and similarity detection. Authorship characterization is aimed at inferring an author’s background characteristics rather than identity. Similarity detection compares multiple pieces of writing without identifying the author. Authorship identification determines the likelihood of a particular author having written a piece of work by examining other works produced by that author.

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\(^{16}\) Mendenhall, T.C. (1901) A mechanical solution to a literary problem, Pop. Sci. Monthly, 60: 97—105
Mosteller and Wallace Table of Primary function words

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The following texts were downloaded from Project Gutenberg\textsuperscript{17} the texts were all resized to 10,000 words – this was done by copying a section of each book into a word document and deleting until a word count of 10,000 was achieved. The texts were further resized by dividing each 10,000 word document into three 3,300 words documents and then further dividing each 3,300 word document into six 500 word documents. The “Classification Sample” (unknown author) was Sense and Sensibility by Jane Austin.

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<td>1892</td>
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<td>B.M. Sinclair, aka., B. M. Bower</td>
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\textsuperscript{17} www.gutenberg.net
Hebrew Function Words using WTM

The Westminster Hebrew OT Morphology (WTM) “splits” the words into POS tags (Part of Speech). This has the advantage of allowing us to analyse the morphemes (a meaningful morphological unit of a language that cannot be further divided), however the disadvantage is that we miss compound forms. For example, whereas the WTM will find ‘ášer (אֲשֶׁר, that) and Ka (K particle preposition) as separate entities, it will not find Ka|´ášer (כַּאֲשֶׁר, “as”). The WTM has a high “word count” 425,904 because it actually counts POS tags. The WTT version (BHS Hebrew Old Testament [4th ed]) finds 496 forms of כַּאֲשֶׁר in a total word count of 309,972 and the (BHT) Transliterated Hebrew OT finds 489 forms of Ka|´ášer in a total word count of 316,760. We have chosen the WTM because it allows (non-grammarians like me) to use the WTM morphology codes for classifying (i.e., noun/participle etc) which is particularly useful when sorting verbs etc into nominal, finite and so forth for constructing datasets. This allows us to “standardize” the forms without requiring specialized grammatical/syntactical knowledge.

The Hebrew Function word dataset only presents the most prolific cases and is therefore not comprehensive. For example the first function word ‘al, roughly translated as “to” occurs 4,242 times in the OT; this is the most common form of the participle but not the only form (the 3rd person masculine singular occurs as a suffix another 434 times and there are also other cases). Moreover, we have not listed all the possible function words. However, this dataset is more than sufficient for our purposes and we will find that the data will need to be analyzed using PCA (Principle Component Analysis) in order to determine which variables give us the best results (many of the function words will then fall away as they do not contribute sufficiently to the variance).

One might question the “accuracy” of these ancient function words; surely such miniscule participles etc are prone to copyist error? In the book, *The History and Heritage of Scientific and Technological Information Systems*, Bella Hass Weinberg examines how The Masoretes standardized the text of the Hebrew Bible and in the course of their work created alphabetical lists of words and phrases. These tenth-century lists may be viewed as the predecessors of thirteenth-century Latin biblical concordances. Structurally, Masoretic lists and biblical concordances are analogous to KWOC (keyword out of context) indexes. Masoretic lists anticipated search features, including truncation and adjacency, developed in the latter half of the twentieth century. The Masoretes also created permuted indexes and produced frequency counts of biblical words. The first complete Hebrew biblical

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18 The following is the WTM tag: @Pp+SxxxExHbRx interpreted as: [Pp] Participle preposition+ [Sxxx] Suffix (none: person/gender/number) [Ex] no dropped or added letters [Hb] homonym 2 (Lexical entry number for homonyms) [Rx] form is a normal reading.
concordance, compiled in the fifteenth century, contains a “stoplist” or list of words not indexed that is similar to contemporary English stopwords. She comments; “One scholar, Jordan Penkower, believes that the Masoretes must have had an indexing system because their lists include function words, such as prepositions which, are often placed on “stoplists” (lists of words not to be indexed). How could anyone remember all the occurrences of the word on, for example, in twenty-four books? The Masoretes did not exclude function words because every word in the Bible counted, and the standardizers of the text wanted to be sure that even non-content words were copied correctly. They prepared lists of the occurrences of similar-sounding function words, such as el (to) and ‘al (on)……. Masoretic notes on the Bible often include frequency counts, which one might think could have been produced only with the aid of a computer. Keep in mind the scope of the Masoretic frequency counts: they cover all occurrences of a word or phrase in the twenty-four books of the Hebrew Bible. Scholars I have consulted are divided as to whether the Masoretes had the entire Bible memorized or used an indexing system (Weinberg. 2001. pp. 183—185)”.  

It is remarkable that ancient copyists anticipated the methodology used by modern “search engines” and that the biblical corpus is often chosen by linguistic and statistical researchers because of the availability of multilingual translations and concordances.

**Pos Tags using WTM**

Frank H. Polak devised a method of evaluating texts based on ratios of verbs (finite/nominal) and nouns (including adjectives); “For each example we will establish the following statistical data: (a) the ratio of nouns (including common and proper nouns, as well as adjectives and numerals) relative to the number of verbal forms, in short the Noun-Verb ratio (NV); (b) the ratio of nominal verbal forms (participle and infinitive construct) vis-à-vis the finite forms (perfect, imperfect, imperative, as well as the infinitive absolute), in short the Nominal-Finite ratio (NF)”. Polak analyses each individual text and (for example) in the statistical survey he does not count לֹא as an infinitive, when it serves as an introduction to direct speech. The words לֹא and הָיְתָ הָיוּ are counted as adverbs, לֹא as a preposition. In LBH as in Aramaic the periphrastic form of the verb (הָיְתָ הָיוּ with participle, e.g., הָיָה, Neh.1:4) is counted as a single form, indicating a special Aktionstart.  

However, using POS tags allows the creation of a dataset that can enumerate the number of nouns/verbs (including nominal and finite forms)/adjectives/prepositions etc. without necessitating extensive grammatical knowledge or analysing each text individually. This is

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particularly useful when we are dealing with a large corpus. Moreover, the results are “standardized” and therefore not open to grammatical interpretation.

The tables document the POS tags as % per chapter, most of the tables are presented with the chapters as horizontal headings and the tags vertically but a transposed version is also supplied – with the chapters (instances) vertically and the pos tags/words (variables) horizontally. This is necessary because many of the statistical applications require this format.

**Function words using the KJV**

As far as function words goes the Hebrew has no indefinite article, for example, the word *davar* means “word” or “a word,” depending on the context. Also, for example the pronoun “thou” is often appended to a verb for emphasis (i.e., added for the purpose of strengthening a genitive or accusative). The KJV function words often represent the translators reading of the sentence structure etc., so even in the case when no independent Hebrew function word exists (such as the indefinite article) the KJV can still (possibly) give us good results. In their work on authorship detection Talis J. Putnins (et al)\(^{21}\) also employ the KJV for statistical work on the Greek NT they remark that; “At least one previous study has found that an author’s style characteristics, particularly function word usage, are still present in translated texts”\(^{22}\) The table documents % per chapter.

**Synonyms using the KJV**

In their article on unsupervised learning Moshe Koppel (et al) employ the KJV as the basis for their work. In their experiment they artificially mixed up (“munged”) OT books and found that by using synonyms and further refining with function words they were able to separate them perfectly:

“(Almost) Automatic Synset Identification is one of the advantages of using biblical literature is the availability of a great deal of manual annotation. In particular, we are able to identify synsets by exploiting the availability of the standard King James translation of the Bible into English (KJV). Conveniently, and unlike most modern translations, KJV almost invariably translates synonyms identically. Thus, we can generally identify synonyms by considering the translated version of the text. There are two points we need to be precise about. First, it is not actually words that we regard as synonymous, but rather word roots. Second, to be even more precise, it is not quite roots that are synonymous, but rather senses of roots.


Conveniently, Strong’s (1890 [2010]) Concordance lists every occurrence of each sense of each root that appears in the Bible separately (where senses are distinguished in accordance with the KJV translation). Thus, we can exploit KJV and the concordance to automatically identify synsets as well as occurrences of the respective synonyms in a synset. (The above notwithstanding, there is still a need for a bit of manual intervention: due to polysemy in English, false synsets are occasionally created when two non-synonymous Hebrew words are translated into two senses of the same English word. Although this could probably be handled automatically, we found it more convenient to do a manual pass over the raw synsets and eliminate the problems.) The above procedure yields a set of 529 synsets including a total of 1595 individual synonyms. Most synsets consist of only two synonyms, but some include many more. For example, there are 7 Hebrew synonyms corresponding to “fear.”

A dataset containing synonyms (though not as extensive as that of Moshe Koppel (et al) is included on the spreadsheet. The “synonyms” are not always exact substitutions (this is not due to polysemy but to the “flexibility” of the Hebrew). The synonyms are based on the Hebrew word (as listed in the Strongs KJV Concordance) not on the English translation. Some infrequent synonyms have been included as they may still serve for exclusionary purposes. I suspect that synonyms will be useful at the macro (book) level but maybe not as effective at the micro (chapter) level. The table documents % per chapter.

**Function words using YLT (Young's Literal Translation)**

Employing a set of selected criteria Jan Kroeze (et al) measures the “literality” of the KJV and the NIV against specific Hebrew OT passages and concludes that whereas the KJV has a rating of 77% literality the NIV rates at only 65%. Perhaps the most literally translated Bible is the YLT (see diagram) and we have therefore included a dataset of function words based on the YLT. The table documents % per chapter.

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24 Jan Kroeze, Manie van den Heever, Bertus van Rooy, Just How literal is the King James Version?, Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages 37/1 (2011), pp. 27-56
3-ngrams using YLT

An n-gram model models sequences notably natural languages, using the statistical properties of n-grams. In the fields of computational linguistics and probability, an n-gram is a contiguous sequence of n items from a given sequence of text or speech. The items can be phonemes, syllables, letters, words or base pairs according to the application. The n-grams typically are collected from a text or speech corpus. A three word n-gram might be *sons of Israel*. The 3-ngrams are in the frequency range of 315-1,320 occurrences in the OT (YLT) and the table documents % per chapter.

Key Words based on Proverbs YLT

This dataset (hits per chapter in the YLT) was constructed by determining keywords (excluding function words) occurring in the frequency range of 53-20 times in Proverbs (the range was chosen to allow the words the possibility to occur at least once in each of the 31 chapters); these same words were then searched for in the rest of the OT.

Extracted Proverbs Datasets

The last worksheet contains a collection of Proverbs datasets extracted from the previous data tables. They have been arranged along the lines of the seven headings found in Proverbs.
This necessitated that certain sections (22.1-16, 22.17-24.22 and 24.23-34) required manual adjustment and calculation as they cross the chapter divisions and are therefore not calculated by the BibleWorks statistical dialogue. However, the Word List Manager (WLM) does allow the user to target specific sections and therefore provides word-counts (the equivalent of Pos tags in the WTM version) – this allows the calculation of % per section.

Combining Datasets

The analysis is performed with different datasets in order to determine compositional relationships\(^\text{25}\) as well as to determine the efficiency of the different datasets themselves. Ideally the different datasets would all deliver the same results. There will be some overlap between the different datasets and the datasets constructed specifically for Proverbs will be run using information extracted from the main dataset (Pos Tags) complimented with other datasets (keywords, synonyms etc) once we have determined which variables give the best results. Of course, the English translations add another layer of variation on top of the original language. They have only been included for experimental purposes but surprisingly some of the translated English datasets still allow reasonable separation (despite the added layer of linguistic complexity). However, serious evaluation can only occur on the Hebrew dataset and for this reason our work focuses on the Pos Tag dataset.

\(^{25}\) Compositional relationships or “similarity detection” rather than “authorship” i.e., writings that are stylistically similar and therefore have a high probability of sharing a developmental history.
3. Mixed Gaussian Distributions

The problem facing statistical analysis of Biblical Books is that we are dealing with Mixed Distributions as the Shapiro-Wilk test for normality indicates:

![Shapiro-Wilk Normality test matrix for Pos tag features per OT book](image)

Shapiro-Wilk Normality test matrix for Pos tag features per OT book (A=Prov 1-9, B=Prov 10-22) smaller collections cannot be tested for feature distribution, therefore some small books missing.

This was performed on the full Pos-Tag dataset (29 features) on all books. If a book is written by a single person and not edited or smoothed we would expect a nearly 100% pass rate on normality for all features. When the Gutenberg data for every single author was tested all the features (with the exception of a few outliers) passed the Shapiro-Wilk test for
normality indicating Gaussian distributions. The highest pass rate for normality achieved on any OT book was 21 (Zechariah) out of 29 features.

Standard deviation is a number used to tell how measurements for a group are spread out from the average (mean), or expected value. A low standard deviation means that most of the numbers are very close to the average.

A high standard deviation means that the numbers are spread out. One point to clarify is that the concept of standard deviation is not limited to normally distributed data. It is a general concept that applies to data that arise from any distribution. What is special about the standard deviation for the normal distribution is that it can be applied symmetrically about the mean, since the normal is a symmetric distribution. Though other distributions, such as the F, T, Chi-square, Gamma, or Beta, are not consistently symmetric, a variance - and therefore a standard deviation - can still be calculated for them.

Unlike the “Gutenberg” data set where each book was written by one author and then probably lightly edited giving normal distributions on the values (the function words), the Bible has undergone centuries of linguistic “smoothing” and some books (like Psalms) are collections. It is rare then that a chapter or even a book is characteristic of one single author, therefore we are dealing with material that is not homogenous. Nevertheless, the methods employed do yield useful results therefore enough original data is present to allow analysis (in most cases).
4. PCA, LDA and X-Means

The main methods that we employ are PCA, LDA and X-Means. Principle Component Analysis (PCA) reduces the number of variables and can then be followed by Linear Discriminant Analysis (LDA) and Classification.\(^\text{26}\)

In LDA the data is classified by assigning each point to the group that gives minimal Mahalanobis distance to the group mean. The Mahalanobis distance is calculated from the pooled within-group covariance matrix, giving a linear discriminant classifier. The given and estimated group assignments are listed for each point. In addition, group assignment is cross-validated by a leave-one-out cross-validation (jackknifing) procedure.

The ratio between samples (instances) and variables is important. The challenge is determining the number of relevant factors that we need to keep, on the basis of their eigenvalue. This is not really easy. Several aspects should be considered (Jackson, 1993): the number of instances ‘\(n\)’; the number of variables ‘\(p\)’; the ratio between the instances and the variables ‘\(n:p\)’; the correlation between the variables; the possible existence of groups of correlated variables. The ratio ‘\(n:p\)’ is an important thing. It determines the stability of the factors. Some references indicate that ‘\(n:p\)’ must be higher 3 in order to obtain reliable results (Grossman et al., 1991).\(^\text{27}\) In the Gutenberg Table we have 21 instances (7 groups of three samples) and 10 variables (features) giving a ratio of 2.1. Ideally we would want to analyse more texts from these authors but the results obtained indicates that this is sufficient. in fact we can reduce the variables down to 5 and still obtain 94.44% correct grouping on the texts and 100% on the Classification Sample (this would give an \(n:p\) ratio of 4.2).

What we aim for is a projection that maintains the maximum discriminative power of a given dataset, so a method should make use of class labels (if they are known \textit{a priori}). Linear Discriminant Analysis (LDA), invented by R. A. Fisher (1936), does so by maximizing the between-class scatter, while minimizing the within-class scatter at the same time.

The important distinction (to put it simply) is that PCA is a sort of pre-processing as it allows you to pick out the most important features in a dataset. What is the point of using hundreds of thousands of features if (for example) 85% of them are no good for separation? A dataset containing hundreds of features (in our case words i.e., nouns, verbs etc) can sometimes be narrowed down to just a handful of important features. If you know that certain features allow good separation on all the instances (chapters) between different books this makes comparison easier. PCA is “unsupervised” by that we mean that you input only the columns of features/variables (words in our case) without associating them with

\(^\text{26}\) See the PCA_DA_STEPWISE spreadsheet for a simplified introduction into the workings of Principle Component Analysis and Discriminant Analysis (DA or LDA). The analysis was performed using a combination of different software applications (TANGARA, PAST).

\(^\text{27}\) Source: Determining the right number of components in PCA (Tangara PDF).
groups of “books”. PCA will look only at the features and calculate how well they separate. A simple way of understanding the method is that an axis is created along every feature. This is 3D separation! You might visualize this as a ball of spikes with zero at the origin with each column of words (vector or “spike”) forming an axis with every other column of words. It will then give you the best separation (which it expresses as axis 1 against axis 2 etc) but you might find that a particular word (or a lack thereof) might give a good separation (say 30%) when you compare axis 1 with axis 17. The analysis will reveal the most important features...for example five words (be, and, any, have, at) contained enough correlation and variation to enable us to identify whether a book was written by Austin, Bower, Davis, Doyle, Dickens or Zane (more on this anon). So six books can be separated by five words! For those who are interested in the maths a spreadsheet has been included that deconstructs PCA and demonstrates how it works.

Linear Discriminant Analysis (LDA) is “supervised learning” – that means that once you have determined the most important features (words) by PCA then you set up your data table such that you have columns of features (words) allocated to groups (rows of books). That means that you have to tell the software the number of books that are present (i.e., the first 50 rows [chapters] all belong to a group called “Genesis”). This means that an a priori judgement must be made. For example, we may tell the method that we have 15 apples in the first group and 10 oranges in the second group when we actually have a mixture of 10 apples and 5 oranges in the first group (25 pieces of fruit total). We might create columns of “number of seeds”, “colouring” and “fruit weight” as the distinguishing features (variables). The method should then classify 40% as apples (10/25*100%) and 40% as oranges giving a correctly classified figure of 80% and misclassified as 20% (of group 1) which it consigns to the oranges group. It has worked! But what if there are pears present that we don’t know about (e.g., first group = 10 apples and 5 pears)? It will still try and classify these in one or the other group and probably in both (the one that they resemble most). In so doing it calculates new group centroids and may now misclassify some oranges and apples as well. You might now get something like Group 1= 8 apples, 2 pears, 2 oranges and Group 2 = 7 oranges, 4 pears, 2 apples classified as 100% correct (which it is obviously not). This is often what happens but note that the “core” (pun) of each group is fairly stable (if the features are properly selected). Group 1 is still predominately apples and group 2 is still predominately oranges but the pears do not even show up! If we do a Shapiro-Wilk normality test on the features (seeds, colour, and weight) of each classified Group (cluster) we now find that some of the features in each Group are not “normal”. This leads us to suspect that some other kind of fruit is “mixed” with either the apples or the oranges. We suspect that we have three groups (kinds of fruit) instead of two. What can we do? Perhaps we can use a clustering “algorithm” to determine how many clusters (groups) are present in the data. For those who are interested in the maths the PCA spreadsheet also deconstructs LDA and demonstrates how it works.
As described above, we have a 25 pieces of fruit with supposedly 15 apples and 10 oranges, however, we suspect that other fruit is also present (and wrongly labelled). Our best option is to use a clustering algorithm. This is also “unsupervised learning” as all you need (once again) are the columns of features (seeds, colour, weight) the only other instruction that is required to input into the software is the number of clusters to look for. And therein lays the problem. Do we look for 3, 4, or 10 clusters? We could actually make 25 clusters with each piece of fruit forming the centroid (and only member) of its own cluster but what would that tell us? There are different methods for estimating the amount of clusters in a dataset—the Elbow, Silhouette and Dirichlet methods come to mind (Python scripts supplied in the Work Books) and such methods as EM-clustering but my experience is that if the data is very homogenous (number of seeds, colours and weights very similar) then any such method will struggle with differentiation and see only 2 clusters (the minimum) when you know that more than 2 are present. 28 However, we may have additional information available such as that the fruit usually comes in bags with five pieces of the same fruit per bag or in our case we may suspect that certain sequential chapters form “blocks”. The best approach is to choose a number of likely clustering options (say 2, 3 and 4 clusters) and then run a normality test on the output. In our case we find that 2 clusters fails normality on seeds, 4 clusters fails on colours but with 3 clusters each group (cluster) passes normality on all three features (seed, colour, weight). We can take this result and double check by running it through LDA again. We name the first group as apples (10 of them) the second group as oranges (10 of them) and the third as unknown (5 of them). The data achieves 100% classified. A little research helps us conclude that the unknown group has the average number of seeds, colours, weights etc usually associated with pears. We now know that the first group did not contain 15 apples….it actually had 10 apples and 5 pears.

The simplest and most often used clustering method is called Kmeans. You input the number of clusters (say 3 e.g., K=3) and the software randomly places 3 centroids in the data….it then calculates the distance from each “centroid” to every single point and forms 3 groups (clusters). In other words this is the cluster assignment step in which each point is assigned to the closest (randomly formed) cluster. In the next step (we call this move centroid step) it calculates the averages of all the data points in the cluster and then moves the centroid to the average. It will keep doing this with data points constantly transferring between the clusters as the distances and averages keep changing – the centroid is constantly moving until stability (or some specified criteria) is achieved that maximises the distance between the clusters while minimizing the cluster average. This involves hundreds of very quick calculations and is known as an iterative process. The software has now formed 3 distinct clusters from the data. However, that does not necessarily mean that 3 clusters are present. It may contain 4 or 5 or…? Our method employs X-Means instead of

KMeans. X-Means is KMeans extended by an improve-Structure part of the algorithm the centres are attempted to be split in this region. The decision between the children of each centre and itself is done comparing BIC-values\textsuperscript{29} of the two structures. Experience has shown this clustering method to be highly effective. Often the newly formed clusters will also pass the normality test. However, this still does not necessarily mean that we have found the correct clusters although core density does tend to remain stable (more on this anon).

\textsuperscript{29} In statistics, the Bayesian information criterion (BIC) or Schwarz information criterion (also SIC, SBC, SBIC) is a criterion for model selection among a finite set of models; the model with the lowest BIC is preferred. Wikipedia contributors. (2018, December 4). Bayesian information criterion. In Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia. Retrieved 01:14, December 12, 2018, from https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Bayesian_information_criterion&oldid=872004923
5. Testing the methodology

5a) Testing the methodology with the Gutenburg dataset

In order to familiarize ourselves with the software and test the methodology two experiments were conducted. The first was with the “Gutenburg” dataset described in the dataset section. It turned out that the 500 word dataset was too small but the 3,300 word dataset performed well. So for each of the six books three 3,300 word “samples” were “mined” for 60 function words which were then ultimately reduced to just five words (by PCA). The dataset contained two different books by the same author (Jane Austin) and one of them was designated as “Class” (e.g. Classify). The hope was that these 6 books would form 6 distinct clusters and that the “Class” group (book) would be classified as belonging to the “Austin” group. The final dataset prepared for LDA with PAST (note the group colours and symbols):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>and</th>
<th>any</th>
<th>be</th>
<th>have</th>
<th>at</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Austin</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austin</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austin</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bower</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bower</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bower</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Davis</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Davis</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>26</td>
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<tr>
<td>Davis</td>
<td>D</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dickens</td>
<td>DK</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dickens</td>
<td>DK</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
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<td>Dickens</td>
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<td>135</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>47</td>
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<tr>
<td>Doyle</td>
<td>DY</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doyle</td>
<td>DY</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doyle</td>
<td>DY</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zane</td>
<td>Z</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zane</td>
<td>Z</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zane</td>
<td>Z</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>16</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Remember Austin (Group A) in the first row the word “and” is found 97 times in the first 3,300 word “sample” 72 times in the second 3,300 word “sample” and 67 times in the third 3,300 word “sample”.

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30 In the first instance a word count was done by sectioning into 3,300 word sections in Word and then using a the inbuilt word find and replace function to count the frequencies of the features (and, at, a etc) the above table reflects these counts (from random 3,300 word sections taken out of each book). Later it was realised
PAST produced the following Confusion Matrix and gave 100% classified.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>DK</th>
<th>DY</th>
<th>Z</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DK</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DY</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Z</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We have highlighted the result – each book clusters in its own group!
The classifier produced the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Point</th>
<th>Given group</th>
<th>Classification</th>
<th>Jackknifed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Austin</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austin</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td>Austin</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bower</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bower</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bower</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Davis</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>D</td>
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<tr>
<td>Davis</td>
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<td>D</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dickens</td>
<td>DK</td>
<td>DK</td>
<td>DY</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dickens</td>
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<td>DK</td>
<td>DY</td>
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<tr>
<td>Doyle</td>
<td>DY</td>
<td>DY</td>
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<td>Doyle</td>
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<tr>
<td>Doyle</td>
<td>DY</td>
<td>DY</td>
<td>DK</td>
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<tr>
<td>Zane</td>
<td>Z</td>
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<td>Zane</td>
<td>Z</td>
<td>Z</td>
<td>Z</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zane</td>
<td>Z</td>
<td>Z</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

that it was easier to import the complete book into an Excel Work Book for processing. See the PDF and spreadsheet on “Making a word counter”. The figures on the spreadsheet will be different than the above table because the 3,300 word sections are processed sequentially and are not randomly chosen sections (as used in the above table). Using Excel it was possible to produce a much larger dataset – for example 19 sections (3,300 words each from the Zane book) and therefore possible to test each feature (function word) for normality. It turns out that each feature is distributed “normally” (as we would expect) with only the occasional outlier (probably due to editing). The conclusion is that in a single book written by a single author (over a relatively short period of time) the features will be distributed normally. The flip side is that failures in normality suggest (but not always) multiple authors and/or sources.
Note that “Class” (highlighted yellow) was our “unknown” sample awaiting classification. It was classified (correctly) as being a Jane Austin book. The plot is shown below both with and without 68% ellipses (explained anon):
Stylometrics 33

Note that although the Austin book lies in the same quadrant as the “Class” samples there is still considerable spread. This is either due to editing or maturity of the writers developing style. Also note that this is “supervised learning”...we knew what books (except for Class) we were dealing with from the start. If, for example, the Davis book had accidently been put inside a Jane Austin book jacket and we had mistakenly labelled the Davis data as Austin, the outcome would be entirely different (and incorrect).

The 95% and 68% probability area is crucial in distributions and PAST allows you to plot these areas and highlight them with a coloured ellipse. In statistics, the 68–95–99.7 rule, also known as the empirical rule, is a shorthand used to remember the percentage of values that lie within a band around the mean in a normal distribution with a width of two, four and six standard deviations, respectively; more accurately, 68.27%, 95.45% and 99.73% of the values lie within one, two and three standard deviations of the mean, respectively. In mathematical notation, these facts can be expressed as follows, where X is an observation from a normally distributed random variable, μ is the mean of the distribution, and σ is its standard deviation:

\[
\begin{align*}
\Pr(\mu - \sigma \leq X \leq \mu + \sigma) & \approx 0.6827 \\
\Pr(\mu - 2\sigma \leq X \leq \mu + 2\sigma) & \approx 0.9545 \\
\Pr(\mu - 3\sigma \leq X \leq \mu + 3\sigma) & \approx 0.9973
\end{align*}
\]

Therefore 68% is one standard deviation (either side of the mean) which is a fairly tight window. This assumes that the data is normally distributed. However, numerous experiments have indicated that this is not always the case for every value especially for the older books (Pentateuch). Unlike the “Gutenburg” data set where each book was written by one author and then probably lightly edited giving normal distributions on the values (the words), the Bible has undergone centuries of linguistic “smoothing” and some books are collections. It is rare then that a book (or sometimes even a chapter) is characteristic of one single author, therefore we are dealing with material that is not homogenous although it can sometimes give the impression of homogeneity as distributions with a similar spread tend to merge. Nevertheless, in most cases the methods employed do yield useful results.

A simple way of understanding the ellipse\(^{32}\) is to view it as the base of a three dimensional Probability Density Function (PDF):

So, the top (peak) of the mountain is the mean (average result) cutting the slope of the mountain at the 68% level would mean that 68% of the results (diamonds) can be found (mined) in this area of the mountain. If we stand at the bottom of the mountain and walk around the base we are walking around the area that contains 100% of the diamonds. Most of these plots will be shown at the 68% probability area. Of course if we dig at the very base we will only find the odd diamond but if we dig a tunnel halfway up the mountain we find hundreds of diamonds. If data is fairly similar (homogenous) then 95% ellipses will show enormous overlap:

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\(^{32}\) The Multivariate Normal Distribution Edps/Soc 584 and Psych 594 Applied Multivariate Statistics Carolyn J. Anderson Department of Educational Psychology UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN
At the 95% probability region we have huge overlap among the groups (books). This is like a number of mountains all merging into one another. In fact, the data is so similar it is a wonder that LDA can correctly separate the books at all—but it does! The method is therefore fairly robust but is only as good as the dataset and dependent on our initial choices. There are a number of different analyses that can be performed on the same data table in PAST. Below is Non-metric Multidimensional Scaling (MDS) in 3D employing Euclidean distance. The PAST manual describes MDS as follows; “Non-metric multidimensional scaling is based on a distance matrix computed with any of 21 supported distance measures, as explained under Similarity and Distance Indices. The algorithm then attempts to place the data points in a two- or three-dimensional coordinate system such that the ranked differences are preserved. For example, if the original distance between points 4 and 7 is the ninth largest of all distances between any two points, points 4 and 7 will ideally be placed such that their euclidean distance in the 2D plane or 3D space is still the ninth largest. Non-metric multidimensional scaling intentionally does not take absolute distances into account. The program may converge on a different solution in each run, depending upon the initial conditions. Each run is actually a sequence of 11 trials, from which the one with smallest stress is chosen. One of these trials uses PCO as the initial
condition, the others are random. The solution is automatically rotated to the major axes (2D and 3D).

We have 21 “distance” measurements and the option of choosing a 2D or 3D output which allows us to select a plot that best displays the relationship between the groups. These plots can also be displayed with ellipses, group and row names etc. The above is a “plain” plot (for clarity) that demonstrates that despite some points being very close there are clearly distinguishable groups (books). Note the blue dots and rings are both Austin books and they form one group (with a large spread), note how the Davis book results (orange rings) cluster tightly together (very consistent) and furthest away from the other groups (indicating a distinct writing style).

The MDS method also has a “Shepard” tab which allows you to view the Shepard plot: “This plot of obtained versus observed (target) ranks indicates the quality of the result. Ideally, all points should be placed on a straight ascending line (x=y). The W values are the coefficients of determination between distances along each ordination axis and the original distances”. If you click the “compute” button the above plot will constantly change the position of the groups etc showing all the possibilities relative positions in 3D space.
The Shepard plot and the low “stress” value (0.038) indicate that the quality of our result (on the Gutenburg dataset) is fairly good.

Clustering analysis can also be performed on the same dataset in PAST. The hierarchical clustering routine produces a 'dendrogram' showing how data points (rows) can be clustered.
Three different algorithms are available:

- **Unweighted pair-group average (UPGMA).** Clusters are joined based on the average distance between all members in the two groups.
- **Single linkage (nearest neighbour).** Clusters are joined based on the smallest distance between the two groups.
- **Ward’s method.** Clusters are joined such that increase in within-group variance is minimized. One method is not necessarily better than the other, though single linkage is not recommended by some. It can be useful to compare the dendrograms given by the different algorithms, to informally assess the robustness of the clusters.

For Ward’s method, a Euclidean distance measure is inherent to the algorithm. For UPGMA and single linkage, the distance matrix can be computed using 24 different indices, as described under the ‘Similarity and distance indices’ section.

### 5b) Testing the methodology with MGD’s

MGD is an abbreviation for “Mixed Gaussian Distribution” The following experiment was designed from scratch in order to observe how X-Means and LDA deal with “mixed” distributions, that is, a “mixed distribution” represents a book that has more than one author. In that case, the features will not be normally distributed. It was then necessary to design features and associate them with authors. The authors were named Tom, Rick and Harry. The features were named A, B, C and D. The features were designed by choosing a mean and SD for each feature and author so as to lie in similar ranges as our POS Tag dataset. For example, A is Mean=0.5, SD=0.1 (for Tom) and A is Mean= 1.8, SD=1.7 (for Rick) these parameters were employed to make “normal distributions” by combining the normal inverse and Random functions in Excel. These four features (A, B, C, D) were then used to build “books”.

When Book 1 to 3 was processed with LDA only 54.7% was classified correctly. **Book 1 (B1)** is Tom (yellow ellipse) with 15 chapters B1.1 to B1.15. **Book 2** is a mixture of Tom and Rick (big red ellipse) 30 chapters B2.1 to B2.30 (10 Tom and 20 Rick) **Book 3** is a mixture of 10 Harry, 10 Tom and 10 Rick (blue ellipse) B3.1 to B3.30. According to the Confusion Matrix (CM) Book 1 has 11 “chapters” correctly classified 11/15*100 =73.33% Book 2 has correctly classified 16/30*100 = 53.33% (about half) Book 3 has correctly classified 14/30*100= 46.66% (less than half). Book 1 passed the Shapiro-Wilk Test for all features (this is to be expected as it has one author) Book 2 and 3 failed (the mixtures) failed normality on some features. However, book 3 had only one feature that failed normality and that is because
some of the distributions are so similar (on Mean and SD) that the results merge into one large distribution.

PAST LDA MGD (3 Books) 54.7% classified

Rather than testing all three “books” together testing them 1 to 1 can help clarify the situation through a process of elimination, for example, testing Book 1 with Book 2 (excluding Book 3) produces 71.11% classified with LDA:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Book1</th>
<th>Book2</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Book1</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book2</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Note that when two groups are input into PAST the LDA software always produces a histogram (not a scatter plot) with the fixed colours red and blue (irrespective of the symbols or colours that you input). The Confusion Matrix (and Classifier not shown here) demonstrates that 14 of 15 Tom chapters of Book 1 (93.3%) classify as Book 1. It is clear from the LDA that Book 1 is a complete collection (chapters 1-15) by one author (Tom). Book 2 is a mixture of Tom (10) and Rick (20) and many (12 see CM) of the Book 2 Tom chapters want to classify with the Book 1 Tom chapters. The CM indicates that 18 of Book 2 chapters classify as Book 2. So, Book 2 splits roughly 40/60 into two collections (authors). If the first 10 chapters of Book 2 are indeed Tom then the remaining 20 would be Rick the odd miss-classification being due to data that can cluster with either group. In this case a 1 to 1 classification by LDA has proved very useful for gaining insight into the structures of Book 1 and Book 2. If we compare the Gauss curves of Book 1 with those of Book 2 (using a Python Script) we can clearly see that whereas Book 1 has normal distributions Book 2 has “double peaks” (2 Collections).

However, Book 3 (10 Tom, 10 Rick, 10 Harry) has only one “fail” on normality which can be seen on the Gauss curves:
The reason for only one failure is because in this case Tom, Rick and Harry have very similar distributions (their writing styles are similar) and therefore the data is merging. As a consequence Book 3 will be the most difficult to separate into its constituent parts.

Using a Python script to estimate the number of clusters in Book 3 indicated 2 or 3 clusters;

Top (EM) 3 clusters? /Dirichlet 2?

We could (of course) do a 1 to 1 LDA analysis with Book 1 (Tom) and Book 3 and attempt to discover the structure by a process of elimination. Instead it was decided to employ X-Means to create 3 clusters (K=3) from the Book 3 dataset. All of the three clusters created in this manner passed Shapiro-Wilk normality on all features and Cluster 0 proved to be 80% Rick, Cluster 1 was 80% Tom and Cluster 2 was 70% Harry. In other words X-Means correctly separated over 70% of each “Book”. This is a very good result for collections that have very similar distributions as the “core” of each book was correctly identified. Once the core is identified additional information (such as chapter sequence) and other methods can be employed to refine the result.
6. Proverbs and repetition

Robert Alter has called the book of Proverbs an “anthology of anthologies” (or a collection of collections)\(^3\)\(^3\), indeed, a brief glance at Proverbs demonstrates that the book is subdivided into sections with even conservative scholars recognizing multiple authorship as the following unit headings demonstrate:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proverbs by superscript or introductory heading</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proverbs of Solomon</td>
<td>1:1-9:18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Words of the Wise</td>
<td>22:17-24:22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Words of the Wise</td>
<td>24:23-34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proverbs of Solomon transcribed by Hezekiah’s scribes</td>
<td>25:1-29:27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Words of Agur</td>
<td>30:1-33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Words of Lemuel</td>
<td>31:1-31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The headings suggest that editorial activity was still ongoing as late as Hezekiah’s era (two hundred years after Solomon). We might ask who collected the sayings and try to identify the different authors. Does a difference in style denote different authors? The first nine chapters are set in the form of instructions from a father to a son but the next section (up to chapter 22) consists of one-line aphorisms that seem to have no social context, interrupted by the “words of the wise” (reverting to instructional format), followed by the “Hezekiah collection” (similar to the one-line aphorisms) with the anthology concluding with an acrostic poem on the virtuous woman (chp.31).

Of course, some may object that such investigations add little to our understanding of the book. Does it matter who wrote the sections, or compiled/edited the book? Individual proverbs contain universal truths and “pithy” sayings (maxims) by which one can direct life - such investigations are therefore (it is objected) purely speculative academic ventures which contribute little to our everyday understanding of the sayings. However, context should never be so easily dismissed as the provenance of particular proverbs explains how they should be applied or understood. Moreover, the idea that individual proverbs have no social or historical context and are simply eclectic folk sayings (a stitch in time saves nine) or have been copied from Egypt\(^3\)\(^4\) contradicts what we know about Scriptures. Wisdom literature,

\(^4\) The sayings of the wise (Proverbs 22:17–23:11) resemble the instructions of Amenemope.
such as the Psalms, is the result of the Psalmists life experiences and it is important to
determine whether the psalmist is David, or Hezekiah (or someone else) and to establish (as
far as is possible) the historical context. In the words of Proverbs: “It is the glory of God to
conceal a thing: but the honour of kings is to search out a matter” (25:2).

There are a number of techniques that can help us “search out the matter”. Some of these
methods were not available to bible students of a bygone era (such as stylometry) and
when combined with intertextual analysis this can lead to fresh insights into the text. This
article hopes to be a short introduction to a more extended treatment of Proverbs which
will appear later this year (DV) and therefore only preliminary findings are presented here,
with more work needed to flesh out the inter relationship between Proverbs and other
Wisdom Literature (Job, Psalms etc) and with the prophetic corpus, particularly Isaiah.

**Repetitions in Proverbs**

Even a casual reader of Proverbs cannot help but notice the number of times that certain
proverbs are repeated. Scholars have proposed various reasons for the repetitions; some
understand it as a remnant of poor editing (repetition is the “seam” between the original
subunits), others that iteration is the result of oral transmission, or that sayings were
repeated in order to establish a numerical scheme. However, the theory of imprecise or
sloppy editing, mostly held by the older critics, is (rightly) dismissed by modern scholars.
Recently Rendsburg (among others) emphasise the importance of repetition and variation

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35 Stylometry is the application of the study of linguistic style to written language. Stylometry is often used to attribute authorship to anonymous or disputed documents.
37 C. H. Toy, for example, claimed that repetition across subunits of the book demonstrates that the collectors of 10:1—22:16, 22:17—24:22, 24:23—34, and chaps. 25—29 were “not acquainted with the work of the others,” while some repetition within subunits may be scribal errors (Proverbs [ICC; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1899; repr. 1959; vii—viii); similarly, W. O. E. Oesterley claimed that the compiler of the book “failed to notice” the same sayings in the different collections and that nearly identical sayings in closely contiguous verses “must either be due to carelessness, or they may be the work of a later scribe who overlooked the fact that they had already been utilized” (The Book of Proverbs: New York: Dutton, 1929; xvii).
in poetry and prose in relation to performance response. The device of repetition (often with slight variations) aided “live” performances and enhanced audience participation (minor variations assist alertness). We can readily imagine a book like Song of Songs being “performed” by allocating readers different roles and perhaps it was read on a special occasion (i.e., a wedding). Scholars believe that the nature and function of the sapiential material is made clear only when it is explored within a performance context, that is, in a particular social or dialogical situation that creates a framework through which to identify the function and significance of the discourse. However, performance analysis is problematic in the book of Proverbs, as the material has been removed from its original context(s) of use and assembled into an anthology.

If the repetitions do not represent literary “seams” where units have been inexactly joined together, but rather a literary device to enhance performance, can repetition tell us anything about the compositional development of the book? It is certainly possible (as closer examination will substantiate) that repetition fulfils a dual function; enhancing performance response and providing textual coherence. If that is the case, then the use of repetition should tell us something about compositional history. Any provisional conclusions garnered on the hand of analysing repetitions can be further put to the test by subjecting the units to stylometric analysis and finally to intertextual analysis. If these three approaches reach similar conclusions we can be fairly certain that we are on the right track and we should know more about when Proverbs was written and why it was written.


Rendsburg supposedly coined the term “polyprosopon,” to describe the ways in which variations in repeated lines hold the attention of a listener (or reader) but Bullinger employed the term in 1898 to describe antimetathesis (or, dialogue) as a transference of speakers (polyprosopon) in W. Bullinger, Figures of Speech used in the Bible, explained and illustrated, (1898).

For example, A. Perry understands Job as a dramatization of the Assyrian crisis. In that case the book of Job would be “performed” by different readers and the particular social or dialogical situation that creates a framework through which to identify the function and significance of the discourse is reflection upon the near death experience of Hezekiah (and Judah) during that crisis. The discourse becomes a philosophical/parabolic treatment in which the theme of disinterested service (by Job/Hezekiah) is examined. Although threatened with death and unable to understand unmerited suffering Job (Hezekiah) continues in steadfast faith and belief in the covenant grace of Yahweh and in so doing exposes the false theological viewpoints of his day. A. Perry, Job (Willow Publications, 2011).

D. C. Snell aptly notes that ultimately the reasoning is circular: “if repetition stems from literary cleavage, then repetition remains the major indication that there is literary cleavage” Ibid, 11.
**Analysing Repetitions**

The classic study on Repetitions (mentioned earlier) is that of D.C. Snell, *Twice-Told Proverbs and the Composition of the Book of Proverbs*. Snell freely admits that his project has “failed” to explain repetitions; “Actually, I will fail at explaining repetition, but because repetition shows that sections of the book had in one way or another an affinity for each other, I will still be able to speculate in a more informed way than before about the way the book came together.” (p.9) Despite his admission, the work that Snell performs is important because he presents the data systematically dividing the repetitions into groups that consist of proverbs that are exactly the same except for spelling variations (6 sets), proverbs with one dissimilar word (6 sets), two dissimilar (11 sets), three dissimilar (9 sets) and four dissimilar words (10 sets).

Snell highlights the work of Israeli scholar Jehoshua Grintz who, rather than looking at repetitions, uses “expressions” (proverbial clichés) in order to posit a two stage composition of the book which can be represented graphically as follows:

![Diagram of the composition of the Book of Proverbs]

Grintz argues that A, B and C form the first edition with D and E (and possibly the remainder) forming the final edition in the time of Hezekiah. However, Snell disagrees with the methodology employed for identifying and selecting the “expressions” and remarks that affinity (between expressions) need not imply contemporaneity. Essentially Grintz contends that the present order of Proverbs reflects the historical order in which it was composed but this is difficult to maintain as the Septuagint presents a different order, suggesting that the final (canonical) form was still fluid when the LXX was translated in the third century:

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43 Jehoshua Grintz, *The Proverbs of Solomon* (translated title), Lešonenu 33:4 (1968) the original article is written in Modern Hebrew and has been translated by Snell as an appendix to his book.
The consensus view is that parts of the book were composed and joined in the following order (using the original titles from table 1):

1). 10:1-22:16 (B)
2). 22:17-24:22 (C)
3). 1-9 (A)
4). order unknown; 24:23-34(D); 25-29 (E); 30(F); 31(G).

This view understands B as the oldest collection because of its attribution to Solomon and one-line sayings which are a simpler structure. Chapters 1-9 were added later as a prologue, with some scholars believing that this occurred after the exile.

When critiquing the work of Grintz, Snell makes the important observation (p.7) that evidence of language similarities could derive from other circumstances than the text having a single compositor. This is important because it highlights the necessity for other techniques (such as stylometry) in order to determine whether or not similarities are superficial or systematic. Stylometry uses statistical methods to determine the probability that a text is written by a certain author. Every author leaves a “fingerprint” that cannot be easily mimicked (if at all). It is relatively easy to use similar words or copy phrases, but the way a person writes is very individualistic, particularly when it comes to function words. Function words are words that have little lexical meaning but serve to express grammatical relationships with other words within a sentence (e.g., “the”, “a” or “it”.....). This type of analysis has developed to such an extent that it can be employed forensically, to determine

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44 I have the propensity to overuse “the” and must always edit my own work to remove excess use of the article. Even so, I suspect that stylometric analysis would still show a higher than normal usage compared with other authors.
(for example) whether or not emails have been written by the same person (useful in counter terrorism).

Nevertheless, the analysis of repetition in Proverbs is a useful tool, at the very least for giving a first impression into how Proverbs was “put together. The data from Snell has been placed in a macro enabled spreadsheet – download the spreadsheet and use the interactive buttons to view the internal and cross-unit connections.
7. Proverbs and stylometry

*NIDOTTE* offers a helpful survey on the structure of Proverbs:45

“Accredited theological reflections on Proverbs depends on an accurate exegesis of every detail of isolated proverbs and, if they were deliberately arranged into meaningless-rich contexts of larger, unified blocks of proverbial material, on their literary contexts. If, however, the proverbs are only a random, haphazard accretion of isolated proverbs, then each is an entity in itself and has no other rich meaning gained from its surrounding literary context.

Historically, most commentators have occasionally noted groupings in the Proverbs literature of chs. 10-29, but for the most part the larger context created by such groupings has been ignored in the interpretation of the isolated proverb. Moreover, Gemser, Baruca, Aitken, Farmer, Bostrom, Hubbard, et al., although helpfully rearranging proverbs according to topics and offering insightful reflections upon them, unwittingly wrench them from their literary contexts. Recent research, however, demands a new approach both to exegeting the book and reflecting theologically on it.

In 1962 U. Skladny set the stage for most subsequent discussion regarding the question of the arrangement of the proverbs into contexts. Skladny, by using analyses of form, content, style, and by employing statistics to quantify his findings, further delineated smaller sub collections: A (=10-15), B (=16.1-22:16), C (=25-27) and D (=28-29). This analysis conformed in part with the obvious editorial notices of the book’s structure in 10:1; 22:17; 25:1, 30:1. McKane, R.B.Y. Scott, and C. Westermann deny there is a context in the defined literary units’ sentence literature. However, in 1968 H.J. Hermisson carried Skladny’s analysis a step further by trying to discern thematic and poetic unities in Collection A. In 1972 G.E. Bryce, by using certain methods of French structuralism, showed that Prov 25:2-27 constitutes a literary unit. In 1978 B. W. Kovacs found Collection B, which he begins in 15:28, as the embodiment of a consistent worldview. In 1979 R. N., Whybray showed that an editor deliberately chose the place of the Yahweh sayings in 10:1-22:16. In 1984 R.C. Van Leeuwen, by structuralism, poetics, and semantics, convincingly demonstrated that the proverbs in Collection C are arranged into larger literary compositions. In 1985 B. V. Malchow proposed that Collection D is an intricately arranged collection serving as “A Manual for Future Monarchs”. The recent commentaries by Plöger, Meinhold, and Garret have attempted to interpret individual proverbs within larger literary units. Meinhold succeeds best in this enterprise. In 1987 S.C. Perry confirmed the work of Böptrom (1928) that paromomesic (word play sounds) bonds structure in the Proverbs”.

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Interestingly, Waltke mentions the statistical work done by Sklandy. The following plot achieves a similar result by employing the groupings identified by Sklandy in a supervised LDA analysis on a POS tag dataset. This operates as a “double blind test” in that it (probably) differs with regards to both data and methodology. Encouragingly, the results were classified as 100% correct by (PAST) LDA, shown below (large plot) with 68% ellipses:

Comparison of Sklandy and LDA classification methods against the biblical units:

Note that the LDA graph above uses 68% ellipses and that the group with only two chapters (Proverbs 28 and 29) shows no ellipse as two data points makes it impossible to calculate within group covariance (only averages). Note also that at 68% ellipses Proverbs chapter 19 is on the border of group A (but not at 95% ellipses). The same data can also be displayed using hierarchical clustering:
• Unweighted pair-group average (UPGMA). Clusters are joined based on the average distance between all members in the two groups.

• Stratigraphically constrained clustering: This option will allow only adjacent rows or groups of rows to be joined during the agglomerative clustering procedure. May produce strange-looking (but correct) dendrograms.

Sklandy delineated smaller sub collections: A (=10-15), B (=16.1-22:16), C (=25-27) and D (=28-29) the same found by LDA. Hierarchical clustering arranges the clusters somewhat differently with overlap occurring at the ends and beginnings of collections. Overall this is a very satisfactory result as a comparative exercise (with Sklandy’s result), yet it demonstrates how difficult it is to separate the groups – at the 95% probability level all the groups overlap indicating considerable stylistic homogeneity.

The clusters discovered by Sklandy are sub-clusters and these could undergo further clustering to the point of irrelevancy if one so wished to make the results meaningless (i.e., 31 clusters with each chapter in its own cluster). It is obvious that even within clusters differences can be found probably because each collection was a cooperative work with more than one scribe writing, copying etc which was then assembled and underwent a final edit at the end and perhaps further redaction after the exile. While acknowledging the work done by Sklandy the remainder of this analysis will divide Proverbs along the normal biblical collection titles, mainly to avoid confusion but also because it is good practice to follow biblical structural indicators. The within group similarities far outweigh between group differences. A caveat is necessary at this point. Proverbs 22 belongs to both the Solomon 2 sayings and the sayings of the wise. Most biblical software only produces statistical data on complete units (chapters) – all the data on Prov 22 would need to be collected and catalogue manually which is extremely time consuming. Prov 22 is therefore usually (but
not always) counted as part of the larger Solomon 2 group as it will not influence the statistics of the larger group as much. Sometimes the data from the WB (Wisdom Book sayings; 22.16-24.34) is left out altogether at other times it is counted as part of the WB group in order to depict results graphically. On the whole it does not seem to skew the results over much when 22 is counted as belonging to Solomon 2. However, when the WB is graphically displayed as a group (22-24) chapter 22 and 24 lie fairly close together with 23 being somewhat of an outlier thereby creating a large elliptical probability area. This is the opposite of what we would intuit as we would expect 23 and 24 to lie closer together with the mixed 22 as the outlier.

Seven variables were retained from the Hebrew Function Words dataset although the MSA (or KMO value) was “miserable” (0.54), factor loadings were good on four of the variables (on the first axis), with two of the remaining variables loading reasonably on axis 2 as the TANGARA correlation circle demonstrates:

The data was 87.1% correctly classified using LDA (PAST software) on the Hebrew Function Words data set all collections (main plot).

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46 The retained (Hebrew) variables after PCA: (for/because), all, if, (no/not), (in/among), dom, (also/too). The Analysis was performed only on Proverbs (not on the whole OT) and Proverbs was divided according to the seven group headings Pr_s1 [Proverbs of Solomon 1]=(1-9), Pr_s2=(10-22.16), WB1 [Wisdom Book 1]=(22.17-24.22), WB2=(24.23-34), Pr_hez [Hezekiah Collection]=(25-29), Pr_a1 [Proverbs Appendices 1]=(30), Pr_a2=(31).
The above LDA graph of Hebrew Function Words (68% ellipses) distinguishes distinct groups, at 95% ellipses there is considerable overlap on this dataset, with WB1 (22.17-24.22) firmly in Solomon 1 (1-9) and WB2 (24.23-34) lying outside any of the ellipse boundaries. Hierarchical clustering employing the Gower algorithm on the same dataset has WB1 (and Proverbs 30) clustering with many of the chapters in Solomon 1 (Proverbs 1,2,3,4 and 6) and WB2 with Solomon 2 which is itself divided into 3 sub-clusters but notably the closest units to WB2 in the mini sub-cluster is; 9, 25, 22.1-16 – Proverbs 9 is the end of the Solomon 1 collection with Proverbs 22.1-16 forming the termination of the Solomon 2 collection and Proverbs 25 the commencement of the Hezekiah collection. Is this evidence of the same hand working on the “seams” of the collections?
Despite considerable overlap, it is encouraging that separate “groups” can be determined based on the headings as designated by the authors of Proverbs. At this early stage we safely conclude that we are dealing with a collection that was written /edited by more than one author. Note that the plot that excludes the WB and Appendices flips the Hezekiah Collection vertically almost mirroring the position of the previous plot in the opposite quadrant (that is because there are less points from which to calculate between group difference i.e., no WB or appendices interfering); this produces an even higher classification (92.59% inset plot) – however, the three remaining groups maintain the same relative positions. Classifying “correctly” means that the chapter is closest (Mahalanbois distance) to the class (or group) to which it was originally assigned. So, for example, if we designated chapter 4 as belonging to group \( Pr_{s1} \) (Proverbs of Solomon chapters 1-9) and LDA placed chapter 4 as being closest to the centroid of group \( Pr_{s1} \) then chapter 4 would be 100% correctly classified. A classification of 87.1% correct means that 27 of the 31 “chapters” were originally assigned to the correct group and 92.59% means that 25 out of a total of 27 chapters were classified correctly. Also consider that we are expressing a “probability” that a “chapter” belongs in this or that cluster and that the clusters sometimes overlap. This approach is known as “Supervised Learning” because chapters are consigned to apriori groups. The maximized dataset for classifying Proverbs according to their biblical group ascriptions proved to be a % POS tags dataset, which yielded 100% correct on only five features:

![Graph showing classification of Proverbs chapters](image)

Proverbs Pos tags (PAST/LDA) 5 variables 100% correct

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47 The five features (variables) were \((Pd), (P@x), (a), (v?q), (v?P)\). NOTE: We have designated \( P@X \) in place of \( @x \) for the Morphological code used by Bible Works 5 WTM version (Westminster Hebrew OT Morphology). The Pos tag \( @x \) (our \( P@x \)) specifies a “paragraph marker” in the text either \( \approx \) is used indicating opening, closing etc. In English, indentation will mark the paragraph, but there is no way to group major and minor thoughts of paragraphs (unless further indentation occurs, of course, such as sub-bullet statements). The Masoretic scholars however recorded the paragraphs of text with respect to their spacing. The closer formatting of paragraphs one to another had connected (or “closed” the thoughts together); or, on the other hand, had...
Below is a scatter plot (using Excel) of the % participle adverbs \( (Pd=\text{red line}) \) and the adverbs \( (a=\text{blue line}) \) which demonstrates visually the difference between the collections (vertical dashed lines):

Proverbs % participle adverbs (Pd) and adverbs (a) per chapter plotted in Excel

"opened" (or separated the thoughts apart). On this see Yeivin, Israel (1980), *Introduction to the Tiberian Masorah*, (trans. and ed., by EJ. Revell, Saarbrücken: Scholars Press, 40-41). In this respect, readers of the Hebrew Bible can "clump together" the major paragraphs of a book. So, for example, in the Song of Solomon, the first paragraph of the text (1:1 - 1:4) is the major paragraph with all subsequent paragraphs in the book "closed" with the first paragraph --- and so the book is one big thought. However, in 8:11 there is a major paragraph break, and so the reader stops and reads the remainder of the book (8:11-8:14) as a separate thought, or coda, to the book. The paragraph marker \( (P\@x) \) functions as a good separator on the different three –dimensional PCA axis’s and if does indeed indicate original spacing etc, it could be useful but how far back (old) is the practice? Operating on the safe-side it was decided to omit the marker in future datasets.
The same can be done with the % Nominal-Finite verb Ratios in Proverbs:\(^{48}\)

**Blue=Average Sol 2 (10-22), Grey = Average Hez (25-29), Green= Average Sol1 (1-9)**

The blue Horizontal line represents the mean result of **Pr_hez** (Hezekiah Collection = 25-29) which has an NF of 0.49% and NV of 0.66%. The grey horizontal line represents the mean of **Pr_s2** (Solomon 2 = 10-22.16) with an NF of 0.46% and NV of 0.70%. The bottom green horizontal line represents the mean of group **Pr_s1** (Solomon 1 =1-9) with an NF of 0.27% and NV of 0.63%.

A few interesting results should be noted here;

- **WB2** (= 24.23-34) mean 0.24%NF, 0.63%NV has virtually the same NF/NV percentage as chapter one (0.24%NF, 0.63%NV) in **Pr_s1** (Solomon 1) at as does **Pr_a1** (Appendices 1 =30) at 0.27% NF, 0.67%NV.
- **Pr_s2** (Solomon 2 =10-22.16) and group **Pr_hez** (Hezekiah =25-29) are very similar (blue and grey mean lines)
- **Pr_s1** (Solomon 1= 1-9) is distinctly lower (mean 0.27%NF, 0.63%NV) than the other groups (green line)

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The distribution of the Yahweh name also demonstrates that we are dealing with different (but related) collections:

The average for Proverbs is 0.74%
**Hezekiah as Solomon redivivus?**

In his paper “Who were the men of Hezekiah?” Michael Carasik<sup>49</sup> produces some interesting observations. His work focused on the Hebrew verb *hiskil*; “The most basic clue that links Hezekiah with Solomon-like wisdom is the verb *hiskil*, “to be prosperous, successful, intelligent.” It seems that the author(s) of Kings and the royal Chronicles wanted to portray Hezekiah as the “New Solomon” and Carasik also suggests that 2 Kgs 19.3 (uttered by Hezekiah) is in the form of a proverbial saying. Carasik inter-textually links a number of sayings in the “Hezekiah Collection” (25-29) with the Assyrian crisis.<sup>50</sup> However, despite his important discoveries and new evidence his conclusion is ambivalent; “I conclude, therefore, that the citation of the “men of Hezekiah” in Prov. 25:1 could just as well be exegetical as it could historical. If this conclusion is sound, the court of Hezekiah can no longer be considered the first, fixed point in the transmission of wisdom literature.”<sup>51</sup> His reluctance to credit Hezekiah despite the evidence is rather strange.

Another two independent studies by David Bostock<sup>52</sup> and John W. Olley<sup>53</sup> have focused on faith and “trust” in relation to Hezekiah. Olley, for example, notes the unusual concentration of the root for trust in 2 Kgs: 18-19 and Isa. 36-37 and continues with a survey of the references in these chapters. Olley then surveys the use in the books of Isaiah, Psalms, Proverbs, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and the Twelve.

Following the lead of Carasik *et. al* the distribution of the Hebrew root words for “sekel” (wise) and “batach” (trust) in Kings, Chronicles, Isaiah and Proverbs were plotted as % per chapter. In order to compact the plot, zero reference chapters were omitted. Of course these words have various translations in the English (prudent, understanding/secured, safely etc). It can be observed that *sekel* does not occur in Isaiah and Kings but does occur in Chronicles and Proverbs. On the other hand *batach* occurs in Isaiah, Kings and Proverbs but not in Chronicles with the exception of chapter 32.

<sup>49</sup> Carasik, Michael, ”Who Were the “Men of Hezekiah (Proverbs XXV 1)”? (1994). Departmental Papers (Jewish Studies). 16. [http://repository.upenn.edu/jewishstudies_papers/16](http://repository.upenn.edu/jewishstudies_papers/16)

<sup>50</sup> The inter-textual links suggested by Carasik between proverbial sayings and Hezekiah will be examined in the exegetical section of chapters 25-29.

<sup>51</sup> Michael Carasik cites Brueggemann (see footnote 15): “This may be termed a “post-critical” acceptance of the Solomonic wisdom tradition. The current “pre-critical/critical” acceptance of Hezekiah’s role in the transmission of wisdom literature may have to be salvaged by a similar reading.”

<sup>52</sup> Bostock, David (2003) The theme of faith in the Hezekiah narratives, Durham theses, Durham University. Available at Durham E-Theses Online: [http://etheses.dur.ac.uk/4075/](http://etheses.dur.ac.uk/4075/)

<sup>53</sup> John W. Olley, “‘Trust in the Lord’: Hezekiah, Kings and Isaiah,” TB 50 (1999): 59-77
Distribution of the Heb., root "sekel" (wise) and "batach" (trust) in Kings, Chronicles, Isaiah and Proverbs

The situation is clarified with hierarchical clustering employing Euclidean distance (paired group UPGMA) also including Proverbs chapters with zero mentions:

Hierarchical clustering using "sekel" (wise)

It can be clearly seen that the Chronicler wishes to establish a link between the Sons of Asaph (men of Hezekiah), Solomon and Hezekiah himself as custodians of sekel. All the
references to *sekel* occur in the Solomon 2 Collection (10-22) and even in the WB chapter 23 the Solomon Collection (1-9) has no references with the exception of Chapter 3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapters</th>
<th>Hits</th>
<th>Totals</th>
<th>% sekel (wise)</th>
<th>Collection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10 to 22</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>3528</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>Solomon 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.17 to 24.34</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>856</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>WB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 to 9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2412</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>Solomon 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 to 31</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>677</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Appendices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 to 29</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1403</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Hezekiah</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hierarchical clustering using “batach” (trust)

In this case although it is predominately the author of Kings (followed by parallel accounts in Isaiah) that wishes to associate Hezekiah with Solomon through use of *batach*, even the Chronicler participates by using the term in 2 Chron 32. The use of *batach* in 1 Chron 5 is indirectly linked with Hezekiah who courted the northern tribe of Manasseh; implying that their failure to repel the Assyrians was due to the lack of the kind of trust (*batach*) in Yahweh that they had once displayed in the past (which Hezekiah was now demonstrating). In Proverbs, the Hezekiah collection has the highest % *batach* followed by Solomon 1, Appendices, Solomon 2, with the WB having no occurrences of the term. If we drill down it is only chapter 31 of the Appendices that uses the term (1 count in 287 Pos tags) hence 0.35% *batach* (marking this as the second highest).

54 Totals can be considered “words” per chapter but actually they are POS tags (Parts of Speech) i.e., the Hebrew deconstructed into its simplest morphological units...statistics using BibleWorks5 in WTM mode (Westminster Hebrew OT Morphology).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapters</th>
<th>Hits</th>
<th>Totals</th>
<th>% <em>batach</em> (trust)</th>
<th>Collection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>25 to 29</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1403</td>
<td>0.43</td>
<td>Hezekiah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 to 9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2412</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>Solomon 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 to 31</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>677</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>Appendices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 to 22</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3528</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>Solomon 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.17 to 24.34</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>856</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>WB</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Occurs only in chapter 31 (therefore only 0.35% *batach* if chapter 31 is counted as a separate appendicle).*
8. Comparative stylometric analysis of 7th century literature

In the above section Waltke observed the following which is repeated once again here as it is of the utmost importance:

“Accredited theological reflections on Proverbs depends on an accurate exegesis of every detail of isolated proverbs and, if they were deliberately arranged into meaningless-rich contexts of larger, unified blocks of proverbial material, on their literary contexts. If, however, the proverbs are only a random, haphazard accretion of isolated proverbs, then each is an entity in itself and has no other rich meaning gained from its surrounding literary context”.

This commentary rejects the notion that the proverbs are a collection composed of a random, haphazard accretion of isolated sayings. The proverbs can only be understood within their chapter context and more importantly (and largely neglected) within the wider context of biblical wisdom literature and poetry such as Qoheleth (Ecclesiastes), Job, Canticles (Song of Songs) and the Psalms set against the background of the pre-exilic prophets. Stylometrics and inter-textual exegesis will be employed that demonstrate that the socio-historical origins of much of the wisdom literature (including Proverbs) is pre-exilic, namely in the eighth century (800-701 BC) during which time Assyrian power reached its zenith.

8.1 Supervised 1 to 1 (LDA) reduced dataset (PCA)

This was conducted with a PCA reduced dataset 56 which was optimized across the range of prophetic and wisdom books and therefore not calibrated for any specific case but rather created in order to standardize comparisons over the complete range. The dataset was employed to perform 1 to 1 LDA, for example, Hosea against the “Hezekiah Collection” (Proverbs 25-29), which produced 100% classification.

56 Selected features were (v?p),FV,(v?P),NV,NF RATIO,(a),87.32% cumulative on the 3rd axis, MSA (0.61). (v?p)= Verb any stem perfect, FV= Finite Verbs,(v?P)= Verb any stem Participle, NV = Noun Verb ratio, NF= Nominal-Finite ratio, (a)=adjectives
This means that Hosea and Proverbs 1-9 completely separated (on this dataset) and have no affinity. A matrix was produced for where each LDA analysis is recorded, so in this case Pro(hez) has 0% affinity with Hosea. The Psalms were grouped according to their ascriptions:

- **Ps** = unattributed psalms (50)
- **PsA** = Psalms of Asaph (12)
- **PsD** = Psalms of David (73)
- **PsK** = Psalms of Korah (13)

**Proverbs was grouped as follows:**
- **Pro(s1)** = Proverbs Solomon 1 (=1-9)
- **Pro(s2)** = Proverbs Solomon 2 (=10-22)
- **Pro(hez)** = Hezekiah Collection (=25-29)

**Isaiah was grouped in accordance with the tripartite division:**
- **IsaA** (= 1-39)
- **IsaB** (= 40-55)
- **IsaC** (= 56-66)

Example IsaA and the Psalms; Classification travels in both directions with some psalm chapters classifying as IsaA and some IsaA chapters classifying as Psalms - these are not the same chapters. As the group dynamic changes with LDA adding or removing chapters then the chapters are consigned to the group that they are most likely to fit - so some Psalms will move to IsaA and some IsaA chapters will move to the Psalms cluster. The matrix results for IsaA and the psalms are as follows: 10.3% IsaA classifies as a psalm but 10.7% PsD classifies as IsaA (and 7.7% PsK, 8.3% PsA, 14% Ps). The psalm groups have the following totals: Ps = 50, PsA = 12, PsD = 75, PsK = 13.

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Note: 40 unattributed psalms and 10 Psalms of Degrees (Ascent) unattributed = 50 psalms total. Psalms of David include the 2 Solomon Psalms (when they are separated by LDA; 73+2=75). *Ps 88 names both the sons of Korah and Heman the Ezrahite as authors giving a total of 13 Korah psalms. Ethan/Moses psalms included in Korah totals (when separated by LDA; 13+2=15). Deg = 15 Songs of Degrees (Ascent), 10 unattributed, 4 Davidic, 1 Solomon
Seventeen Psalms in total classified as belonging to the Isa A cluster. But now some of IsaA also classifies as belonging to the Psalm cluster, IsaA has 39 chapter (1-39) therefore four IsaA chapters (10.3%*0.39=4.017) classified as clustering with the Psalms.

Matrix of (1 to 1) LDA analyses expressed as % horizontal book that share affinity with vertical book.

Isaiah A demonstrates a 33.3% stylistic affinity with IsaC and 15.4% similarity with Proverbs (1-9) notable is the high correspondence with Micah (38.5 %) and Amos (41%).

Isaiah B has 25% affinity (style wise) with the Psalms (as a group of 150 psalms=25%) notable is the high concordance between IsaB with Hosea (33.3%) and Job (33.3%) and Micah (26.7%). IsaB shares little in common with IsaA or IsaC. Although it was suspected that the same chapters of IsaB were being re-classified as either Hos/Job this turned out not to be case: Isa 40, 44, 46, 48, 55 (classified as Hos) and Isa 41, 42, 43, 47, 55 (classified as Job). IsaB demonstrates 12.5% congruity with Proverbs 1-9

Isaiah C is compatible at 36.4% with IsaA and shows the highest compatibility with the Psalms (as a group=36.4%) with Micah (25%) and with Hosea (40%) are the largest style contributors to IsaC. IsaC demonstrates a lower (9.1%) congruity with Proverbs 1-9. All the
Isaiah collections contribute to Proverbs 1-9 in the range of (9-15%) none of them contribute to Proverbs 10-22 or Proverbs 25-29. Most remarkable is the similarity between Amos and IsaA and Hosea and IsaC. Both IsaA and IsaB share affinity with the wisdom literature but the style sharing is marginal with the exception of IsaB (Isa ch. 40-55) and Job. (IsaB focuses on the suffering servant).

The Psalms demonstrated a significant internal transfer between the various groups identified by their ascriptions (highlighted yellow with dots). They proved difficult to separate (Em Clustering finds only two clusters!) suggesting similarity and style smoothing between the psalms. However, unattributed Psalms (Ps) could belong to any group and Davidic Psalms (PsD) could be denoting a genre rather than a claim to authorship. Psalm 88 (for example) names both the sons of Korah and Heman the Ezrahite so it is quite possible that some psalms are a "cross-over" (style wise) between groups (this assumes that the ascriptions are meaningful).

When the Psalms are tested as a complete group (150) against a single book or collection the following pattern emerges with the percentages indicating the amount of Psalms "re-classified" as the other group (therefore 42.9% of the psalms were classified as belonging to the Micah cluster): 42.9% (Mic), 36.4% (IsaC,) 28.6%, (Hos), 25% (IsaB) 16.7% (Job/Ecc), 12.5% (Songs),10.3% (IsaA), 8.3% (Pro 10-22).

Proverbs 1-9 demonstrates the closest style compatibility with itself and therefore has 0% affinity with the Psalms (as a whole group), however, that does not convey the complete picture as 24% of the psalms classify with Proverbs 1-9 indicating that those Psalms share closer consonance with Proverbs 1-9 than with the remaining psalms. The percentage of psalms (total) classifying as either Proverbs 10-22 or Proverbs 25-29 is lower (ca. 7 -9%)

Proverbs internal transference can be observed (orange cells) with 20% of Hezekiah (25-29) clustering with Solomon 2 (10-22). On the other hand Proverbs 1-9 shows little affinity with the other two proverb collections. It seems then that the first collection does not share style with the other two, but the other two collections do share style with each other.

Note that Proverbs 1-9 shows style compatibility with all the northern prophets and wisdom literature (except Songs) and particularly with IsaC (33.3%). This is markedly different from the other two proverb collections who do not share style with northern prophets or wisdom literature.

However, to complete the picture we must look at transference in the other direction where we see the northern prophets preferring to cluster with Proverbs 1-9 at significant levels (with the exception of Hosea) and also note correspondence with the wisdom literature Job (23.8%) and Qoheleth (25%). We have virtually no exchange from the northern-prophets and wisdom writings to the second proverbs collection (10-22) although 20% of Job and 7.1% Hosea clusters with the Hezekiah collection (25-29).
The possibility exists that the reduced dataset is distorting the results because it has not been optimized for specific cases. For example IsaA has a 41% affinity with Amos which is very high (and in the other direction 55.6% Amos classifies as Isaiah). It is probable that one specific feature in this small (reduced) dataset shares a strong commonality with both Isaiah and Amos and is therefore exaggerating and skewing results that in a larger dataset would otherwise not exert such an influence. Nevertheless, it should be regarded as an indicator of affinity at some basic level. The next section will supplement the reduced dataset with other datasets (Key words etc).
1 to 1 Classification occurs in both directions
8.2 Supervised multiple group (LDA) reduced dataset (PCA) supplemented

Isaiah: One of the main historical co-texts pertaining to Judah from this era is the book of Isaiah. However, the book of Isaiah is given a tripartite division by the critics with some portions thought to be written during or after the exile. The tripartite approach is two pronged as it is based on stylistic and historical grounds. This commentary rejects the historical basis for the theory which is largely based on the Cyrus prophecy concerning the rebuilding of Jerusalem furthermore, stylistic arguments alone (without further inter-textual confirmation) are meaningless as textual smoothing and updating can account for linguistic discrepancies. Nevertheless, the dataset for Isaiah was split into the three parts identified by critical theory using “typical” chapters from Isaiah A, B and C (determined by clustering algorithms) and then plotted against the Proverbs collection with the post-exilic Nehemiah used as a “late” benchmark. A combination of the PoS tags and synonym data sets was employed after determining the best features by PCA. The classification achieved by LDA was 86.96% (a very good fit) and the plot shows 68% ellipses:

The first observation is that Nehemiah (a post-exilic book) lies completely separate in its own quadrant of the graph. The second observation is that Isaiah A, B and C completely overlap (even at 68% ellipses) demonstrating a large degree of homogeneity. The third observation is that Pr_s1 (Prov 1-9) also overlaps with all the Isaiah groups and the fourth observation is that the rest of the Proverbs collection is largely separate in its own hemisphere of the graph. Also note that Proverbs chs. 30 and 31 are almost dead centre of

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Proverbs (Pr_s1, Pr_s2, Pr_hez & Prov 23, 30, 31 ungrouped), Isaiah (A, B, C) and Nehemiah PoS tags and synonyms dataset 86.96% classified 68% ellipses

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58 See the chapter, Hezekiah as the anointed in Isaiah 45
the complete Isaiah groupings. A classification of 86.96% is very good – the misclassifications are for the most part internal (i.e. between Isaiah A, B, C or between the proverbs collections), Proverbs 30 and 31 cluster in the Isaiah group and Proverbs 24 (representing WB1) in the Solomon 1(=1-9) collection.

Proverbs and the Northern Prophets: Next we classify Proverbs (minus the WB 22.16-24.34) against the “Northern Prophets” Hosea, Amos and Micah. Although none of the books is completely “homogenous” distortion from within book variation can be ignored. The data is classified 84.48% in the assigned group by LDA which is a very good fit. Two graphs were produced, the first showing the 68% ellipsis and the second the 95% probability area:

Hosea, Micah, Amos and Proverbs (Pr_s1, Pr_s2, Pr_hez) Pos tags and Keywords with 68% Ellipses
Hosea, Micah, Amos and Proverbs (Pr_s1, Pr_s2, Pr_hez) with 95% Ellipses

We observe that the three prophetic books lie almost completely on top of one another. This is to be expected as Hosea, Micah and Amos come from the same region from about the same time period. At 68% probability Pr_s1 (1-9) is completely distinct but when the ellipses increases to 95% Pr_s1 captures most of the "northern prophets" but also part of the "Hezekiah" collection (Pr_hez = 25-29) and Solomon 2 (Pr_s2 = 10-22). The conclusion (so far) is that Pr_s1 (1-9), is stylistically similar to the "northern prophets" and Isaiah but it also captures part of the "much later" Hezekiah and Solomon2 collections. It is certainly beginning to look like all these texts were shaped in a similar environment.

**Proverbs, Qoheleth and Canticles:** Our next foray will compare Qoheleth (Ecclesiastes) and Canticles (Song of Songs) with Proverbs. The data set employed achieves a 97.83% classification (the highest yet) at 68% ellipses:

We note that the Songs and Qoheleth clusters fall virtually on top of one another. Only chapter 23 from the WB has been included. Proverbs 23 is classified as Solomon 1 with Proverbs 30 placed in Qoheleth and 31 placed in Canticles (Songs). Neighbour Joining Clustering on the same data:

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59 The statistics software from Bible Works 5 gives the results per chapter, however, as the WB ascriptions do not follow the chapter structures this causes distortions and a large cluster spread. Proverbs 23 represents the middle of WB1 (22.17-24.22) omitting the introduction to the WB and omitting chapter 24 including the prologue (WB2=24.17-34). Chapter results for Proverbs 22-24 (as complete chapters) are also recorded and plotted (as WB) in the excel work book.
Canticles (Songs of Sol), Qoheleth and Proverbs (Pr_s1, Pr_s2, Pr_hez & Prov 23, 30, 31) with PAST Neighbour Joining Clustering

- Pro 1-5, 9 (= Solomon 1) & Pro 30 clustering as a sub-cluster with Can/Qoh, Pro 31 & Pro 7
- Solomon 2 And Hezekiah clustering with Pro 6&8

**Proverbs and Job**: Now we turn to the book of Job which is treated canonically even though it is not stylistically homogenous (for example the introduction and prologue of Job differ from the main body). However, whether Job is deconstructed into constituents using clustering algorithms or processed as a book the LDA results are very similar (as with Isaiah A, B, C).
LDA clusters Pro 23 and Pro 31 with Job, and Pro 30 with Solomon 1. Neighbourhood Joining Clustering makes the affinity between Job and Proverbs clearer, note particularly how the prologue and epilogue of Job (1, 42) joins with Proverbs chapters 5 and 30. However, X-means clustering (anon) will demonstrate that the framework of Job has an even stronger affinity with Isaiah 36-39 and therefore when given the choice will prefer to cluster with that section of Isaiah rather than Proverbs. Therefore the results are relative and not absolute in that they depend on the chosen dataset (and hence the available options).

**Psalms:** For the next LDA analysis the book of Psalms has been split into three small groups of psalms consisting of the northern psalms identified by Rendsburg (IH)\(^6^0\), Korah Psalms (PsK), Asaph Psalms (PsA) and compared with Proverbs. The classification is a reasonable 74.6% correctly classified.

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\(^6^0\) The Rendsburg group of northern Psalms (IH) already contains a few Korah and Asaph Psalms and is therefore is not truly independent of the PsK and PsA groups. Northern Psalms according to Rendsburg: Pss 9-10, 16, 29, 36, 45, 53, 58, 74, 116, 132, 133, 140, 141, as well as the Korah and Asaph collections. Gary A. Rendsburg, A Comprehensive guide to Israelian Hebrew: Grammar and Lexicon (Cornell University Vol. XXXVIII 2003), 8
The three psalm groups show considerable homogeneity (they all overlap) this could be partially due to our sample choice but independent clustering experiments also suggests uniformity. It is notable that the psalm groups all overlap with the Hezekiah collection (25-29) but they also display stylistic affinity with Solomon1 (=1-9) as Neighbour Joining Clustering demonstrates:
8.3 Unsupervised multiple group (X-Means) full dataset re-processed (LDA/MDS)

Before reaching any conclusions and to limit distortions the full POS tags dataset was tested by pre-processing with X-Means and then re-processing with LDA or non-linear MDS. The X-Means is unsupervised in the sense that no groups or “books” are designated in advance but the result will depend on the initial cluster setting. If we instruct X-Means to find 3 clusters it will find 3 clusters. For example, we instructed X-Means to find 3 clusters in the book of Isaiah and it found 3 clusters but they are not the same clusters as the tripartite designation. Both the tripartite division discovered by scholarship and the X-Means clusters all produced roughly a 100% on classification with LDA. The tripartite division has the distinct advantage of representing sequential blocks of chapters. Below is a comparison of the Tripartite division (IsaA, IsaB, IsaC) with K=4 determined by X-Means and a Hybrid fusion of A (from K=3).

What is notable from all these plots is the extent of homogeneity...it is difficult to cluster separate groups and given the choice most clustering detection software will see Isaiah as one (or possibly two) clusters. However, a visual assessment of the MDS plots below finds what looks like two clusters on the “fringes” of the centre and they turn out to be Isaiah B and part of Isaiah A. So, Isaiah A seems to split into two components, but not along nice “block” lines (although mini sub-clusters are detectable) and Isaiah B appears to be stable.

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61 Hybrid of Tripartite and group A from X-Means (K=3) adjusted for sequential “blocks” e.g., IsaA1=(6-9)+(20-24)+(36-39)//IsaA2 =(1-5)+(10-19)+(25-35)//IsaB (40-55) [unchanged]///IsaC(55-66)[unchanged].
Tripartite “Block” designation Non-metric MDS (Euclidean 2D). Red=IsaA, Blue=IsaB, Yellow=IsaC

Tripartite Shepard plot stress= 0.2224

X-Means (K=4) Non-metric MDS (Euclidean 2D), stress also 0.224. Black = mostly IsaA, Brown = IsaB, Orange =IsaA, Green= mix A, B, C

Hybrid Non-metric MDS (Euclidean 2D), stress also 0.224. Orange=IsaA1, Red=IsaA2, Blue=IsaB, Yellow=IsaC

The Shapiro-Wilk normality test on the various clustering assignments:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of cluster</th>
<th>Weighted Pass Rate&lt;sup&gt;62&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>X-Means K=2</td>
<td>14.6</td>
<td>First cluster mainly IsaA some C, Second cluster a mixture of A, B and some C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X-Means K=3</td>
<td>18.6</td>
<td>The core of two clusters is A the core of the third is B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X-Means K=4</td>
<td>19.5</td>
<td>The fourth cluster is a mix of all three (fragmentation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tripartite</td>
<td>17.8</td>
<td>Distinct sequential blocks that follow on.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hybrid</td>
<td>19.9</td>
<td>IsaA split into two (A1 and A2) with each containing “block” subdivisions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>62</sup> Weighted for number of chapters in each cluster (group).
From this we can conclude that IsaB remains fairly stable and IsaC wants to mix with all the other clusters. IsaA has the propensity to split itself into two. We might add that the dataset demonstrates enormous internal cohesion (similarity) and that is why it is so difficult to cluster. The Shapiro-Wilk test indicates that the Hybrid assignment gives the highest score on feature normality. However, a random test conducted on a complete feature column indicates that it will more often than not produce a positive. The fact is that the more data points that we have on a feature (especially if the chapter styles are similar) the more likely they will merge to produce a normal result (a single distribution). However, if we split the features into four distinct clusters (such as K=4 or the Hybrid) we would expect less positives (as long as the sample size is not too small). Therefore Shapiro-Wilk is probably indicating that 4 clusters is a more likely scenario than 3 clusters.

Many of the sub-units in our “Hybrid” scheme are complete units in themselves. A good example is chapters 6-9 which commences with the commissioning of Isaiah with a "throne room" scene and then continues with the Immanuel prophecy and warnings about the Syro-Ephraimites war and the coming threat of Assyria. This can obviously be placed during the reign of Ahaz and by rights we would expect this unit to form the start of the book of Isaiah, however, the start of the book is chapters 1-5.

The commencement of Isaiah’s mission began during the reign of Uzziah and chpt 6 (timed with the death of Uzziah) demonstrates that Uzziah was co-regent during the reigns of Jotham and Ahaz and probably lived to see the birth of his great grandson Hezekiah (of the Immanuel prophecy) chapter 1 refers to leprosy (the whole head sick) where Uzziah becomes a metaphor for the nation and the reference to vineyards a play on Uzziah's love of viticulture.

It makes sense that a number of “sub-units” were written over a period of time for specific purposes and then later such sub-units were joined together. Variation in style may simply reflect writer maturity but we must not forget the influence of a significant influx of northern refugees and prophets who joined the Royal court of Hezekiah. While some internal variation is detectable it is not enough to posit that parts of Isaiah are post-exilic although we do not discount later smoothing.

The dataset consisted of the full Pos Tag set for 8 books (Job, Isaiah, Qoheleth, Canticles, Proverbs, Hosea, Amos, Micah) containing a total of 189 chapters (29 features) looking for 8 clusters with X-Means (k=8). X-Means looks for clusters and only operates on the feature columns (in that sense it is unbiased and unsupervised). It is akin to not splitting the books (e.g., disregarding book designations). The results were sorted afterwards into groups to see if patterns emerged.
We started the X-Means clustering at K=8 (eight books) and gradually reduced to K=4. From K=8 to K=6 the algorithm kept producing a cluster containing 1 single chapter (Proverbs 4) so these clustering attempts were discarded. The choice remained between K=5 and K=4 and it was decided to employ K=4 in order to force similar writings to cluster together. Our aim is not separation but comparison. The way that the data clusters tells us something about the way the data is structured and inter-related. Eight books do not cluster properly in the range of 6-8 clusters. Given the choice between 2 clusters and anything up to a maximum of 5 clusters the data will cluster into two groups. This tells us that the data is very similar. However, we want to force the data to cluster giving the data a chance to cluster with data that it is MOST similar with. That leaves us a choice of between 3-5 clusters (for eight books). We chose 4 clusters (setting: Min=4 & Max=4) so that we can still distinguish some of the books without fragmenting them too much. The group assignments and bar colours were given afterwards when the results were plotted in Excel in order to detect patterns. For example - with K=4 (see below) cluster 0 is mainly Proverbs with some collections completely captured (s1=55.6%, s2=100%, Prov hez=100%, Prov app= 50%) - it is only when the chapters are plotted by group that we notice that the WB (Prov 22.16-24.34) is missing in cluster 0. This tells us that some of the WB is dissimilar (in some ways) to the rest of Proverbs. Part of the WB (Prov 24) still clusters with the remainder of Proverbs (in cluster 2 (s1=33.3%, Prov app =50% [ch.30]) and part of the WB (ch. 23) prefers to cluster with Job (in cluster 3).

Note that there is no IsaB present in cluster 1 but it is found in cluster 2 together with the remaining out-group from Proverbs and with the remains of IsaC and IsaA and a significant amount of Hosea. In contrast the IsaA and IsaC chapters in cluster 1 show affinity with Amos, Qoheleth and Canticles. This indicates that part of Isaiah and the northern prophets (Hosea in particular) is stylistically similar to Proverbs (s1 chapters 1, 3, 9; WB ch.24; Prov app ch.30) and another part of Isaiah and the northern prophets (Amos in particular) is stylistically similar to Qoheleth and Canticles but has no affinity with Proverbs.
The next experiment was done with the same books as above but with the Psalms added. In other words 339 chapters in total or 9 Books (Prophets and Psalms etc) - full Pos tag dataset (29 features) with "attributed" column for reference. The first occasion where clusters were formed by X-Means without a single chapter remaining in isolation in one cluster was K=8 and this was therefore chosen as K. When the X-means result was processed by LDA it classified at 80.83%. Normally we would expect near to 100% as the groups have already been pre-clustered by X-Means. This indicates significant transference between groups because of the homogeneity of the dataset. The output from X-Means was processed another three times through LDA until stability was achieved at 97.05% - higher was not possible as above 97.05% it reverted again to lower classification (another indicator of how similar the data is). The Shepard plot was an indicator of how “stressed” this dataset was:

Shepard plot: Non-metric MDS, Gower, 3D, stress=0.76

Nevertheless, it was still possible to obtain results from this dataset (K=8):

9 Books full Pos Tag dataset PAST LDA 97.05% Classified, 68% ellipses, K=8
LDA uses PCA and eigenvalues for grouping (different to the X-Means algorithm), what is happening is that chapters are jumping from one group to the other because there is so much overlap (similarity). This is due to the introduction of the Psalms (O) into the equation. **Cluster 0** (Red in the centre) is mostly Isaiah (square) with the odd Micah, Amos and Psalm. **Cluster 2** (Green N.E.) is mostly Psalms but has Isaiah and Job as well, moreover, it overlaps with the other Psalm cluster, and with Job (cluster 7) and Isaiah (cluster 1).

**Cluster 3** (Orange S.E.) is nearly all Psalms but overlaps with **Cluster 4** (Brown S.E.) which is mainly Proverbs, some Psalms and Job. **Cluster 4** (Yellow S.W.) is predominately Isaiah and Amos. **Cluster 5** (Blue S.) is Ecclesiastes and Canticles. **Cluster 7** (aqua N.W.) is mostly Job.

If we draw a diagonal from the S.E. quadrant through the origin to the N.E. quadrant we find that the top half of the plot is mostly Isaiah, Amos, Job and Psalms and the bottom half mostly Qohelet, Canticles, Proverbs and Psalms.

The results are given book (or collection) designations and plotted in Excel as before. For an enlarged version of the plot see the Excel Work Book.
Cluster 0: Rather assorted virtually nothing over 20% present. Notably the 12.5% Job represents the prologue and epilogue (Job 1, 2, 42) and the 12.8% of Isaiah A represents (Isa 36-39) the chapters concerning the Assyrian crisis in the time of Hezekiah. Also the first chapter of Hosea present (as well as 5 and 12). Three of the unattributed songs of Ascent (Degrees) also cluster here (126, 130, 134) as well as Northern Asaph Psalms 78 and 83 that deal with crisis. Probably both from the Hezekiah era.


Cluster 1: Predominant is IsaB at 100% together with a third of Amos and half of Hosea. Proverbs is also significantly represented in this group 44.4% s1 (1, 3, 6, 9) 66.6% of the WB (22, 24) and Prov app (30).

Cluster 2: Predominately Psalms especially Asaph. Isa 53 and Ps 37 are also found in this cluster. Only ch.4 from Proverbs s1 and ch.28 from Prov hez.

Cluster 3: Predominately Psalms 46.2% Korah (46, 48, 49, 87, 89) 16.7% Asaph (76, 79), 34% unattributed Ps and 26% Degrees (Ascent). Only Micah 7 clusters here along with 37.5% Canticles (5, 7, 8) and 22.2% Prov s1 (7, 8) and 20% Prov hez (26).

Cluster 4: IsaA (64.1%), IsaC (45.5%), Amos (66.7%) and Micah (71.4%).

Cluster 5: Qoheleth (100%), Canticles (50%) and 26.7% Psalms of Degrees/Ascent (123,124,125,133)

Cluster 6: Prov s2 (100% = 10-22), Prov hez (60% = 25, 47, 29) and Prov s1 (22.2% = 5, 2).

Cluster 7: Mostly Job (57.1%) along with 33.3% WB (ch.
8.4 Unsupervised multiple group (X-Means) book averages re-processed (LDA)

The above plots show the whole OT based on book averages (rather than chapter data). The first plot employs 29 features including noun–verb ratios etc with the second plot the
features have been reduced by PCA to only five features\(^{63}\) in both plots the Psalms have been divided using ascriptions and Proverbs by the collection titles. Although the arrangement of the clusters will vary depending on which features are selected and which are omitted useful stylistic information can still be garnered. We note for example that “genre” seems to be a determining factor with Psalms and Proverbs forming distinct groups. However, the PCA “reduced” data set does show many of the “early” books and “late” books grouping in distinct clusters. Of particular interest to us is that Proverbs 1-9 clusters with IsaB and the bulk of the Psalms. The reduced data set shows IsaB in a different cluster albeit on the border of the 68% probability region of the Psalm cluster. Also interesting is that Song of Songs and the Songs of Degrees (Ascent) tend to cluster together.\(^ {64}\) In the top plot (all features) IsaA and IsaC cluster together in the bottom plot (reduced features) they are grouped in different clusters although overlap establishes affinity as they fall within each-others 68% probability area.

\(^{63}\) (v?i),(v?v),(nc),(Pa),(Po)

\(^{64}\) In the first plot they are indicated by a “Gold O” symbol but not by an ellipse because there are only two elements in the cluster (Sol/Deg) therefore LDA can only calculate an average (not a variance) but the classifier does place them in the same cluster.
9. Comparing the methods (case study Isaiah and Amos)

[A] Isaiah (ungrouped) 1 to 1 with Amos, 72% classified (reduced dataset)

[B] Isaiah (ungrouped) and Amos (90.67% classified) PAST LDA (full dataset)
[C] Tripartite Isaiah and Amos 93.33% classified, 68% ellipses, PAST LDA (full dataset)

[D] Hybrid Isaiah (determined by X-Means reprocessed with LDA) with Amos, 96% Classified, 68% ellipses (full dataset)
[E] **Cluster 4** by X-Means (K=8) re-processed with LDA, 97.05% classified (full dataset)

[F] **Cluster 4 Grouped** - 100% classified by LDA, 95% ellipses (full dataset)
10. Summary

[A] Employing the PCA reduced dataset in a 1 to 1 fashion using LDA with Isaiah ungrouped (not divided into collections) gave the lowest classification (72%) with a two way exchange occurring between Isaiah and Amos. In this analysis 41% of Isaiah classified as belonging to Amos and 55.6% of Amos was classified as Isaiah. Despite the reduced dataset being good for “overall” comparison it functioned poorly in this case (as we suspected). Even so, it indicates that on particular features Isaiah and Amos share affinity. Some books were able to separate completely (classify at 100%) on these same features. Part of the problem is perhaps that Isaiah itself is not homogenous.

[B] The next experiment reproduced the above but this time with the full dataset in order to smooth out imbalances caused by a single dominant feature. This saw an immediate improvement in the classification with an increase of 18.76% to 90.76% classified. Now only 10.76% of Isaiah classifies as Amos, moreover, Amos remains in its own group and classifies at 100% as Amos. However, this does not tell the full story as the “Jackknife” results paint a different picture. In this case 21.1% of Isaiah Jacknifed as Amos and 66.6% of Amos Jacknifed as Isaiah – what do we mean by “Jackknife”? Because we chose the initial groups the analysis is called “supervised LDA” and may well be biased (if our initial choices are incorrect). The basic idea behind the Jackknife variance estimator lies in systematically recomputing the statistic estimate, leaving out one or more observations at a time from the sample set. From this new set of replicates of the statistic, an estimate for the bias and an estimate for the variance of the statistic can be calculated and a different classification be assigned. Ideally you want the Classified and Jackknife result to be the same. Hwang, Dae-Yeop describes the process as follows; “Important in understanding how PDA (Predictive Discriminant Analysis similar to LDA) works is the leave-one-out (LOO) Jackknife approach of classification (Huberty, 1994; Huberty & Lowman, 2000)…. The LOO method uses Jackknife methodology to make these classifications. The LOO method follows two steps: (1) One unit is deleted and linear classification functions (LCFs) are determined on the remaining N-1 units and (2) These LCFs are used to classify the deleted unit into one of the k criterion groups. For each classification, it may be considered that a training sample of size N-1 and a test sample of size 1 are being used. This process is carried out N times and the proportions of deleted units correctly classified are used as hit-rate estimators. The classification function is fitted to repeatedly drawn samples of the original sample". 65 In other words (the way I understand it) is that although Amos classifies as 100% Amos (as was initially

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assigned) an unbiased re-calculation could assign 66.6% of Amos to Isaiah. Style-wise Amos and Isaiah share a lot in common.

[C] Now we divide Isaiah according to the tripartite A, B, C, (the blocks identified by scholarship) and test against Amos, once again using the full dataset with LDA. Another improvement in classification is achieved (93.33%). The plot at 68% ellipses shows distinct groups but at 68% there is already overlap between IsaA and Amos and at 95% this overlap will be more pronounced. From the visual assessment alone we can surmise that IsaA and Amos share at least some affinity. Now only 7.6% Isaiah classifies as Amos and 0% Amos classifies as Isaiah but the Jackknifed positions are still high 25.6% IsaA Jackknifed as Amos and 44.44% Amos Jackknifed as IsaA. Note that although some Jackknifeing occurs with IsaB and IsaC we have now narrowed down the culprit as (mostly) IsaA. Before we could only say “Isaiah” but now “IsaA” has a strong style affinity with Amos (and vice a versa).

[D] Hybrid Isaiah (determined by X-Means re-processed by LDA) with Amos using the full dataset. The Hybrid construct is our own model based on splitting IsaA into two parts (A1, A2) of non-sequential blocks by supplementing missing chapters in the X-Means (K=3) determination. This achieves a very good classification of 96% with only 8.3% IsaA1 and 4% IsaA2 classifying as Amos and 0% Amos classifying as Isaiah. However 25% of Isa A1 still Jackknifes as Amos (and 16% of IsaA2), Amos itself demonstrates a proclivity to Jackknife towards IsaA2 at 33.3% (and IsaA1 at 22.2%). So, even drilling down and splitting IsaA into A1 and A2 components we find that both components have style affinity with Amos (and vice versa) and it is difficult (with two way transference) to determine which has the strongest alignment.

[E] Cluster 4 by X-Means (K=8) re-processed with LDA, 97.05% classified (full dataset). This can be seen as mostly “unsupervised” as the initial clustering is done by X-means without any group or book assignments. This is the best way of achieving “unbiased results”. This achieved a lower original classification of 80.83% due to the overall homogeneity of the dataset which was further disrupted by adding all of the Psalms. The result was refined to 97.05% classification by running it through LDA multiple times until stability was achieved. The above plot shows only cluster 4 (of the 7 clusters) because that is where we find the highest concentration of IsaA (64.1%) together with Amos (66.7%) and Micah (71.4%). The “mini” LDA plot (above) shows cluster 4 as a distinct separate cluster. The filled square is Isaiah the cross is Amos and the star (difficult to see as there are only five out of seven chapters) is Micah. Now a reminder......this is unsupervised as we did not know that this was
mostly IsaA chapters\textsuperscript{66} until we examined the classification table and plotted the result in Excel. There is virtually no Jackknifing in this analysis because we have already “pre-clustered” and IsaA and Amos are already in the same cluster (so where are they going to go?) they have already found the chapters that they “like” the most.

\textbf{[F] Cluster 4 Grouped}: In this analysis the chapters from X-Means (K=8) found in cluster 4 are processed through LDA again to determine interrelationships. Although the groups will classify at 100\% (because the chapters have already been pre-processed, see \textbf{[E]} above) the Jackknife positions should help determine interrelationships.

From this we can conclude that Amos and Isaiah (the son of Amoz) share a strong style affinity. Maybe not as strong as the initial reduced dataset \textbf{[A]} suggested but there is definitely transference of style between the two prophets.

\textsuperscript{66} But there is also 45.5\% IsaC present and no IsaB - What does this tell us? That IsaC is not as different from IsaA as some may wish.
11. Conclusions

In this case stylometric analysis does not reveal the “authorship” of books as the material is too homogeneous because it has undergone smoothing and updating and represents multiple sources with similar distributional spreads. It is clear that the material contains mixed distributions which in many instances are impossible to separate. Nevertheless, stylometry can make an important contribution to establishing the “milieu” in which certain writings appeared. The one thing that has become clear is the enormous transference of “style” between eighth century literature whether it is prophetic or wisdom literature. When we talk about “style” we refer to language and language can be unique to a certain region (dialect, colloquialism etc) and also to a certain time period. Rendsburg has detected the presence of IH (Israelian Hebrew) which is specific to Northern Israel (more on this anon) and it is in this period that the Assyrian crisis acted as a catalyst for the bringing together of Northern Scribes (refugees) into the Royal Court of the Judean kings. It should therefore come as no surprise that we find an exchange of ideas and style between these two groups, especially as it was encouraged by Hezekiah’s reformation and cult centralization. From the time of Uzziah onwards we can suppose that northerners sought the relative stability and refuge of Judah.

Style is not the same as content. Often style and content go hand in hand but not always, it is possible for books that are thematically different to share a similar style. It is possible for an author to use material from another book but express it in his own unique style. For content and theme we look to inter-textual analysis where allusions and echoes are used to draw in earlier material and rework it in a unique manner (such as Isaiah does with Proverbs 8 or, Psalm 49 does with Isaiah 22; more on this anon). Statistics can also be employed on themes as well as style; Wei Hu has produced interesting results by applying a topic model to an unsupervised clustering method to group the psalms together by content, and then matching the outcome of this unsupervised learning with the literary forms. He notes that, “Proverbs 11 is highly correlated with Psalms 11, 37, and 112, and they share several key words. Thereby some verses in Psalms 11, 37, and 112 display the characteristics of proverbs.” However, the human mind is more attuned to pattern recognition than many software programs; on the other hand, the statistical approach comes into its own with large datasets containing complex material.

However, stylometrics does deliver useful insights. An example of this is the first cluster of X-Means (K=8) where the epilogue and prologue of Job clustered together with Isaiah 36-39 and the Immanuel prophecy of Isaiah 9 (and two of the Asaph “crisis” Psalms). Job 1-2 and 42.7-17 provide a narrative frame for the book of Job. Scholars have long recognized differences between the frame and the body of the book. The frame is prose and the body is

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67 Wei Hu, Unsupervised Learning of Two Bible Books: Proverbs and Psalms, (Department of Computer Science, Houghton College, New York, USA), 2012, 332
poetry and different names for God are used in the introduction and conclusion of the book. It is interesting that the frame of Job, which describes the crisis brought upon him and his subsequent recovery should be clustered with the section of Isaiah that describes the crisis that Hezekiah endured and his subsequent recovery. In the second cluster we discover many of the Davidic Psalms (22, 31, 51, 69) that describe suffering and penance together with Isaiah 53 (the suffering servant). In cluster 6 (K=8) we find Psalm 45 clustering with Canticles 4. Psalm 45 is a “Song of Loves” (like Canticles) despite both texts being a “love poem” they employ military language to describe the bride (Ps 45.3, 5; sword, arrows and Can 4.4; armoury) the locations in Canticles are “northern” (4:1, 8; Mount Gilead, Lebanon, Amana, Shenir, Hermon) and the bride in Ps 45.12 is the daughter of Tyre. The “northern” kingdom was intermarried with Phoenician royalty.\(^{68}\) In the time of Solomon friendly relations existed with Hiram of Tyre. In our chapter on Canticles we argue for the Phoenician origins of Hezekiah’s bride Hephzibah.

It is noteworthy that Rendsburg\(^{69}\) classifies Proverbs as “northern” literature and lists the corpus of northern Israelite Hebrew texts (including Canticles and Ps 45) as follows:

- Blessings to the northern tribes in Genesis 49
- Leviticus 25:13-24
- Deuteronomy 32
- Blessings to the northern tribes in Deuteronomy 33
- Selected stories in Judges (especially Deborah. Gideon, Jephthah)
- 2 Samuel 23:1-7
- Material in Kings devoted to the Northern Kingdom of Israel (see the list in my book on Kings [B2], pp. 23-24)
  - Hosea
  - Amos
  - Micah 6-7
- Northern Psalms: Pss 9-10, 16, 29, 36, 45, 53, 58, 74, 116, 132, 133, 140, 141, as well as the Korah and Asaph collections
- Proverbs
- Song of Songs (Canticles or Song of Solomon)
- Qohelet (Ecclesiastes)
- Nehemiah 9

According to my calculations, this amounts to 149 chapters out of a total of 920 (Hebrew) chapters in the Bible or approximately 16% of the Bible.

A vocabulary of IH terms culled from the Rendsburg article has been attached to the end of this chapter.\(^{70}\) Professor Rendsburg has done important work by highlighting that many of

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68 In the 9th century BC, the royal houses of Israel and Sidon intermarried when King Ahab of Israel married a Sidonian princess named Jezebel (with disastrous results due to the Baal-worship that infiltrated Israel from Tyre and Sidon).

69 Gary A. Rendsburg, A Comprehensive guide to Israeli Hebrew: Grammar and Lexicon (Cornell University Vol. XXXVIII 2003), 8

70 Professor Rendsburg has done important work by highlighting that many of
the supposed “late” linguistic features are actually regional dialect from northern Israel. The only possible opportunity (after Solomon) for “northern” and “southern” linguistic features to flourish side by side is the time of Hezekiah. Between Solomon and Hezekiah lay a divided kingdom until the reformation to unite the tribes and centralise worship under Hezekiah. With the fall of the northern kingdom many scribal refugees would have flooded the royal court of Judah (and been welcomed by Hezekiah). We suppose they would have been set to work under the watchful eye of Isaiah documenting, recording, editing and composing….and above all preserving the work of the northern kingdom. This must have been a large and highly motivated guild of prophets, priests, scribes and Levites (perhaps the largest group ever set such a task) quaintly called “the men of Hezekiah” (Prov 25.1). That all these literary works are stylistically so similar is certainly no coincidence and they all attained their first draft (perhaps not yet finalized because of the terror caused by Manasseh) before the exile.

The prophet Isaiah (1.1) was a contemporary of the northern prophets Amos, Hosea and Micah. A great earthquake occurred during Uzziah’s reign (Zech 14.5) and Isaiah was commissioned in the year that king Uzziah died (Isa 6.1). Amos commenced his career two years before the earthquake (Amos 1.1).\(^{71}\) Josephus has the great earthquake occurring when Uzziah forcefully entered the temple (Antiq. 9:225; LCL 6:119) and according to Austin (et al)\(^{72}\) the earthquake occurred in 750 BC with Uzziah dying 15 years later. The close stylistic affinity between IsaA (1-39) and Amos has already been noted. Interestingly, Isaiah 9 and Amos 6 occur together in cluster 4 (K=8) and both have the earthquake as an underlying theme.\(^{73}\) Amos was probably written between 781 and 753 B.C. Linguistics features are consistent with this date range. Davies observes; “The archaic pronoun “anoki” is used eight times. The earlier word for kingdom, “mamlakah” is used once, while the later companion “malkut” is not used. David’s name is spelled in the later long form דוד in 6:5 and 9:11. This is due to the fact that all the Minor Prophets were managed as one scroll, and the spelling pattern became relatively late in the entire scroll due to the work of the scribes who copied the scroll. The anthropomorphism of God smelling is present in Amos 5:22 (sometimes translated as “accept” literally means “smell”). Amos uses the term “high places” (לִשׁוֹא) in a positive sense (4:13), while later writers use it in an entirely negative sense as

\(^{70}\) It is a pity that the terms are too sparse for statistical manipulation although they can be used to distinguish between “northern” and “southern” literature.

\(^{71}\) See also Isa.2:10-22 and Amos 9:1 for earthquake language.


\(^{73}\) Amos 9:1; I saw the Lord standing upon the altar: and he said, Smite the lintel of the door, that the posts may shake: and cut them in the head, all of them. Isaiah 6:1; In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Isaiah 6:4; And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke.
a place of corrupted worship. Amos has the earliest preserved example of a lamentation using the “limping meter” (5:1-3), a poetic device used later in Ezekiel and Lamentations.  

Micah has a 71.4% concentration in cluster 4 (K=8) which means that 5 out of 7 Micah chapters share a strong affinity with the other chapters in the cluster. When the chapters from cluster 4 (determined by X-Means K=8) are analysed by LDA they classify at 100% (as is to be expected because they have been "pre-processed") but it is interesting that Micah chs., 1, 2, 4 Jackknife as IsaA and Micah ch., 3 Jackknifes as IsaC. Amos chs., 6, 9 also Jackknife as Micah, Micah ch., 3 Jackknifes as IsaC, Isa (total) chs., 3,4,14,27,58,66 Jackknife as Micah, Isa (total) chs., 11,16,22,25 Jackknife as Amos, IsaA chs., 10,13,19,20,24,29,31,34,35 Jackknife as IsaC and IsaC chs., 61, 66 Jackknife as IsaA. This demonstrates that despite 100% classification, (i.e., assigned to the correct groups) all these groups are stylistically very close and display transference.

Not only does the passage in Isaiah 2.2-4 (IsaA) parallel Micah 4.1-3 but both chapters are found in the same cluster (C4, K=8) indicating style affinity and thematic correspondence, the same can be said of Isa 58.1 (IsaC) // Mic 3.8 (C4, K=8). However, it is not always the case that chapters with parallel passages also display style affinity. For example IsaB (40-55) has three chapters with Micah parallels (Isa 41.15-16 // Mic 4.13, Isa 48.2 // Mic 3.11 and Isa 52.12// Mic 2.13) with all of the IsaB chapters occurring in cluster 1 and all the Micah chapters occurring in a different cluster (C4) probably because they are closer to Amos than to Isaiah. Micah itself is not uniform in style; Micah splits into three clusters (K=8) namely, Micah 1-5 (C4), Micah 6 (C7) and Micah 7 (C3). It is noteworthy that Micah 6 and 7 should split into separate clusters from the main body of Micah (1-5) indicating a slightly different style; this has possibly been confirmed by Rendsburg who has identified Micah 6-7 as northern Israelite. Micah 7 also finds a parallel in IsaB (Isa 49.23//Mic 7.17). Micah 7 (C3) is in a different cluster to Isaiah 49 (C1). Micah 7 shares a cluster that has 37.5% Canticles (chs., 5,7,8) and 46.2% Korah Psalms. The background of much of the material in C3 (Canticles and Korah Psalms) is the Assyrian crisis. Canticles was probably performed at Hezekiah’s wedding to Hephzibah and is a parabolic “wedding parable” describing how Hezekiah (the “new Solomon”) courted northern Israel and united the tribes (see the chapter on Canticles in this commentary). Davies remarks that Micah 6.7, “may be a reference to Hezekiah’s huge sacrifice in 2 Chron 29.32-33” to which the northern tribes were invited. Canticles depicts not just the wedding of Hezekiah but the uniting of the separated “northern and southern “lovers” whose wedding was “gate crashed” by Assyria. Micah 7 is messianic and in the first instance is based on Hezekiah (the suffering servant) who typified and represented the nation. Thematically these chapters belong together and it is encouraging to find them in the same cluster. For example Can 5.6 tells of the disappearance of the groom (Hezekiah’s illness) and Can 8.7 tells of the waters of the

74 Davis, Dating the OT, p.277
75 Ibid, p.286
Euphrates (Assyria) nearly drowning “love” and the utter contempt displayed towards paying tribute by Sennacherib. And what of Micah 7.8; “Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the LORD shall be a light unto me”. Whittaker comments, “The Lord was literally a light unto him [i.e., Hezekiah] (v.8) when, as foretold by Isaiah, the appearance of the Shekinah glory of the lord caused the shadow caused by the natural sun to be so overpowered by a greater light that the shadow on the staircase sundial of Ahaz went back ten steps”. One particular key word appears in many of the “Hezekiah” psalms and other chapters that appear in this cluster (C3) – ‘aman is found in Mic 7.5; Can 7.177; Ps 89.28,37,52; Ps 116.10 and in Prov 25.13, 26.25 and 27.6 (Hezekiah Collection) and also used in anti-Hezekiah rhetoric in 2 Chron 32.15. Psalm 89 contemplates the abolishment of the Davidic Covenant brought on by the near death and childlessness of Hezekiah (the king is reminding Yahweh of his covenant); “My mercy will I keep for him for evermore, and my covenant shall stand fast (יֹאמֶן, ‘aman) with him” (the term occurs three times in this chapter). The lone chapter Hosea 2 in C4 that clusters with Amos and is also concerned with covenant betrothal (Hos 2.20); “I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness (‘emunah): and thou shalt know the LORD”.

It is possible then, that Micah 6 and 7 were added as a sort of epilogue after the Assyrian defeat or more likely written “in situ” in Jerusalem during the siege with Micah and Isaiah collaborating on the project. This would explain the exchange between Micah and Isaiah. Micah was a contemporary of Isaiah. Micah 1.1 dates itself from the time of the Judean kings Joatham, Ahaz and Hezekiah. Davies observes, “We have the unique mention of his name in Jer 26:18, along with a precise quote of Mic 3:12. The Jeremiah passage is from the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim, in 609 B.C., so the quotation is of a passage written at least 80-100 years earlier. Micah seems to be written before Hezekiah’s reforms, due to the mention of the high places (1:5), and before the destruction of Samaria (1:6). Israel’s primary foreign enemy in Micah’s account is Assyria (5:5-7 and 7:12). The negative reference to Northern Israelite kings Ahab and Omri (6:16) implies a date before the fall of Northern Israel”. There are then, stylistic and thematic connections between the chapters in C4 as we would expect as they come from the same time period and have the same historical background. There is no reason to date any of these chapters after the exile.

76 H A Whittaker, The finest of all Messianic Prophecies (Micah 7) pp.94-99 in Bible Studies on Anthology, (Biblia, 1987), pg 95. Note that the 10 Degrees resulted in 15 years life extension and therefore 15 Psalms of Degrees (Thirtile, Whittaker, Booker)
77 Can 7.1 is from a similarly derived root translated “cunning workman” (KJV) or someone who is steadfast/faithful, a reference to the master craftsman who was endowed with the Spirit to build the tabernacle. In Prov 8.3 the term ʿāmōn is employed. For the implications see the discussion in the commentary on Proverbs 8. The word ‘aman also occurs in Isa 49.7,23 (Isa 49 has a parallel with Micah 7 but occurs in a different cluster). A number of Isaiah chapters in C4 also use ‘aman (Isa 7.9; 8.2; 22.23, 25; 25.1; 28.16; 60.4; 65.16).
78 Ibid, 286
In cluster 1 (K=8) we find 93.75% IsaB together with 50% of Hosea (chapters 3, 4, 6, 8, 9, 11, 14). The chapter missing in IsaB is chapter 53 (the suffering servant). The question is why these particular Hosea chapters cluster with IsaB? Obviously they have stylistic affinity but do they have any thematic correspondence? Davies states that Hosea was written before 731 B.C. Some of Hosea’s oracles date from the reign of Jeroboam II of Israel, probably around 760 B.C.\(^79\) He summarises as follows; “The linguistic features in Hosea are consistent with an eighth century B.C. date. The early pronoun “anoki” is used four times. The older word for kingdom, “mamlakah,” is used instead of one of the newer forms. The early relative pronoun “zo,” meaning “this,” is present in 7:16, and the old poetic negation “bal” is in 7:2 and 9:16. “Ehdah” (ה’דה), a pre-exilic word meaning “congregation,” is in 7:12. “Zulah” (זל”ח), meaning “except” in 13:4, appears almost entirely in pre-exilic texts. Hos 6:2 uses the early dual form (בְּנֵיהֶם) for “two days.” The spelling is relatively homogenous among all the Minor Prophets, probably because the scroll of Minor Prophets was copied and maintained as a single scroll of 12.\(^80\) Therefore, spelling cannot be used with confidence to distinguish between dates for the Minor Prophets. Still, David’s name is spelled in the older form דָּוִד in 3:5”.\(^81\) The introduction to Hosea (1.1) places the prophet firmly in this era; “The word of the LORD that came unto Hosea, the son of Beeri, in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel”. Rendsburg recognises Hosea as a Northern Israelite writing with distinctive features, why then is Judah referred to some 15 times in a prophecy directed at Ephraim? This leads scholars such as Bos to argue for a “Persian period” Hosea in the late sixth or early fifth century B.C.\(^82\) which is surely a case of over-reach. The question is easily resolved by positing that the oracle underwent a re-working in the court of Hezekiah in order to make it relevant to Judah. Ephraim stood as an object lesson to Judah of the fate of those who turned their back on Yahweh. It is not a coincidence that chapters like Isaiah 28 which roundly condemns the “drunkards of Ephraim”\(^83\) finds itself in the same cluster as Hosea 2 which speaks of restoration; “Say ye unto your brethren, Ammi; and to your sisters, Ruhamah” (Hos 2.1). Moreover, the Hebrew “carash” (workman) is employed in Hos 8.6 to describe the artificer who made the “calf of Samaria” is also employed multiple times in IsaB (Isa. 40.19f; 41.7; 44.11ff; 45.16; 54.16) in a negative sense for the forger of idols. Elsewhere we argue that “carash” (workman) was deliberately misread by some of the exilic Jews as “Koresh” in order to imply that “Cyrus” was the chosen workman to restore the fate of nation. In the first instance the “workman”

\(^{79}\) Ibid, 272

\(^{80}\) Anderson and Forbes, Spelling in the Hebrew Bible, pp., 315-316

\(^{81}\) Ibid, 272

\(^{82}\) James M. Bos, Reconsidering the Date and Provenance of the Book of Hosea: The Case for Persian-Period Yehud, (T&T Clark, 2013)

\(^{83}\) The phrase “the pride of Ephraim” is used twice in Isaiah 28 and is akin to the phrase the “pride of Israel” found twice in Hosea (5.5, 7.10). However, the Hebrew is from different roots and Hosea 5 and 7 do not form part of C1. Nevertheless it is not unthinkable that the writings of one prophet should influence another (if not stylistically at least thematically).
who was chosen and anointed by God was Hezekiah. It is possible that IsaB was originally intended as polemic against Manasseh who deliberately reversed the policy of his father and plunged the nation into idol worship. Hezekiah is portrayed and upheld as the idyllic king chosen by Yahweh to fulfill the nation’s destiny.

However, if this section of Hosea was “updated” during the first half of the reign of Manasseh it is unlikely that Judah would be spoken of in such glowing terms as found in Hos 11.12 (KJV) which is found in the same cluster as IsaB; “Ephraim compasseth me about with lies, and the house of Israel with deceit: but Judah yet ruleth with God, and is faithful with the saints”. In the first instance “deceit” is probably a reference to Jacob (the deceiver) and “rule with” (rwd) a play on Israel the KJV choice of translation influenced by a misreading of Hos 12.3-4 where Israel (Jacob) does not have “power”(rule) with God but prevails against his old nature. The translations all offer different interpretations of rwd so much so that NIDOTTE admits “Several of the limited occurrences of the verb (less than six) are under dispute, either as to textual reading or root derivative”\(^84\) In Jeremiah (2.31) Judah is reported as flaunting God by saying “We are free to roam (rwd)”. Judah is spoken of negatively in Hos 5.5 “Judah also shall fall with them” (see also vv.10 12, 13, 14; 6.4; 8.14; 10.11; 12.2). This would make 11.12 the only positive mention which is hardly credible. It is therefore, God who remains faithful (’aman) with the saints during this period of persecution while Judah roams restlessly seeking refuge in vanity (idols like Ephraim). The son of Manasseh was called Amon (master craftsman) who was an evil idol worshipper assassinated by his own servants after a two year reign before he was followed by the last good king of Judah Josiah who found the book of the law (Deuteronomy?) while restoring the temple. This period saw incredible highs and lows. Uzziah was a good king (albeit undone by ambition) and co-regent with Jotham, Ahaz was a vacillating unfaithful king, Hezekiah was the faithful reformer followed by the resentful Manasseh (who later repented and was restored), Amon was a blot and Josiah followed in the footsteps of Hezekiah. It is suggested then that Hosea was updated during a lull in the Manasseh persecution to make it relevant to Judah. Finalization may have continued as late as the reign of Josiah who was also a reformer and removed idol worship. Deuteronomy (1.32) warned the people against not believing (’aman); Ahaz (Isa 7.9) was warned against his refusal to believe (’aman) and IsaB (43.10) repeatedly urges belief (’aman) to turn away from the craftsman who produces idols and to embrace the workman appointed by God.

When clustered as individual chapters, the bulk of Job (57%) clusters in its own group with a few psalms and Prov 23. When clustered as book averages Job demonstrates affinity with

\(^{84}\) NIDOTTE, p.1067 (vol 3)
IsaB (and less so with IsaC) the WB (Prov 22-24), some Psalms and Prov 1-9. Davies observes the following verbal connections between Job and Proverbs:

1. Eloah is used for God (41 times in Job, also in Isa 44:8, Prov 30:5 and Psalm 114)
2. “Fear of the LORD is wisdom” (Job 28:28, Prov 1:7 and 9:10)
3. “Hidden treasures” (Job 3:21, Prov 2:4 and Isa 45:3)
4. God “your confidence” (Job 4:6 and Prov 3:26)
5. The search for wisdom in Job 28:12-28 matches the Proverbs introduction, particularly the Prov 8:10, 8:11 and 8:19 comparisons valuing wisdom above gold and jewels.
6. Prov 9:10 and 30:3 refer to God as “Holy One,” a phrase from Job 6:10 and one of Isaiah’s favourites.
7. Prov 6:16 and Job 5:19 both use the literary device of saying “six...even seven.”

Our earlier identification of Isaiah as being the translator of Job means that the ties between Job and Proverbs 1-9 and 30 provide evidence that Isaiah was also involved with these sections of Proverbs.

The “men of Hezekiah” were certainly involved with the book of Job but it was much more than “translation” or “copying”. This commentary finds itself in agreement with the work done by Perry (discussed elsewhere) that demonstrates by employing inter-textual methodologies that Job is a parabolic play and a theological/philosophical discussion (performance art of the highest order if you will) based on the Assyrian crisis and Hezekiah’s role as the “suffering servant”. The man who did all the “right” things yet had everything taken away from him and almost lost his life. Job is Hezekiah trying to make sense of things. Perry rejects the suggestion put forward by Davies that Job is a translation (by Isaiah) of older material and that the location setting of Job is Edomite. He communicated the following via email; “As for dating, I’m pretty sure Job post-dates Isaiah because of the common language – i.e. the direction of quotation and allusion is towards Job. The reason for this is Isaiah has its language rooted in the situation and Job’s rootedness is really the product of reflection and analysis – as with any political play. I don’t think plays as

85 Ibid, pp.382-383
87 Davies probably bases the Edomite heritage of Job on the Septuagint version of Job 42:17. However, Reed Concludes that, “Consequently, this addition is best dated between the OG transla-tion of Job circa 150 B.C.E. and the translation of Q’ in the early first century C.E. Given the use of the appendix by Aristeas the Exegete, the terminus ad quem is the quotation of Aristeas by Alexander Polyhistor, circa 60 B.C.E”. Annette Yoshiko Reed, The Interpretation of Job in LXX Job 42:17b-e in the Journal of Biblical Literature: SBL, Vol 120, No.1, Spring 2001: 31-55, 40. If Job is not a Hebrew then it is unclear why the Book of Job is included in the Hebrew Scriptures. The post-exilic prophets demonized Edom as the enemy of Israel it is only from about the time of John Hyrcanus (112 BCE) that they were rehabilitated (see Reed pg 44) leading to “Herod the Great” becoming a “Jewish” king. The LXX addition to Job is most probably from around this period.
sophisticated as Job get written except for wealthy patrons and I can’t see the reign of Manasseh as conducive to the sponsorship of Job. I prefer Josiah. Also, there is the question of inspiration and during the reign of Manasseh, I don’t see the bestowal of the Spirit. So I prefer Josiah. But the issue can only be decided by a comparison with Jeremiah which I haven’t done. Wolfers determined the location of Uz, so I don’t think Job is an Edomite. Rather, Edom occupied Uz which was in the Shephelah”.  

It is likely then that Job shares affinity with Isaiah but the direction of influence is from Isaiah to Job.

Finally we turn to comparing the Psalter with Proverbs. This is probably the most difficult as the psalms had already undergone two centuries of linguistic “smoothing” before Hezekiah’s time. Hezekiah was certainly interested in the Psalms as he re-established the Levitical choirs and explicitly says....

“The LORD was ready to save me: therefore we will sing my songs to the stringed instruments all the days of our life in the house of the LORD”.
(Isa 38.20)

Following Thirtle, Whittaker and Booker we will argue that the first arrangement of the Psalter (after David) occurred during the Hezekiah period. The Psalms were collected and arranged (ordered), new psalms were written and some older psalms were revised to make the hymnal of Israel applicable to the reigns of both David and Hezekiah. The psalm titles are useful (and it is suggested historical) for understanding the background of the psalms but many psalms are unattributed. Furthermore, the situation is complicated as a “Korah” or an “Asaph” psalm could be an early psalm (David) or a later psalm (Hezekiah) as the “sons of Asaph” (and Korah) performed (and wrote psalms) from the time of David onwards.

A good example is the Songs of Degrees or Ascents (discussed elsewhere in more depth) a group of 15 psalms placed together by Hezekiah to celebrate his fifteen year extension of life (so, Thirtle et., al) although they represent a unity in their careful final editing, two of the psalms are identified as “northern” by Rendsburg (132, 133) and others are linked by their ascriptions to David (122,124,131, and 133), and one to Solomon (127). Psalm 133 is a “northern” psalm from the time of David (a united kingdom) that was probably written to celebrate the bringing of the ark up to Zion. It was then co-opted and “adjusted” by Hezekiah to celebrate tribal unity and centralized worship in the wake of the Assyrian crisis. Dating such a collection solely on the grounds of stylistic criteria would prove impossible as it has too many divergent linguistic features. Interestingly, the Songs of Degrees clusters

88 David Wolfers, Deep Things out of Darkness: The Book of Job: Essays and a New English Translation [Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995]. Other scholars are decidedly unhelpful; “somewhere in northern Mesopotamia” (Gordis:1978,10) “difficult to determine” (Tur-Sinai:1957,2) because of contradictory biblical data, or (Clines:1989,10) that it is important only because "it is not in Israel".

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together with Song of Songs on the book averages plot. This may be due to the northern provenance of both writings or it may just be an indicator of genre.

Proverbs are called “dark sayings” (ךְיָדָה chiydah) in the KJV translation of Prov 1.6, the term is rare and is found in the Psalter only in a Korah Psalm (49.5) and an Asaph Psalm (78.2) where it is translated as “parable”. It also occurs in the pre-exilic literature in the Pentateuch in Num 12.8 where Yahweh says he will not speak to Moses in "dark speeches" and eight times in Judges 14 for Samson’s “riddle” and interestingly in the parallel accounts in 1 Kgs 10.1 and 2 Chr. 9.1 for the "hard questions" that the Queen of Sheba puts to Solomon. Rendsburg considers the Korah and Asaph psalms as “northern” and Booker and Whittaker¹ note thematic correspondence between Isaiah 22 and Psalm 49:⁹¹

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Isaiah 22</th>
<th>Psalm 49</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15. Over the house</td>
<td>11. [They think] their houses will continue forever</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Sepulchre... an habitation for himself in the rock</td>
<td>16. When the glory of his house is increased</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. The Lord will carry thee away with a mighty captivity</td>
<td>11. “Their graves are their homes forever” (RSV)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. I will drive thee from thy station</td>
<td>12,20. Man being in honour abideth not</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. The chariots of thy glory shall be... shame</td>
<td>19. They that trust in wealth... and boast in... riches...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10. [will] leave their wealth to others</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There is then (at least stylistically) a connection between Proverbs 1-9 and Isaiah. This could be due to later editing and “smoothing” but if that were the case we would expect the other Proverbs collections to also link *stylistically* with Isaiah. However, our exegesis of Proverbs 8 finds multiple inter-textual links with Isaiah 40. The direction of dependency is probably from Proverbs to Isaiah making the wisdom poem the earlier writing that is alluded to by Isaiah. It is possible that the source of the poem can be attributed to the court of Solomon but that it migrated to northern Israel after the disintegrated of the kingdom (the Rehoboam rebellion) where the poem was initially finalized and preserved. One suspects that elements of the first Solomon Collection (1-9) arrived back in Judah with northern


⁹¹ The Korah Psalm 49 is clustered with Proverbs 1-9
refugees from the Assyrian crisis where it was redacted to suit the larger Collection with additions by (for example) the prophet Isaiah (Introduction and appendices to Proverbs etc?). The intermingled themes of the cult (tabernacle) and creation (of the world and of the nation), the personification of wisdom and allusion to a master craftsman are pertinent to Solomon but also easily adapted to Hezekiah. Hezekiah attempted to reform the cult and unite the nation and (unlike Solomon) he repented when he erred. Hezekiah was therefore a suitable Davidic heir to the Solomonic wisdom traditions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proverbs 8</th>
<th>Isaiah 40</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Doth not wisdom cry? And understanding put forth her voice? (8:1)</td>
<td>The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.(40:3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counsel is mine (8:14)</td>
<td>With whom took he counsel (40:14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By me princes rule, and nobles, even all the judges of the earth.(8:16)</td>
<td>That bringeth the princes to nothing; he maketh the judges of the earth as vanity. (40:23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.....from the beginning, or ever the earth was. (8:23)</td>
<td>...hath it not been told you from the beginning? (40:21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.....I was set up from everlasting... (8:23)</td>
<td>.....the everlasting God, the LORD (40:28)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.....the highest part of the dust of the world. (8:26)</td>
<td>.....comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, (40:12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.....when he prepared the heavens... (8:27)</td>
<td>.....that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain (40:22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.....when he appointed the foundations of the earth (8:29)</td>
<td>.....foundations of the earth... (40:21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>That I may cause those that love me to inherit substance; and I will fill their treasures (8:21)</td>
<td>And I will give thee the treasures of darkness (45:3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.....while as yet he had not made the earth (8:26)</td>
<td>.....I have made the earth (45:12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.....when he established the clouds above (8:28)</td>
<td>.....heavens....he hath established it...(45:18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Then I was by him, as one brought up with him: and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him... (8:30)</td>
<td>I am the LORD, and there is none else, there is no God beside me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known me: (45:5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth... (8:31)</td>
<td>.....he formed it to be inhabited... (45:18)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Further exegesis of chapters 1-9 finds many allusions to and echoes of the Northern Prophets (such as Micah). Craig Davis\textsuperscript{92} offers the following summary:

There are additional reasons to believe Isaiah may be the author of Proverbs 30, and even the introductory section of Proverbs 1:2-9:18.

1. Emphatic duplication, so characteristic of Isaiah's style (see section 4.2.1.2.9) but largely absent elsewhere in the Bible, makes a prominent appearance in chapter 30. Prov 30:9-10 repeats “lest” three times, 30:11-14 repeats four times “There is a generation...,” 30:15 says “give, give,” 30:19 says “the way” four times, and the Hebrew of 30:21-23 has “under” repeated four times.

2. Prov 1:16 essentially equals Isa 59:7, “Their feet run to evil, and they hasten to shed blood.”

3. The Prov 30:4 string of rhetorical questions is similar to the string of rhetorical questions in Job 38-41, Isa 10:8-11, 40:12-14, 40:21, etc.

4. “Righteous One” is a designation for God only in Isa 24:16, 53:11 and Prov 21:12.\textsuperscript{93}

5. The word (יִתְיַסֶּה)\textsuperscript{94} for “young lion” appears only in Isa 30:6, Job 11:4 and Prov 30:30

6. Personification, like the personification of wisdom in Proverbs, was a literary technique of Isaiah also (Isa 24:23, 35:1, 44:23, 55:12, etc.).

7. Isaiah was the only prophet to use the phrase “fear of the LORD” (Isa 11:2-3 and 33:6), a phrase which occurs 24 times in the Bible, including 14 times in Proverbs, and also in Job 28:28.

8. Prov 7:6 indicates that the author’s house had a lattice. Only the more affluent homes in Jerusalem had lattices,\textsuperscript{95} Isaiah was a favourite of the king, and likely had such a home.

Davis\textsuperscript{96} also paints a portrait of Isaiah and the era in which he lived which concurs fully with the thrust of this commentary:

1. Isaiah was a uniquely talented writer. While many prophets could preach, Isaiah could also write, not just in the sense that he was literate, but in the sense that he could create a masterpiece. Isaiah uses a larger vocabulary than any other book in the Old Testament. He mixes prose and poetry, includes literary structures like chiasms, and retains a unique writing style.

2. Isaiah was the only writing prophet who was indisputably a “court prophet,” that is, a prophet who worked for the king and prophesied in his court. Although court

\textsuperscript{92} Craig Davies, Dating the Old Testament, 384
\textsuperscript{93} Davis’ note 15: The term “Righteous One” in Isa 53:11 applied to the Suffering Servant, an individual identified with Christ in Christian theology.
\textsuperscript{94} MY NOTE: It does occur outside of the wisdom literature: Jdg. 18:7, 14, 27, 29; 1 Sam. 25:44; 2 Sam. 3:15 (according to Westminster Hebrew OT Morphology or WTM (BibleWorks 5 search))
\textsuperscript{95} Davis’ note 16: Jones. The Complete Guide to the book of Proverbs, p. 67
\textsuperscript{96} Ibid, pp. 256-7
prophets were common (1 Kgs 22:6), their loyalty to the king could be thought to compromise their integrity, and all the other writing prophets were apparently outsiders. Isaiah, however, worked for the king of Judah and seemed to be especially close to Hezekiah, with whom he apparently collaborated for the entirety of Hezekiah’s 29 year reign. As a court prophet, Isaiah had ready access to royal documents and archives present in the capital, Jerusalem. Prov25:1 mentions a role for the “men of Hezekiah” in collating the book of Proverbs, and it is likely that Isaiah, Hezekiah’s main prophet and most talented writer, played a role in that project.

3. Circulating in the upper class in Jerusalem makes it likely that Isaiah spoke Aramaic as well as Hebrew, a skill not shared by most Jews of the day (2 Kgs 18:26).

Isaiah and Hezekiah also lived in a unique period of Israel’s history, in that they were prominent in the southern Kingdom of Judah at the time that the northern Kingdom of Israel fell. The only way for a northern writing to make it into the canon of scripture therefore, was to “emigrate” south, and this would need to have happened during the time of Hezekiah and Isaiah. This apparently did happen in the case of the northern prophets Hosea and Jonah and the southern prophet to the north, Amos. All three of these prophets prophesied shortly before Isaiah, but their life spans overlapped his and he may have helped collate their work.

Note how Hos 1:1 gives a list of kings of Judah (Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah) that exactly matches Isa 1:1, even though Hosea was not a prophet to Judah but to the north, and despite the fact that the written body of his prophecy was apparently not completed before the time of Hezekiah. Isaiah may also have helped collate the northern Israelite material now found in Kings related to Elijah, Elisha, and the destruction of the Baal cult.

There were no writing prophets from either the north or the south whose lives dearly ended before the time of Isaiah, although prophets were active in Israel for more than 300 years before him. On the other hand, at least four other writing prophets lived during his time (Hosea, Amos, Jonah and Micah).

**Solomon 1 (1-9)**

The first Proverbs collection demonstrates strong stylistic correspondences with Isaiah and the northern prophets. Indeed, when we use the book averages, Prov 1-9 and Prov 31 cluster together with IsaB (40-55) and with many of the Psalm groupings. Interestingly, Psalm 49 is a Korah Psalm that demonstrates stylistic convergence with Proverbs 1-9 and inter-textually linkage with Isaiah 22 (IsaA) forming as a “stylistic–thematic bridge” between Proverbs 1-9 and Isaiah. Textual familiarity is displayed when the prophet alludes to the ode to Wisdom (Proverbs 8) in Isaiah 40 and 45 (IsaB). Moreover, Nominal-Finite verb Ratios are

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97 Strong affinity with IsaB (40-55) weaker with IsaA(1-39)
virtually the same for Proverbs 1-9 and Canticles and very similar to IsaB and Hosea. Proverbs 1-9 has therefore significant stylistic correspondence with eighth century literature. However, the first collection is more rhetorical and less antithetical than the other collections; for example Proverbs 2 constitutes one single sentence,\(^98\) and its employment of personification as a literary device is pronounced. Internally it has many repetitions but virtually no external repetitions linking with the other proverb collections. The question remains; “Does this collection have anything to do with Solomon?” As no developmental or compositional history is available we can only speculate. Proverbs 8, for example, is most certainly earlier than Isaiah and it is possible that Solomonic tradition lies behind the poetic discourse. A theoretical textual history can be constructed that sees such literature migrate north-wards with the disintegration of the united monarchy in the time of Rehoboam, where it was preserved and revised and perhaps retained as a series of closely related separate units which belonged neither to Israel’s hymnal nor to its prophetic or historic literature. It then migrated back to Judah during the Assyrian crisis carried by northern scribal refugees. It was then co-opted by Hezekiah who had tasked his “men” with the project of collecting, revising, rearranging and assembling sacred literature. Whatever Solomonic kernel lay at the roots of this collection was germinated to fruition in a hot-house of fervently inspired eighth century literary activity in the face of a mounting crisis driven by the desire to safeguard and centralize the cult, its sacred writings, and its history. This was, after all, an existential crisis that nearly terminated the Davidic dynasty and any sense of nationhood.

**Solomon 2 (10-22.16) and the “Hezekiah” collection (25-29)**

This collection has a plethora of internal repetitions but it also has a substantial number of external repetitions that link with the Hezekiah collection (25-29). Solomon 2 and the Hezekiah collection share a degree of common stylistic coherence (even using the subdivision proposed by Sklandy)\(^99\) Nominal-Finite verb Ratios of both collections are similar and close to that of the northern prophet Amos. The highest concentration of *sekel* (wise) is in Solomon 2 with none in the Hezekiah collection (25-29) the reverse is true of *batach* (trust) with the highest concentration found in the Hezekiah collection and very little in Solomon 2. Therefore, both collections chose different “hook” words to establish a link between Hezekiah and Solomon with Solomon 2 using “*sekel*” (wise) and Hezekiah collection using “*batach*” (trust).

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\(^99\) On the Sklandy finding non-metric Multidimensional scaling (Euclidean Similarity index in 2nd dimension) @ 68% Ellipses shows complete convergence with the groups lying on top of one another and LDA shows the Hezekiah collection at the 95% probability region capturing all the other groups.
WB (22.17-24.34)

Following the biblical ascriptions, the WB can be subdivided into two namely, WB1 (22.17-24.22), and WB2 (24.23-34). One repetition connects WB 2 with Solomon 1 (1-9) moreover; WB2 also has the same NF/NV values as Proverbs 1 which introduces the whole book. On the other hand hierarchical clustering places WB 1 in a group that has the endings of Solomon 1 and 2 and the start of the Hezekiah collection. The WB as a whole is therefore stylistically related to the beginnings and endings of the various collections.

Appendices (30-31)

These chapters are stylistically associated with Isaiah and depending on the dataset jump between clustering with IsaB and IsaA. It is likely that the framework of Proverbs, consisting of introductory chapters and appendices was added during or just after the finalization of the Isaiah oracle occurred.
Proverbs Commentary
The Proverbs of Solomon

First Collection

Chapters 1-9
Proverbs 1

Theme: Not all the Proverbs are for Solomon or written by Solomon but Proverbs 1 concerns the imparting of a Father’s wisdom to his son. The background is the royal intrigue facing the ascension of Solomon to the throne. Solomon faced competition for the throne from his brother Adonijah and a group of supporters who were enemies of David. Therefore the chapter also draws on the theme of the betrayal of Joseph by his brethren. The Father’s instructions open the book of Proverbs and the mother’s instructions close the book, forming an inclusio.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proverbs 1</th>
<th>Joseph in Genesis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A wise man will increase learning..... (1:5)</td>
<td>Joseph = Yah will increase or add to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>......to the young man knowledge....... (1:4)</td>
<td>......a young man, an Hebrew......</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To understand a proverb, and the interpretation; the words of the wise, and their dark sayings. (1:6)</td>
<td>..........he interpreted to us our dreams.. (41:12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.....chains about thy neck (1:9)</td>
<td>...and [Pharaoh] put a gold chain about his neck (41:42)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not. (1:10)</td>
<td>......thou art his wife: how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God? (39:9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If they say, Come with us, let us lay wait for blood, let us lurk privily for the innocent without cause: Let us swallow them up alive as the grave; and whole, as those that go down into the pit. (1.11-12)</td>
<td>Come now therefore, and let us slay him, and cast him into some pit, and we will say, Some evil beast hath devoured him: and we shall see what will become of his dreams. (37:20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you.(1:23)</td>
<td>And they sent a messenger unto Joseph, saying, Thy father did command before he died, saying, So shall ye say unto Joseph, Forgive, I pray thee now, the trespass of thy brethren, and their sin; for they did unto thee evil: and now, we pray thee, forgive the trespass of the servants of the God of thy father. (50:16-17)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The betrayal of Joseph was also a betrayal of their father Jacob, who clearly favoured Joseph. On his death bed Jacob commanded his children to beg forgiveness for their plotting against Joseph. This has obvious thematic connections with Solomon’s situation as does the fact that Joseph was a “dreamer” which links with Solomon’s “dream” (1 Kgs.3:5). Joseph
was made to ride in Pharaoh’s second chariot (cf. Solomon on the King’s mule) as a sign of authority. Joseph’s refusal to sleep with the wife of his master is perhaps a commentary on Adonijah’s request to marry David’s concubine Abishag the Shunammite (1 Kgs.1:22), which Solomon rightly perceived as a threat to his authority. In this case the one being “enticed” by sinners to give “consent”, was Solomon’s mother Bathsheba, who was asked to put the petition before Solomon.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Proverbs 1</strong></th>
<th><strong>The ascension of Solomon in 1 Kings</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>...........a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels (1:5)</td>
<td>Do therefore according to thy wisdom.... (2:6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For their feet run to evil, and make haste to shed blood. (1:16)</td>
<td>...........whom he slew, and shed the blood of war in peace... (2:5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She crieth in the chief place of concourse......... (1:21)</td>
<td>Wherefore is this noise of the city being in an uproar? (1:41)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer......(1:28)</td>
<td>And Benaiah brought the king word again, saying, Thus said Joab, and thus he answered me. And the king said unto him, Do as he hath said, and fall upon him, and bury him... (2:30-31)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They would none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof. Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices. For the turning away of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them. But whoso hearkeneth unto me shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil. (1:30-33)</td>
<td>And it was told Solomon that Shimei had gone from Jerusalem to Gath, and was come again. And the king sent and called for Shimei, and said unto him, Did I not make thee to swear by the LORD, and protested unto thee, saying, Know for a certain, on the day thou goest out, and walkest abroad any whither, that thou shalt surely die? and thou saidst unto me, The word that I have heard is good. Why then hast thou not kept the oath of the LORD, and the commandment that I have charged thee with? The king said moreover to Shimei, Thou knowest all the wickedness which thine heart is privy to, that thou didst to David my father: therefore the LORD shall return thy wickedness upon thine own head (2:41-44)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The chief place of “concourse” ḥamah in Prov.1:21 is also employed in 1 Kgs.1:41 and translated as “uproar” it is a place of “noise” and “clamour” and shouting voices. It describes Solomon being led through the city on the king’s royal mule to the accompaniment of trumpets and acclamations- “God save the king!” This “concourse” (noise, uproar) is the voice of “wisdom”, note the female gender… “she crieth”. The “wisdom” depicted here is the “wisdom” of David in his choice of a royal heir. Note that wisdom cries not only in the “concourse” but also in the “gates”. The city gate was the place where disputes were commonly aired. When another brother of Solomon (Absalom) had attempted to dethrone David, he had “stood beside the way of the gate” (2 Sam.15:2) in order to speak to all those entering the city in order to convince them of his royal credentials. At the conclusion of Proverbs we shall encounter another woman, the virtuous woman Ruth, whose husband (Boaz) sits in the “gates” (31:23), she herself is praised in these same “gates” (31:31). Therefore, the book opens with “noise” in the gates and concludes with “praise” in the gates and both stories concern inheritance in relation to establishing the Davidic dynasty.

The one whose feet were quick to shed innocent blood was Joab, who tricked Abner and slew him, David declared his house “guiltless” from this treachery (1 Sam.3:28) and David forced Joab to mourn at the funeral, but his perfidy troubled David deeply. It seems that Joab possessed a strange hold over David as especially after the Bathsheba incident David was morally powerless to discipline his captain. The punishment of Joab was part of the “wisdom instructions” given to Solomon. The kingdom could not be established with such an ambitious double-dealer as army chief.

Solomon did not answer when Joab appealed for mercy by grasping the horns of the altar. He simply sent his captain, Beniah, back to the altar to finish the task without replying to Joab’s appeal. In this case Solomon is personified as “wisdom” refusing to answer. It was too late to launch an appeal for mercy, Joab could not be trusted. He had been a thorn in David’s side and had continued his treachery by undermining Solomon’s authority. He saw himself as king-maker and the power behind the throne but “wisdom” knew otherwise and cut him down. There is implicit irony in the refusal to answer as Samuel had warned that God (the true King) would also “refuse to answer” when the people “cried out because of your king which ye shall have chosen you” (1 Sam.8:18). That king was Solomon, who introduced high taxes and forced labour in the king’s service.

The last section concerns Shimei who at first listened to Solomon’s reproof and obeyed the restrictions placed on his movements. He dwelt peacefully for three years in Jerusalem but
left the city (thus breaking his “house arrest”) in pursuit of two escaped servants. He was therefore “simple” in thinking that Solomon would somehow “forget” his “reproof” and ultimately he was a “fool destroyed by his prosperity” as he chased after his property and thus forfeited his life. The confinement of Shimei to Jerusalem was akin to the confinement of someone sentenced to manslaughter in one of the cities of refuge where they were protected from the avenger of blood. Shimei did not listen to the “voice of wisdom” (Solomon) and therefore he was sentenced to death. So, finally the grief and trouble stirring that Shimei had caused David had come home to roost; “Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices” we might say, “what goes around, comes around” – there is definitely an element of schadenfreude in some of these proverbs; “I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh” (1:26), but it is richly deserved.
Proverbs 2

Theme: The fear of God is the “wisdom” that allows the upright to meet all challenges and adversity. These are the words of a “father” to a “son” (David to Solomon) but they are also the words of God to his children a “foolish and unwise” people (Deut.32:6). Significantly, Proverbs 2 has Deuteronomy 30-33, Psalm 18 and 2 Samuel 22 as co-texts:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proverbs 2</th>
<th>Deuteronomy 30-33</th>
<th>Psalm 18</th>
<th>2 Samuel</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>...searchest for her as for hid treasures... (2:4)</td>
<td>Is not this laid up in store with me, and sealed up among my treasures? (32:34)</td>
<td>....my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler (18:2)</td>
<td>...in him will I trust: he is my shield... (22:3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...a buckler (shield) to them that walk uprightly... (2:7)</td>
<td>....the shield of thy help... (33:29)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He keepeth the paths of judgment, and preserveth the way of his saints.... (2:8)</td>
<td>To me belongeth vengeance....their foot shall slide in due time.... (32:35)</td>
<td>He maketh my feet like hinds’ feet, and setteth me upon my high places. (18:33)</td>
<td>He maketh my feet like hinds’ feet: and setteth me upon my high places.(22:24)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>....the man that speaketh froward things... (2:12)</td>
<td>....a very froward generation... (32:20)</td>
<td>With the pure thou wilt shew thyself pure; and with the froward thou wilt shew thyself froward. (18:26)</td>
<td>.....with the froward thou wilt shew thyself unsavoury. (22:27)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For the upright shall dwell in the land...(2:21)</td>
<td>.....that thou mayest dwell in the land.... (30:20)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Psalm 18 is set in the period somewhere between 2 Samuel 6 and 11 — for it is inconceivable that vv. 22-24 were written after the time of David’s great lapse, and the allusions in the second half of the psalm to the northern tribes and Gentile enemies require that David be king in Jerusalem when writing these words. Psalm 18 is also placed in 2 Samuel 22 (note that chapters 20-24 form a miscellaneous collection of records not in
chronological order). There are also many connections between Psalm 18 and Hannah’s song of exaltation in 1 Samuel 2.

The froward man is possibly based on Doeg the Edomite (see Psalm 52) who slew the priests and the strange woman “which flattereth (chalaq) with her words” and “forsaketh the guide of her youth, and forgetteth the covenant of her God” (2:16-17) is very likely a reference to David’s councillor Ahithophel, who betrayed him. His words were “smoother (chalaq) than butter” (Ps.55:21) and he was David’s “guide” (my guide, and mine acquaintance, 55:13) and he broke “his covenant” (55:20). The contrast here is with Ahithophel forsaking his guide (divine wisdom) and forgetting not only “his covenant” (with David) but the covenant of her God. Even the female gender (her) is applicable as the nation had been married to God at Sinai (Ezek.16:8). Folly is depicted here as a “strange woman” an adulterous and unfaithful woman, untrue to the love covenant and treacherous.

Interestingly, the word translated as flattery/smooth, carries another core meaning relating to “division” as in dividing up portions or spoil. This delivers further intertextual connections with Abraham refusing the reward offered by the king of Sodom and only accepting reimbursement for the portion of his men’s costs. (Gen.14:24) As a consequence of refusing the reward of Sodom the very next chapter commences with God offering Abram a reward; “Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward” (Gen.15:1) – God offers his protection and Abram was promised an heir and the land as his reward. The theme of “God as shield” and “dwelling in the land” is also found in Proverbs 2. Furthermore, in Genesis 17:1, Abraham was advised to; “walk before me, and be thou perfect (tamiym)” the NIB/NIV translates as “blameless the same word that is employed in Prov.2:21; “For the upright will dwell in the land, and the blameless will remain in it” (NKJ).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proverbs 2</th>
<th>Abraham in Genesis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16 .....the stranger which (chalaq) with her words</td>
<td>14.24 .....let them take their portion (chalaq)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 .....He is a shield (magen) to those who walk uprightly</td>
<td>15.1 .....I am thy shield (magen), and thy exceeding great reward.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 .....the blameless (tamiym) will remain in it</td>
<td>17.1 .....be thou perfect (tamiym)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 .....dwell in the land</td>
<td>15.7 .....to give thee this land to inherit it</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is difficult to see how the semantic range can cover both flattery and division. Perhaps the distinction between the two core meanings was not always clear cut to the LXX translators. Perhaps the semantic range of the word was expanded or perhaps division and disunity is the consequence of political double-speak (flattery cf. Dan.11:32). Notably it was the tribe of Benjamin that would “divide (chalaq) the spoil” in the evening and morning of Israel’s history (Gen.49:7). King Saul came from the tribe of Benjamin as did “Saul of Tarsus” and both persecuted a Davidic King at the beginning and end of Israel’s national history. See the title of Psalm 18: “A Psalm of David, the servant of the LORD, who spake unto the LORD the words of this song in the day that the LORD delivered him from the hand of all his enemies, and from the hand of Saul...”
The last verse of Proverbs 2 (v.22) is more faithfully rendered by the NRS; “but the wicked will be cut off from the land, and the treacherous בגד (bagad) will be rooted out of it”. The verb בגד is complex as it is identical to the Hebrew noun for clothing; this has caused some to attempt to connect the verb with the noun. It is possible that the “treachery” in Prov.2:22 is a play on 1 Kings 1; “And king David is old, entering into days, and they cover him with garments (בגד), and he hath no heat” (YLT). If that is the case, the first verse of Kings 1 carries a double entendre, namely – David is old and they covered him with treachery but he could not get angry (hot). This play on בגד accords well with what follows – David’s death bed words of wisdom and his instructions to Solomon - David may well have been too old to personally punish the plotters and double dealers for their treachery, but he ensured that the traitors would get their just deserts.

It is clear that a complex matrix of intertextual connections exists between early Davidic history, Deuteronomy and Proverbs 2. It seems to me that the direction of influence is from Deuteronomy to the other writings. In other words the former writings are alluding to the last chapters of Deuteronomy – to the last words of “covenant wisdom” spoken by Moses to his “children” before he died, and before they entered the Promised Land this coincides well with David giving his death bed instructions to Solomon.

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101 The verb for treachery and the noun for clothing have identical spelling. NIDOTTE#953 remarks; “Although attempts (on these see, e.g., Erlandsson, TDOT 1:470; R. L. Smith, 321 to connect the verb to the noun, beged, garment/clothing, have received considerable support (see Pusey, 35; R. L. Smith, 321; Verhoef, 267) they are not compelling”.
Proverbs 3

Theme: Wisdom is to be valued above all else, obedience and fear of God is true wisdom and it comes with the additional benefits of long life and wealth. The co-texts for this chapter are Genesis 1-3, Deuteronomy, and Psalm 91 together with 1 Kings 3:10-14;

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proverbs 3</th>
<th>1 Kings 3:10-14</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>For length of days, and long life.... (3:2)</td>
<td>....and hast not asked for thyself long life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.....and peace.... (3:2)</td>
<td>Solomon = peace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.....shall they add to thee (3:2)</td>
<td>And I have also given thee that which thou hast not asked...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. She is more precious than rubies: and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her. (3:14-15)</td>
<td>.....both riches, and honour: so that there shall not be any among the kings like unto thee all thy days.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My son, forget not my law; but let thine heart keep my commandments (3:1)</td>
<td>And if thou wilt walk in my ways, to keep my statutes and my commandments....</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of days is in her right hand; and in her left hand riches and honour. (3:16)</td>
<td>......then I will lengthen thy days</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Solomon acts as the “template” upon which the framework of the chapter is hung. His request for wisdom in the dream vision of 1 Kgs.3:10-14 is granted along with the added benefit of riches and long life. Long life and length of days is mentioned twice in the dream vision and twice in Proverbs 3. The benefits of wisdom are taken from Psalm 91. This Psalm was chosen because it recalls the death of Moses together with the wilderness generation before the younger generation (under Joshua) entered the Promised Land. Psalms 90 and 91 are thus seen to be two halves of the same whole. It is fitting that David refers to this Psalm as Solomon represented the new generation. There are word plays in Psalm 91 (vv.1, 16) on Aholiab (The Father (God) is my tent); Bezaleel (In the shadow of God) and Joshua (The Lord is my salvation). Psalm 91 has many intertextual links with Deuteronomy and Exodus and we shall see that Proverbs 3 also employs Deuteronomy.
### Psalm 91

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Reference</th>
<th>Verse</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>My God, in him will I trust</td>
<td>Deut. 32:37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Cover thee (s.w.)</td>
<td>Exod. 40:3,21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Feathers... wings</td>
<td>Deut. 32:11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>The pestilence</td>
<td>Deut. 32:24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Reward, recompense (s.w.)</td>
<td>Deut. 32:35,41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Thy habitation/dwelling</td>
<td>Deut. 33:27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>place/refuge (s.w.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Adder... dragon</td>
<td>Deut. 32:33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>My salvation</td>
<td>Exod. 14:13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Proverbs 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reference</th>
<th>Verse</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proverbs 3</td>
<td>Length of days is in her right hand... (3:16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>With long life will I satisfy him, and shew him my salvation. (91:16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Then shalt thou walk in thy way safely, and thy foot shall not stumble. (3:23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. (91:11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Be not afraid of sudden fear, neither of the desolation of the wicked, when it cometh. (3:25)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day. (91:5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>For the LORD shall be thy confidence, and shall keep thy foot from being taken. (3:26)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone. (91:12)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The benefits of wisdom are therefore drawn from the words of Moses regarding the passing of one generation and the inheritance of the coming generation. The old generation died in the wilderness (along with Moses himself) but the youngsters survived all the wilderness perils because they were guided and protected by God. Solomon would also survive the perils of leading his people and possessing the land, but only if he followed the instructions for “choosing life” as set out in Deuteronomy. This was not just an outward “binding” of the law, but a way of life written on the heart—not on tables of stone.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proverbs 3</th>
<th>Deuteronomy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thine heart.... (3:1,3,5)</td>
<td>And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart... (6:6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My son, forget not my law (3:1)</td>
<td>Beware that thou forget not the LORD thy God in not keeping his commandments, and his judgments, and his statutes, which I command thee this day. (8:11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Let not mercy and truth forsake thee: bind them about thy neck; write them upon the table of thine heart. (3:3)</td>
<td>And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand... (6:8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My son, despise not the chastening of the LORD; neither be weary of his correction. (3:11)</td>
<td>Thou shalt also consider in thine heart, that, as a man chasteneth his son, so the LORD thy God chasteneth thee. (8:5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase. (3:9)</td>
<td>That thou shalt take of the first of all the fruit of the earth...and shalt go unto... the LORD... (26:2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine. (3:10)</td>
<td>The LORD shall command the blessing upon thee in thy storehouses.... (28:8)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Finally, and most importantly, a distinction must be made between divine wisdom and human wisdom. Divine wisdom is a gift – grasping at divine wisdom is hubris and pride cometh before a fall:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proverbs 3</th>
<th>Genesis 1-3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>....keep my commandments (3:1)</td>
<td>I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat (3:11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be not wise in thine own eyes (3:7)</td>
<td>Pleasant to the eyes....to make one wise (3:6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>....all the things thou canst desire (3:15)</td>
<td>....to be desired (3:6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>....fear the LORD (3:7)</td>
<td>....I was afraid (3:10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Happy is the man that findeth wisdom(3:13)</td>
<td>.....I will greatly multiply thy sorrow. (3:16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of days is in her right hand (3:16)</td>
<td>.....for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die. (2:17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her. (3:18)</td>
<td>.....the tree of life also in the midst of the garden. (2:9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace (=Solomon). (3:17)</td>
<td>......to keep the way of the tree of life .(3:24)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase. (3:9)</td>
<td>And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock. (4:4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My son, despise not the chastening of the LORD; neither be weary of his correction. (3:11)</td>
<td>And the LORD said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? (4:6-7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strive not with a man without cause, if he have done thee no harm. (3:30)</td>
<td>And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him.(4:8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The curse of the LORD is in the house of the wicked: but he blesseth the habitation of the just (3:33)</td>
<td>And now art thou cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother’s blood from thy hand (4:11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The LORD by wisdom hath founded the earth; by understanding hath he established the heavens. (3:19).</td>
<td>In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth (1:1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By his knowledge the depths are broken up. (3:20)</td>
<td>Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place. (1:9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>So shall they be life unto thy soul. (3:22)</td>
<td>......and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.(2:7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The wise shall inherit glory: but shame shall be the promotion of fools. (3:35)</td>
<td>And he said, Lord GOD, whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it? (15:8)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The warning in 1 Chron. 28:9 is appropriate here; “And thou, Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind: for the LORD searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts: if thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever”.

Proverbs was edited by the “men of Hezekiah” (Prov. 25:1) as were many of the Psalms. Proverbs 3:2-3 has the same key phrases as Psalm 85:10; mercy and truth (cf. Micah 7:20) and peace referring to the covenant promises and peace “kissing each other”. Psalm 85 (A Korah Psalm) describes the outworking of divine wisdom in the suffering servant (Hezekiah), who embodied messianic hope — resurrection from his death bed, the continuation of the Davidic dynasty and a time of peace for his people after the return of the Assyrian captives.\footnote{See, G. Booker online@ \url{http://www.christadelphianbooks.org/booker/psalms3/psabkc13.html} [cited May 2014]}
Proverbs 4

Theme: Wisdom is necessary for the establishment of the Davidic dynasty from tender beginnings (Solomon) and from the shining light of Hezekiah (the suffering servant) until the “perfect” day of the Messiah shines forth. Yahweh would preserve and keep them (like he did the patriarchs) as long as they did not turn aside. The co-texts are Deuteronomy and Genesis:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proverbs 4</th>
<th>Deuteronomy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Good doctrine (4:2)</td>
<td>My doctrine (32:2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>....tender and only beloved (4:3)</td>
<td>.....upon the tender herb (32:2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Words of my mouth (4:5)</td>
<td>Words of my mouth (32:1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forsake her not (4:6)</td>
<td>.....and will forsake me (31:16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>....she shall preserve thee (4:6)</td>
<td>.....that he might preserve us alive (6:24)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>....for she is thy life (4:13)</td>
<td>....therefore choose life (30:19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The way of the wicked is as darkness (4:19)</td>
<td>....as the blind gropeth in darkness (28:19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.....let all thy ways be established (4:26)</td>
<td>....hath he not made thee, and established thee? (32:16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turn not to the right hand nor to the left (4:27)</td>
<td>...turn not aside from the commandment (17:20)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The framework for Proverbs is once again taken from Deuteronomy, with words like doctrine (יְשׁוֹעַ) occurring in both texts and tender (יוֹם) in Prov.4:3 being matched with “tender herb” (נהר) or “new grass” in Deut.32:2. This echoes the description of Solomon by David in 1 Chron.22:5; “my son is young and tender (יוֹם)”. God would “establish (יהי, יְשׁוֹעַ) the throne” of the Davidic dynasty (1 Chron.22:10); “all his ways would be established (יְשׁוֹעַ)” – the same word is employed in Prov.4:26 and Deut.32:16. The Hebrew meḵûnā (fem.) base (from the root יְשׁוֹעַ) is used eight times in 1 Kings 7 for the description of the brass base of the lavers and the base of the pillars that Solomon made for the temple. The first pillar was Jachin “He (Jah) will establish (יְשׁוֹעַ)” the other pillar Bo’az probably means,
“He will strengthen”\(^{103}\) The same word (׃ךֵּן, ḫūn) is employed in Proverbs 4:18 but it is translated “perfect” in the KJV instead of “established”; “But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect (׃ךֵּן, ḫūn) day”. This is almost a paraphrase of David’s words in 2 Sam.23:3-4; “The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me, He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God. And he shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain. The same “shining language” is used of King Hezekiah in Isa.9:2 \(^{104}\) and as the Proverbs were collected and arranged by his scribes we should expect a dual application. The establishment of the Davidic dynasty is therefore likened to a shining new dawn – and the light will get brighter and more intense (more and more) until the “perfect” or “established” day (the day the Messiah appears – the true Davidic heir as verses typical fulfilments such Solomon or Hezekiah). There is further evidence of northern Israelite influence \(^{105}\) as the situation described in Prov.4:17 is similar to that found in Amos 2:8 and similar language is used of the Hezekiah, who is the “suffering servant” (Isa.53:2); “For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant (׃ָּנְּאָי), which conveys the idea of a suckling, sapling or a young plant.

The expression “I was my father’s son” (KJV) in Prov.4:3, literally (YLT); “a son I have been to my father”, is unusual and echoes 2 Sam.7:14; “I will be his father, and he shall be my son” which although applicable to Solomon, has clear messianic overtones. However, although the establishment of the Davidic dynasty was unconditional (i.e., God would establish it through his messiah), there would be punishment for the king and the nation if they “turned aside” and it is fitting that this phrase is from Deuteronomy 17 – the chapter that warns Israel of the consequences of desiring a human king – he would “multiply horses” and demand forced labour in his service – all these things were done by Solomon, so much so, that the kingdom revolted because of the heavy burden Solomon placed on his subjects and under his son the monarchy was divided. So, in the end, Solomon forsook wisdom and God turned aside from him.

\(^{103}\) De Vries believes that the significance of the pillars may be “as propriety emblems, claiming the temple for Yahweh” (S. De Vries, 1 Kings, 1985, p.112), but they most certainly are concerned with the promise made to David who was the descendant of Boaz. The pillars were decorated with pomegranates – indicating multitudinous seed and lilies, which are also associated with the nation (2 Esdras 5:23-28 and with Passover redemption so Thirtle). The meaning of Boaz is uncertain but most probably means strength - the word “strength” is twice used in Prov.31: 17 (where the virtuous woman is modeled on Ruth) playing on the name of Boaz. The pillars formed an outward symbol of the promise made to David; “Yahweh would establish the seed of Boaz (the gibbôre hayil)”

\(^{104}\) “The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined”.

\(^{105}\) Instability in northern Israel caused many northern scribes to attach themselves to Hezekiah’s royal court in Judah.
There are also allusions to the patriarchs Jacob and Joseph throughout Proverbs 4; the providential care of Yahweh is being highlighted in these passages:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proverbs 4</th>
<th>Genesis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Forsake her not, and she shall preserve thee... (4:6)</td>
<td>God did send me (Joseph) before you to preserve life (45:5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...love her, and she shall keep thee (4:6)</td>
<td>And, behold, I am with thee (Jacob), and will keep thee (28:15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For they sleep not....(4:16)...</td>
<td>...and (Jacob) lay down in that place to sleep (28:11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>....except they have done mischief (4:6)</td>
<td>....and mischief befall him...(Joseph’s brother Benjamin)...(44:9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She shall give to thine head an ornament of grace: a crown of glory shall she deliver to thee (4:9)</td>
<td>....on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head (49:26)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>......with all thy getting (הָלַ֚ךְ) get understanding (4:17)</td>
<td>“Getting” (הלכ) is used 4x in Genesis 47 for Joseph acquiring/buying/getting, all the land of Egypt but Joseph also had understanding.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

106 The high priestly blessing in Numbers 6 also references the terms – keep thee/shine etc all found in Proverbs 4
Proverbs 5

Theme: The seduction of folly is personified as a foreign woman. The folly of presumptuous pride (Uzziah) provides a backdrop to the folly of Judah being seduced by Assyrian power (under Ahaz). Hezekiah (the suffering servant) and the northern Israelites that he courted is the antithesis of the temptress. When ensnared in the sin of pride Hezekiah humbled himself (2 Chron.32:26) and when trapped by the cords of death he appealed to God and not to Assyria (like Ahaz did). The major co-texts are Song of Songs, Ecclesiastes and Isaiah:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Proverbs 5</strong></th>
<th><strong>Song of Songs</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>For the lips of a strange woman drop as an honeycomb... (5:3)</td>
<td>Thy lips, O my spouse, drop as the honeycomb... (4:11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remove thy way far from her, and come not nigh the door of her house... (5:8)</td>
<td>I held him, and would not let him go, until I had brought him into my mother’s house... (3:4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Should your springs be scattered abroad, streams of water in the streets? (5:16 NRS)</td>
<td>....my spouse; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed.... (4:12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Let her be as the loving hind and pleasant roe; let her breasts satisfy thee at all times; and be thou ravished always with her... (5:19)</td>
<td>My beloved is like a roe or a young hart.... (2:9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And why wilt thou, my son, be ravished with a strange woman (5:20)</td>
<td>Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister... (4:9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>....and embrace (ָךָ֣סֶף) the bosom of a stranger? (5:20)</td>
<td>....his right hand doth embrace (ָךָ֣סֶף) me. (2:6)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The strange woman in Proverbs 5 draws on co-texts that depict the beauty and faithfulness of the bride in Song of Songs. This juxtaposition is obviously done to contrast the two women. The bride is the antithesis of the strange woman. Whereas the bride in Songs is both a “sister” and a “spouse” (in other words she is related to her husband like Abraham
was to Sarah) the other woman is “strange” (i.e., foreign). Whereas the bride is chaste and keeps her “fountain sealed” for her husband, the strange woman is liberal with her waters, making them universally available. The bride takes her beloved to her mother’s house, Isaac took his “sister-spouse” to his mother’s tent (Gen.24:67) making her the matriarch of the clan. The “strange” woman takes her lover(s) into her house. Solomon built Pharaoh’s daughter her own house (1 Kgs.9:24) and he “loved many strange women” (1 Kgs.11:1). The word embrace (ḇāḇāḇ) echoes Isaac “laying” with his wife and is a euphemism for covenant love. The patriarchal doublets recounting the “sister-wife” narratives in Genesis (12:10-20; 20:1-18; 26:7-11) are typically prophetic of Israel’s covenant history and are concerned with legitimacy and ownership of water sources. Song of Songs alludes to these sister-wife narratives and should be placed in the context of Hezekiah’s reign.

The Shepherd in Songs is Hezekiah and the Shulamite is the faithful element in the northern kingdom. Hezekiah’s wooing campaign is the reformation early in his reign and the ‘betrothal’ is the great Passover that he organised. The Shepherd’s disappearance coincides with Hezekiah’s illness and the Assyrian invasion, which causes the maiden’s dreams and nightmares. The story concludes with ‘Solomon’ (Hezekiah) coming to claim his bride – no longer depicted as a shepherd but as a victorious and splendid King. Reference to the “sealed fountain” in Songs and “own cistern” in Proverbs, functions at two levels; firstly, it denotes the chastity of the faithful remnant in Hezekiah’s day, those who refuse to turn to Assyria and her gods and secondly, it was literally true, as Hezekiah built a water tunnel and “shut up the fountains” in order to prevent the Assyrians finding water; “So there was gathered much people together, who stopped all the fountains, and the brook that ran through the midst of the land, saying, Why should the kings of Assyria come, and find much water?” (2 Chron.32:4). Hezekiah promised the people that they would drink water out of their own cisterns (cf. Prov.5:15) and this statement was countered with Assyrian propaganda (2 Kgs.18:31). Under Hezekiah the people remained faithful to their own God and drank from the “wells of salvation” (Isaiah 12). Ironically, the Gihon spring was later known as the Virgin spring and this coincides nicely with the “sealed fountain”.

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107 The KJV renders Proverbs 5:16 as follows: “Let thy fountains be dispersed abroad, and rivers of waters in the streets”. However, the NRS renders the Hebrew as an interrogative: “Should your springs be scattered abroad, streams of water in the streets?” This is closer to the Greek LXX (LXE); “Let not waters out of thy fountain be spilt by thee, but let thy waters go into thy streets”.
108 See especially Genesis 26
109 See, Sister-Wife, CeJBI, Vol. 6 No. 2 Apr 2012: 3-15
111 The pool of Siloam in the city of Jerusalem is fed by a conduit (Hezekiah’s tunnel) that is cut for a distance of 530 meters through solid rock, and which starts at the Gihon spring.
112 The name may owe its origin to an earlier Jewish name, the Well of Miriam (the sister of Moses). Since Miriam is Hebrew for Mary, this could explain an unlikely Christian legend that the Virgin Mary washed Jesus’ swaddling clothes here.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proverbs 5</th>
<th>Ecclesiastes</th>
<th>Other co-texts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I was almost in all evil in the midst of the congregation and assembly (5:14)</td>
<td>Hebrew word for assembly ב'ם (qā hàlām) is a form of our word for Preacher (ך'מ'נ') or “assembler” (qōhelet) in Eccl. 1:1f, 12; 7:27; 12:8ff.</td>
<td>Of Levi and Simeon it is said; Let not my honour be united to their assembly; (Gen.49:6 NKJ). .....for thou hast trespassed; neither shall it be for thine honour from the LORD God. (2 Chron.26:18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lest thou give thine honour unto others, and thy years unto the cruel (5:9)</td>
<td>Dead flies cause the ointment of the apothecary to send forth a stinking savour: so doth a little folly him that is in reputation for wisdom and honour. (10:1)</td>
<td>Of Levi and Simeon it is said; “instruments of cruelty are in their habitations” (Gen.49:5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And say, How have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof (5:12)</td>
<td>Be not hasty in thy spirit to be angry: for anger resteth in the bosom of fools. (7:9)</td>
<td>Then Uzziah was wroth, and had a censer in his hand to burn incense: and while he was wroth with the priests, the leprosy even rose up in his forehead before the priests in the house of the LORD (2 Chron.26:19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And thou mourn (נָבַי) at the last, when thy flesh and thy body are consumed (5:11)</td>
<td>It is better to go to the house of mourning (גְּד), than to go to the house of feasting: for that is the end of all men; and the living will lay it to his heart. (7:2)</td>
<td>And Uzziah the king was a leper unto the day of his death, and dwelt in a several house, being a leper; for he was cut off from the house of the LORD: (2 Chron.26:21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Let them be only thine own, and not strangers’ with thee (5:17)</td>
<td>.....yet God giveth him not power to eat thereof, but a stranger eateth it: this is vanity, and it is an evil disease. (6:2)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lest strangers be filled with thy wealth (נִשָּׂא); and thy labours be in the house of a stranger (5:10)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Thus saith Hezekiah, This day is a day of trouble, and of rebuke, and of blasphemy: for the children are come to the birth, and there is not strength (נִשָּׂא) to bring forth. (Isa.37:3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Let thy fountain be blessed: and rejoice with the wife of thy youth. (5:18)</td>
<td>Live joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest (9:9)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>His own iniquities shall take the wicked himself, and he shall be holden with the cords (נִשָּׂא) of his sins. (5:22)</td>
<td>Woe unto them that draw iniquity with cords (נִשָּׂא) of vanity, and sin as it were with a cart rope (Isa.5:18)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

113 Assembler of wisdom?; Caller of assemblies?; Hence, ἐκκλησία/Ecclesiastes—dynamically—Preacher/teacher
In wisdom literature the figure of the “woman” is employed as a personification of either wisdom or folly, particular in Proverbs. In Proverbs 5 the “strange woman” is a metaphor for the seduction of folly. Proverbs 5 covers the era from Uzziah to Hezekiah. Elsewhere, the case was made that Ecclesiastes (Qoheleth) is based on the memoirs of king Uzziah. In this chapter he is employed as the example of the folly of human pride and presumptuous sin. King Uzziah usurped the priestly function and regarded himself as a Melchizedek priest-king and attempted to imitate his ancestor David. However, David did not force himself into the divine presence but was invited to sit before the ark, where he received the promise of 2 Sam.7 and saw the vision described in Psalm 110. There are key words in Proverbs 5 (and Qohleth) that are specifically linked with the priestly tribe of Levi when they became covenant breakers! The words – honour/assembly/stink are linked with Levi but they also occur in Qohleth and Proverbs 5. Particularly the mention of the ointment made to stink (Ecc.10:1) is a reference to the priestly anointing oil that was reserved only for the priests. Uzziah had made this priestly ointment stink (like Levi) when he broke the covenant and his reputation for honour was destroyed because he had united his honour with the assembly of the covenant breakers. His flesh and body were consumed with leprosy (Prov.5:11) it was an evil disease (Ecc.6:2). Strangers (i.e. foreigners = the Assyrians) would be filled with his wealth (Prov.5:10); however, the Hebrew הָרָע should be rendered “power” with emphasis on generative power as in Isa.37:3; the people did not have the strength to give birth. They could not deliver the child and where too exhausted to bear down and push. Judah and King Hezekiah faced death at the hands of Assyria. So all of Uzziah’s labours in strengthening his kingdom were ultimately vanity and vexation of spirit as he watched his grandson Ahaz sell out to the Assyrians.\footnote{King Uzziah did not accept the rebuke of the priests and neither did the people of Judah; the nation had become leprous like their king\footnote{Isaiah 1:6 From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment.} therefore God sent a “day of rebuke” (Isa.37:3; 1Kgs.19:3). Solomon had asked for an understanding heart – literally, a “listening heart” (1 Kgs.3:9) the students of wisdom are urged to listen to wise sayings, which is to apply the heart to what the teacher instructs. Similar to King Uzziah many of the people who lived during the reign of his co-regent Ahaz, refused to listen to reproof. As a consequence they would mourn (יָנָה)\footnote{The Hebrew is literally groan or growl; “At the end of your life you will groan, when your flesh and body are spent” (Prov. 5:11 NIV).} at the last (Prov.5:11) and their groan (יָנָה) of distress would be matched by the growl (יָנָה) of the Assyrian lion.\footnote{Isaiah 5:29 Their roaring shall be like a lion, they shall roar like young lions: yea, they shall growl (יָנָה), and lay hold of the prey, and shall carry it away safe, and none shall deliver it.} They did not ponder the way of life (Prov.5:6) but chose other paths (Isa.2:3; Mic.4:2). Proverbs 5 ends with the following verses;[114] Jotham and Ahaz were co-regents with Uzziah and he lived long enough to see the birth of Hezekiah. Uzziah spent the last 15 years of his life as a leper and he observed the deterioration of Judah with dismay.\footnote{Jotham and Ahaz were co-regents with Uzziah and he lived long enough to see the birth of Hezekiah. Uzziah spent the last 15 years of his life as a leper and he observed the deterioration of Judah with dismay.}
“His own iniquities (נִשְׁמָטָה) shall take (לָכְבֹּס) the wicked himself, and he shall be holden with the cords of his sins. He shall die without instruction; and in the greatness of his folly he shall go astray”.

There is a matrix of connections in these last verses; the word for iniquities (נִשְׁמָטָה) occurs for the first time in the story of Cain (4:13), where it is translated as punishment — “My punishment (נִשְׁמָטָה) is greater than I can bear”. Some of the older versions translate it as iniquity/guilt (LXX, Tg. Onkelos, and Vg.) and it seems to be an idiomatic expression formed together with the verb to bear. The idiom occurs 37 times in the OT mostly in the Pentateuch. Of particular interest is the scapegoat on the Day of Atonement; “bear upon him all their iniquities (נִשְׁמָטָה)” (Lev.16:22). The scapegoat was sent away from the sanctuary. The parallels are obvious — Cain was sent away from Eden with a “mark” on his body, Uzziah was cut off from the sanctuary with leprosy and Samaria was sent into captivity. Rather than employing the usual form of the idiom (iniquities/bear), the combination iniquities/taken is employed in Prov.5:22, probably to convey the idea of the taking or capture of Samaria where it is used twice; “And at the end of three years they took (לָכְבֹּס) it: even in the sixth year of Hezekiah, that is the ninth year of Hoshea king of Israel, Samaria was taken (לָכְבֹּס)” (2 Kgs.18:10). The Hebrew taken (לָכְבֹּס) also occurs in Prov.6:2; taken or trapped by the words of your mouth. Being ensnared by the cords of sin parallels “the cords of Sheol entangled me” in 2 Sam.22:6. The chapter ends with the wicked going astray (גָּזֶה). This is the same word that is used in verses 19 and 20 and translated there as “ravished” in the KJV but more accurately rendered as intoxicated (Prov. 5:20 NRS) -often it carries the idea of drunken stumbling; “These also reel (גָּזֶה) with wine and stagger with strong drink; the priest and the prophet reel (גָּזֶה) with strong drink, they are confused with wine, they stagger with strong drink; they err (גָּזֶה) in vision, they stumble in giving judgment” (Isa.28:7 NRS). These were the “drunkards of Ephraim” (northern refugees in the Hezekiah period), who were destined to be “broken, and snared, and taken” (v.13) because they had made a deal with the Assyrians (we have made a covenant with death, v.15).

118 See NIDOTTE,#2627
119 See commentary on Proverbs 6 where לָכְבֹּס is linked with Isa.8:5 during the reign of Ahaz.
120 Prov chapter 2 also employs 2 Sam 22 as a co-text.
Proverbs 6

Theme: The contrast is between zeal for the house (temple) and the covenant typified by Hezekiah and indolence typified by Ahaz. Abject lessons are drawn from the unfaithfulness of Israel in the time of Jezebel and employed to warn Judah. Only Yahweh could stand as surety for the survival of the Davidic dynasty – turning to Assyria would spell disaster. Punishment would be swift and decisive for Jerusalem committed the same sins of adultery as her sister Samaria. No gifts or pledges could buy of the Assyrians who were instruments of divine punishment – only Yahweh could save them. No gifts or substance could buy covenant protection – only faithfulness to Yahweh. The main co-texts are 1&2 Kings, Deuteronomy and Isaiah:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proverbs 6</th>
<th>1 &amp; 2 Kings (northern Israel)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A naughty person (lit., 'adam beliya`al), a wicked man, walketh with a froward mouth. (6:12) A false witness that speaketh lies...(6:19)</td>
<td>And there came in two men, children of Belial, and sat before him: and the men of Belial witnessed against him, even against Naboth, in the presence of the people, saying, Naboth did blaspheme God and the king. (21:13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To keep thee from the evil woman, from the flattery of the tongue of a strange woman (6:24)</td>
<td>And Jezebel his wife said unto him, Dost thou now govern the kingdom of Israel? (21:7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lust not after her beauty in thine heart; neither let her take thee with her eyelids. (6:25)</td>
<td>Jezebel heard of it; and she painted her face, and tired her head, and looked out at a window. (2 Kgs. 9:30)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For by means of a whorish woman (6:26)</td>
<td>What peace, so long as the whoredoms of thy mother Jezebel and her witchcrafts are so many? (2 Kgs. 9:22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>....a man is brought to a piece of bread (6:26)</td>
<td>....arise, and eat bread, and let thine heart be merry (21:7) But there was none like unto Ahab, which did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the LORD, whom Jezebel his wife stirred up. (21:25)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>....and the adulteress will hunt for the precious life. (6:26)</td>
<td>.... I make not thy life as the life of one of them by tomorrow about this time. (19:2)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The story of Jezebel is employed in Proverbs 6: 24-26 as a warning to Judah. Jezebel was a Phoenician princess who married into the royal house of northern Israel and introduced Baal worship. She also encouraged her husband Ahab in a scheme to confiscate land. Jezebel killed the prophets and sought to “hunt for the precious life” of Elijah. Jezebel is
accused of “whoredoms” (cf. Prov.6:26) in 2 Kings because of her introduction of Baal worship and in Prov.6:24 she is called a “strange” or foreign (לְשֵׁנָּה) woman. Solomon “loved many strange women” (1 Kgs.11:1); these foreign women led him astray after their gods. The woman in Proverbs uses “flattery” (หวย) or “smoothness” but the Hebrew root הִלְוֶה occurs with two different meanings, be smooth (hilq I) and divide/apportion (hilq II). The apportioning has to do with dividing up land as in Gen.33:19; “a parcel of a field”. This is fitting as Jezebel’s “flattery” concerned stealing a portion of land from Naboeth.

Northern Israel was punished because of this misbehaviour; “Seest thou how Ahab humbleth himself before me? because he humbleth himself before me, I will not bring the evil in his days: but in his son’s days will I bring the evil upon his house” (1 Kings 21:29). Samaria, the capital of northern Israel fell to the Assyrians in BC 721/722 and this served as a warning to Judah. “Woe to those who plan iniquity, (cf. Prov.6:18) to those who plot evil on their beds! At morning’s light they carry it out because it is in their power to do it. And they covet fields, and take them by violence; and houses, and take them away: so they oppress a man and his house, even a man and his heritage” (Mic.2:1-2). As in previous chapters, Deuteronomy is also employed as a co-text by Proverbs 6:20-22;

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proverbs 6</th>
<th>Deuteronomy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>...keep thy father’s commandment (6:20)</td>
<td>For this commandment which I command thee this day (30:11)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Father....mother (6:20)</td>
<td>.....which will not obey the voice of his father, or the voice of his mother (21:18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...forsake not the law of thy mother (6:20)</td>
<td>....and go a whoring after the gods of the strangers.... and will forsake me...(31:16)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bind them... (6:21)</td>
<td>....thou shalt bind them (6:8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>continually upon thine heart (6:21)</td>
<td>....and in thy heart (30:14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When thou goest, it shall lead thee; when thou sleepest, it shall keep thee; and when thou awakenest, it shall talk with thee.(6:22)</td>
<td>And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.(6:7)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

God acts as both a father and a mother (cf. Isa.66:13) towards his people. The constant warning in Deuteronomy is against the forsaking of the covenant by following foreign (strange) gods (as Solomon did). Unlike Deuteronomy, the law is not bound like “frontlets” before the eyes, but upon the heart and around the neck. The idea of the high priestly

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121 NIDOTTE, #2744
122 STRONGS, #2513
123 Micah 1:1 The word of the LORD that came to Micah the Morasthite in the days of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, which he saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem.
breastplate is presented here- bound with chains around the neck and waist and resting on the chest – the law is no longer something written on tablets of stone but internalised. This section concludes with an echo of Psalm 119:105; “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path”. It is called “a way of life” (6:23) which echoes Deut.30:19 – “chose life”. Psalm 119 is a Hezekiah Psalm and this period fits the background of Proverbs 6 which we assign to the eighth century. The downfall of Israel stood as a warning to Judah and therefore co-texts from the period (Uzziah to Hezekiah) inform the rest of the background for Proverbs 6. Connections will be found with the book of Isaiah, with the Songs of Degrees, with Ecclesiastes and with Song of Songs. All these co-texts have relevancy to the period.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proverbs 6</th>
<th>Eighth century co-texts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My son, if thou be surety for thy friend.....(6:1)</td>
<td><strong>Isa.38:14 (JPS)</strong> - O LORD, I am oppressed, be Thou my surety.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 Kgs.18:23- Now therefore, I pray thee, give pledges to my lord the king of Assyria.</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Isa.1:7</strong>....as overthrown by strangers (= the Assyrians)</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Isa.8:15</strong>-And many among them shall stumble, and fall, and be broken, and be snared, and be taken</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Isa.38:6</strong>- And I will deliver thee and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Isa.36:18</strong>-The LORD will deliver us...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Give not sleep to thine eyes, nor slumber to thine eyelids. (6:4)</td>
<td><strong>Ps.132:4, 5</strong>-I will not give sleep to mine eyes, or slumber to mine eyelids, Until I find out a place for the LORD, an habitation for the mighty God of Jacob.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Ps.124:7</strong>- Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers: the snare is broken, and we are escaped</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deliver thyself as a roe from the hand of the hunter, and as a bird from the hand of the fowler.(6:5)</td>
<td><strong>Isa.10:14</strong>- And my hand hath found as a nest the riches of the people: and as one gathereth eggs that are left, have I gathered all the earth; and there was none that moved the wing, or opened the mouth, or peeped.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Ps.91:3</strong>- Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence.</td>
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124 On this see G. Booker, Psalm Studies online @ [http://www.christadelphianbooks.org/booker/index.html](http://www.christadelphianbooks.org/booker/index.html) [cited May 2014]

125 See the analysis of the Songs of Degrees, Ecclesiastes and Song of Songs and their connection with the eighth century.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise: Which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, Provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest. How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? when wilt thou arise out of thy sleep? Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man. (6:6-11)</th>
<th>Ecc.10:18-By much slothfulness the building decayeth; and through idleness of the hands the house droppeth through. 2 Chronicles 29:3-5:- He in the first year of his reign, in the first month, opened the doors of the house of the LORD, and repaired them. And he brought in the priests and the Levites, and gathered them together into the east street, And said unto them, Hear me, ye Levites, sanctify now yourselves, and sanctify the house of the LORD God of your fathers, and carry forth the filthiness out of the holy place.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A naughty person, a wicked man, walketh with a froward mouth. He winketh with his eyes, he speaketh with his feet, he teacheth with his fingers; Frowardness is in his heart, he deviseth mischief continually; he soweth discord. (6:12-14)</td>
<td>2 Kings 18:26-28; - Speak, I pray thee, to thy servants in the Syrian language; for we understand it: and talk not with us in the Jews’ language in the ears of the people that are on the wall. But Rabshakeh said unto them, Hath my master sent me to thy master, and to thee, to speak these words? hath he not sent me to the men which sit on the wall, that they may eat their own dung, and drink their own piss with you? Then Rabshakeh stood and cried with a loud voice in the Jews’ language, and spake, saying, Hear the word of the great king, the king of Assyria...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Therefore shall his calamity come suddenly; suddenly shall he be broken without remedy. (6:15)</td>
<td>Isa.29:5- Moreover the multitude of thy strangers shall be like small dust, and the multitude of the terrible ones shall be as chaff that passeth away: yea, it shall be at an instant suddenly.</td>
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<tr>
<td>These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren.(6:16-19)</td>
<td>Isa.29:21 (NIV)- ...those who with a word make a man out to be guilty, who ensnare the defender in court and with false testimony deprive the innocent of justice. Isa.59:7- Their feet run to evil, and they make haste to shed innocent blood: their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity; wasting and destruction are in their paths. Isa.59:3- For your hands are defiled with blood, and your fingers with iniquity; your lips have spoken lies, your tongue hath muttered perverseness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6:20-23</td>
<td>Deuteronomy (see above table)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>6:24-26</td>
<td>Northern Israel (see above table)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burned? Can one go upon hot coals, and his feet not be burned? So he that goeth in to his neighbour’s wife; whosoever toucheth her shall not be innocent. (6:27-29) | **Isa. 33:14**- The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites. Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?  
**2 Kgs.16:10,13**- And king Ahaz went to Damascus to meet Tiglathpileser king of Assyria, and saw an altar that was at Damascus: and king Ahaz sent to Urijah the priest the fashion of the altar...And he burnt his burnt offering and his meat offering....the blood of his peace offerings, upon the altar. |

*Men* do not despise a thief, if he steal to satisfy his soul when he is hungry; But *if* he be found, he shall restore sevenfold; he shall give all the substance of his house. *But* whoso committeth adultery with a woman lacketh understanding: he *that* doeth it destroyeth his own soul. A wound and dishonour shall he get; and his reproach shall not be wiped away. For jealousy *is* the rage of a man: therefore he will not spare in the day of vengeance. He will not regard any ransom; neither will he rest content, though thou givest many gifts. (6:30-35)  

**2 Sam.12:16**-David takes showbread from temple  
**Songs 8:7**-....if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned.  
**Num.5:14**- And the spirit of jealousy come upon him, and he be jealous of his wife, and she be defiled: or if the spirit of jealousy come upon him, and he be jealous of his wife, and she be not defiled:  
**Isa.59:17**- For he put on righteousness as a breastplate, and an helmet of salvation upon his head; and he put on the garments of vengeance for clothing, and was clad with zeal as a clote.  
**Isa.61:2**- To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn  
**2 Chron.32:23-29**- And many brought gifts unto the LORD to Jerusalem, and presents to Hezekiah king of Judah: so that he was magnified in the sight of all nations from thenceforth.... But Hezekiah rendered not again according to the benefit done unto him; for his heart was lifted up: therefore there was wrath upon him, and upon Judah and Jerusalem. Notwithstanding Hezekiah humbled himself for the pride of his heart, *both* he and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the wrath of the LORD came not upon them in the days of Hezekiah.
Proverbs 6 commences with textual difficulties. The KJV translates vv.1-3 as follows; “My son, if thou be surety for thy friend, if thou hast stricken thy hand with a stranger, thou art snared with the words of thy mouth, thou art taken with the words of thy mouth. Do this now, my son, and deliver thyself, when thou art come into the hand of thy friend; go, humble thyself, and make sure thy friend”. The passage is usually thought to be concerned with someone rashly volunteering to guarantee another’s debt and when realising that they are unable to cover a default, they implore to be released from the obligation. The translation “friend” is deceptive and it appears to parallel stranger (i.e., foreigner). It should probably be translated in a more neutral fashion (fellow rather than friend or neighbour), the same word has been found on the inscription in Hezekiah’s tunnel and it carries the sense of “the other” (person). In that case we have a guarantee or a pledge hastily being offered to the “other” who is a foreigner. The Assyrians are described as stranger in Isa.1:7 and the word for pledge or surety can refer to the paying of tribute or debt (2 Kgs.18:23 and Isa.36:8, hit`ärēbc). Ahaz stripped the temple and appealed to the king of Assyria to deliver him; “Ahaz took away a portion out of the house of the LORD......and gave it unto the king of Assyria (Tiglath-Pileser)” (2 Chron. 28:21; 2 Kgs.16:7). The account in Kings (2 Kgs.18:16) describes how Hezekiah himself plundered the temple in order to pay tribute to Sennacherib but this is counter intuitive to the portrayal of Hezekiah’s character. Moreover, despite this payment Sennacherib continued to lay siege to Jerusalem. Gallagher comments; “The claim that Hezekiah sent tribute after Sennacherib is unique in Assyrian inscriptions. Sennacherib had been at Lachish. Why did Hezekiah not come out, present his tribute, kneel down and kiss Sennacherib’s feet like the other kings had done at Ushu? Why did Hezekiah stay in Jerusalem and merely send a messenger to Nineveh to pay Sennacherib homage?” The Assyrians were masters at psychological warfare and intelligence gathering and would soon be aware that Hezekiah himself was facing death and that the offer of tribute was a desperate delaying tactic. Rabshakeh was therefore sent to instigate further instability – to drive a wedge between those who faithfully resisted and those who wished to capitulate. It seems that a “pledge” was undertaken in Hezekiah’s name while he was on his sickbed, royal courtiers (such as Shebna) may have pressured him to strip the temple and a hasty deal may have been struck, one on which the Assyrians reneged (possibly because they knew that it did not have Hezekiah’s full support) as they continued the siege. A parallel text in Prov.17:18 (NIB) reads; “A man lacking in judgment strikes hands in pledge and puts up security for his neighbour”. This

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126 On this see NIDOTTE #6842(surety/pledge) and #8287 (friend)#2424(stranger)#8104(humble)
127 The OT usage of “other person” occurs in the eighth-century BC Siloam tunnel inscription with the sense of “the other” –’l r’w (to the other, 2x in ll.2, 3) – and ’š lqr’ ‘lr ‘w, one towards another (1.4). The contexts are those of two groups of labourers approaching one another in completing the digging of the tunnel. The work groups approach one another, they call to one another, and finally their picks meet. (#8287, p.1145)
128 Ibid, p.132
129 See; Peter Dubovský, “Hezekiah and the Assyrian Spies: Reconstruction of the Neo-Assyrian Intelligence Services and Its Significance for 2 Kings 18-19”, (Gregorian Biblical BookShop, 2006)
could well refer to Shebna (et al) striking a deal on Hezekiah’s behalf. In contrast we have Hezekiah appealing to Yahweh to act as his guarantor – to save his life and the city; “be Thou my surety” (Isa.38:14, JPS). This is literally; be-surety-you-me (‘orḇēnî) which is the verbal form of the root ‘rb used in Proverbs for pledge/surety. The next phrase in Prov.6:2, “snared....taken” (i.e., by your own words); nôqašṭā.....nilkâḏtā (literally; you-were-trapped....you-were-seized) is almost a repeat of Isaiah’s warning (8:15) concerning deportation by the Assyrians wânōqšû wânilKâºdû (literally; and-they-are-trapped.....and-they-are-seized) – so the words of their own mouth would trap them and they would be literally “trapped and seized” and deported to Assyria. Proverbs advises them to “deliver themselves”\(^\text{130}\) but the only way to do so was to appeal to someone stronger than the king of Assyria (this is what Ahaz should have done) and indeed Hezekiah does so (Isa.36:8,18).

The next section 6: 4-5 makes two references to the “Songs of Degrees” a Hezekiah collection of 15 Psalms that celebrate his 15 years of life-extension and the deliverance of Zion. During his reign Hezekiah had remained alert to the Assyrian danger and had attempted to centralise worship in Zion with an appeal to the northern tribes. The ark may well have been found in the fields of Ephratah (Ps.132:6) but it now resided in Zion where David received the promise concerning the establishment of the Davidic throne (Ps.132:11). This theme was dear to Hezekiah as he nearly died childless during the Assyrian invasion – just as the ark was found in Bethlehem-Ephratah and eventually brought to Zion, so also the messiah, the descendant of David, would be born in Bethlehem (Mic.5:2) and would reign in Zion......and Hezekiah was as eager and zealous as David was (who could find no sleep or slumber until it was accomplished) to established Yahweh’s presence in Zion and to continue the Davidic dynasty. Proverbs 6:5 continues with another allusion to a Song of Degrees, Psalm 124:7; “Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers: the snare is broken, and we are escaped”. The cylinder, or prism, of Sennacherib has the following statement: “Hezekiah himself like a caged bird, within Jerusalem, his royal city, I shut in.” The Assyrian King is depicted as a poacher in Isa.10:14, reaching his hand into a nest to steal eggs. Moreover, there are further allusions to Psalm 91:3 where the theme of a fowler’s snare is linked with pestilence. We already noted the extensive use of Psalm 91 in Proverbs 3, but Psalm 91 is also alluded to in Song of Songs (which is a dramatization of Hezekiah’s courtship of the northern tribes, his absence due to illness and the Assyrian crisis); They all hold swords, being expert in war: every man hath his sword upon his thigh because of fear in the night” (Song 3:8).\(^\text{131}\) The Assyrians were slain by the angel of death and they succumbed to pestilence (this explains the Passover motif in Isaiah).

\(^{130}\) “So Ahaz sent messengers to Tiglathpileser king of Assyria, saying, I am thy servant and thy son: come up, and save me out of the hand of the king of Syria, and out of the hand of the king of Israel, which rise up against me. And Ahaz took the silver and gold that was found in the house of the LORD, and in the treasures of the king’s house, and sent it for a present (תְּנֵיה) to the king of Assyria” (2 Kgs.16:7-8). The Hebrew (תְּנֵיה) means gift or bribe the same word is used in Prov.6:35.

\(^{131}\) Compare “fear (תַּחְלָל) in the night” (Song 3:8) with “terror (תַּחְלָל) by night.....pestilence that walketh in darkness” (Ps.91:5, 6). This is a reference to the destroying angel: “And it came to pass that night, that the
The next unit (Prov. 6:6-11) is concerned with the sluggard. This section serves as the antithesis of Prov.6:4 – in the latter, the individual could not even sleep until a “habitation had been found for Yahweh” (Ps.132:4-5), but now, we are dealing with indolence and neglect of Yahweh’s habitation. When Hezekiah ascended the throne he found the temple damaged and closed (2 Chron. 29:3-5). His father Ahaz had stripped the temple, rearranged the cult furniture to accommodate an Assyrian altar and finally he had abandoned the “house” altogether. Ecclesiastes (based on the memoirs of King Uzziah) tells us; “By much slothfulness the building decayeth; and through idleness of the hands the house droppeth through” (Ecc.10:18). Jotham and subsequently Ahaz were co-regents with Uzziah (Qoheleth), who watched with dismay as his grandson Ahaz allowed “the house” (temple) to fall into disrepair.

The temple was deliberately neglected and decaying – the legacy of Ahaz – but disrespecting Yahweh would catalyse decline; “So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man” (6:11). The JPS renders this as, “So shall thy poverty come as a runner, and thy want as an armed man” and the LXE as “Then poverty comes upon thee as an evil traveller, and want as a swift courier”. This is not the gradual manifestation of genteel poverty but the sudden and violent arrival of scarcity as the result of war – such as prophesied by Isaiah during the reign of Ahaz, when Isaiah symbolically named his son Maher-shalal-hash-baz which means “swift is booty, speedy is prey” (Isa.8:3).132 Although Ahaz was indolent and in a deep spiritual sleep (contrast Hezekiah) the Assyrians were not asleep; “None shall be weary nor stumble among them; none shall slumber nor sleep; neither shall the girdle of their loins be loosed, nor the latchet of their shoes be broken: Whose arrows are sharp, and all their bows bent, their horses’ hoofs shall be counted like flint, and their wheels like a whirlwind (Isa.5:27-28). The Assyrians would overwhelm the nation like the flooding of the Euphrates, bringing swift destruction, and leaving poverty and destitution in their wake. Assyria was not weary, lazy or sleepy when it came to fulfilling territorial ambitions and conquering in the name of their god; they were industrious in their pursuits (like the ants).

Proverbs 6:12-14 provides a description of “a naughty person”, literally; a man (adam) of Belial or a wicked man. This is a composite picture; it includes the children of Belial who bore false witness against Naboth (1 Kgs.21:13), the sons of Eli who were sons of Belial (1 Sam.2:12) and Nabal who is called a man of Belial. Nabal becomes the archetypical “fool” of Proverbs; “for as his name is, so is he; Nabal is his name, and folly is with him” (1 Sam.25:25). The sons of Eli were violent and degenerate priests who disrespected Yahweh-

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132 We noted earlier that Prov.6:2 (taken/snared) refers to Isa.8:15
the ark was captured because of their behaviour and the house of Eli was disenfranchised. This is the antithesis of the zeal expressed in Prov.6:4/Ps.132:4-5 by Hezekiah concerning the habitation of Yahweh and the ark. In contrast Ahaz was like the sons of Eli who disrespected the Lord’s altar and lost the ark. Finally we come to Rabshakeh who forms the archetype of the haughty blasphemer when he deliberately attempted to sow discord by twisting Isaiah’s prophecies. He spoke Hebrew and was therefore a Jewish collaborator, apostate, and an archetype for human hubris and arrogance.

Proverbs 6:15 describes the fate of the wicked, literally; suddenly he shall come calamity-of-him instantly (piťŏm yâbô’ รวจā hētaq) which is an echo of Isaiah 29:5; instant, suddenly (lāhētaq piťŏm). Rabshakeh and the Assyrians would perish “suddenly in an instant”......their army was destroyed overnight by plague.

The six things that God hates (6:16-19) are based on the moral decline of Israel and Judah. The same faults found in Israel under the dynasty of Ahab were being repeated in Judah.

See Deuteronomy table for 6:20-23

See Northern Israel table for 6:24-26

Proverbs 6:27-29 is not about adultery but idolatry. Being unfaithful to God was akin to committing adultery. When an Israelite suspected his wife of being unfaithful he subjected her to the waters of jealousy (cf. Prov.6:34). In that ritual a woman drank water in which a written curse was dissolved and if she was guilty she would suffer a horrible death. When the nation of Israel committed idolatry with the golden calf Moses “ground it to powder, and strawed it upon the water, and made the children of Israel drink of it” (Exod.32:20). The nation was treated like an adulterous woman because of her unfaithfulness to God. Of Ahaz it is said that, “he walked in the way of the kings of Israel, yea, and made his son to pass through the fire, according to the abominations of the heathen, whom the LORD cast out from before the children of Israel” (2 Kgs.16:3). Moreover, Ahaz copied the altar of Tiglath-Pileser and had it installed in the temple and henceforth offered his peace offerings on an altar dedicated to Asshur (2 Kgs.16:10, 13). However, Ahaz and the sinners in Zion were playing with fire (Isa. 33:14).

The final section 6:30-35 commences with an observation concerning a thief who steals to satisfy his hunger – such a one will not be despised. In this case the reference is to David who took the shewbread from the tabernacle to satisfy his hunger and that of his men (cf. Matt.12:3). The obvious contrast is with those like Ahaz who stripped the temple to purchase Assyrian aid instead of believing in Yahweh. The actions of David were out of necessity and in good faith but Ahaz (compare the sons of Eli) had no respect for Yahweh or his altar. Restitution could not be made, even if the “substance of his house” was given,
which is a reference to Songs 8:7 from the Hezekiah period - the Assyrian “flood”\textsuperscript{133} could not drown covenant love; “Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it: if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned”. Ahaz would not be forgiven because he refused the sign offered by Yahweh (the sign of messiah) and therefore his reproach would remain. Yahweh was like a jealous\textsuperscript{134} husband: therefore he will not spare in the day of vengeance (6:34), which is a reference to the “day of vengeance” in Isaiah (59:17; 61:2), where Yahweh is depicted as a warrior. This may explain the use of רָצוֹן (geber) in Prov.6:34 rendered as either “man” or “husband” in most translations but “warrior” is equally valid. Finally, many gifts were brought (Prov. 6:35) to Hezekiah and Yahweh in acknowledgement of the Assyrian defeat. Nevertheless, Yahweh was not appeased.....punishment would still be meted out to Judah........but it would be deferred and retribution would not occur in Hezekiah’s day. Ironically all the attention stirred up by the Assyrian defeat caused Hezekiah to act in a prideful manner; he dropped his guard and showed the Babylonians all the substance of his house (2 Kgs. 20:15-17). As a consequence he was informed that eventually all the substance would be carted off to Babylon.

\textsuperscript{133} Isaiah 8:7 Now therefore, behold, the Lord bringeth up upon them the waters of the river, strong and many, even the king of Assyria, and all his glory: and he shall come up over all his channels, and go over all his banks.

\textsuperscript{134} For jealousy is a husband’s fury (Prov.6:34 NKJ) compare the waters of jealousy
### Proverbs 7

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proverbs 7</th>
<th>Co-texts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Say unto wisdom, Thou art my sister; and call understanding thy kinswoman\(^{135}\) (7:4) | Sarah/Rebekah/Ruth
  
  ...thou art my sister (Gen.12:13)
  
  ...She is my sister (Gen.20:2)
  
  ...She is my sister (Gen.26:7)
  
  And Naomi had a kinsman (Ruth 2:1) |
| That they may keep thee from the strange woman, from the stranger which flattereth with her words. (7:5) | Jezebel: foreign princess see commentary on Prov.6 |
| For at the window of my house I looked (7:6)                                | Rebekah: Abimelech.....looked out at a window, and saw, and, behold, Isaac was sporting (q[x,c']) with Rebekah his wife. (Gen.26:8)\(^{136}\) |
| For at the window of my house I looked and beheld among the simple ones, I discerned among the youths, a young man void of understanding (7:6) | Michal: Michal Saul’s daughter looked through a window and saw king David...... she despised him in her heart... and said...as one of the vain fellows shamelessly uncovereth himself (2 Samuel 6:16-20) |
| Passing through the street near her corner; and he went the way to her house, in the twilight, in the evening, in the black and dark night. (7:8-9) | The Shulamite: I will rise now, and go about the city in the streets, and in the broad ways I will seek him whom my soul loveth: I sought him, but I found him not. By night on my bed I sought him whom my soul loveth: I sought him, but I found him not. (Songs 3:2,1) |
| And, behold, there met him a woman with the attire of an harlot, and subtil of heart. (7:10) | Tamar: When Judah saw her, he thought her to be an harlot; because she had covered her face. (Gen.38:5) |
| She is loud and stubborn; her feet abide not in her house (7:11)            | Potiphar’s wife: ....and I cried with a loud voice... (Gen.39:14) |
| I have peace offerings with me; this day have I paid my vows. Therefore came I forth to meet thee, diligently to seek thy face, and I have found thee. (7:14-15) | Leah: ....and Leah went out to meet him, and said, Thou must come in unto me; for surely I have hired thee with my son’s mandrakes. And he lay with her that night. (Gen.30:16) |
| I have decked my bed with coverings of tapestry, with carved works, with fine linen of Egypt. I have perfumed my bed with myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon. Come, let us take our fill of love until the morning: let us solace ourselves with loves. For the goodman is not at home, he is gone a long journey: He hath taken a bag of money with him, and will come home at the day appointed. (7:16-20) | Potiphar’s wife: And Joseph was brought down to Egypt....And it came to pass after these things, that his master’s wife cast her eyes upon Joseph; and she said, Lie with me. But he refused, and said unto his master’s wife, Behold, my master wotteth not what is with me in the house, and he hath committed all that he hath to my hand; (Gen.39:7-8) |
| With her much fair speech she caused him to yield... (7:21)                  | Delilah: And it came to pass, when she pressed him (Samson) daily with her words, and urged him, so that his soul was vexed unto death (Judg.16:16) |
| For she hath cast down many wounded: yea, many strong men have been slain by her. (7:26) | Delilah: ......if I (Samson) be shaven, then my strength will go from me, and I shall become weak, and be like any other man. (Judg.16:17) |
| Her house is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death.          | Rahab: And they went, and came into an harlot’s house, named Rahab, and lodged there. (Josh.2:1-2) |

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\(^{135}\) Probably better translated as “close-relative” see NIDOTTE,\# 4530 – the form (אָדָם) only occurs in Prov.7:4 and Ruth 2:1

\(^{136}\) The same word (זֶרֶם) is used in Exod.32:6 at the Golden Calf incident, when the Israelites “rose up to play”: obviously the word has negative covenant connotations in that context.
Theme: Keep wisdom as a close relative, a sister, because the covenant is based on the sister-wife relationship and on the kinsman redeemer. Do not be seduced by the foreign woman; do play the harlot with the covenant. The historical situation is that of the eighth century, the co-texts allude to faithful and faithless women in Israel’s covenant history. Other co-texts are the book of Isaiah and 2 Kings 16. Proverbs 7 employs numerous allusions, echoes and parallelisms to various OT women. There are faithful women who were either harlots or who “played” the harlot (Tamar, Rahab) and these faithful women are alluded to by way of contrast. There are foreign women who were treacherous (Jezebel, Delilah, Potiphar’s wife). The Shulamite is an example of true love and Leah is an example of persistence (in a good sense) in contrast with the temptress who persists in her seduction. The reference to a “kinswoman” or close-relative is concerned with the Ruth/Boaz story and the act of loyalty demonstrated by Ruth and the kinsman redeemer that vouched safe the Davidic dynasty. The reference to a “sister” relates to the sister-wife narratives in Genesis which are prophetically typical of Israel’s covenant history (see commentary on Proverbs 5).

Proverbs 7:6 employs the literary convention of “looking out of a window” which is found in the patriarchal narrative of Gen.26:8 and in 2 Sam.6:16-20. On both these occasions a glance through the window represents an observation into the covenant relationship. Isaac was the first to be born into the Abrahamic covenant and his intimacy with his wife is typical of the Hezekiah period. The reaction of shock when Abimelech realises that Rebekah is already married represents the gentile response to covenant love displayed at Yahweh’s deliverance of Judah. The Davidic covenant was received directly after the incident described in 2 Sam.6:16-20 but the reaction of Michal is one of disdain and disrespect towards David; “How glorious was the king of Israel to day, who uncovered himself to day in the eyes of the handmaids of his servants, as one of the vain fellows shamelessly uncovereth himself”. The zeal of David for Yahweh was treated with contempt. Michal considers David one of the “simple ones”, a “man void of understanding” (Prov.7:6), like the young man on his way to the house of the “strange woman” rather than a man who wanted to install the Ark of the Covenant in Jerusalem and to build a house for Yahweh. For this reason David was no longer intimate with her (compare Isaac with Rebekah), ensuring that she had no children and therefore the descendents of Saul were excluded from the Davidic dynasty. All the women who were faithful to the covenant are found in the lineage of the Messiah. It is obvious that Proverbs 7:6-8 acts as a contrast and commentary – what is observed “through the window” is the opposite of “covenant love” a youth (simple one) seduced to make a covenant with the strange women (foreigner). The historical context of Proverbs 7 is (once again) the era from Uzziah to Hezekiah, with particular attention to the foreign allegiances with Assyria and the introduction of Assyrian religious practices by Ahaz. The main co-text is 2 Kings 16 supported by passages from Isaiah:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proverbs 7</th>
<th>Co-texts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Now is she without, now in the streets, and</td>
<td>And Ahaz gathered together the vessels of the house of God, and cut in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lieth in wait at every corner (הנ'פ).(^\text{137})  (7:12)</td>
<td>pieces the vessels of the house of God, and shut up the doors of the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passing through the street near her corner (P)</td>
<td>house of the LORD, and he made him altars in every corner (הנ'פ) of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and he went the way to her house. (7:8)</td>
<td>Jerusalem. (2 Chron.28:24)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>So she caught him, and kissed him, and with an</td>
<td>Moreover the LORD saith, Because the daughters of Zion are haughty, and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>impudent face said unto him. (7:13)</td>
<td>walk with stretched forth necks and wanton eyes, walking and mincing as</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have peace (שלום) offerings with me; this</td>
<td>they go, and making a tinkling with their feet (Isa.3:16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>day have I payed my vows. (7:14)</td>
<td>And he burnt his burnt offering and his meat offering, and poured his</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Therefore came I forth to meet (אתיך) thee,</td>
<td>drink offering, and sprinkled the blood of his peace (שלום) offerings,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>diligently to seek thy face, and I have found</td>
<td>upon the (Assyrian) altar. (2 Kgs.16:13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>thee. (7:15)</td>
<td>And king Ahaz went to Damascus to meet (אתיך) Tiglathpileser king of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have decked my bed with coverings of</td>
<td>Assyria (2 Kgs.16:10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tapestry, with carved works, with fine linen</td>
<td>Behind the doors also and the posts hast thou set up thy remembrance:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of Egypt. I have perfumed my bed with myrrh,</td>
<td>for thou hast discovered thyself to another than me, and art gone up;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aloses, and cinnamon. Come, let us take our</td>
<td>thou hast enlarged thy bed, and made thee a covenant with them; thou</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fill of love until the morning: let us solace</td>
<td>lovedst their bed where thou sawest it. And thou wentest to the king</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ourselves with loves.....Her house is the way</td>
<td>with ointment, and didst increase thy perfumes, and didst send thy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to hell, going down to the chambers of death. (7:16-18,27)</td>
<td>messengers far off, and didst debase thyself even unto hell. (Isa.57:8-9)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

God kept Israel as the “apple of his eye” (Deut 32:10) and expected Israel to reciprocate by cherishing his covenant as the “apple of their eye” (Prov.7:1) and writing the law on their hearts (v.2 cf. Deut.30:6). They are warned not to be seduced by the strange (foreign) woman with her harlotry. Ahaz was seduced by Assyrian power\(^\text{138}\) and introduced Assyrian religious practices including shrine prostitution. Isaiah (3:18-26) condemns the virgin daughters of Zion for their obsession with erotic beauty; “In that day the Lord will take away the bravery of their tinkling ornaments about their feet, and their cauls, and their round tires like the moon, the chains, and the bracelets, and the mufflers, The bonnets, and the

\(^{137}\) Note that the Hebrew for “corner” with slightly different pointing is identical with “turning aside” or “turning away” (i.e., turning a corner...in a bad sense turning after idols); הנפ (panah), turn away (Deut 29:17;31:18); פנ (pinnah), corner.

\(^{138}\) Judah was also seduced by Egyptian power politics (cf. Prov.7:16) see the oracles in Isaiah against Egypt.
ornaments of the legs, and the headbands, and the tablets, and the earrings, The rings, and nose jewels, The changeable suits of apparel, and the mantles, and the wimples, and the crisping pins, The glasses, and the fine linen, and the hoods, and the vails. And it shall come to pass, that instead of sweet smell there shall be stink; and instead of a girdle a rent; and instead of well set hair baldness; and instead of a stomacher a girding of sackcloth; and burning instead of beauty. Thy men shall fall by the sword, and thy mighty in the war. And her gates shall lament and mourn; and she being desolate shall sit upon the ground”.

The table above has Isaiah 57 as a co-text with Proverbs 7. Many scholars would object as they assign Isaiah 56-66 to the post-exilic period (c.500 BC) by an anonymous author (“Tritio-Isaiah or Third Isaiah) rather than to the eighth century period during which the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah fall (cf. Isa.1:1). However, verses 57:3-9 are an invective against idol worship and have no relevance to the Babylonian captivity or the postexilic period. Craig Davis observes; “ Polemic messages against idol worship are a unifying theme throughout both parts of Isaiah (1:29,2:8,10:10-11,17:8,19:1,19:3,21:9, 30:22, 31:7, 40:19, 41:29, 42:8, 42:17, 44:9, 44:15, 45:16, 46:6-7, 48:5, 57:5, 65:2-4, 66:3 and 66:17). Canaanite idol worship, which was a huge spiritual problem for the pre-exilic community, became largely a dead issue during and after the exile. With the exception of 47:13 and the specific references to Babylonian idols in 46:1, the idolatry in the second part of the book appears to be of the Canaanite variety. Certainly passages like “Who inflame yourselves among the oaks, under every luxuriant tree, who slaughter the children in the ravines, under the clefts of the crags?” (57:5) are unmistakably addressing Canaanite and not Babylonian idolatry. This implies that at the time the second part of Isaiah was written, Canaanite idolatry was a serious concern. This state of affairs was true during the time of Isaiah the son of Amos, but not true during or after the exile”. 139

Moreover, Whittaker highlights five intertextual connections between Isaiah 57 and Isaiah 6 (recorded at the death of Uzziah) and he identifies Hezekiah with the one that is of a “humble spirit” and notes an allusion to Jezebel; “ye sons of the sorceress, seed of the adulterer and the whore (v.3). The references to sorcery and whoredom may be intended to recall Jezebel, priestess of the Phoenician Baal, who died enquiring scornfully: “Is it peace?” The prophet’s answer here is: “There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked” (v.21).” 140

We have already noted that Jezebel is employed in Proverbs as an archetypical fashion and warning to Judah.

140 Harry Whittaker, Isaiah,(Biblia,1988), 497
Isaiah 57 is therefore written after the death of Uzziah and after the recovery of Hezekiah from the Assyrian crisis, probably when he humbled himself (the incident of the Babylonian envoys 2 Chron.32:26). The reformation that Hezekiah instigated was short lived and his son Manasseh deliberately chose a policy of syncretism that was even worse than his grandfather, Ahaz.\textsuperscript{141} The prophet Isaiah was (according to tradition) murdered during Manasseh’s reign (sawn asunder Heb.11:37) and it is probable that Isaiah 57 reflects this period of extreme idolatry. It is fitting then that Isaiah 57 is alluded to in Proverbs 7 as it reflects the low-points of Judean apostasy under Ahaz and Manasseh.

Craig Davis bases his analysis of the date of Isaiah on the linguistic and thematic evidence supplied by Rachel Margalioth\textsuperscript{142} and we agree with the conclusion that he reaches; “Isaiah 1-66 was placed in its final form by about 680 BC or shortly afterwards, and is all the work of Isaiah, the son of Amoz. The book was not written all at the same time; some portions were written earlier and other portions written later in Isaiah’s life”.\textsuperscript{143}

\textsuperscript{141} Note how he copied Ahab and Jezebel: “For he built up again the high places which Hezekiah his father had destroyed; and he reared up altars for Baal, and made a grove, as did Ahab king of Israel; and worshipped all the host of heaven, and served them” (2 Kings 21:3).... Manasseh seduced them to do more evil than did the nations whom the LORD destroyed before the children of Israel (v.19).

\textsuperscript{142} Rachel Margalioth, The ‘Indivisible’ Isaiah, (Sura Institute for Research, Jerusalem, and Yeshiva University, New York, 1964. Translated from Hebrew)

\textsuperscript{143} Ibid, 255
**Proverbs 8**

Theme: The voice of wisdom and the personification of wisdom. She commends herself as serving the best interest of those who are faithful and is worthy of undivided loyalty and obedience. She presents her credentials and authority in terms of her divine origin, her proximity to God, and her precedence over creation. The main co-texts are Isaiah 40 and 45:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proverbs 8</th>
<th>Isaiah 40</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Doth not wisdom cry? And understanding put forth her voice? (8:1)</td>
<td>The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. (40:3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counsel is mine (8:14)</td>
<td>With whom took he counsel (40:14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By me princes rule, and nobles, even all the judges of the earth. (8:16)</td>
<td>That bringeth the princes to nothing; he maketh the judges of the earth as vanity. (40:23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.....from the beginning, or ever the earth was. (8:23)</td>
<td>...hath it not been told you from the beginning? (40:21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...I was set up from everlasting... (8:23)</td>
<td>....the everlasting God, the LORD (40:28)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.....the highest part of the dust of the world. (8:26)</td>
<td>.....comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, (40:12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...when he prepared the heavens... (8:27)</td>
<td>...that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain (40:22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...when he appointed the foundations of the earth (8:29)</td>
<td>....foundations of the earth... (40:21)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proverbs 8</th>
<th>Isaiah 45</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>That I may cause those that love me to inherit substance; and I will fill their treasures (8:21)</td>
<td>And I will give thee the treasures of darkness (45:3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...while as yet he had not made the earth (8:26)</td>
<td>...I have made the earth (45:12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...when he established the clouds above (8:28)</td>
<td>...heavens....he hath established it... (45:18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Then I was by him, as one brought up with him: and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him... (8:30)</td>
<td>I am the LORD, and there is none else, there is no God beside me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known me: (45:5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth... (8:31)</td>
<td>....he formed it to be inhabited... (45:18)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There are also connections with the Genesis creation account but these have been omitted for reasons of brevity and also because it is obvious that both Proverbs 8 and Isaiah 40-45 chose to employ the creation language of Genesis in a unique manner. Although ontological
questions are addressed we cannot exclude the texts reaching beyond natural creation to
include the creation of the nation of Israel. The wilderness Tabernacle was a mini cosmos
and Genesis creation themes are employed to describe the establishment of the Tabernacle.
Weinfeld includes a very useful comparison between particular Hebrew phrases which are
identical or nearly identical in each passage, including among others.

1. Gen. 1:31 [“And God saw all that He had made, (kāl ’ašer ‘ašah), and found it
(wēhinēh) very good”]; Exod. 39:43 [“And when Moses saw that they had
performed all the tasks (kāl hamēlā ‘kāh)—as the LORD had commanded, so
they had done (wēhinēh ‘ašū ‘ōtāh)”].

2. Gen. 2:1 [“The heaven and the earth were completed (wayēkulū) and all (wēkāl)
their array”]; Exod. 39:32 [“Thus was completed all (watēkēl kāl) the work of
the Tabernacle of the Tent of Meeting”].

3. Gen. 2:2 [“God finished the work which He had been doing (wayēkāl
‘elōhīm...mēla ‘kēto ‘ašer ‘āśāh)”; Exod. 40:33 [“When Moses had finished the
work (wayēkāl mōsēh ‘et hamēlā ‘kāh)”].

4. Gen. 2:3 [“And God blessed...(wayēbārek)”; Exod. 39:43 (“And Moses blessed
(wayēbārek) them”).

5. Gen. 2:3 [“And sanctified it (wayēqadaš)”]; Exod. 40:9 [“...and to sanctify
(wēqidašētā) it and all its furnishings”].

Crispin Fletcher-Louis sums up the significance of this correspondence nicely when he states
that: “Obviously, these correspondences mean that creation has its home in the liturgy of
the cult and the Tabernacle is a mini cosmos.” This conclusion follows a series of liturgical
parallels and themes that Fletcher-Louis had just summarized in his text as follows: “[There
exists] a set of literary and linguistic correspondences between creation (Genesis 1) and the
tabernacle (Exod 25-40)....the seven days of creation in Genesis 1 are paired with God’s
seven speeches to Moses in Exodus 25-31....Each speech begins ‘The Lord spoke to Moses’
(Exod 25:1; 30:11, 16, 22, 34; 31:11, 12) and introduces material which corresponds to the
relevant day of creation. Most transparently, in the third speech 30:16-21 there is
commanded the construction of the bronze laver. In the Solomonic temple this is called
simply the ‘sea’ and in P it matches the creation of the sea on the third day of creation in
Genesis 1:9-11. Similarly, the seventh speech (Exod 31:12-17) stresses the importance of the
Sabbath for Israel, just as Genesis 2:2-3 tells us how God rested on the seventh day. In the
first speech to Moses Aaron’s garments and his ordination are described and stress is placed
upon his duty to tend the menorah at the evening and morning sacrifice (Tamid) (27:20-21;
30:7-8)....the golden and jewel-studded garments which Aaron wears are, generally, best
understood as the Israelite version of the golden garments worn by the gods of the ancient

of Genesis 1:1-2:3,” in Mélanges bibliques et orientaux en l’honneur de M. Henrie Cazelles, (ed. A. Caquot and
Near East and their statues. This means that Aaron is dressed to play the part within the temple-as-microcosm theatre that God plays within creation.\textsuperscript{145} Indeed, the fact that in this first speech Aaron is twice told to tend the temple lampstand and offer the Tamid sacrifice means that he is to police the first boundary—between day and night, light and darkness—which God creates on the first day of creation (Gen 1:3-5).\textsuperscript{146}

Although there are a few intertextual linguistic connections with Exodus 31, there are many thematic connections; the choice of words may be different but Proverbs 8 reverberates throughout with echoes. Exodus 31 narrates the outpouring of wisdom on the craftsmen who would construct the Tabernacle. Wisdom \textit{dwell}s with prudence (Prov.8:12) which could be translated “tabernacled” (תַּבְנִיָּה) or \textit{shakan} from which Rabbinic Judaism derived the “shekinah” — indwelling glory.\textsuperscript{147} Here then we have a description of the Spirit of God (wisdom) making its home with the prudent craftsman....the one who would build the Tabernacle:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proverbs 8</th>
<th>Exodus 31</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>...find out knowledge of witty inventions (8:12)</td>
<td>To devise cunning works (31:4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.....understand wisdom ....be ye of an understanding heart; (8:5)....counsel \textit{is} mine, and sound wisdom : I \textit{am} understanding ; I have strength (8:14) ...to them that find knowledge (תֵּנָּה)....(8:9)....For wisdom (תֵּנָּה).... (8:11)</td>
<td>.....and in the hearts of all that are wise hearted I have put wisdom (חכמה), that they may make all that I have commanded thee (31:6) ...And I have filled him with the spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge (חכמה).... (31:3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Then I was the craftsman at his side. (8:30 NIB)</td>
<td>...and in all manner of workmanship (31:3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My fruit \textit{is} better than gold, yea, than fine gold; and my revenue than choice silver. (8:19)</td>
<td>To devise cunning works, to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass (31:4)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{145} Aaron also represented the people as he wore a breastplate with twelve stones\textsuperscript{PW}
\textsuperscript{147} Compare: “And the Word became flesh, and did tabernacle among us, and we beheld his glory, glory as of an only begotten of a father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14 YLT). Note that Jesus was also a “carpenter” who built a temple.
The “craftsman” at his side (next to him) in Prov.8:30 is problematic; the JPS renders this as; “Then I was by Him, as a nursling; and I was daily all delight, playing always before Him” and the KJV has “as one brought up”. The translators seem to have confused דָּמֹןָ and is possibly influenced by Esther 2:20; “like as when she was brought up with him (Mordecai)”. The versions chose either; craftsman (NIB/NIV), master-craftsman (NKJ), master-worker (NRS) or worker (YLT) or “little child” (NEB) “brought up” (KJV) or “nursling” (JPS).

Bruce K. Waltke sums up the problem as follows; “Scholars debate whether Woman Wisdom’s person more specifically is that of a “craftsman” or a “little child”, depending on how they interpret the hapleg. דָּמֹן in 8:30 (cf. NRSV text and note). Both interpretations demand either emending the text or investing the word with a unique meaning. Hoffman (Shiftbeweis 1:97, cited by Delitzsch) and Plöger, independently from him, satisfyingly interpret דָּמֹן as “consistently/faithfully/constantly”. Though a hapleg., this interpretation is grammatically plausible, does not confuse or confound the clear message of vv.22-31, and above all, matches the parallels daily and at all times. Note the parallelism of the verse as represented by the Massoretic accents (lit.tr.):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>And I was</th>
<th>beside him</th>
<th>faithfully;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>And I was</td>
<td>delighting</td>
<td>daily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>celebrating before him</td>
<td>at all times</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Unfortunately, Plöger undermined his argument, saying the form should be niphal (so also Delitzsch, 190). The niphal participle form, however, is appropriate as an adjective, not as an adverb; the niphal infinitive absolute of ‘mn is unattested (NIDOTTE, #586)”.

This suggestion certainly has merit as in Isa 7 is a famous meeting between Isaiah and king Ahaz, the first part of which concludes with Isaiah issuing a challenge that incorporates a play on words that the NIV captures well: “If you do not stand firm in your faith, you will not stand at all” (וָאֵלְךَا נָא אֶלְּמִּי אֶלְּמִי נָא; Isa.7:9). Psalm 89:52 uses the adverbial form דָּמֶן twice; “Blessed be the LORD for evermore. Amen, and Amen”. This is particularly relevant in light of Isa.7:9 as Psalm 89 is assigned to Hezekiah who was about to die childless thereby annulling the Davidic covenant, moreover, the noun émet (the most

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148 דָּמֹן See, NIDOTTE, # 588, STRONGS, #525/#542; דָּמֹן (Song of Songs 7:1)
149 STRONGS, # 539; דָּמֹן as in Ruth 4:16; לְדָמֶנֶת : became nurse/foster-mother
150 NIDOTTE, # 594, STRONGS, # 545; דָּמֶן (this is a hapleg, it only occurs here)
151 NIDOTTE, Vol.4, p.1082
152 See, NIDOTTE, #586
153 G. Booker online @ http://www.christadelphianbooks.org/booker/psalms3/psabkc13.html [cited May 2014]
common form of the root ‘mn) occurs in Isa.38:7 when Hezekiah is on his death bed; “how I have walked before thee in truth (ָאמִּים)"

These associations with faith/belief/truth in the Hezekiah period strongly advocate for the positions of Hoffman and Plöger, (ֶאמôn = faithfully) however, the thematic connections with the craftsman Bezaleel who was “called by name” (Exod.31:2) to build the Tabernacle is echoed by Isa.45:4 “called thee by thy name” to “build my city” (45:13). This is especially relevant to the Cyrus (Koresh) debate if the original in Isa.45:1 is read as וְהִזְרַע (ch-r-sh) or “craftsman” (Isa.44:11) instead of Cyrus וַּיְהִי (k-r-sh)... The Cyrus debate is dealt with in a separate digression, however, the setting of Isaiah 45 is (as correctly identified by Perry) the incident of the Babylonian envoys (2 Chron.32:31), however, the oracle is not ironic rhetoric against Hezekiah but directed at Babylon (after Hezekiah humbled himself) – the counsel, political acumen, material support and wisdom of Babylon are rejected. Their (Marduk’s) “craftsmen” are only good for building idols (Isa.44:11) but Yahweh’s “craftsman” (the Messiah) will break the gates of death!

Isaiah 40:22 has the “heavens stretched out like a tent” alluding to the veil in the Tabernacle. Proverbs 8:29 has the sea bound by decree; “that the waters should not pass his commandment: when he appointed the foundations of the earth” which brings to mind Deut.32:8; “....he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel”. God sets the bounds of “the natural sea” and the “sea of the Gentiles” in order to expose the earth. The Hebrew for earth or land (ָארץ) is often synonymous for the land of Israel. Both Prov.8:26 and Isa.40:12 refer to the “dust (ׂכָּד) of the earth” which occurs in the promise to Jacob “And thy seed shall be as the dust (ׂכָּד) of the earth” (Gen.28:14). Proverbs 8:23; “I was set up (ָנָא) from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was”. The same word is employed in Gen.35:14; “So Jacob set up a pillar in the place where He talked with him, a pillar of stone; and he poured (ָנָא) a drink offering on it, and he poured oil on it”. In essence, Jacob the eponymous father of Israel “anointed” the place where God appeared to him before the “earth” (the nation of Israel) was formed and he was promised the “earth” (land) and that kings would come out of his loins. Wisdom speaks truth; “For my mouth shall speak truth (יָשָׁם) and God speaks truth (יִשָּם) to Jacob; “....and of all the truth (יִשָּם), which thou hast shewed unto thy servant (Gen.32:10). The word “truth” is idiom for the covenant promises (Micah.7:20). It seems that the sub-text of Proverbs 8 and Isaiah 40-45 is the creation of a covenant relationship with Israel, a new order in the cosmos.

154 The change from וְהִזְרַע to וְהִזְרִית is a simple re-vocalisation. With the addition of vowels and pointing the later Masorites rendered Cyrus as - כּוֹרֶשׁ (kôrêsh)
155 The YLT renders this as; “From the age I was anointed (שָׁמָּא)....”
As we noted previously (see commentary on Proverbs 7), scholarship considers Isaiah 40-45 to be postexilic texts. The mention of Cyrus in Isa.45 is a notorious crux but even chapter 40 is considered to be from a different (unknown) postexilic author. Craig Davis comments as follows: 156

“The land of Israel is mostly very rugged, with steep, rocky hills, valleys, and caves and even mountains, though none of the mountains are very high. The land around Babylon is an alluvial plain, flat, smooth, watered by the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. In other words, the geography of the two countries is different. With this in mind, we should consider the geographical setting of the writing of Isaiah 40-66. An Israelite, as opposed to a Babylonian setting is immediately clear (Isa 40:3-4): “A voice is calling, clear the way for the LORD in the wilderness; Make smooth in the desert a highway for our God. Let every valley is lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; and let the rough ground become a plain, and the rugged terrain a broad valley…”

This is Israeli geography. The geographical references to mountains and hills continue (40:9, 40:12; 41:15, 41:18, etc.). Isa 41:19 provides a list of trees native to Israel: cedar, acacia, myrtle, olive, juniper, box tree and cypress. References to Israel’s neighbour Lebanon are in 40:16. It seems unlikely that a prophet writing nearly 50 years into the exile would use numerous geographical references with which only the oldest among his target audience could identify. A few source critics acknowledge this problem, and allow that Deutero-Isaiah was writing from the land of Israel. Bernhard Duhm, who popularized the view that there were three Isaiah’s, says of Deutero-Isaiah, “He certainly did not live in Babylonia.” 157

Andrew Perry 158 places Isa.40:1-11 firmly in the Hezekiah period, after the blockade of Jerusalem and after the victory against Moab and Ammon sometime during late 701 and early 700. He considers this an oracle about the promise implied in the victory in the east of Jordan. Good news for the cities of Judah. Perry also notes the correspondences between Proverbs 8 and Isaiah 40:

“The significance of these links is in the rarity of the words and expressions (6x, “princes”; 3x, “circle”; 13x, “from the beginning”; 6x, “foundations of the earth”). In addition, there are thematic links: “prepared the heavens” (Isa 40:22); and “understanding”, “knowledge” and “counsel” (Prov 8:12, 14) are obvious correspondences with the context of Isaiah’s oracle.

The argument that Isaiah was making is that just as God had set the laws that governed the earth (see Proverbs), so too he sets up kings and rules through princes. If princes did not

156 Craig Davis, Dating the Old Testament, (RJ Communications: New York, 2007), 216
158 Andrew Perry, Isaiah 40-48, (Willow Publications, 2010),118
rule with good judgement, as the cosmos was so ordered, they were to be counted as nothing- a formless chaos (Gen 1:2; Isa 40:23)

The people were expected to know all this, having been told from the beginning. This is not the beginning before creation (obviously), and Isaiah is more or less unique among the Prophets in using this expression (Isa 41:4, 26; 42:11; 48:16). The beginning could be Isaiah’s ministry (cf. Hos 1:2), or the beginning of the present troubles-the Assyrians hegemony in the West (Isa 1:26); or it could be the beginning of Israel as a nation (the Exodus).”\textsuperscript{159}

To reject the counsel of Yahweh (for that of the Babylonian princes etc) is to reject wisdom – wisdom was present from the beginning, when a craftsman was endowed with the spirit of wisdom to construct the cosmos of Israel and Yahweh holds the hand of another master-craftsman – the carpenter from Nazareth, who will construct a “new heavens and earth” and build a “new Jerusalem”, who will triumph over death in a manner that could only be approximated (typified) by Hezekiah – for Jesus Christ is the “Wisdom of God” personified (Lk.11:49).

\textsuperscript{159} \textit{Ibid,} 164
### Proverbs 9

Theme: The co-text for this chapter is 2 Chronicles 30 and the theme is the invitation issued by Hezekiah to celebrate the Passover feast in Jerusalem:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proverbs 9</th>
<th>2 Chronicles 30</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wisdom hath builded her house, she hath hewn out her seven pillars (9:1)</td>
<td>Manasseh, Zebulon, Asher, Judah Issachar, Ephraim, Levi (7 tribes mentioned)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She hath killed her beasts....(9:2)</td>
<td>Then they killed the Passover....(30:15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She hath sent forth her maidens (9:3)</td>
<td>And Hezekiah sent to all Israel and Judah (30:1) ....So they established a decree to make proclamation throughout all Israel (30:5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Come, eat of my bread....(9:5)</td>
<td>.....that they should come to the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, to keep the Passover unto the LORD God of Israel. (30:1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forsake the foolish, and live; and go in the way of understanding (9:6)</td>
<td>Ye children of Israel, turn again unto the LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel...(30:6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He that reproveth a scorners getteth to himself shame: and he that rebuketh a wicked man getteth himself a blot. Reprove not a scorners, lest he hate thee: rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee. (9:7-8)</td>
<td>So the posts passed from city to city through the country of Ephraim and Manasseh even unto Zebulun: but they laughed them to scorn, and mocked them. (30:10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be yet wiser: teach a just man, and he will increase in learning.(9:9)</td>
<td>Nevertheless divers of Asher and Manasseh and of Zebulun humbled themselves, and came to Jerusalem. Also in Judah the hand of God was to give them one heart to do the commandment of the king and of the princes, by the word of the LORD. (30:11-12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding. (9:10)</td>
<td>And Hezekiah spake comfortably unto all the Levites that taught the good knowledge of the LORD.... (30:22)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The reference to “wisdom building her house” is no doubt an allusion to Solomon the temple builder, who was given divine wisdom to rule the house of Israel. The “seven pillars” are an echo of the “twelve pillars” of the altar in Ex.24:4 (although another Hebrew word is used there for pillars) after which the elders partook of the covenant meal in the divine presence (Ex.24:11), which is reminiscent of wisdom furnishing her table. The “twelve pillars” of Exodus become the “seven pillars” of Proverbs to reflect the tribes who responded to Hezekiah’s reformation.

The life of those who follow wisdom will be prolonged (Prov.9:11), as was the life of Hezekiah (Isa.38:5); there was no need to drink “stolen waters” or eat the “bread of secrécies” as Hezekiah promised the people that they would drink water out of their own cisterns (cf. Prov.5:15) and this statement was countered with Assyrian propaganda (2 Kgs.18:31). The Hebrew, “bread of secrécies” could mean “bread [eaten in] secret places,” a genitive of location; or it could mean “bread [gained through] secrets,” a genitive of source, the secrécies being metonymical for theft. The latter makes a better parallelism in this verse, for bread gained secretly would be like stolen water. The idiom of adultery is a reflection of Ahaz’s syncretism and probably also of the pro-Assyrian party of Hezekiah’s era who made secret deals with the “strange woman” (the Assyrians). The fate of these “simple ones” is to be guests in hell (Prov.9:18), essentially the same fate that awaited the Assyrian monarchs; “Hell from beneath is moved for thee to meet thee at thy coming: it stirreth up the dead for thee, even all the chief ones of the earth; it hath raised up from their thrones all the kings of the nations. All they shall speak and say unto thee, Art thou also become weak as we? art thou become like unto us? Thy pomp is brought down to the grave, and the noise of thy viols: the worm is spread under thee, and the worms cover thee” (Isa.14:9-11).
Proverbs of Solomon
Second Collection
10:1-22:16
Proverbs 10

Theme: The fate of the wicked and the righteous are contrasted. The main co-texts are Psalm 37 and Psalm 49 and Micah:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proverbs 10</th>
<th>Psalm 49 and Psalm 37</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Treasures of wickedness profit nothing: but righteousness delivereth from death. (10:2)</td>
<td>They that trust in their wealth, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches (49:6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The LORD will not suffer the soul of the righteous to famish: but he casteth away the substance of the wicked. (10:3)</td>
<td>I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread. (37:25) Trust in the LORD, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed. (37:3) They shall not be ashamed in the evil time: and in the days of famine they shall be satisfied. (37:19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The memory of the just is blessed: but the name of the wicked shall rot. (10:7)</td>
<td>Their inward thought is, that their houses shall continue for ever, and their dwelling places to all generations; they call their lands after their own names. Nevertheless man being in honour abideth not: he is like the beasts that perish. (49:11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.....the name of the wicked shall rot. (10:7)</td>
<td>That he should still live for ever, and not see corruption. (49:9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The rich man's wealth is his strong city: the destruction of the poor is their poverty. (10:15)</td>
<td>They that trust in their wealth, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches. (49:6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The tongue of the just is as choice silver: the heart of the wicked is little worth. The lips of the righteous feed many: but fools die for want of wisdom. (10:20-21)</td>
<td>The mouth of the righteous speaketh wisdom, and his tongue talketh of judgment. (37:30)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The fear of the wicked, it shall come upon him: but the desire of the righteous shall be granted. (10:24)</td>
<td>Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart. (37:4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As the whirlwind passeth, so is the wicked no more: but the righteous is an everlasting foundation. (10:25)</td>
<td>For evildoers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the LORD, they shall inherit the earth.For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be: yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be. (37:9-10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The righteous shall never be removed: but the wicked shall not inhabit the earth. (10:30)</td>
<td>For such as be blessed of him shall inherit the earth; and they that be cursed of him shall be cut off. (37:22)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Both Psalms have a similar thematic – the confidence of the wicked is misplaced. Although they plan for immortality and attempt to establish dynasties their wealth and power is
ephemeral. In contrast, the righteous who endure the machinations of the wicked will see their demise and live to inherit the covenant blessings.

The superscription to Psalm 37 attributes the psalm to David. In v.25 he is depicted as an old man, now looking back on earlier evil days — presumably the days of Saul’s jealousy and his own varied experience as an outlaw. David lived to see the demise of Saul’s dynasty and received the powerful covenant promise of 2 Samuel 7 that established the Davidic dynasty forever.

Psalm 49 is a Korah psalm, most probably from the Hezekiah era. G. Booker notes correspondences between Psalm 49 and Isaiah 22:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Isaiah 22</th>
<th>Psalm 49</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Over the house</td>
<td>11. [They think] their houses will continue forever</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sepulchre... an habitation for himself in the rock</td>
<td>16. When the glory of his house is increased</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Lord will carry thee away with a mighty captivity</td>
<td>11. “Their graves are their homes forever” (RSV)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I will drive thee from thy station</td>
<td>12,20. Man being in honour abideth not</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The chariots of thy glory shall be... shame</td>
<td>6. They that trust in wealth... and boast in... riches...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10. [will] leave their wealth to others</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The context in Isaiah is the end of the Davidic dynasty. Hezekiah had no heir to the throne and was mortally ill during the Assyrian crisis. From the time of Ahaz the royal court was divided along pro-Assyrian and pro-Egyptian lines with the prophet Isaiah urging reliance on Yahweh. The royal scribe Shebna (probably a Phoenician) was preparing the establishment of his own dynasty (no doubt with foreign support) and constructed an ostentatious royal tomb in commemoration of his loftiness. Micah the Morasthite prophesied in the days of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah and his message was directed at Samaria and Jerusalem:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proverbs 10</th>
<th>Micah 6</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Treasures of wickedness profit nothing (10:2)</td>
<td>Are there yet the treasures of wickedness in the house of the wicked... (6:10)</td>
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<tr>
<td>The mouth of a righteous man is a well of life: but violence covereth the mouth of the wicked. (10:11)</td>
<td>For the rich men thereof are full of violence, and the inhabitants thereof have spoken lies, and their tongue is deceitful in their mouth (6:12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The LORD will not suffer the soul of the righteous to famish: but he casteth away the substance of the wicked. (10:3)</td>
<td>Thou shalt eat, but not be satisfied (6:14)</td>
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</table>
Proverbs 11

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proverbs 11</th>
<th>Inter-text</th>
<th>Comments</th>
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</table>
| v.1) A false balance is abomination to the LORD: but a just weight is his delight. | Proverbs 11 is to an extent inter-textual with Micah who was a contemporary with the prophet Isaiah concurrent with reigns commencing with Uzziah and terminating in the reign of Hezekiah. The elite are condemned for their double standards (false balances cf. Deut 25.13-16; Lev 10.35-36 and ANET 388, 423) and their accumulation of wealth at the behest of the poor. In particular Micah condemns Judah for becoming like the Israelite King Ahab renowned for his luxury (1 Kgs 22.39) and stealing the vineyard of Naboth by levelling false charges against him (1 Kgs 21.2). | **Proverbs 11**

| v.1) | A false balance is abomination to the Lord |
| v.2) | with the lowly is wisdom. |
| v.4) | Riches profit not in the day of wrath: but righteousness delivereth from death. |
| v.18) | The wicked worketh a deceitful work: but to him that soweth righteousness shall be a sure reward. |
| v.24) | There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty. |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Micah 6.8-15</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>v.8)</td>
<td>Shall I count them pure with the wicked balances?</td>
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<td>v.9)</td>
<td>...the man of wisdom shall see thy name</td>
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<tr>
<td>v.10)</td>
<td>Are there yet the treasures of wickedness in the house of the wicked, and the scant measure that is abominable?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v.12)</td>
<td>For the rich men thereof are full of violence, and the inhabitants thereof have spoken lies, and their tongue is deceitful in their mouth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v.15)</td>
<td>Thou shalt sow, but thou shalt not reap; thou shalt tread the olives, but thou shalt not anoint thee with oil; and sweet wine, but shalt not drink wine.</td>
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Stones were used for measuring amounts of silver on the balance; in Prov 11.1 the stone (weight) that pleases the Lord is whole, complete or perfect (from שָׁלֵם, shalem). It was one that would give an honest, accurate measurement. Perhaps the **perfect stone** is a reference to Micah 5.5; “And this man (Hezekiah) shall be the peace (shalom), when the Assyrian shall come into our land”.


v.2) When pride cometh, then cometh shame: but with the lowly is wisdom

v.3) The integrity of the upright shall guide them: but the perverseness of transgressors shall destroy them

In Prov 11.2, the prideful (arrogant) Assyrian Sennacherib (or a reference to Hezekiah’s great grandfather in 2 Chron 26.16-21) is contrasted with “lowly” Hezekiah who became the bruised and stricken suffering servant of Isaiah 53 (thus typifying messiah). Sennacherib (2 Chron 32.21-22) returned to his land in shame using a different Heb word (cf. When pride cometh, then cometh shame) where he was assassinated by his sons in the temple of his god. Proverbs continues by saying: “The integrity of the upright shall guide them: but the perverseness of transgressors shall destroy them”. This is a metonymy as Hezekiah’s integrity is another way of saying “his faith in Yahweh”, the chronicler records (v.22); “Thus the LORD saved Hezekiah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem from the hand of Sennacherib the king of Assyria, and from the hand of all other, and guided them on every side”. The Hebrew word “destroy” in Prov 11.3 is a Kethib/Qere reading. The Qere יְשָדֵם (yyshadem) is an imperfect tense with the pronominal suffix. The Kethib וְשָדֵם (vyyshadam) is a perfect tense with a vav prefixed and a pronominal suffix. The Qere is supported by the versions. Interestingly, this links with the warning of the coming destruction (by Assyria) in Isa 13.6, which plays on the same word; “Howl ye; for the day of the LORD is at hand; it shall come as a destruction (shod) from the Almighty (Shaddi)”[ Shaddai is always associated with the blessing of children; http://www.biblaridion.info/resources/Shad.pdf].


v.4) Riches profit not in the day of wrath: but righteousness delivereth from death.

v.5) The righteousness of the perfect shall direct his way: but the wicked shall fall by his own wickedness.

v.4) Riches profit not in the day of wrath: but righteousness delivereth from death.

Isa 22:15-19;
“Thus saith the Lord GOD of hosts, Go, get thee unto this treasurer, even unto Shebna, which is over the house, and say, What hast thou here? and whom hast thou here, that thou hast hewed thee out a sepulchre here, as he that hewed him

v.5) The righteousness of the perfect shall direct his way: but the wicked shall fall by his own wickedness.

Prov 11.4-8 continues to contrast the fate of the wicked and the righteous. It warns the wicked not to trust in their wealth and that their scheming will back-fire and result in a reversal of fortunes. The wicked and their expectations of greatness will perish in contrast with the deliverance of the righteous. These verses reflect the fate of the treasurer Shebna who took advantage of Hezekiah’s illness in order
<table>
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<tr>
<th>v.6</th>
<th>The righteousness of the upright shall deliver them: but transgressors shall be taken in their own naughtiness.</th>
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<td>out a sepulchre on high, and that graveth an habitation for himself in a rock? Behold, the LORD will carry thee away with a mighty captivity, and will surely cover thee. He will surely violently turn and toss thee like a ball into a large country: there shalt thou die, and there the chariots of thy glory shall be the shame of thy lord's house. And I will drive thee from thy station, and from thy state shall he pull thee down”. (see the Note at the end of this table) to negotiate a deal with Sennacherib while at the same time seeking the support of Egypt. Shebna was building himself a monumental tomb amongst the Kings of Judah, no doubt deluding himself that his house would see the commencement of a new royal dynasty in Judah. The word “perfect” (v.5) is a reference to Abraham (Gen 17.1) and “way” is a reference to Abraham’s children (Gen 18.9) pointing to Hezekiah. Abraham was delivered because of his righteousness (Gen 15.6) which means that he believed the covenant promise concerning messiah. Hezekiah (though about to die childless) also believed in the covenant promise made to the house of David (whereas Aha did not).</td>
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<td>v.7</td>
<td>When a wicked man dieth, his expectation (tiqvah) shall perish: and the hope of unjust men perisheth there is shouting.</td>
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<td>The Hebrew word “tiqvah” is usually translated as “hope” and is often associated with having children as children represented “future hope” and the hope of Israel was the promised messiah. Hezekiah was about to die without an heir to the throne, thus nullifying the Davidic covenant. On the other hand Shebna was plotting the establishment of his own dynasty. However, both the prophet Isaiah and the Proverb makes it clear that there would be a reversal of fortunes. Hezekiah would see an extension of life and the people of Judah would be delivered. Hope (children) would continue (in the form of the Davidic dynasty) but the “hope” of Shebna would perish. Shebna would be violently removed from office and would die in captivity – his “hope” (dreams of a dynasty) would perish there with him, in contrast the life of Hezekiah (and his dynasty) would be extended; “.....the seed of the righteous shall be delivered” (Prov 11.21) or, in the words of the prophet Isaiah; “...he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand” (Isa 53.10). Moreover, the word to describe the righteous in v.5 “perfect” is the same word that God uses when he exhorts Abraham – “to walk before me, and be thou perfect” (Gen 17.1). Abraham’s faith reached “perfection” in his belief concerning the promised messiah. Note the reference to “shouting” (v.7) when Jericho fell (Josh 6.5) except for the house of Rahab who had a red thread of hope (tiqvah cf. Josh 2.18) as she married the prince of Judah (Chron 2.11-12; Matt 1.5) thus Rahab became a progenitor of the messiah – demonstrating that “hope” (tiqvah) is associated with having children.</td>
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<tr>
<td>v.8</td>
<td>The righteous is delivered out of trouble, and the wicked cometh in his stead.</td>
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<td>The righteous is delivered out of trouble, and the wicked cometh in his stead.</td>
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</table>
v.9) An hypocrite with his mouth destroyeth his neighbour: but through knowledge shall the just be delivered.

v.10) When it goeth well with the righteous, the city rejoiceth: and when the wicked perish,

v.11) By the blessing of the upright the city is exalted: but it is overthrown by the mouth of the wicked.

v.12) He that is void of wisdom despiseth his neighbour: but a man of understanding holdeth his peace.

2 Chron 30.22; “And Hezekiah spake comfortably unto all the Levites that taught the good knowledge of the LORD”.

Isa 12.2-3 Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the LORD JEHovah is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation. Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation.

2 Kgs 18.36; “But the people held their peace, and answered him not a word: for the king’s commandment was, saying, Answer him not” (2 Kgs 18.36).

The Hebrew word “hypocrite” originally meant “impious, godless, polluted or profane”. It later developed the idea of a “hypocrite” (Dan 11.32). Here it refers to the godless and impious Rabshakeh spokesman for Sennacherib. The verb יָשַׁחְתָּ (shakhat) means “to destroy; to ruin” and is probably meant as a play on Rabshakeh who destroys with his mouth; “Speak, I pray thee, to thy servants in the Syrian language; for we understand it: and talk not with us in the Jews' language in the ears of the people that are on the wall” (2 Kgs 18.26). The contrast is between Hezekiah and Rabshakeh; “But Rabshakeh said unto them, Hath my master sent me to thy master, and to thee, to speak these words? hath he not sent me to the men which sit on the wall, that they may eat their own dung, and drink their own piss with you?” (2 Kgs 18.27) “And Hezekiah spake comfortably unto all the Levites that taught the good knowledge of the LORD” (2 Chron 30.22). Rejoicing (v.10) refers to the joy of salvation at the defeat of the Assyrians when they drew water from the wells (cf. the water tunnel of Hezekiah) for celebrating feasts such as the water pouring at Tabernacles. The intervening verses (vv. 10-11) contrast the fate of Hezekiah and the fate of the Assyrians. The NetBible notes that the phrase “the blessing of the upright” is either an objective or subjective genitive. It may refer to the blessing God gives the upright (which will benefit society) or the blessing that the upright are to the city.

v.13) A talebearer revealeth secrets: but he that is of a faithful spirit concealeth the matter.

The noun means “slander” and so “tale-bearer” (so KJV, ASV, NASB), or “informer.” The participle מְגַלֶּה (mÿgaleh) means “uncovering” or “revealing” secrets. The contrast is between an “informer” (in common parlance a “grass” or “snitch”) and a reliable (faithful) person. The LXX version of this proverb is
interesting: “A double-tongued man discloses the secret counsels of an assembly: but he that is faithful in spirit conceals matters”. This reading is supported by the next proverb (Prov 11.15) which also refers to counsel. It seems that information was “leaking” from Hezekiah’s Royal Privy Council. Sennacherib was aware of efforts to seek Egyptian support (2 Kgs 18.21) and Rabshakeh the chief cup-bearer or the vizier of the Assyrian court was probably Jewish (he spoke Hebrew) and he was familiar with Isaiah’s prophecy which he countered in a propagandistic fashion. Shebna (the treasurer) was plotting against Hezekiah and one wonders if the High Priest (Eliakim) was involved as the stripping of the temple for tribute payment as it does not seem like something that Hezekiah would approve but could have been done in Hezekiah’s name during his illness. It was obviously a delaying tactic – stalling for time while seeking Egyptian support. However, the Assyrian spies in the court of Hezekiah knew this and therefore the Assyrian king did not lift the siege. This dire situation and the ongoing negotiations were concealed from the people (in order to keep up morale, or in order to hide duplicity?); “Then said Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, and Shebna, and Joah, unto Rabshakeh, Speak, I pray thee, to thy servants in the Syrian language; for we understand it: and talk not with us in the Jews' language in the ears of the people that are on the wall” (2 Kgs 18.26).

<table>
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<tr>
<th>v.14</th>
<th>Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counsellors there is safety.</th>
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LXX Proverbs 11:14 They that have no guidance fall like leaves: but in much counsel there is safety. The term “safety” ṭeswu’ah(teshu’ah) means “salvation” or “victory” (BDB 448 s.v.); cf. NAB, TEV “security”; NRSV, NLT “safety.” Here, it connotes “success” as the antithesis of the nation falling. The previous verse (in the LXX) referred to disclosure of the secret counsels of an assembly, however this proverb recommends that salvation comes through the advice of a multitude of counsellors. In the case of Hezekiah, with warring factions (within the government) and secrets being leaked to the enemy this seems like a contradiction. In many other biblical cases (such as the advice offered to Rehoboam) “much counsel” caused confusion and contradicting opinions rather than sound advice. Could the translators have misunderstood this proverb? A satisfactory solution can be found by reading this as a superlative (a sort of plural of majesty) as in: “Great Counsel” or “Abundant Counsellors” (plural superlative?) which echoes the Immanuel Prophecy; “For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace”. (Isa 9:6) The suggestion is that the Isaiah term should be read as a titular singularity “Wonderful Counsellor” without punctuation (which is not present in the original). The Hebrew uses the same word for counsel in both passages (יַעֲדוֹת, ya’ats) with different descriptors attached --
abundant (בְּנִי, rob) and wonderful (שֶׁבֶל pele’), although the first can mean “great” or “greatness” and the latter “marvellous” or “extraordinary”. On pragmatic matters Hezekiah listened to the advice of his princes (He took counsel with his princes and his mighty men to stop the waters of the fountains which were without the city: and they did help him, 2 Chron 32.3) but on the matter of national salvation the Wonderful Counsellor urged his people to rely on God for salvation.

v.15) He that is surety for a stranger shall smart for it: and he that hateth suretiship is sure.

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<tr>
<th><strong>Proverbs 6</strong></th>
<th><strong>Eighth century co-texts</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My son, if thou be surety for thy friend.....(6:1)</td>
<td>Isa.38:14 (JPS) - O LORD, I am oppressed, be Thou my surety.</td>
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<tr>
<td>.....if thou hast stricken thy hand with a stranger (6:1)</td>
<td>2 Kgs.18:23- Now therefore, I pray thee, give pledges to my lord the king of Assyria.</td>
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<td>Isa.1:7....as overthrown by strangers (= the Assyrians)</td>
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v.16) A gracious woman retaineth honour: and strong men retain riches.

LXE v.16) A gracious wife brings glory to her husband: but a woman hating righteousness is a theme of dishonour. The slothful come to want: but the diligent support themselves with wealth.

There are difficulties with this proverb as its counterpart in the LXX demonstrates considerable divergence. If the contrast is between a gracious woman and a strong man we might naturally think of the progenitors of the royal Davidic line (Ruth and Boaz) who are employed as types of grace and strength in Prov 31. The name of Boaz is associated with strength. However, the word for strength here יָרֵאת (‘ariyts), is usually translated as violent (ASV), ruthless (NIV/NIB) and terrible (YLT). These descriptors are not applicable to Boaz, moreover the italicized word men (KJV), is not present in the original, but all of the translations supply “men” by way of completing the ellipses. However, throughout Isaiah the “terrible” or “terrible one” יָרֵאת (‘ariyts) is used to describe the Assyrians (cf. Isa 13.1;25.3-5;29.5,20;49.25). The gracious (חֵן chen) woman who retains glory (כַּבֹּד kabowd) is probably the personification of wisdom (typified by Ruth); Proverbs 4:8-9; “Exalt her, and she will promote you; She will bring you honor, (כַּבֹּד kabad) when you embrace her. She will place on your head an ornament of grace (חֵן chen); A crown of glory (תֵיפָרָה teph’arah ) she will deliver to you. (cf. Prov 3.16; In her left hand.....glory כַּבֹּד kabowd)”. We suggest an amended translation; Proverbs 11:16 A gracious woman (i.e., wisdom) retains glory: the terrible (i.e., Assyrians) retain wealth. The irony is that wisdom adds all those other things anyway (riches, long life etc)...it did in the time of Solomon and certainly did with Hezekiah. Note the parallels: So the LORD exalted Solomon exceedingly in the sight of all Israel, and bestowed on him such royal majesty as had not been on any king before him in Israel. (NKJ 1 Chron 29.25). And many brought gifts to the LORD at Jerusalem, and presents to Hezekiah king of Judah, so that he was exalted in the sight of all nations thereafter. (NKJ 2 Chron 32.23)
**v.17** The merciful man doeth good to his own soul: but *he that is* cruel troubleth his own flesh.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prov 11:15</th>
<th>Gen 49:7; “Cursed <em>be</em> their anger (Levi and Simeon), for it was fierce; and their wrath, for it was <em>cruel</em> “. Gen 34.30; “Ye have <em>troubled</em> me to make me to stink among the inhabitants of the land”.</th>
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<tr>
<td>This proverb comes from the Jacob Cycle and is most certainly directed at the priests and scribes from the tribe of Levi and Simeon; Cursed <em>be</em> their anger (Levi and Simeon), for it was fierce; and their wrath, for it was <em>cruel</em> (Gen 49.7 see also Prov 5.9 and comments). And Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, Ye have <em>troubled</em> me to make me to stink among the inhabitants of the land (Gen 34.30). It seems that elements within the priestly and scribal clans had turned against Hezekiah and were plotting against him. It should be remembered that the father of Hezekiah (Ahaz) and his high priest were Assyrian collaborators (Uriah in 2 Kings 16). Although these priests were removed and replaced during the Hezekiah reformation we can speculate that a pro-Assyrian party of appeasers still existed in government. Of particular interest is that on the occasion in Genesis the Levites deceptively abused the covenant of circumcision to execute a foreigner. It seems then that “double-dealing” was going on and that included misusing the covenant.</td>
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**v.18** The wicked worketh a deceitful work: but to him that soweth righteousness shall be a sure reward.

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<tr>
<th>Prov 11:18</th>
<th>2 Kgs 18.16-17; “At that time did Hezekiah cut off <em>the gold from</em> the doors of the temple of the LORD, and <em>from</em> the pillars which Hezekiah king of Judah had overlaid, and gave it to the king of Assyria. And the king of Assyria sent Tartan and Rabsaris and Rabshakeh from Lachish to king Hezekiah with a great host against Jerusalem”.</th>
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<tr>
<td>Most of the translations have “deceptive wages” rather than “deceitful work”. As with the previous proverb the Jacob Cycle forms the underlying inspiration, with Laban cheating Jacob ten times on his wages (Gen 31.41). The “wicked” Syrian (Laban) reflects the wicked Assyrians who made deals with “Jacob” that they consequently reneged on (payment of tribute). The one sowing righteousness is Jacob’s progenitor Isaac who prospered greatly in the land and typified Hezekiah (unblocking the Abrahamic covenant i.e., “the wells” [of salvation]).</td>
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v.19) As righteousness tendeth to life: so he that pursueth evil pursueth it to his own death.

v.20) They that are of a froward heart are abomination to the LORD: but such as are upright in their way are his delight.

Gen 31.29; “And he took his brethren with him, and pursued (יָרָדְפָה, radaph) after him seven days’ journey; and they overtook him in the mount Gilead”. Ps 101.4-5; “A forward heart shall depart from me: I will not know a wicked person. Whoso privily slandereth his neighbour, him will I cut off: him that hath an high look and a proud heart will not I suffer”.

The Hebrew pursueth (יָרָדְפָה, radaph) also occurs in the Jacob Cycle when Laban chased after Jacob; “And he took his brethren with him, and pursued (יָרָדְפָה, radaph) after him seven days’ journey; and they overtook him in the mount Gilead”. (Gen 31.23).

Laban was warned in a dream that if he harmed Jacob it would be to his detriment (Gen 31.29). Proverbs 11.19-20 also reflects the sentiments of the Davidic Psalm 101, (see Booker et al Psalms Studies) the tone of this psalm and of the Proverbs in general are very similar. As might be expected, there are frequent allusions and references to this psalm 101 in the Proverbs: Compare 3 with 6:25; 23:31-35; 4 with 2:12-15; 3:32; 6:20; 8:13; 11:20; 17:20; 5 with 6:16-19; 10:18; 20:19; 21:4; 25:23; 30:10; 6 with 28:28; 29:2; 7 with 12:3; 29:12; and 8 with 16:12; 20:8,26.

The Hebrew word “delight” (רַצָּוָן, ratsown) implies favour or acceptance. It is used three times in this chapter (11.1,20,27) and is employed throughout the book of Isaiah, particularly to declare “the acceptable year of the LORD” (Isa 61.2). Of course, that was the year that Jerusalem was delivered from the Assyrian and the captives were released.

v.21) Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished: but the seed of the righteous shall be delivered.

Isa 7.2; “And it was told the house of David, saying, Syria is confederate with Ephraim. And his heart was moved, and the heart of his people, as the trees of the wood are moved with the wind.”

This proverb reflects the historical situation in the time of Ahaz (the father of Hezekiah) when there was a confederacy (hand joined in hand) against Judah (Isa 7.1-16) to establish a puppet king and regime in Jerusalem. On that occasion Ahaz refused the messianic sign of Immanuel (Hezekiah) that assured the establishment of the Davidic dynasty. Nevertheless, despite
The unfaithfulness of Ahaz the wicked confederacy failed. The “seed of the righteous” is rendered “those who are righteous” (NIV/NIB) or in the LXX “he that sows righteousness”. Obviously, Ahaz was not righteous. Could the construct be – “righteous seed” rather than “seed of the righteous”? Of Hezekiah it was said; “he shall see his seed”. (Isa 53.10)

| v.22 | As a jewel of gold in a swine’s snout, so is a fair woman which is without discretion. | Gen 24.47; “And I asked her, and said, Whose daughter art thou? And she said, The daughter of Bethuel, Nahor’s son, whom Milcah bare unto him: and I put the earring upon her face, and the bracelets upon her hands”. | This proverb probably owes its inspiration to the Isaac Cycle (who was a type of Hezekiah), the first man “born into the Abrahamic covenant”. Abraham sent his trusted servant to find his son Isaac a suitable (covenant) wife. He found the beautiful Rebekah and sealed the deal with a nose earring and bracelets (Gen 24.47). However, she lacked discernment (cf. Abigail; same word employed in 1 Sam 25.33). She represents the faithful covenant bride. Similarly, Hezekiah sent his servants to Northern Israel to gather his “covenant bride” for the Passover celebrations. However, his messengers were mocked and laughed to scorn. The Hezekiah reformation also forms the backdrop to the “love story” in Song of Songs. |

| v.23 | The desire of the righteous is only good: but the expectation of the wicked is wrath. | We note that the word expectation (tiqvah) is employed again, this parallels verse 7 and is contrasted with the desire (ta’avah) of the righteous. The desire (same word) of King David was to enquire in the temple (Ps 27.4) concerning the future of his dynasty, the outcome being the messianic promise given in 2 Sam 7. He was assured that the Davidic dynasty would last forever in contrast the expectation (hope) of the wicked is not offspring (a continuing dynasty) but rather “wrath”. In the case of Hezekiah (the childless descendant of David) he also entered the temple to enquire, bearing the arrogant, threatening letter sent by Sennacherib (Isa 37.14-17). He was assured that the Assyrian would be defeated and that Davidic hope would not perish. |
v.24) There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty.

Gen 26.12; “Then Isaac sowed in that land, and received in the same year an hundredfold: and the LORD blessed him”.

Gen 26.18-19; “And Isaac’s servants digged in the valley, and found there a well of springing water”.

Once again we revert to the Isaac Cycle – the exemplar of being born into the covenant, typifying Hezekiah and his reformation (unblocking the wells of Abraham) as a messianic proto-type; “Then Isaac sowed in that land, and received in the same year an hundredfold: and the LORD blessed him”. (Gen 26.12); “And Isaac digged again the wells of water, which they had digged in the days of Abraham his father; for the Philistines had stopped them after the death of Abraham: and he called their names after the names by which his father had called them”. And Isaac's servants digged in the valley, and found there a well of springing water. (Gen 26.18-19) And they said, We saw certainly that the LORD was with thee (GOD WITH US = IMMANUEL =HEZEKIAH) : and we said, Let there be now an oath betwixt us, even betwixt us and thee, and let us make a covenant with thee”. (Gen 26.28) And it came to pass the same day, that Isaac's servants came, and told him concerning the well which they had digged, and said unto him, We have found water”. (Gen 26.32) Hezekiah is known for the “water tunnel” that he constructed linking to the virgin spring. However, the people refused “... the waters of Shiloah that go softly” so instead they got, “....the waters of the river, strong and many” (the Assyrians from the river Euphrates). (Isa 8:6-7) However, the faithful who travelled to Jerusalem to keep the Passover that was reinstituted by Hezekiah (unblocking the wells) were saved from the siege; “Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation”. (Isa 12.3)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>v.26</strong></th>
<th>He that withholdeth corn, the people shall curse him: but blessing shall be upon the head of him that selleth it.</th>
<th>The Jacob (Joseph) Cycle is employed in this proverb to highlight God’s providential care. Joseph withheld corn (Gen 41.49) and saved his brethren and the nation of Egypt. His brethren despised and envied him but their betrayal was for a purpose. Similarly, Hezekiah’s overtures to his northern brethren were mocked but those pilgrims who hearkened were saved in Jerusalem.</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>v.27</strong></td>
<td>He that diligently seeketh good procureth favour: but he that seeketh mischief, it shall come unto him.</td>
<td>Gen 39.21; “But the LORD was with Joseph, and shewed him mercy, and gave him favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison”. Again the Jacob (Joseph) Cycle is in view. Metaphorically Hezekiah and the people were shown favour and released from the “prison” of death and captivity. “But this is a people robbed and spoiled; they are all of them snared in holes, and they are hid in prison houses: they are for a prey, and none delivereth; for a spoil, and none saith, Restore”. (Isa 42.22), “He was taken from prison (restraint) and from judgment” (Isa 53.8), “I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron” (Isa 45.2). The word “mischief” (נָּֽדְרָא <code>ra</code>) should be translated by the stronger word “evil” (NKJ/NIB/NIV/RSV/JPS/YLT). Joseph was plotted against because he brought his father an “evil (נָּֽדְרָא <code>ra</code>) report” and his brethren who conspired against him said that he had been consumed by an “evil (נָּֽדְרָא <code>ra</code>) beast” (Gen 37.20,33). Hezekiah was about to be consumed by an “evil beast” (Assyria) and was also betrayed by his brethren.</td>
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<tr>
<td>v.28)</td>
<td>He that trusteth in his riches shall fall: but the righteous shall flourish as a branch.</td>
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<tr>
<td>v.29)</td>
<td>He that troubleth his own house shall inherit the wind: and the fool shall be servant to the wise of heart.</td>
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<tr>
<td>v.30)</td>
<td>The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise.</td>
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<tr>
<td>v.31)</td>
<td>Behold, the righteous shall be recompensed in the earth: much more the wicked and the sinner.</td>
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</table>

This section is replete with examples from the Pentateuch. Abraham did not trust in his riches and refused the reward offered by the king of Sodom. (Gen 14.22) Joseph interpreted the dream that saw the cupbearer flourishing like a budding and blooming vine indicating his return to favour, thereby anticipating his own restoration (Gen 40.10 cf. Gen 49.22). Simeon and Levi troubled their father Jacob’s house in the matter of Dinah (Gen 34.30), just as they did when they (together with their other brothers) sold Joseph into slavery. Joseph was elevated because he was discreet and wise (Gen 41.33) and his brethren bowed down to him (like servants cf. Gen 37.10). Joseph was like the tree of life in Eden. God sent Joseph before them to preserve life (Gen 45.5) and when Jacob heard and saw these things the spirit of Jacob their father revived (came to life Gen 45.27). In the case of Hezekiah he was recompensed in the earth and his Assyrian enemy vanquished. The Proverbs in this chapter have as historical setting the reign of Hezekiah, which are retold through the types and anti-types of the Pentateuch. The righteous are established and the wicked experience wrath. Above all these proverbs tell the story of reversal of fortunes and of the providential care of God.

**Note:**
The passage ends with a messianic prophecy: Isaiah 22:20-22

And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will call my servant Eliakim the son of Hilkiah: 21 And I will clothe him with thy robe, and strengthen him with thy girdle, and I will commit thy government into his hand: and he shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to the house of Judah. 22 And the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder; so he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open. Harry Whittaker (Isaiah, 249) notes the similarity between the Hebrew phrasing in Isaiah 22:20; wĕqārāʾtî lĕʿabdî lĕʾelyāqîm ben-bilqiyyahû (call my servant Eliakim the son of Hilkiah) and 1 Kings 1:32 qirʾû lî lĕṣādōwq, where the prepositional prefix l’ is also repeated; “call to me Zadok the priest.” Whittaker proposes that Isaiah 22:20 should be understood in the same manner: “call my servant to Eliakim the son of Hilkiah.” The prophet is therefore concerned with Hezekiah (not with Eliakim) The phrase “key of the house of David” is royal language not priestly terminology, moreover the phrases in Isaiah 22:21-23 are inter-textually linked with the Messianic Emmanuelle (God with us) prophecy in Isa 7:14 and 9:6-7 “government”/ “father” etc regarding the throne of David. Hezekiah acts as a proto-type of the Messiah and in Isaiah 22 he is clad in priestly garments and functions as a priest-king (Melchizedek) like his ancestor David. In contrast the fortunes of Shebna are about to be reversed.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proverbs 12</th>
<th>Inter-text</th>
<th>Comments</th>
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</table>
| 1) Whoso loveth instruction loveth knowledge: but he that hateth reproof is brutish.  
**v.2** A good man obtaineth favour of the LORD: but a man of wicked devices will he condemn.  
**v.3** A man shall not be established by wickedness: but the root of the righteous shall not be moved. | **Ps 49.10**; “For he seeth that wise men die, likewise the fool and the brutish person perish, and leave their wealth to others”.  
**Ps 37.7**; “Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for him: fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass”.  
**2 Sam 7.16**; “And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established forever”.  
**Isa 11.10**; “And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious”. | The same Hebrew word for brutish (bâ’är) is employed in Psalm 49.10, a Korah Psalm from the Hezekiah period that describes the fate of the wicked; “Likewise the fool and the brutish together perish.” The Psalm concerns a contemporary of Hezekiah who is compared with Cain; “They call lands after their own name” (Ps.49.11 cf. Gen 4.17)….. “Yet after them men approve their sayings.” (Ps.49.13 cf. Lamech in Gen 4:23). Genesis 4 serves as a template for the brutish man in Psalm 49 – the prototype for the brutish man is Cain. Cain refused correction, he hated reproof and was therefore brutish; “If thou doest well shalt thou not be accepted?” (Gen 4.7). The person that Hezekiah had in mind was probably Sheba. This does not necessarily mean that the proverb originated from the Hezekiah period, or from the same hand as the Psalm, although it may have provided the inspiration for the Psalm. The ‘brutish man’ (Cain) is contrasted with Abraham the ‘good man who obtained favour’ ….. “If I have obtained favour in thy sight” (Gen 18.3) who negotiated the safety of Lot and who had received a covenant promise concerning the establishment of his offspring (a great name Gen 12.2) in contrast with Cain who built his own city and named it after his son Enoch. Likewise, Sheba was “making a name for himself” by building an ostentatious tomb (Isa 22.15-19) – evidence suggests that rather than negotiating the safety of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, he was taking advantage of Hezekiah’s illness and double dealing with the Assyrian enemy (Isa 24.16). The acrostic Psalm 37 (most probably of Davidic origins) with the theme alternating between the fate of the good and the wicked is also alluded to in v.2 – the wicked devices are “plots”. }
The same Hebrew word for established is used five times in 2 Sam 7 with regards to the Davidic Covenant (cf. Isa 7.9 different word) and the “root” a reference to the Davidide (cf. Isa 53.2). It is also used multiple times in the chapters that describe the reforms of Hezekiah and Josiah.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>v.4) A virtuous woman is a crown to her husband: but she that maketh ashamed is as rottenness in his bones.</th>
<th>Ruth 3.11</th>
<th>The virtuous woman is modeled on the great (thrice removed) grandmother of Solomon, Ruth, who is called virtuous (cf. Ruth 3:11, Prov. 31:10) the woman who makes “ashamed” is based on Miriam, who was envious of her brother Moses and was quarantined –the treatment for leprosy (‘rottenness to the bones’): “If her father had but spit in her face, should she not be ashamed seven days” (Num.12:14 cf. Prov.14:30). Proverbs Chapter 31 is based on Ruth (see comments there).</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Isa 32.7</strong>; “The instruments also of the churl are evil: he deviseth wicked devices to destroy the poor with lying words, even when the needy speaketh right (mishpat).” The ‘poor’ in this Isaiah passage is Hezekiah (poor –humble in spirit –the suffering servant) the word for churl is the Hebrew nabal. Hezekiah’s beneficent rule is compared with ‘the evil tricks of the trickster’ (Wade), who ‘devised wicked devices’ to destroy the poor even though he spoke right. The cunning of Rabshakeh and his skilful perversion of the facts in his propaganda war match very well the scornful tirade now used against him as well as those inside the city who would not have hesitated to collaborate selfishly, had they been able.</td>
<td>v.5) The thoughts of the righteous are right (mishpat): but the counsels of the wicked are deceit.</td>
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| v.6) | The words of the wicked are to lie in wait for blood: but the mouth of the upright shall deliver them. | **Isa 38.5-6;**  
>“Go, and say to Hezekiah, Thus saith the LORD, the God of David thy father, I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears: behold, I will add unto thy days fifteen years. And I will deliver thee and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria: and I will defend this city” | The brethren of Joseph cast him into the pit (come now therefore, let us slay him—Gen. 37:20) but Joseph delivered his brethren—“And he comforted them, and spake kindly unto them” (Gen 50:21). The Hebrew *deliver* (מָצַל; natsal) is used eight times in Isaiah chapters 36-38, nine times in 2 Kings chapters 18-20 and five times in 2 Chron chapter 32. Most of the occurrences are in placed the mouth of Sennacherib or his proxy Rabshakeh as in “God is not able to deliver you” in Isa 38.5-6 it is the prayer of Hezekiah (mouth of the upright) that results in deliverance. |
| v.7) | The wicked are overthrown, and are not: but the house of the righteous shall stand. | **2 Kgs 19.37;**  
>“And it came to pass, as he was worshipping in the house of Nisroch his god, that Adrammelech and Sharezer his sons smote him with the sword: and they escaped into the land of Armenia. And Esarhaddon his son reigned in his stead”. | In a literal sense the wicked city of Jericho perished; only the house of faithful Rahab (the harlot) remained standing (Josh 6.17) — this is also true in a figurative sense, for while Sennacherib was murdered (in the house of his god, 2Kgs.19.37), Hezekiah recovered and his house (the Davidic dynasty) was established (forever). It was Sennacherib who made Nineveh a truly magnificent city (c. 700 BC). He laid out fresh streets and squares and built within it the famous "palace without a rival" it was one of the largest settlements world- wide even greater than Babylon. The Assyrian empire was subsumed by the Babylonian, even the city of Nineveh vanished until discovered centuries later (1847) by Sir Austen Henry Layard. |
| v.8) | A man shall be commended according to his wisdom: but he that is of a perverse heart shall be despised. | **Gen 41.39;**  
>“And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Forasmuch as God hath shewed thee all this, there is none so discreet and wise as thou art”. | The antithesis is Nabal (the fool) in verse fifteen. A contemporary example of the perverse heart is Rabshakeh spokesman for Sennacherib. In contrast with the heart (זָעֲן) of Hezekiah (cf. 2 Chron 32.2). |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verse</th>
<th>Text</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>v.9</td>
<td>He that is despised, and hath a servant, is better than he that honoureth himself, and lacketh bread.</td>
<td>Isa 22.18b; “…there shalt thou die, and there the chariots of thy glory shall be the shame of thy lord's house”.</td>
<td>This proverb is hard to place – possibly a reference to Meshibosheth – from the royal lineage of Jonathan son of King Saul. He had fallen from grace with the decline of the dynasty of Saul; although he was royalty, he was lame and dwelt in obscurity with his servant (Ziba). He gained favour with King David; the contrast is perhaps with Joab, who had ideas above his station and plotted against David. His descendents were cursed by David, with (among other things) “a lack of bread” (2 Sam.3.29). The LXX has the dishonored acting as a servant. Hezekiah is the one who took on the role of a servant (Isa 49.7 cf. Philip 2.7) and Shebna is the one who honored himself and ended up in captivity.</td>
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<td>v.10</td>
<td>A righteous man regardeth the life of his beast: but the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel.</td>
<td>Gen 33.13; “And he (Jacob) said unto him, My lord knoweth that the children are tender, and the flocks and herds with young are with me: and if men should overdrive them one day, all the flock will die”.</td>
<td>In contrast with Jacob who was even concerned for the welfare of his animals, his sons Simeon and Levi, feigned mercy towards the Shechemites (Gen.34.15) but their ‘tender mercy’ was a disguise for cruel wrath (Gen.49.7).</td>
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<td>v.11</td>
<td>He that tilleth his land shall be satisfied with bread: but he that followeth vain persons is void of understanding.</td>
<td>Gen 26.12; “Then Isaac sowed in that land, and received in the same year an hundredfold: and the LORD blessed him”.</td>
<td>Abimelech who was the illegitimate son of Gideon that hired vain persons to murder his seventy half brothers – the men of Shechem (see previous proverb) that choose to follow Abimelech and elect him as their King (Jdgs.9.4,6). Isaac is also involved with another Abimelech (a different one) –Isaac is typical of Hezekiah unblocking the Abrahamic wells. The proverb alludes to the plot against Hezekiah. Shechem also features as background to verse 14.</td>
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<td>v.12) The wicked desireth the net (מְצוֹד mtsodw) of evil men: but the root of the righteous yieldeth fruit. NAB</td>
<td>Isa 11.1; “And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots” Isa 53.2; “…as a root out of a dry ground”</td>
<td>The Hebrew translated “net” (KJV). This line is difficult to interpret. BDB connects the term (מְצוֹד mtsod) to II מָצוֹד which means (1) “snare; hunting-net” and (2) what is caught: “prey” (BDB 844-45 s.v. מָצוֹד). This would function as a metonymy of cause for what the net catches: the prey. Or it may be saying that the wicked get caught in their own net, that is, reap the consequences of their own sins. On the other hand, HALOT 622 connects מְצוֹד (mtsod) to II מְצוּדָה (mtsudah, “mountain stronghold”; cf. NAB “the stronghold of evil men will be demolished”). The LXX translated it as: “The desires of the wicked are evil.” The Syriac has: “The wicked desire to do evil.” The Latin expands it: “The desire of the wicked is a defense of the worst [things, or persons].” C. H. Toy suggests emending the text to read “wickedness is the net of bad men” (Proverbs [ICC], 250). The MT reads יִתֵּן (yitten, “will give; gives,” without a direct object: “the root of the righteous gives.” The LXX reads “the root of the righteous endures” (cf. NAB). This suggests a Hebrew Vorlage of אֵּיתָן (ʾetan, “constant; continual”; HALOT 44-45 s.v. I אֵּיתָן) which would involve the omission of ע (alef) in the MT. Shebna took advantage of Hezekiah’s illness and the chaos of the Assyrian crisis to organize a coup. Shebna was covetous and desired ostentation and self-exaltation, wanting the same sort of pomp that powerful Kings, like Sennacherib, accorded themselves - taking advantage of Hezekiah’s illness carving a “stronghold” in the rock the sign of a dynasty: “What hast thou here? and whom hast thou here, that thou hast hewed thee out a sepulcher here, [as] he that hewed him out a sepulcher on high, [and] that graveth an habitation for himself in a rock?” (Isa.22.16) Hezekiah recovered from death and had children (Isa 11.1).</td>
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v.13) The wicked is snared by the transgression of his lips: but the just shall come out of trouble (ָּמַעֲרַתָּה tsarah).

1 Kgs 2.23; “Then king Solomon swore by the LORD, saying, God do so to me, and more also, if Adonijah have not spoken this word against his own life”.

2 Kgs 19.3; “Thus saith Hezekiah, This day is a day of trouble (ָּמַעֲרַתָּה tsarah), and of rebuke, and blasphemy: for the children are come to the birth, and there is not strength to bring forth”.

Adonijah was under a death sentence for attempting to usurp the Davidic throne – in contrast the sons of Barzillai the Gileadite were treated kindly by Solomon because Barzillai had acted justly towards David when his enemies had attempted to usurp the Davidic throne (1 Kgs.2.7). The theme is a royal coup comparable with Hezekiah’s situation which came to a head with the Assyrian crisis (day of trouble) from which the nation was delivered.

v.14) A man shall be satisfied (םָּסָבָב sabā’) with good by the fruit of his mouth: and the recompence of a man’s hands shall be rendered unto him.

The parable of Jotham uttered against Abimelech (Jdgs.9.7) – the good fruit of his mouth: and the come-uppance of Abimelech and the men of Shechem: Now therefore, if ye have done truly and sincerely, in that ye have made Abimelech king, and if ye have dealt well with Jerubbaal and his house, and have done unto him according to the deserving of his hands; (Judges 9.16). Thus God rendered the wickedness of Abimelech, which he did unto his father, in slaying his seventy brethren (Judges 9.56). Shechem is a city in Manasseh; located in a valley between Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim, 34 miles (54 km) north of Jerusalem and 7 miles (10.5 km) south-east of Samaria.

Why does Shechem form the background of the proverbs in vv. 10, 11, 14 and 17? Perhaps because Shechem was hallowed by the memory of Abraham (Genesis 12:6, 7; 34:5), Jacob’s Well (Genesis 33:18–19; 34:2, etc.), and Joseph’s tomb (Joshua 24:32) but more importantly this city of Manasseh became the place where the priestly tribe abused the covenant of circumcision and betrayed the residents of the city (Genesis 34), where Joseph was also betrayed (Gen 37.12-14) where the schismatic king Rehoboam was crowned (2 Chron 10.1) and where the coup of Abimelech occurred (Judges 9). After the kings of Israel moved, first to Tirzah (1 Kings 14.17) and later on to Samaria, Shechem lost its importance but it became the headquarters of the grandson of the high priest Eliashib (expelled by Nehemiah) where a schismatic temple was then erected on Mount Garizim and thus Shechem became the "holy city" of the Samaritans. The history of Shechem is therefore one of schism and betrayal. Hezekiah wrote letters to Ephraim and Manasseh (2 Chron 30.1) inviting them to the Passover but they laughed them to scorn,
and mocked them (v.10). However, a faithful remnant from Ephraim and Manasseh did respond to Hezekiah and historically Barzillai the Gileadite (region of Manasseh) had supported David (see verse 13 above) Meshibosheth (see verse 9 above) also lived in the region of Gilead (2 Sam 9.4) was brought to Jerusalem by David where he was shown kindness for the sake of his father Jonathan. Gilead was a mountainous region east of the Jordan River divided among the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh, and situated in Jordan the identification of Gilead as an aspect of Manasseh was the traditional explanation of why the tribal groups of Machir and Gilead are mentioned along with northern tribes in the ancient Song of Deborah, while Manasseh is absent from it. Gilead is roundly condemned by the prophet Hosea; “Gilead is a city of them that work iniquity, and is polluted with blood” (see complete section Hos. 6-11). It is likely then that those elements that plotted against Hezekiah came from Shechem but faithful elements came from Gilead both lying in the tribal area of Manasseh. Significantly, Shechem and its surrounding lands were given as a Levitical city to the Kohathites. The Hebrew for “satisfied” found in this proverb is also found in connection with Manasseh in Isa 9.20-21; “And he shall snatch on the right hand, and be hungry; and he shall eat on the left hand, and they shall not be satisfied (בעֵשׁ saba’) they shall eat every man the flesh of his own arm: Manasseh, Ephraim; and Ephraim, Manasseh: and they together shall be against Judah. For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still”.

| v.15) The way of a fool (אַיִלֵי 'eviyl) is right in his own eyes: but he that hearkeneth unto counsel is wise. |
| 1 Sam.25.3; “Now the name of the man was Nabal; and the name of his wife Abigail: and she was a woman of good understanding, and of a beautiful countenance: but the man was churlish and evil in his doings; and he was of the house of Caleb”. |
| The prototype of the fool in Proverbs is Nabal (גַּלַּל) - his name actually means fool; Let not my lord, I pray thee, regard this man of Belial, [even] Nabal: for as his name is, so is he; Nabal is his name, and folly is with him (1 Sam.25.25) – the wife of Nabal (Abigail) gave David good advice when she told him not to avenge himself: And blessed be thy advice, and blessed be thou, which hast kept me this day from coming to shed blood, and from avenging myself with mine own hand (1 Sam.25.33). In this case the “fool” is Rabshakeh and the counsel (advice) comes from Isaiah; “And Isaiah said unto them, Thus shall ye say to your master, Thus saith the LORD, Be not afraid of the words which thou hast heard, with which the servants of the king of Assyria have blasphemed me” (2 Kgs 19.6). |
| v.16 | A fool's wrath is presently known: but a prudent man covereth shame. 2 Kgs 19.1; “And it came to pass, when king Hezekiah heard it, that he rent his clothes, and covered himself with sackcloth, and went into the house of the LORD”. The NetBible states; “The range of meanings for the verb and the object suggest several possible interpretations of the last line. The verb כָּסָה(kasah) means “to cover” and may indicate hiding or ignoring something. The noun קָלוֹן(qalon) means “shame” and may refer to disgrace (something to be ashamed of) or to contempt or an insult given (shaming words). Several English translations view it as ignoring or overlooking an insult (NIV, ESV, NRSV). Others more ambiguously render it as covering or concealing dishonor or shame, where it is less clear whether the person conceals their own shame or someone else’s. And the LXX reads “a clever person conceals his own dishonor.” But these entail the three main possibilities: to ignore an insult given to you, to ignore something that could shame others, or to conceal something of your own that could be shameful. In a similar phrase in 12:23, the verb does not mean to ignore something”. The mischievous fool is Rabshakeh who insulted the God of Israel. Hezekiah literally covered himself as a response to the shameful insults. |
| v.17 | He that speaketh truth sheweth forth righteousness: but a false witness deceit. Gen 37.5; “And Joseph dreamed a dream, and he told (nagad) it his brethren: and they hated him yet the more ...... And they took Joseph’s coat, and killed a kid of the goats, and dipped the coat in the blood; And they sent the coat of many colours, and they brought it to their father…..” (Gen.37:31, 32). It was at Shechem that Joseph was betrayed and sold into bondage by his brethren. Shechem features as background to vv.10-11 and 14 (see comments there). Verse 17 serves to introduce the next section (vv.18-23). |
v. 18) There is that speaketh like the piercings of a sword: but the tongue of the wise is health.

v. 19) The lip of truth shall be established for ever: but a lying tongue is but for a moment.

v. 20) Deceit is in the heart of them that imagine (charash), evil: but to the counsellors of peace is joy.

v. 21) There shall no evil happen to the just: but the wicked shall be filled with mischief.

v. 22) Lying lips are abomination to the LORD: but they that deal truly are his delight.

v. 23) A prudent man concealeth knowledge: but the heart of fools proclaimeth foolishness.

The themes of v.v. 18-23 are very similar; therefore they have been grouped together:

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<tr>
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<th>Wisdom</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>Lies</td>
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<tr>
<td>War (imagine evil)</td>
<td>Peace</td>
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<tr>
<td>Just</td>
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<tr>
<td>Deception</td>
<td>Honesty</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hidden knowledge</td>
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Verse 20 uses the Qal form of charash (imagine) and Isaiah uses the Hiphil by way of contrast; “But they held their peace (charash), and answered him not a word: for the king's commandment was, saying, Answer him not” (Isa 36.21). The same themes are found in Psalm 120 – a Song of Degrees from the Hezekiah period: Deliver my soul, O LORD, from lying lips, and from a deceitful tongue. (v.1)..... What shall be given unto thee? or what shall be done unto thee, thou false tongue? (v.3) My soul hath long dwelt with him that hateth peace. (v.6) I am for peace: but when I speak, they are for war (v.7). The main characters in this scenario are; Rabshakeh, Sennacherib, Shebna and Hezekiah. Rabshakeh and his lying tongue (propaganda); “Neither let Hezekiah make you trust in the LORD, saying, The LORD will surely deliver us, and this city shall not be delivered into the hand of the king of Assyria” (2 Kgs.18:30). Sennacherib and his double dealing (deceit); “Woe to thee that spoilest, and thou wast not spoiled; and dealest treacherously, and they dealt not treacherously with thee! when thou shalt cease to spoil, thou shalt be spoiled; [and] when thou shalt make an end to deal treacherously, they shall deal treacherously with thee” (Isa.33.1; 24.16). Shebna and his self-exaltation (open foolishness); “What hast thou here? and whom hast thou here, that thou hast hewed thee out a sepulcher here, [as] he that heweth him out a sepulcher on high, [and] that graveth an habitation for himself in a rock?” (Isa.22:16). Righteous Hezekiah; “And wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of thy times, and strength of salvation: the fear of the LORD is his treasure” (Isa 33.7). “Of the increase of [his] government and peace [there shall be] no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this” (Isa.9.7)
| v.24) The hand of the diligent shall bear rule: but the slothful shall be under tribute. | **Judg 18.1,9;**

“In those days there was no king in Israel: and in those days the tribe of the Danites sought them an inheritance to dwell in; for unto that day all their inheritance had not fallen unto them among the tribes of Israel.......And they said, Arise, that we may go up against them: for we have seen the land, and, behold, it is very good: and are ye still? Be not slothful (אַ탈ו atal) to go, and to enter to possess the land”.

The term רְמִיָּה (remiyyah) can mean “slack, negligent, deceptive” (*HALOT* 1243 s.v.). By the feature of ellipsis and double duty we should probably understand it as “the hand of the negligent,” as a way of referring to a negligent person. The term refers to one who is not diligent, who perhaps tries to deceive his employer about his work, which he has neglected. The theme of slothfulness is linked with inheritance (and birthright, see v. 27); the tribe of Dan was under the dominion (מַשָּׁל mashal) of the Philistines (Judg 14.4) because they did not take up their inheritance. The term for “tribute” is rare מַס (mas) usually refers to forced or conscripted labor and is sometimes translated as “slave labor” (NIV, cp. NLT “slave”) but it is far from clear that it means slavery (see *NIDOTTE* 984 s.v.). The term certainly describes imposed work requirements. The tribal history of Dan is unusual in that it migrated to the north. The central region of the tribe of Dan is listed in Jos 19.44 and seven of those cities are listed in Assyrian records, in the form of inscriptions dating to the late eighth century B.C. In 701 B.C. Sennacherib plundered through the Shephelah, razing towns throughout Judah and nearby tribal territories, Dan included. The tribe of Dan, though situated amongst the southern kingdom of Judah, was considered part of the much larger northern kingdom of Israel. The northern kingdom fell to the Assyrian invaders, while the southern kingdom of Judah lasted nearly two hundred more years. The point of the proverb is faithfully taking up your inheritance or risk falling under tribute to Assyria. Menahem taxed the wealthy of the Kingdom to pay tribute to Tiglath-Pileser, thus avoiding a direct invasion. But by so doing, for all practical purposes he had surrendered the nation to the Assyrians and made it a vassal state of the Assyrian Empire.

<p>| v.25) Heaviness in the heart of man maketh it stoop: but a good word maketh it glad. | Isa 38:3-5; “And Hezekiah wept sore. Then came the word of the LORD to Isaiah, saying, Go, and say to Hezekiah, Thus saith the LORD, the God of David thy father, I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears: behold, I will add unto thy days fifteen years”. | Jacob was devastated at the loss of his son Joseph, but revived when he found out that he was still alive: Thy servants shall bring down the gray hairs of thy servant our father with sorrow to the grave....And they told him all the words of Joseph, which he had said unto them: and when he saw the wagons which Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of Jacob their father revived (Gen 44. 31; 45.27). In similar fashion Hezekiah wept bitterly until the good word revived him. |
| v.26) The righteous is more excellent (יָתֵר yater) than his neighbour: but the way of the wicked seduceth them. | Num 14.7; “And they spake unto all the company of the children of Israel, saying, The land, which we passed through to search it, (יָתֵר yater) is an exceeding good land.” | The word translated ‘more excellent’ is the verb יָתֵר (yater) can mean “to spy out; to examine,” which makes a good contrast to “lead astray” in the parallel colon. Young’s Literal Translation renders this as; “The righteous searcheth his companion, And the way of the wicked causeth them to err.” Of the twenty two times that the verb occurs, it is used eleven times in Numbers, once in Deuteronomy and once in Ezekiel to describe “searching out the land.” This suggests that the proverb should read – the righteous searches out [i.e. the land]: but the way of the wicked causes his neighbor to err” The reference is to the good report made by Joshua and Caleb: And the evil report that seduced the congregation brought by the other spies: “And the men, which Moses sent to search the land, who returned, and made all the congregation to murmur against him, by bringing up a slander upon the land.” (Num 14.36) |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>v.27</strong></th>
<th><strong>Prov 12:27</strong></th>
<th>The slothful man roasteth not that which he took in hunting: but the substance of a diligent man is precious.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gen 25:29,34</strong></td>
<td>&quot;And Jacob sod pottage: and Esau came from the field, and he was faint...Then Jacob gave Esau bread and pottage of lentiles; and he did eat and drink, and rose up, and went his way: thus Esau despised [his] birthright&quot;.</td>
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<td>The RV margin renders Genesis as – The slothful man catcheth not his prey. The MT reads יַחֲרֹךְ (yakharokh) from II חָרַךְ (kharakh, “to roast”). On the other hand, several versions (LXX, Syriac, Vulgate) reflect a Hebrew Vorlage of יַדְרִיךְ (yadrikh) from דָּרַךְ (darakh, “to gain”), meaning: “a lazy person cannot catch his prey” (suggested by Gemser; cf. NAB). The MT is the more difficult reading, being a hapax legomenon, and therefore should be retained; the versions are trying to make sense out of a rare expression. The verb II חָּרַךְ (kharakh) is a hapax legomenon, appearing in the OT only here. BDB suggests that it means “to start; to set in motion” (BDB 355 s.v.). The related Aramaic and Syriac verb means “to scorch; to parch,” and the related Arabic verb means “to roast; to scorch by burning”; so it may mean “to roast; to fry” (HALOT 353 s.v. I חָּרַךְ). The lazy person can’t be bothered cooking what he has hunted. The Midrash sees an allusion to Jacob and Esau in Genesis 25. M. Dahood translates it: “the languid man will roast no game for himself, but the diligent will come on the wealth of the steppe” (“The Hapax harakh in Proverbs 12:27,” Bib 63 [1982]: 60-62). This hyperbole means that the lazy person does not complete a project. The birthright was precious to Jacob – but not to ‘slothful’ Esau. The prophet Hosea (12.3-5) used the example of Jacob wrestled with his brother and with God in order to obtain the birthright. Jacob fled from Syria (12.12) but was now in danger from Assyria because he was not “diligent” with regards to his birthright.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>The slothful man roasteth not that which he took in hunting: but the substance of a diligent man is precious.</td>
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<tr>
<th><strong>v.28</strong></th>
<th><strong>Deut 30:15</strong></th>
<th>In the way of righteousness is life; and in the pathway thereof there is no death.</th>
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<td>&quot;See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil&quot;</td>
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<td>Serving the Lord with the whole heart and mind (not just keeping the law) is life. These words were uttered before entering the land (their inheritance).</td>
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Proverbs 13

Theme: temporal advantage and eternal good. The righteous listen to reproof and humble themselves the wicked perish forever. Proverbs 13 is predominately inter-textual with the book of Isaiah and one wonders if the “men of Hezekiah” included scribes associated with the prophet Isaiah, or perhaps the prophet himself. The end of Proverbs 13 (v.24) summarizes a recurrent theme, namely, the disciplining of the righteous; “He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes”. This was the promise given to David; “I will be his father, and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men”. Scripture does not gloss over the failures of righteous men like David and Hezekiah. Despite being types of the messiah they were both disciplined and both accepted reproof. They are regarded as righteous men despite their short comings. On the other hand, Solomon (the first king born into the Davidic covenant) also failed but it is nowhere recorded that he repented (see; the chapter “Solomon and the Sons of God”). His reign was held in esteem by his royal descendants as the zenith of united Israel’s glory, power and wisdom but in the end it was a spiritual failure that bequeathed a fractured nation. The humbling of Hezekiah is referenced in this chapter which functions as a counterpoint to his faithfulness. Comparisons are shown in tabular form (with comments) – note the number of times that Isaiah 30 is referenced.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proverbs 13</th>
<th>Inter-text</th>
<th>Comments</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>v.1) A wise son heareth his father’s instruction: but a scorner heareth not rebuke.</td>
<td>Isa 30.9 ...lying children, children that will not hear the law of the LORD:</td>
<td>Hezekiah responded positively to divine rebuke but many in the nation did not.</td>
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<td>v.2) ....the soul of the transgressors shall eat violence.</td>
<td>Isa 30.20 ... the Lord give you the bread of adversity, and the water of affliction</td>
<td>Hezekiah also suffered (undeservedly) along with the nation.</td>
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<td>v.3) He that keepeth his mouth keepeth his life: but he that openeth wide his lips shall have destruction.</td>
<td>Isa 36.13 Then Rabshakeh stood, and cried with a loud voice Isa 36.21 ...they held their peace....Answer him not</td>
<td>Contrasting the hubris and blasphemy of Rabshakeh with the quiet confidence of Hezekiah.</td>
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<td>v.4) ...the soul of the diligent shall be made fat.</td>
<td>Isa 30:23 ...increase of the earth, and it shall be fat and plenteous Isa 55:2 hearken diligently unto me..... let your soul delight itself in fatness.</td>
<td>Those who were diligent in listening to the words of Yahweh would prosper.</td>
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<td>v.5)</td>
<td>A righteous man hateth lying: but a wicked man is loathsome, and cometh to shame.</td>
<td>Isa 32.7</td>
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<td>v.6)</td>
<td>Righteousness keepeth him that is upright in the way</td>
<td>Isa 30.21</td>
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<td>v.7)</td>
<td>There is that maketh himself rich, yet hath nothing: there is that maketh himself poor, yet hath great riches.</td>
<td>Isa 39.6</td>
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<td>v.8)</td>
<td>The ransom of a man's life are his riches: but the poor heareth not rebuke.</td>
<td>Isa 10.14</td>
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<td>v.9)</td>
<td>The light of the righteous rejoiceth: but the lamp of the wicked shall be put out.</td>
<td>Isa 9.2</td>
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<td>v.10) Only by pride cometh contention: but with the well advised is wisdom. See verse 18</td>
<td>Isa 39:6 Behold, the days come, that all that is in thine house, and that which thy fathers have laid up in store until this day, shall be carried to Babylon: nothing shall be left, saith the LORD. Isa 39:8 Then said Hezekiah to Isaiah, Good is the word of the LORD.</td>
<td>2 Chron 32.2-26 But Hezekiah rendered not again according to the benefit done unto him; for his heart was lifted up: therefore there was wrath upon him, and upon Judah and Jerusalem. Notwithstanding Hezekiah humbled himself for the pride of his heart.</td>
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<td>v.11) Wealth gotten by vanity shall be diminished: but he that gathereth by labour shall increase.</td>
<td>Ecc 5.13 There is a sore evil which I have seen under the sun, namely, riches kept for the owners thereof to their hurt. This mirrors the reflections on wealth found in the memoirs of Uzziah (Hezekiah’s great grandfather) as recorded in Ecclesiastes. Uzziah passed his wealth to his grandson, the dissolute and wicked Ahaz. In similar fashion the wealth of Hezekiah passed on to the wicked Manasseh.</td>
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<td>v.12) Hope (יהוה tokhelet) deferred maketh the heart sick: but when the desire (ta’awah) cometh, it is a tree of life. See verse 19</td>
<td>Canticles 5.8 I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if ye find my beloved, that ye tell him, that I am sick of love. The word “hope” (יהוה tokhelet) from [yakhal] also has the implication of a tense if not anxious wait. Songs is a play about the Hezekiah reformation and Assyrian crisis. The daughters of Jerusalem are “love sick” because their “hope” of deliverance. However, the beloved is restored and the Davidic covenant is re-established.</td>
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<td>v.13) Whoso despiseth the word shall be destroyed.</td>
<td>Isa 30.12 Wherefore thus saith the Holy One of Israel, Because ye despise this word They told the prophets (Isaiah) to cease from speaking (Isa 30.10).</td>
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<td>v.14) The law of the wise is a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death.</td>
<td>Isa 12.3 Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation. The water tunnel that Hezekiah excavated to provide water to the wells during the siege. (2 Chron 32.1-4).Typified by the wells that Isaac unblocked.</td>
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<td>v.15) Good understanding giveth favour: but the way of transgressors is hard (ארור), or rather, the way of transgressor shall perish.</td>
<td><strong>Isa 41.10-11</strong> Fear thou not; for I am with thee... they that strive with thee shall perish (same root as to'ved (תoved))</td>
<td>The LXX, Syriac, and Tg., of Prov 13.15 reflect a Hebrew <em>Vorlage</em> of הערור (ערור) “are destroyed”, or “shall perish” (same word in Prov 10.28) – <strong>the way of transgressors shall perish</strong> as opposed to favour (Immanuel=God with us).</td>
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<td>v.16) Every prudent man dealeth with knowledge: but a fool layeth open (פרשת paras) his folly.</td>
<td><strong>Isa 53.11</strong>...by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many...<strong>Isa 37.14</strong>...and spread (פרשת paras) it before the LORD</td>
<td>Hezekiah dealt with knowledge and wisdom (fear of the Lord). Sennacherib had his folly (his letter) opened (spread out) (פרשת paras) before the Lord openly displaying his demands and his ridicule of Yahweh.</td>
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<td>v.17) A wicked messenger falleth into mischief: but a faithful (אמון emunim) ambassador is health.</td>
<td><strong>Isa 40.9</strong> O Zion, that bringest good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God!</td>
<td><strong>Heb</strong> “an envoy of faithfulness.” The genitive <em>אמון</em> (emunim, “faithfulness”) functions as an attributive adjective: “faithful envoy.” The plural form <em>אימונים</em> (emunim, literally, “faithfulnesses”) is characteristic of abstract nouns. The faithful envoy (messenger) is the one who returns with the good news that the Assyrian had perished (overnight). The envoy is the forerunner of the released captives (prisoners of war) who enter the gates. The faithful envoy to Hezekiah was Isaiah who brought news of recovery (health).</td>
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<td>v.18) Poverty and shame shall be to him that refuseth instruction: but he that regardeth reproof shall be honoured. <strong>See verse 10</strong></td>
<td><strong>2 Chron 32.23</strong> And many brought gifts unto the LORD to Jerusalem, and presents to Hezekiah king of Judah: so that he was magnified in the sight of all nations from thenceforth.</td>
<td>The antithesis is between Shebna and Hezekiah (see verse 10).</td>
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<td>v.19)</td>
<td>The desire ( ta'avah ) accomplished is sweet to the soul: but it is abomination to fools to depart from evil. <strong>See verse 12</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Isa 26.8</strong></td>
<td>Yea, in the way of thy judgments, O LORD, have we waited for thee; the desire ( ta'avah ) of our soul is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee. <strong>Songs 2.14</strong> O my dove, <strong>that art</strong> in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs, let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely.</td>
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<td><strong>Isaiah 26</strong> has the Passover deliverance of Hezekiah as background (see chapter on the Passover in BC 701). Songs is a play about the Assyrian crisis. Passover deliverance of the nation is likened to God openly revealing his grace (and love) as he did when he hid Moses in the cleft.</td>
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<td>v.20)</td>
<td>He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed.</td>
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<td><strong>Isa 9.16-17</strong></td>
<td>For the leaders of this people cause them to err; and they that are led of them are destroyed... and every mouth speaketh folly</td>
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<td>The Hebrew of Isaiah employs synonyms -folly (נבלא nebalah) describing the result of being a fool (כפי Keciyl) and leaders (אש Ar 'ashar) instead of companion or shepherd (ра'ah ra'ah) the versions translate as the Qal namely, “associate” (companion) to maintain antithetical balance. The (LXX) LXE has “he that walks with fools” and perhaps this was in the original <strong>Vorlage</strong>; “pastures (or grazes) [also, ra'ah ] with fools”.</td>
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<td>v.21)</td>
<td>Evil pursueth sinners: but to the righteous good shall be repayed.</td>
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<td><strong>2 Chron 32.21</strong></td>
<td>So he returned with shame of face to his own land.</td>
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<td>Sennacherib destroyed in his own land</td>
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<td>v.22)</td>
<td>A good man leaveth an inheritance to his children's children: and the wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just.</td>
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<td><strong>Isa 33.6</strong></td>
<td>And wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of thy times, and strength of salvation: the fear of the LORD is his treasure.</td>
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<td><strong>2 Samuel 7:12</strong></td>
<td>And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom.</td>
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<td>v.23</td>
<td>Much food is in the tillage of the poor: but there is that is destroyed for want of judgment. (םָשְׁפַּת mishpat)</td>
<td>This Proverb seems to be based on the parable in <strong>Isa 28.24-26</strong> which discusses farming techniques. The soil requires different preparations for each crop and different sowing and harvesting techniques. The farmer is instructed by God who teaches him discretion (םָשְׁפַּת mishpat). Compare the LXX of <strong>v.26</strong> - So thou shalt be chastened by the judgement of thy God, and shalt rejoice. One might say that the farmer has learned by observing nature (therefore taught judgement or discernment by God). He watches and sees how God plants, the kind of soil God uses and the season etc and then the farmer copies the divine pattern found by observing nature.</td>
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<td>v.24</td>
<td>He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes.</td>
<td><strong>Isa 53.5</strong> But he was wounded for our transgressions, <em>he was</em> bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. As the corporate representative of sonship Hezekiah accepted the punishment due the nation.</td>
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<tr>
<td>v.25</td>
<td>The righteous eateth to the satisfying of his soul: but the belly of the wicked shall want.</td>
<td><strong>Isa 9.20</strong> And he shall snatch on the right hand, and be hungry; and he shall eat on the left hand, and they shall not be satisfied: they shall eat every man the flesh of his own arm.</td>
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</table>
This chapter is intricately linked with the prophet Isaiah. It does not gloss over Hezekiah’s failures but in true prophetic fashion portrays him warts and all. Hezekiah’s greatness lies not only in his willingness to accept undeserved punishment (the suffering servant) for the sake of the nation, but also in his willingness to accept correction when necessary.
### Proverbs 14

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<tr>
<th>Proverbs 14</th>
<th>Inter-text</th>
<th>Comments</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>v.1</strong></td>
<td>Every wise woman buildeth her house: but the foolish plucketh it down with her hands.</td>
<td><strong>Ruth 4.11-12</strong> The LORD make the woman that is come into thine house like Rachel and like Leah, which two did build the house of Israel</td>
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<td><strong>v.2</strong></td>
<td>He that walketh in his uprightness feareth the LORD: but he whose ways are devious despiseth him.</td>
<td><strong>Isa 53.3</strong> He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.</td>
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*NB* **v.2** He whose walk is upright fears the LORD, but he whose ways are devious despiseth him.
<table>
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<tr>
<th><strong>v.3</strong></th>
<th>In the mouth of the foolish <em>is</em> a rod of pride: but the lips of the wise shall preserve them.</th>
<th><strong>Isa 9.9</strong></th>
<th>And all the people shall know, <em>even</em> Ephraim and the inhabitant of Samaria, that say in the pride and stoutness of heart... <strong>Isa 28.3</strong></th>
<th>The “drunkards of Ephraim” made an “agreement with death” (the Assyrians) but it came to nought and they were destroyed.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>v.4</strong></td>
<td>Where no oxen <em>are</em>, the crib <em>is</em> clean: but much increase <em>is</em> by the strength of the ox.</td>
<td><strong>Isa 1.3</strong></td>
<td>The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: <em>but</em> Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider.</td>
<td><strong>NKJ Deut 33.17</strong></td>
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<td><strong>v.5</strong></td>
<td>A <em>faithful</em> witness <em>will</em> not lie: but a false witness <em>will</em> utter lies</td>
<td><strong>Ps 89.36-37</strong></td>
<td>His seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me. It shall be established for ever as the moon, and _as a _faithful witness in heaven. Selah.</td>
<td>Psalm 89 was written by someone who was distressed but faithful. Interestingly, it is said of both David (1 Kings 3:6) and Hezekiah (2 Kings 20:3; 2 Chron 31:20; Isa 38:3) that they were <em>faithful</em> before Yahweh - the niphal form of <em>mn</em> can also mean “established” (similar to <em>āmēn</em> = so be it, of a truth) and is employed by Isaiah (7.2) as a reprimand to Ahaz with an invitation to ask for a sign: “If you will not believe, Surely you shall not be established.” It is no coincidence that Psalm 89 abounds with forms of <em>mn</em> , that these are applied to both David and Hezekiah and that Ahaz is the complete opposite of (truth, faithfulness, stability etc) because he refused to believe the covenant.</td>
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</table>
v.6) A scorner (לועות luwts) seeketh wisdom, and findeth it not: but knowledge (דעת da'ath) is easy unto him that understandeth (בין biyn).

Isa 28.22 Now therefore be ye not mockers (לועות luwts)....

Isa 28.9 Whom shall he teach knowledge? (דעת da'ah) and whom shall he make to understand (בין biyn) doctrine?

RSV 2 Kgs 20.10 And Hezekiah answered, "It is an easy thing (קלל qalal) for the shadow to lengthen ten steps; rather let the shadow go back ten steps."

This proverb is also a commentary on the attitude of the scorers (mockers) of Ephraim who did not understand doctrine (= the report, news or tidings cf. Isa 53.1 same word). The “report” was the deliverance of Hezekiah from his death bed which was the harbinger of national salvation. The Hebrew easy (קלל qalal) is associated with the miracle that extended Hezekiah’s life. For God it was “an easy thing” (קלל qalal) to do the impossible. In similar fashion true knowledge is “an easy thing” for those that feared God and believed the report.

v.7) Go from the presence of a foolish man, when thou perceivest not in him the lips of knowledge.

Isa 28.11 For with stammering lips and another tongue will he speak to this people

LXE Isa 28.11 by reason of the contemptuous words of the lips

YLT Isa 28.11 For by scorned lip, and by another tongue, Doth He speak unto this people.

Because the Ephraimites did not listen to the “lips of knowledge” they were given over to the “scorned lip” and “contemptuous” foolish words of the Assyrians, who reviled and blasphemed Yahweh and their Davidic king.
v.8) The wisdom of the prudent is to understand his way (דֶּרֶךְ derek): but the folly of fools is deceit.

Isa 53.6 All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way (דֶּרֶךְ derek); and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

Isa 55.8 For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, (דֶּרֶךְ derek) saith the LORD.

The prophets had prepared the “way” both for Hezekiah and for Christ; Isa 40.3 “The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way (דֶּרֶךְ derek) of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God”. However, the “fools” had displayed their folly by deceiving themselves. The Ephraimites believed that they had reached an agreement with the Assyrians (a covenant with death and hell)...but... Isa 28.15 “...made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves”. Self-deception and denial is the hallmark of a fool or as the proverb says, “the folly of fools is deceit” (self-deceit).

v.9) Fools make a mock at sin (אָשָׁם 'asham): but among the righteous there is favour.

v.9) Fools mock at a guilt-offering. And among the upright -- a pleasing thing.

Isa 53.10 Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, (אָשָׁם 'asham) he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.

n Heb “guilt.” The word אָשָׁם('asham) has a broad range of meanings: “guilt; reparation.” According to Leviticus, when someone realized he was guilty he would bring a “reparation offering,” a sin offering with an additional tribute for restitution (Lev 5:1-6). It would be left up to the guilty to come forward; it was for the kind of thing that only he would know, for which his conscience would bother him. Fools mock any need or attempt to make things right, to make restitution (cf. NIV, NRSV, NCV, TEV). Hezekiah was the “suffering servant” of Isaiah 53 and the “guilt-offering”. He was mocked and scorned for his faith in Yahweh but found favour and was delivered from death.

v.10) The heart knoweth his own bitterness; (מִדֶּרֶךְ morrah) and a stranger doth not intermeddle with his joy.

Isa 38.15 What shall I say? he hath both spoken unto me, and himself hath done it: I shall go softly all my years in the bitterness (מַר mar) of my soul.

Isa 38.17 Behold, for peace I had great bitterness: (מַר mar) but thou hast in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption: for thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back.

The Hebrew is literally “bitterness of its soul.” Intermeddle or rather share. The verb is the Hitpael of מַר (mar), which means “to take in pledge; to give in pledge; to exchange.” Here it means “to share [in].” The proverb is saying that there are joys and sorrows that cannot be shared. No one can truly understand the deepest feelings of another. RSV: “The heart knows its own bitterness, and no stranger (no one else NIV) shares its joy”. Hezekiah was destitute. He believed in the Davidic Covenant and had done his utmost to reform the nation and serve Yahweh faithfully. Yet he was on the brink of death, without an heir to the throne —thus nullifying the covenant. Moreover, his nation was about to be destroyed. No one can truly understand the depths of his bitterness (the book of Job is a parabolic play about Hezekiah’s circumstances) No one can share his personal joy at restoration. Job 7.11 “Therefore I will not refrain my mouth; I will speak in the anguish of my spirit; I will complain in the bitterness (מַר mar) of my soul”.

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[Prov 14] 187
<p>| v.11 | The house of the wicked shall be overthrown: but the tabernacle of the upright shall flourish. | <strong>Isa 16.5</strong> And in mercy shall the throne be established: and he shall sit upon it in truth in the tabernacle of David, judging, and seeking judgment, and hasting righteousness. | <strong>Amos 9.10-11</strong> All the sinners of my people shall die by the sword, which say, The evil shall not overtake nor prevent us. In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old. Amos was a contemporary of Isaiah (Amos 1.1) The tabernacle of David would be established through the line of Hezekiah. |
| v.12 | There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death. | <strong>Ecc 11:9</strong> Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment. | Ecclesiastes reflects the memoirs of Uzziah the great grandfather of Hezekiah. (see the chapter on Ecclesiastes). The way that “seemed” right to Uzziah was to force his way into the temple to act as a Melchizedek priest (like David). It was an act driven by hubris. |
| v.13 | Even in laughter the heart is sorrowful; and the end of that mirth is heaviness. | <strong>Ecc 7:3</strong> Sorrow is better than laughter: for by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better. | The great grandfather of Hezekiah (Uzziah) was condemned to the Lazar house as a leper. His memoirs are reflected in Ecclesiastes cf. 7:2 <em>It is better to go to the house of mourning, than to go to the house of feasting: for that is the end of all men; and the living will lay it to his heart.</em> He was quarantined as a leper and spent the remainder of his reign contemplating his downfall. All was “vanity” his conclusion of the matter was to fear the Lord and obey him. |
| v.14 | The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways: and a good man shall be satisfied from himself. | <strong>Isa 53.11</strong> He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. | Hezekiah (and the people) was delivered. The life of the king was prolonged and the Davidic throne established. |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>v.15) The simple believeth every word: but the prudent man looketh well to his going.</th>
<th>Isa 37:28-29 But I know thy abode, and thy going out, and thy coming in, and thy rage against me. Because thy rage against me, and thy tumult, is come up into mine ears, therefore will I put my hook in thy nose, and my bridle in thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the way by which thou camest.</th>
<th>The confidence of Sennacherib was misplaced. His rage against Yahweh was met with defeat and ultimately with his assassination.</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>v.16) A wise man feareth, and departeth from evil: but the fool rageth, and is confident.</td>
<td>Ecc 7:9 Be not hasty in thy spirit to be angry: for anger restrth in the bosom of fools. Isa 32.7 The instruments also of the churl are evil: he deviseth wicked devices (בָּפָח mezimmah) to destroy the poor with lying words, even when the needy speaketh right.</td>
<td>Uzziah was also enraged when he was prevented from disrespecting Yahweh (2 Chro 26.19; Then Uzziah was wroth). The sin of Uzziah (the great grandfather of Hezekiah) and Sennacherib was similar – pride and anger – compounded by disrespect.</td>
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<td>v.17) He that is soon angry dealeth foolishly: and a man of wicked devices (בַּפָח mezimmah) is hated.</td>
<td>Isa 52.13 Behold, my servant shall deal prudently, he shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high.</td>
<td>The “servant” was typified by Hezekiah and the faithful remnant. They were prudent because they put their faith in Yahweh.</td>
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<td>v.18) The simple inherit folly: but the prudent are crowned with knowledge.</td>
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<td>v.19) The evil bow before the good; and the wicked at the gates of the righteous.</td>
<td>Isa 60:14 The sons also of them that afflicted thee shall come bending unto thee; and all they that despised thee shall bow themselves down at the soles of thy feet; and they shall call thee, The city of the LORD, The Zion of the Holy One of Israel.</td>
<td>Hezekiah would be magnified in the sight of the nations.</td>
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<td>v.20) The poor is hated even of his own neighbour: but the rich hath many friends.</td>
<td>Isa 66.5 Hear the word of the LORD, ye that tremble at his word; Your brethren that hated you, that cast you out for my name's sake, said, Let the LORD be glorified: but he shall appear to your joy, and they shall be ashamed.</td>
<td>The emissaries that Hezekiah sent to the northern tribes to invite them to celebrate the Passover were mocked and scorned (2 Chron 30.10). Hezekiah was considered the “poor” friendless one. He did not have the riches to buy of the Assyrians (with tribute) neither did he have strategic allies (friends like Egypt). His neighbours (Ephraim and Manasseh) despised his reformation and his desire to turn the nation back to Yahweh.</td>
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<td>v.21) He that despiseth his neighbour sinneth: but he that hath mercy on the poor, happy is he.</td>
<td>Isa 53.3 He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.</td>
<td>Hezekiah’s mission was seen as a failure. He was seen as politically naïve and inept. When he became ill he was an object of scorn and mirth. The “great king” who sought to serve Yahweh was on his death bed (without an heir to the throne) and his nation faced ruin because Hezekiah refused to pursue pragmatic policies.</td>
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<td>v.22) Do they not err that devise evil? but mercy and truth shall be to them that devise good.</td>
<td>Micah 7.20 Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham, which thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old.</td>
<td>Mercy and Truth is a technical term for the covenants promised to the patriarchs concerning the Messiah. Micah was contemporary with Isaiah and Hezekiah (Mic 1:1). The promises were established through the “suffering servant” Hezekiah. See also the Hezekiah Psalm 89.14; “Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne: mercy and truth shall go before thy face”. (See the Psalms section in this book).</td>
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<td>v.23) In all labour there is profit: but the talk of the lips tendeth only to penury.</td>
<td><strong>Isa 29.13</strong> Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men.</td>
<td>The “talk of the lips” are the meaningless platitudes uttered by the people. It would result in “penury” or destitution. Yahweh would not hear such “talk” and they would be carried into captivity. They regarded their service to God as “labour” but unlike normal “labour” it would not profit them.</td>
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<td>v.24) The crown of the wise is their riches: but the foolishness of fools is folly.</td>
<td><strong>Isa 28.5</strong> In that day shall the LORD of hosts be for a crown of glory, and for a diadem of beauty, unto the residue of his people.</td>
<td>The crown of Ephraim was pride (Isa 28.1). The crown of the wise was Yahweh himself. The beautiful crown a description of the high priestly diadem. The depiction here is of a king-priest typified by Hezekiah and pointing to Messiah.</td>
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<td>v.25) A true witness delivereth souls: but a deceitful witness speaketh lies.</td>
<td><strong>Isa 55.4</strong> Behold, I have given him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people.</td>
<td>The contrast is between Hezekiah and his enemies (Sennacherib, Rabshakeh, Shebna etc).</td>
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<td>v.26) In the fear of the LORD is strong confidence: and his children shall have a place of refuge.</td>
<td><strong>Isa 36.4</strong> And Rabshakeh said unto them, Say ye now to Hezekiah, Thus saith the great king, the king of Assyria, What confidence is this wherein thou trustest?</td>
<td>The people placed their confidence in Yahweh.</td>
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<td>v.27) The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death.</td>
<td><strong>Isa 55.1</strong> Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters....</td>
<td>Hezekiah constructed the water tunnel which became a “fountain of life” during the siege. It fed the pool of Siloam (the one sent) via the Gihon spring (Virgin fountain). It is celebrated in the “wells of salvation” of Isa 12. It was typified by the unblocking of the Abrahamic wells by Isaac. (See the chapter on the sister-wife narratives in the</td>
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<td>v.28</td>
<td>In the multitude of people is the king’s honour: but in the want of people is the destruction of the prince.</td>
<td><strong>Isa 5.13</strong> Therefore my people are gone into captivity, because they have no knowledge: and their honourable men are famished, and their multitude dried up with thirst.</td>
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<td>v.29</td>
<td><em>He that is slow to wrath is of great understanding: but he that is hasty (ֶֶָּ qatser) of spirit exalteth folly.</em></td>
<td><strong>Isa 37.27</strong> Therefore their inhabitants were of small (ֶָָָ qatser) power, they were dismayed and confounded: they were as the grass of the field, and as the green herb, as the grass on the housetops, and as corn blasted before it be grown up.</td>
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<td>v.30</td>
<td>A sound heart is the life of the flesh: but envy the rottenness of the bones.</td>
<td><strong>Isa 11.13</strong> The envy also of Ephraim shall depart, and the adversaries of Judah shall be cut off: Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim.</td>
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<td>v.31</td>
<td><em>He that oppresseth the poor reproacheth his Maker: but he that honoureth him hath mercy on the poor.</em></td>
<td><strong>Isa 53.3</strong> He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.</td>
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| v.32 | The wicked is driven away in his wickedness: but the righteous hath hope in his death. | **Isa 38.18** | Job is a parabolic theological play based on Hezekiah. Job came to the conclusion that even death could not extinguish hope. **Job 19.25-27** For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me. Similarly, Hezekiah’s wedding performance recognizes that the waters of Assyria (Isa 8.7 the Lord bringeth up upon them the waters of the river, strong and many, even the king of Assyria,) cannot drown covenant love: **Songs 8.6-7** “….for love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave: the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame. 
7 Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it….“ (see the chapter in this book on Song of Solomon). Covenant hope could not be extinguished by the death of the king or even by national death. The love of Yahweh would eventually prevail. The “driving away” of the wicked is reminiscent of Cain and typified by the sending away of the scapegoat. Shebna would be carried away with a mighty captivity (Isa 22.17). |
| v.33 | Wisdom resteth (ננוות) in the heart of him that hath understanding: but that which is in the midst of fools is made known. | **Ecc 7.9** Be not hasty in thy spirit to be angry: for anger resteth (ננוות) in the bosom of fools. | The same word is employed in Ecclesiastes. The anger that “rests” in the bosom of the fool is revealed by precipitate action as it was by Uzziah and Sennacherib. It is driven by hubris and snatching at divine prerogatives. |
| v.34) | Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people. | **Isa 37.4** | It may be the LORD thy God will hear the words of Rabshakeh, whom the king of Assyria his master hath sent to reproach the living God, and will reprove the words which the LORD thy God hath heard: wherefore lift up thy prayer for the remnant that is left. | The harsh words of reproach by Assyria were a sin. God had used Assyria as a “rod” to punish Israel (the rod of his anger cf. Isa 10.5) but in their pride the Assyrians thought this meant that their god Asshur was superior to Yahweh. They denigrated and disrespected Yahweh, forgetting that the city of Nineveh had been spared destruction because of the preaching of Jonah more than a century before. The cruel and bloody city would eventually disappear from the pages of history as would the Assyrians but Jerusalem abides. Judah was exalted because of the faithfulness of Hezekiah and the fame of his victory would be retold among the nations. |
| v.35) The king's favour is toward a wise servant: but his wrath is against him that causeth shame. | **Isa 49.6** | And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth. | The wise servant is Hezekiah who represented the nation and the “King” is Yahweh. |

The major theme is the antithesis between pride and humility, between true wisdom and foolishness. The pride of Ephraim and rejection of Hezekiah (and thus Yahweh) is a major feature in these proverbs. The pride of the Assyrians also features large. The anti-dote to foolishness and pride is true wisdom which is based on fear of the Lord.
**Proverbs 15**

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<td>v.1) A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger.</td>
<td>Isa 12.1 And in that day thou shalt say, O LORD, I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me.</td>
<td>The book of Job narrates a parabolic theological (philosophical) debate on theodicy which is based on the Hezekiah situation. Job (Hezekiah) demanded an explanation for his unmerited suffering. Instead of an answer Job is given a demonstration of divine power and wisdom after which God demands an answer from Job; Job 38.2-3 &quot;Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge? Gird up now thy loins like a man; for I will demand of thee, and answer thou me&quot;. Job 42.1-6 “Then Job answered the LORD, and said, I know that thou canst do every thing, and that no thought can be withholden from thee. Who is he that hideth counsel without knowledge? therefore have I uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not. Hear, I beseech thee, and I will speak: I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto me. I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes”. God does not owe his creation an answer and cannot be held to account in the court of incomplete and fallible human reason. His ways and thoughts are beyond human comprehension. God knows the beginning from the end and therefore his actions cannot be evaluated from our limited perspective. Job’s “soft” answer was an acknowledgement of his limitations and with this freshly acquired self-awareness Job turned away divine wrath. It turns out that Job spoke “right” about God after all (Job 42.7). Job’s attitude may have been wrong (God did not owe him an answer) but his observations about divine operations in the world were correct and unlike his friends he did not manipulate observable “facts” to justify a false theological narrative. In the end his friends were instructed to ask Job to make intercession for them (Job 42.8) in like manner the suffering servant interceded for the nation.</td>
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<td>v.2) The tongue of the wise useth knowledge aright: but the mouth of fools poureth out foolishness.</td>
<td><strong>Isa 50.4</strong> The Lord GOD hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: he wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned.</td>
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<td><strong>Ps 119.98-100</strong> “Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies: for they are ever with me. I have more understanding than all my teachers: for thy testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the ancients, because I keep thy precepts”. Psalm 119 is a Hezekiah Psalm: <a href="http://www.christadelphianbooks.org/booker/psalms5/psabke13.html">http://www.christadelphianbooks.org/booker/psalms5/psabke13.html</a> How outstandingly true these verses were concerning Jesus: “And it came to pass, that after three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions. And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers”. (Luke 2.46-47).</td>
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<td>v.3) The eyes of the LORD are in every place, beholding the evil and the good.</td>
<td><strong>Isa 38.5</strong> Go, and say to Hezekiah, Thus saith the LORD, the God of David thy father, I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears: behold, I will add unto thy days fifteen years.</td>
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<td>The Lord saw the suffering of Hezekiah and answered his prayer.</td>
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<td>v.4) A wholesome tongue is a tree of life: but perverseness therein is a breach in the spirit.</td>
<td><strong>Isa 57.1</strong> I create the fruit of the lips; Peace, peace to him that is far off, and to him that is near, saith the LORD; and I will heal him.</td>
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| Both expressions are metonymies of cause; the subject matter is what they say. How wise people are can be determined from what they say. A deceitful tongue causes a “breach” (שֶׁבֶר sheber) in the spirit” (KJV); crushes the spirit (NIB) a wound to the spirit (JPS) the same expression is used in Isa 65.14; “Behold, my servants shall sing for joy of heart, but ye shall cry for sorrow of heart, and shall howl for vexation (שֶׁבֶר sheber) of spirit”. The deceitful tongue is the serpent in Eden as opposed to the tree of life. 2 Kgs 18.30 Rabshakeh is the deceitful tongue; “Neither let Hezekiah make you trust in the LORD, saying, The LORD will surely deliver us, and this city shall not be delivered into the hand of the king of Assyria”. Hezekiah is the healing tongue; 2 Chron 32.6-8 “And he set captains of war over the people, and gathered them together to him in the street of the gate of the city, and spake comfortably to them, saying, Be strong and courageous, be not
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<th>Verse</th>
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<td>v.5</td>
<td>A fool despiseth his father's instruction: but he that regardeth reproof is prudent.</td>
<td><strong>2 Kgs 20.19</strong> Then said Hezekiah unto Isaiah, Good is the word of the LORD which thou hast spoken. Hezekiah was a good king and a faithful man but he was not sinless. Although his downfall was pride he was willing to accept correction. This “son of David” was wise to accept correction (2 Sam 7.14).</td>
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<td>v.6</td>
<td>In the house of the righteous is much treasure (chocen): but in the revenues of the wicked is trouble.</td>
<td><strong>Isa 22.5</strong> For it is a day of trouble......Go, get thee unto this treasurer (cakan), even unto Shebna (22.15) Shebna attempted to use Hezekiah’s problems to his advantage. Although the KJV associates both words with “treasure” the Hebrew roots are different. The LXE has “treasurer” (LXX: ταμιαν, tamian) other English translations “steward”. He held a position of power and influence and was preparing an ornate tomb which belied his dynastic aspirations.</td>
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<td>v.7</td>
<td>The lips of the wise disperse knowledge: but the heart of the foolish doeth not so.</td>
<td><strong>Isa 11.2</strong> And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD. Hezekiah acted as intermediary between God and the nation. He was the recipient of divine wisdom (like Solomon).</td>
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<td>v.8</td>
<td>The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD: but the prayer of the upright is his delight.</td>
<td><strong>NKJ Isa 1.13</strong> Bring no more futile sacrifices; Incense is an abomination to Me. The <strong>sacrifices of the wicked</strong> are hated by the Lord because the worshipers are insincere and blasphemous (e.g., Prov 15:29; 21:3; 28:9; Ps 40:6-8; Isa 1:10-17). In other words, the spiritual condition of the worshiper determines whether or not the worship is acceptable to God.</td>
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<td>v.9</td>
<td>The way of the wicked is an abomination unto the LORD: but he loveth him that followeth after righteousness.</td>
<td><strong>Ps 146.9</strong> The LORD preserveth the strangers; he relieth the fatherless and widow: but the way of the wicked he turneth upside down. The similarities between Ps 146 and Isa 42 suggest that Isaiah authored Psalm 146. <strong>But the way of the wicked he turneth upside down.</strong> These words would be almost literally true in the violent devastation and destruction of the Assyrian camp outside Jerusalem. For multiple connections between Ps 146 and Isa 42 see: <a href="http://www.christadelphianbooks.org/booker/psalms5/psabke41.html">http://www.christadelphianbooks.org/booker/psalms5/psabke41.html</a></td>
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### v.10) Correction is grievous unto him that forsaketh the way: and he that hateth reproof shall die.

**Isa 22.14** And it was revealed in mine ears by the LORD of hosts, Surely this iniquity shall not be purged from you till ye die, saith the Lord GOD of hosts.

Shebna would not listen and was therefore destined for death in a foreign land. The curse of death would rest on him, “Thou shalt surely die” and the ornate tomb that he constructed (testament to his dynastic aspirations) would remain empty.

### v.11) Hell and destruction are before the LORD: how much more then the hearts of the children of men?

**Job 26.6** Hell is naked before him, and destruction hath no covering.

Inter-textual connections with Job abound in the next few proverbs with Job typifying Hezekiah. Nothing is hidden from God even the inner most motivations of men.

### v.12) A scorners loveth not one that reproveth him: neither will he go unto the wise.

**Isa 29.20** For the terrible one is brought to nought, and the scorners is consumed, and all that watch for iniquity are cut off.

Hezekiah was the “wise” the scorners (Rabshakeh, Sennacherib, Shebna, northern tribes who mocked) did not “love” Yahweh (cf. Isa 37.28-29).

### v.13) A merry heart maketh a cheerful countenance: but by sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken.

**Job 7.11** Therefore I will not refrain my mouth; I will speak in the anguish of my spirit; I will complain in the bitterness of my soul. **Job 9.28** I am afraid of all my sorrows, I know that thou wilt not hold me innocent.

The proverb in verse 4 employs a different Hebrew word for broken. Job (Hezekiah) speaks of his anguish, bitterness and sorrow.

### v.14) The heart of him that hath understanding seeketh knowledge: but the mouth of fools feedeth on foolishness.

**Job 42.3** Who is he that hideth counsel without knowledge? therefore have I uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not.

Job (Hezekiah) sought knowledge and understanding but his attempt to justify himself was tantamount to accusing God of indifference. The test (trial) sent against Job (Hezekiah) was that of “disinterested service” – i.e. would Job still love God (serve him) if there was no perceived external benefit attached? Job (Hezekiah) still served God and did not “curse” him despite the withdrawal of outward blessings. However, the “please explain” challenge issued by Job verged on foolishness.
| **v.15)** All the days of the afflicted **are** evil: but he that is of a merry heart **hath** a continual feast. | **Job 7.6** My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle, and are spent without hope.  
**Job 7.16** I loathe it; I would not live alway: let me alone; for my days **are** vanity.  
**Isa 22.13** And behold joy and gladness, slaying oxen, and killing sheep, eating flesh, and drinking wine: let us eat and drink; for tomorrow we shall die.  
A “continual feast” was held by the “drunkards of Ephraim” (Isa 28). These were the refugees who had fled to Jerusalem. Some of them had made a “deal” (covenant) with Assyria, others were drinking and feasting themselves into oblivion resigned to the fact that they were about to die. Others were “double-dealing” stalling for time while they sought Egyptian assistance. In the meantime Hezekiah (Job) lay on his deathbed “smitten by God” and despised as weak and ineffectual by the pro-Assyrian party (Shebna). |
| **v.16)** Better **is** little with the fear of the LORD than great treasure and trouble therewith. | **Isa 22.5** For it is a day of trouble.....Go, get thee unto this treasurer, even unto Shebna (22.15)  
**Job 1.1** There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil.  
Job entered the world naked and would leave the world in the same fashion. God had dealt him a terrible blow and he was left with very little, even his life was in jeopardy. However, Job (Hezekiah) never lost his fear for the Lord and would not “curse God and die” (Job 2.9). On the other hand, the treasurer Shebna would inherit great trouble (see verse 6) as would all the enemies of Hezekiah. |
| **v.17)** Better **is** a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox and hatred therewith. | **Isa 26.8-9** Yes, in the way of Your judgments, O LORD, we have waited for You; The desire of our soul is for Your name And for the remembrance of You. With my soul I have desired You in the night. Yes, by my spirit within me I will seek You early; For when Your judgments **are** in the earth......  
**The dinner with “herbs” where love is found references the Passover meal eaten with “bitter herbs” (Exod 12.8) as a memorial (remembrance) of “Covenant Love” the meal was consumed during the Passover night. The Assyrian army was destroyed overnight during the Passover feast. (See the chapter on the Passover in 701 BC). In contrast the “stalled” or “fatted” ox was eaten with hatred in mind. At the covenant meal oxen were sacrificed as peace offerings (Exod 24.5). Often the peace offering was made as a free expression of the worshiper’s goodwill (Lev 7:11–18). The peace offering was the only sacrifice worshipers could eat. Only part of the animal and cereal was offered up, and the rest was left for the person bringing the offering and anyone else in the vicinity of the sanctuary to consume. |
<p>| v.18 | A wrathful man stirreth up strife: but he that is slow to anger appeaseth strife. | <strong>2 Kgs 18.27</strong> But Rabshakeh said unto them, Hath my master sent me to thy master, and to thee, to speak these words? <em>hath he not sent me</em> to the men which sit on the wall, that they may eat their own dung, and drink their own piss with you? <strong>2 Kgs 18.36</strong> “But the people held their peace, and answered him not a word: for the king's commandment was, saying, Answer him not”. |
| v.19 | The way of the slothful man is as an hedge of thorns: but the way of the righteous is made plain. | <strong>Isa 40.3</strong> The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. <strong>Isa 40.4</strong> Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain. The way of the righteous is made plain. God removes all impediments and obstacles for those who earnestly seek him. The Assyrian was destroyed and Hezekiah recovered. The captives were released by Assyria and the desert and rocky mountain road back to Judah was “straightened” and made “plain”. They simply strolled back home without hindrance. In contrast the “slothful” (like the tribe of Dan who refused to take up their inheritance) had long since been dragged away into captivity. |
| v.20 | A wise son maketh a glad father: but a foolish man despiseth his mother. | <strong>Isa 51.2</strong> Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah <em>that</em> bare you: for I called him alone, and blessed him, and increased him. The “father” is Abraham and the “mother” is Sarah the first child born into the Covenant was Isaac (Gen 17.9), whose name means “laughter” as incredulous laughter was turned into mirth and rejoicing. The NT plays on the meaning. “Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad” (John 8.56). The day that Abraham saw was the day of sacrifice (Yahweh-Yireh) the Lord will be seen (Gen 22.22). Isaac typified both Hezekiah and the Messiah. |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>v.21) Folly is joy to him that is destitute of wisdom: but a man of understanding walketh uprightly.</th>
<th>Isa 33.15-16 He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly... He shall dwell on high...</th>
<th>Job and Hezekiah walked uprightly and spoke what was right about Yahweh.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>v.22) Without counsel purposes are disappointed: but in the multitude of counsellors they are established.</td>
<td>Isa 9.6 ...his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor</td>
<td>See the comment on Prov 11.14. A multitude of counsellors usually leads to confusion not so with the Wonderful Counsellor. The Davidic throne would be “established” through the counsel of Hezekiah. “If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established” (Isa 7.9).</td>
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<tr>
<td>v.23) A man hath joy by the answer of his mouth: and a word spoken in due season, how good is it!</td>
<td>Isa 38.5 ...behold, I will add unto thy days fifteen years.</td>
<td>And how apt and timely was the reply from God in the mouth of Isaiah!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NIB v.23) A man finds joy in giving an apt reply—and how good is a timely word!</td>
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<tr>
<td>v.24) The way of life is above to the wise, that he may depart from hell beneath.</td>
<td>Isa 7.11 Ask thee a sign of the LORD thy God; ask it either in the depth, or in the height above.</td>
<td>The messianic sign in the “height” and “depth” was the birth of Immanuel (from above i.e, in the height) who would be victorious over death (i.e, the depth). Hezekiah typified the miraculous birth and resurrection that would establish the throne of David forever.</td>
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<tr>
<td>v.25) The LORD will destroy the house of the proud: but he will establish the border of the widow.</td>
<td>Isa 22.19 And I will drive thee from thy station, and from thy state shall he pull thee down.</td>
<td>The fate of the house of Shebna is contrasted with the house of David. David’s great grandmother was a widow (Naomi) and yet her house was established through the faithfulness of Ruth and the kinsman redeemer. Hezekiah was about to die childless, yet his house was established.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ruth 1.21 I went out full, and the LORD hath brought me home again empty: why then call ye me Naomi, seeing the LORD hath testified against me, and the Almighty hath afflicted me?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Verse</td>
<td>Proverbs</td>
<td>Scripture</td>
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<td>v.26</td>
<td>The thoughts of the wicked are an abomination to the LORD: but the words of the pure are pleasant words.</td>
<td><strong>Isa 59.7</strong> Their feet run to evil, and they make haste to shed innocent blood: their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity; wasting and destruction are in their paths. <strong>Isa 55.8</strong> For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD.</td>
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<tr>
<td>v.27</td>
<td>He that is greedy of gain troubleth his own house; but he that hateth gifts shall live.</td>
<td><strong>Isa 5.23</strong> Who justify the wicked for a bribe, And take away justice from the righteous man!</td>
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<tr>
<td>v.28</td>
<td>The heart of the righteous studieth to answer: but the mouth of the wicked poureth out evil things.</td>
<td><strong>Isa 59.13</strong> In transgressing and lying against the LORD, and departing away from our God, speaking oppression and revolt, conceiving and uttering from the heart words of falsehood.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v.29</td>
<td>The LORD is far from the wicked: but he heareth the prayer of the righteous.</td>
<td><strong>Isa 38.5</strong> Go, and say to Hezekiah, Thus saith the LORD, the God of David thy father, I have heard thy prayer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>v.30</strong></td>
<td>The light of the eyes rejoiceth the heart: <em>and a good report maketh the bones fat.</em></td>
<td><strong>Isa 40.9</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>v.31</strong></td>
<td>The ear that heareth the reproof of life abideth among the wise.</td>
<td><strong>2 Chron 31.20</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>v.32</strong></td>
<td>He that refuseth instruction despiseth his own soul: but he that heareth reproof getteth understanding.</td>
<td><strong>Job 42.6-7</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>v.33</strong></td>
<td>The fear of the LORD is the instruction of wisdom; and before honour <em>is</em> humility.</td>
<td><strong>2 Chron 32.26</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Humility and fear of the Lord equate to wisdom through which the righteous are established. The pride and scorn of the wicked equate to foolishness and condemnation. These proverbs draw on the pride of Job, Hezekiah and Uzziah their suffering and their humbling. In contrast with the wicked these men were willing to accept reproof and correction and their dynasties were established.
Proverbs 16

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proverbs 16</th>
<th>Inter-text</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>v.1)</strong> The preparations of the heart (מַׁעַׁרְכֵּי־לֵב, ma’arkhe-lev) in man, and the answer of the tongue, is from the LORD</td>
<td><strong>2 Chron 30.19-20</strong> <em>That prepareth his heart</em> (כָּל־לְבָבֹו, kāl-lĕbābōw) to seek God, the LORD God of his fathers, though <em>he</em> be not cleansed according to the purification of the sanctuary. And the LORD hearkened to Hezekiah, and healed the people.</td>
<td>The first and the second proverbs are complimentary. The Net Bible (<em>incorrectly</em>) paraphrases; “Humans may set things in order, plan out what they are going to say, but God sovereignly enables them to put their thoughts into words”. The idea in the first proverb is that although the inner man makes plans or preparations (to seek God) it is the divine response (the tongue or his spokesman) that will convey whether the preparations have been successful (or not) .....Because (see next proverb) although he may consider himself pure, God knows the true motives. This was the case during Hezekiah’s call to celebrate the Passover for although “ritually unclean” they were declared clean if their motivation was pure. This was acting in accordance with the spirit of the Law rather than the letter. It was Hezekiah that conveyed this truth to the people. Hezekiah acted as an intercessor; But Hezekiah prayed for them, saying, The good LORD pardon (kaphar) every one (2 Chron 30.18) and he delivered the answer that God found this acceptable (if they did it for the right reasons).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **v.2)** All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes; but the LORD weigheth the spirits | **Ps 36.2** For he flattereth himself in his own eyes, until his iniquity be found to be hateful. | **NIV** *Proverbs 16:2* All a man’s ways seem innocent to him, but motives are weighed by the LORD. Note the incident behind this (see the above proverb) is about ritual purity “being clean”.

*Ps 37.31* The law of his God *is* in his heart; none of his steps shall slide.
| v.3 | Commit (ライバツ, galal) thy works unto the LORD, and thy thoughts shall be established. |
| Ps 37.5 | Commit (ライバツ, galal) thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass. |
| Ps 22.8 | He trusted (ライバツ, galal) on the LORD that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him. Psalm 37 is a Davidic Psalm as is Psalm 22, but Ps 22 was adjusted by Hezekiah. See, P. Wyns, Psalm 22, CEJBI, Vol. 10, No.2, Apr 2016@ http://www.biblaridion.info/resources/Ps22.pdf and P. Wyns, Sabachthani: the suffering servant and the akedha @ http://www.biblaridion.info/Anthology/Sabachthani.pdf as well as the spreadsheet @ http://www.biblaridion.info/Anthology/Sabek.xlsm |
| v.4 | The LORD hath made all things for himself: yea, even the wicked for the day of evil. |
| Ps 37.28 | For the LORD loveth judgment, and forsaketh not his saints; they are preserved for ever: but the seed of the wicked shall be cut off. |
| Job 21.30 | That the wicked is reserved to the day of destruction? they shall be brought forth to the day of wrath. The idea that finds its germination in Ps 37.28 is more fully developed in Job 21.30 and Prov. 16.14. As mentioned elsewhere, Job is a parabolic theological commentary (probably acted out as a play) on the Hezekiah situation. |
| v.5 | Every one that is proud in heart is an abomination to the LORD: though hand join in hand, he shall not be unpunished. |
| Ps 119.21 | Thou hast rebuked the proud that are cursed, which do err from thy commandments |
| Psalm 119 is a Hezekiah Psalm. On this see the following; http://www.christadelphianbooks.org/booker/psalms5/psabke13.html |
| Hand joined in hand speaks of a confederacy; cooperation between enemies such as occurred in the time of Hezekiah’s father Ahaz (cf. Isa 7.2). Presumably this manifested itself as a pro-Assyrian party within government or perhaps different external allegiances who set themselves against Hezekiah. |
| v.6 | By mercy and truth iniquity is purged: and by the fear of the LORD men depart from evil. |
| Micah 7.18-20 | Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity..... wilt perform the truth to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham, which thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old. |
| Mercy and Truth is a technical term used to describe the covenant promises. |
**v.7** When a man’s ways please the LORD, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him.

**Gen 26.28** And they said, We saw certainly that the LORD was with thee....

**Gen 26.31** And they rose up betimes in the morning, and sware one to another: and Isaac sent them away, and they departed from him in peace.

Isaac was a type of Hezekiah; “the Lord with thee” = Immanuel (see the chapter on the “sister-wife” narratives in Genesis).

**v.8** Better is a little with righteousness than great revenues without right.

**Psalm 37.16** A little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked

Another reference to Psalm 37 as the Davidic circumstances resonated with Hezekiah.  
http://www.christadelphianbooks.org/booker/psalms1/psabka45.html

**v.9** A man’s heart deviseth his way: but the LORD directeth his steps.

**Ps 37.23** The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way

Note that Ps 37 is an acrostic as is Ps 119, which is also referred to in the above proverbs.

**v.10** A divine sentence is in the lips of the king: his mouth transgresseth not in judgment.

**1 Kgs 3.28** And all Israel heard of the judgement which the king had judged; and they feared the king: for they saw that the wisdom of God was in him, to do judgement.

This harks back to the “wisdom” of Solomon (before he apostatized). Hezekiah was considered the natural heir of Solomonic wisdom and a kingdom united around Yahweh worship at the temple.

**v.11** A just weight and balance are the LORD’S: all the weights of the bag are his work.

**Micah 6.11** Shall I count them pure with the wicked balances, and with the bag of deceitful weights?

Micah 7 is also referred to (see above): Micah 6-7 is thought to be of Northern Israelite origins. See, Gary A. Rendsburg, *A Comprehensive Guide to Israelian Hebrew: Grammar and Lexicon*, (Orient, Vol. XXXVIII, 2003), p.8 Many northern scribes were displaced by the Assyrian invasions and migrated to the Royal Court at Jerusalem; the book of Proverbs is classified as “northern” by Rendsburg. Micah was contemporary with Isaiah.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>v.12) It is an abomination to kings to commit wickedness: for the throne is established by righteousness.</th>
<th>2 Sam 7.13-14</th>
<th>The Davidic throne would be established by righteousness (as promised) not by “double standards” (false balances) see above.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2 Sam 7.13-14</td>
<td>He shall build an house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men:</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Job was parabolic of Hezekiah. The Kings (plural) of this proverb references the “Great King” (Yahweh) the expression should be considered a plural of majesty (i.e. king of kings).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v.13) Righteous lips are the delight of kings; and they love him that speaketh right.</td>
<td>Job 42.7</td>
<td>Pacify = make atonement</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>for ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job hath.</td>
<td>Job was parabolic of Hezekiah. The Kings (plural) of this proverb references the “Great King” (Yahweh) the expression should be considered a plural of majesty (i.e. king of kings).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v.14) The wrath of a king is as messengers of death: but a wise man will pacify it.</td>
<td>Isa 37.36</td>
<td>Pacify = make atonement</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Then the angel of the LORD went forth, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians.... behold, they were all dead corpses</td>
<td>The “king” here is Yahweh who sent his angel (messenger) of death against the Assyrians (at the Passover). The wise man who pacifies (divine wrath) against Judah is Hezekiah (the suffering servant), who embodies the Passover sacrifice.</td>
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<tr>
<td>v.15) In the light of the king's countenance is life; and his favour is as a cloud of the latter rain.</td>
<td>Job 29.23-24</td>
<td>Once again the book of Job is employed and Job’s favour is typical of Hezekiah’s blessing. Of course “Job” was talking about his situation prior to his fall from grace. The proverb is the antithesis of 16.14 above. As the divine agent, the favour of Hezekiah (the king) is akin to Yahweh’s favour. Heb “latter rain” (so KJV, ASV). The favour that this expression represents is now compared to the cloud of rain that comes with the “latter” rain or harvest rain. The point is that the rain cloud was necessary for the successful harvest; likewise the king’s pleasure will ensure the success and the productivity of the people under him. E.g., also Psalm 72:15-17; the prosperity of the land is portrayed as a blessing on account of the ideal king.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### v.16)

**Prov 16** How much better is it to get wisdom than gold! and to get understanding rather to be chosen than silver!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>1 Kgs 10.14</strong></th>
<th>Now the weight of gold that came to Solomon in one year was six hundred threescore and six talents of gold... <strong>10:27</strong> And the king made silver to be in Jerusalem as stones, and cedars made he to be as the sycomore trees that are in the vale, for abundance.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This proverb refers to the gold and silver obtained by Solomon. Solomon was gifted with wisdom and was the first born into the Davidic covenant promised in 2 Sam 7 but he apostatized and served mammon (666).</td>
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### v.17)

**Prov 16** The highway of the upright is to depart from evil: he that keepeth his way preserveth his soul.

<p>| <strong>Isa 7.3</strong> Then said the LORD unto Isaiah, Go forth now to meet Ahaz, thou, and Shearjashub thy son, at the end of the conduit of the upper pool in the highway of the fuller's field; <strong>Isa 36.2</strong> And the king of Assyria sent Rabshakeh from Lachish to Jerusalem unto king Hezekiah with a great army. And he stood by the conduit of the upper pool in the highway of the fuller's field. |
|---|---|
| The point of righteous living is made with the image of a highway, a raised and well-graded road (a hypocatastasis, implying a comparison between a highway and the right way of living) such as in Isa 38.5. Coincidentally (sic) much of the prophetic “drama” occurs “in the highway of the fullers field” where Ahaz was strengthening the defensive works around the city. The second half of the verse uses two different words for “guard”; this one is נֹצֵּר (notser) “the one who guards his way,” and the first is ש ֹמֵּר (shomer) “the one who guards his life” (the order of the words is reversed in the translation). The second colon then explains further the first (synthetic parallelism), because to guard one’s way preserves life. It is probably meant to echo the cherubim in Eden who guarded the way to the tree of life. |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>v.18)</strong> Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.</th>
<th><strong>2 Chron 26.16</strong> But when he was strong, his [Uzziah] heart was lifted up to his destruction. <strong>2 Chron 32.26</strong> Notwithstanding Hezekiah humbled himself for the pride of his heart.</th>
<th>The two lines of this proverb are synonymous parallelism, and so there are parasyonyms. “Pride” is paired with “haughty spirit” (“spirit” being a genitive of specification); and “destruction” is matched with “a tottering, falling.” The downfall of both Hezekiah and his great grandfather Uzziah was pride. Both men were successful and faithful kings and both repented. (Uzziah’s repentance is the book of Ecclesiastes which records his memoirs while quarantined for leprosy).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>v.19)</strong> Better it is to be of an humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud.</td>
<td><strong>Isa 57.15</strong> For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.</td>
<td><em>Heb</em> “low of spirit”; KJV “of an humble spirit.” This expression describes the person who is humble and submissive before the Lord and therefore inoffensive. It is always necessary to have a humble spirit, whether there is wealth or not. <em>Heb</em> “than to divide plunder.” The word “plunder” implies that the wealth taken by the proud was taken violently and wrongfully – spoils are usually taken in warfare. R. N. Whybray translates it with “loot” (<em>Proverbs</em> [CBC], 95). The proud are in rebellion against God, overbearing and oppressive. One should never share the “loot” with them. The reference is obviously to Abraham who refused to share the loot with the king of Sodom and accepted God as his “reward” as a consequence he was given the land covenant of Gen 15. This is obviously pertinent to the Hezekiah situation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### v.20) He that handleth a matter wisely shall find good: and whoso trusteth in the LORD, happy is he.

Ps 37.40 And the LORD shall help them, and deliver them: he shall deliver them from the wicked, and save them, because they trust in him.

Although traditionally this word is translated “happy” (cf. KJV, ASV, NAB, NRSV, NLT), such a translation can be misleading because the word means far more than that. It describes the heavenly bliss that comes from knowing one is right with God and following God’s precepts. The “blessed” could be at odds with the world (Ps 1:1-3). Heb “and the one who trusts in the Lord – blessed is he.” R. N. Whybray relates it to “business” – “The shrewd man of business will succeed well, but the happy man is he who trusts the Lord” (Proverbs [CBC], 92). However, this is not about secular matters (business) but refers to Hezekiah’s handling of the Assyrian political crisis. The “men of Hezekiah” obviously found Psalm 37 a suitable Davidic commentary from which to draw their inspiration.

### v.21) The wise in heart shall be called prudent: and the sweetness of the lips increaseth learning.

Ps 119.103 How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!

The heavenly manna (word) that sustained the Jews for 40 years in the desert was like “a pastry fried in honey” During the Middle Ages, there developed a picturesque ceremony of introducing the child to his Jewish studies; it included the custom of writing the letters of the alphabet on a slate and covering them with honey. These the child licked with his tongue so that the words of the Scriptures might be as “sweet as honey” (Ma’aseh Roke’ah, 295–6, Mahzor Vitry, ed. by S. Hurwitz (1923), 628, 508). On Ps 119 as a Hezekiah Psalm see v.5 comments.

### v.22) Understanding is a wellspring of life unto him that hath it: but the instruction of fools is folly.

Ps 36.9 For with thee is the fountain of life: in thy light shall we see light.

The Hebrew noun שֵׁכֶל (sekhel, “prudence; insight”; cf. KJV, NASB, NIV “understanding”; NAB, CEV “good sense”) is related to the verb that means “to have insight; to give attention to; to act circumspectly [or, prudently],” as well as “to prosper; to have success.” These words all describe the kind of wise action that will be successful. This psalm (although Davidic) was also considered suitable; the fountain of life suggest the conduit of Hezekiah (Psa. 46:4) which became the lifeline of Jerusalem when the Assyrian was at the gate.

### v.23) The heart of the wise teacheth his mouth, and addeth learning to his lips.

1 Kgs 3.9 Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people....

An understanding heart is a gift from God originally requested by Hezekiah’s forebear Solomon. It was a spirit that allowed the Davidic king to pronounce correct judgements in complex cases. The King then acts as the divine agent in matters of jurisprudence.
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<tr>
<td>v.24</td>
<td>Pleasant words <em>are</em> as an honeycomb, sweet to the soul, and health to the bones.</td>
<td>This proverb parallels that found in other “northern” Hezekiah literature where the “bride” (northern Israel) lauds the sweet words (of reformation and unity) preached by the groom (Hezekiah). It is his appeal to come up to Jerusalem to jointly celebrate the Passover. No doubt “Songs” was written after the Assyrian crisis was resolved when Hezekiah married Hephzibah. It was most probably performed as a play at his wedding. See also the comments regarding honeycomb found in Prov 24.13 and Prov 27.7.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v.25</td>
<td>There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof <em>are</em> the ways of death.</td>
<td>The previous proverb recounts the response of the faithful northern remnant….this proverb the response of intransigent northern Israelites (Ephraim). The antithesis is between those who respond to the “sweetness” of Hezekiah’s words and those who reject him and make an “agreement with death” (the Assyrians). The Assyrians never had any intention of honouring any covenants their main purpose was to undermine and sow discord. They only respected strength and declared a “holy war” (Jihad) against Yahweh. The “god” Asshur would crush this insignificant nation even though the ancients recounted the myth of the defeat of Egypt by Yahweh.</td>
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<tr>
<td>v.26</td>
<td>He that laboureth laboureth for himself; for his mouth craveth it of him</td>
<td>The great grandfather of Hezekiah (Uzziah) had perceived the truth about human ambition. It is never satisfied and always craves more. In its lust for power the Assyrians are described as unstoppable (like the terminator see Joel 2.7-10).</td>
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<tr>
<td>v.27</td>
<td>An ungodly man diggeth up evil: and in his lips <em>there is</em> as a burning fire.</td>
<td>Hezekiah was betrayed (and ill). Members of his own court were making deals with the Assyrians and appealing to Egypt for help.</td>
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<tr>
<td>v.28</td>
<td>A froward man soweth strife: and a whisperer separateth chief friends.</td>
<td>Heb “a man of perverse things”; NAB “an intriguer.” This refers to someone who destroys lives. The parallelism suggests that he is a “slanderer” or “gossip” – one who whispers and murmurs (18:8; 26:20, 22). Hezekiah’s “friends” (Shebna) were murmuring and whispering behind his back. His enemies were internal (his own household) and external (the Assyrians). Rabshakeh was familiar with Isaiah’s preaching as he had spies and collaborators in the city.</td>
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<tr>
<td>v.29) A violent man enticeth his neighbour, and leadeth him into the way that is not good.</td>
<td>Ecc 5.8 If thou seest the oppression of the poor, and violent perverting of judgment and justice in a province, marvel not at the matter: for he that is higher than the highest regardeth; and there be higher than they.</td>
<td>King Uzziah (Hezekiah’s great grandfather) had watched as his life’s work was undermined by his pro-Assyrian grandson Ahaz. He considered Ahaz a fool who promoted base sycophants. Nevertheless, he concluded that such undermining would eventually receive “payback” from Yahweh. The “neighbour” of Judah was Ephraim (northern Israel) who had experienced internal chaos and assassinations while plotting to rebel against Assyria (and at one stage to overthrow Judah). This proverb seems to be saying, “don’t follow that route” – rely on Yahweh not on violence or intrigue – Do not be enticed by that behaviour. Look what happened to Ephraim...they were driven into captivity.</td>
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<td>v.30) He shutteth his eyes to devise froward things: moving his lips he bringeth evil to pass.</td>
<td>Prov 6.13 He winketh with his eyes, he speaketh with his feet, he teacheth with his fingers.</td>
<td>This proverb parallels the proverb in 6.13 and the context of that chapter which is a condemnation of northern Israel and the abject failure of Ahaz to learn from Ephraim’s unfaithfulness.</td>
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<td>v.31) The hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness.</td>
<td>Isa 28.5 In that day shall the LORD of hosts be for a crown of glory, and for a diadem of beauty, unto the residue of his people.</td>
<td>The “crown of glory” is the high priestly diadem which becomes a metaphor for the “hoary head” or the “ancient of days” (Yahweh). The “crown of glory” for Ephraim was its “pride” in its own self-sufficiency. The “crown of glory” of Judah was Hezekiah who functioned in the role of priest-king as Yahweh’s agent. Gray hair is a “crown of glory” if the old man who wears it has earned his long life in service to Yahweh. Ultimately it was Yahweh (and his appointed agent) who should have been the nation’s “crown of glory”.</td>
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<tr>
<td>v.32) He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.</td>
<td>Joel 2.13 And rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the LORD your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil.</td>
<td>Hezekiah was “slow to anger” when facing the rage of Sennacherib. Hezekiah was the divine agent and therefore displayed the divine characteristic of patience and longsuffering as Yahweh had revealed himself “slow to anger” when dealing with the intransigence of his people but also “slow to anger” when dealing with the Assyrians who Yahweh had deliberately raised up as a “rod of punishment”. However, even divine patience must come to an end. The nation was unrepentant (and therefore required punishment) and the Assyrians overstepped their remit with their unrelenting cruelty and hubris they even had the audacity to challenge Yahweh himself.</td>
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</table>
v.33) The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the LORD.

Lev 16.8 And Aaron shall cast lots upon the two goats; one lot for the LORD, and the other lot for the scapegoat.

Scapegoat= national captivity  
Goat for Yahweh=Hezekiah  
Here then is the conclusion of the matter based on the Day of Atonement ritual. Although the priest may cast the lot it is God who decides which goat gets sacrificed and which goat gets exiled. Northern Israel went into captivity (approx 100 years before) but a remnant in Judah was saved because of the work of the “suffering servant” (Hezekiah). The devastation of the Assyrian army (at Passover) caused them to release their prisoners of war. A remnant did return (as predicted by Isaiah when naming his son) and the nation recovered and had respite under their faithful king Hezekiah.

Yahweh looks at the motivations of the heart and will save the “suffering servant”. This chapter draws on “Hezekiah material” for its proverbs whether that is Psalms, Job, Ecclesiastes, Songs, Micah or Isaiah. Northern Israelite input is particularly prominent particularly the contrast between unfaithful Ephraim and the faithful remnant in Judah.
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<th>Proverbs 17</th>
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<td><strong>v.1)</strong> Better is a dry morsel, and quietness (םלֶיתֶה, shalvah) therewith, than an house full of sacrifices with strife.</td>
<td><strong>Isa 32.17;</strong> And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness (רַפָאֵה, shaqat) and assurance for ever. <strong>Isa 58.4;</strong> Behold, ye fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness: ye shall not fast as ye do this day, to make your voice to be heard on high.</td>
<td>The “house full of sacrifices” was the temple where even the Day of Atonement (fast) had become a day of strife and tension rather than a day of national repentance and unity. Hezekiah attempted to revive centralised worship in Jerusalem and this was largely rejected by the northern tribes (with the exception of a faithful remnant). The “Songs of Degrees” (which is a collection arranged and partly authored by Hezekiah) includes a Davidic Psalm that celebrates tribal unity; “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!” (Ps 133.1). A similar sentiment is expressed by King Uzziah (great grandfather of Hezekiah) who cynically remarked that it was preferable to sit undisturbed in the lazar house (quarantined for leprosy) with very little than to have all the trappings of royalty (like his grandson Ahaz) and yet be vexed by the intrigues of geo-political power relations whilst wearying his people with labouring on defensive works (cf. Isa 7.13); “Better is an handful with quietness (קַשׁ, Nachath), than both the hands full with travail and vexation of spirit” (Ecc 4.6).</td>
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<td><strong>v.2)</strong> A wise servant shall have rule over a son that causeth shame, and shall have part of the inheritance among the brethren.</td>
<td><strong>Isa 49.7;</strong> Thus saith the LORD, the Redeemer of Israel, and his Holy One, to him whom man despiseth, to him whom the nation abhorreth, to a servant of rulers, Kings shall see and arise, princes also shall worship, because of the LORD that is faithful, and the Holy One of Israel, and he shall choose thee.</td>
<td>Hosea was contemporary with the Hezekiah period. Ephraim was God’s “son” (Hos 11.1) who brought shame (Hos 9.10). Hezekiah was a “servant of rulers” (Isa 49.7) who would (although a “suffering servant”) divide his portion with the great (Isa 53.12).</td>
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<td>v.3</td>
<td>The fining pot is for silver, and the furnace for gold: but the LORD trieth the hearts.</td>
<td>2 Chron 32.31; Howbeit in the business of the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon, who sent unto him to enquire of the wonder that was done in the land, God left him, to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart.</td>
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<td>v.4</td>
<td>A wicked doer giveth heed to false lips; and a liar giveth ear to a naughty tongue.</td>
<td>Isa 30.10; Which say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophesy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits.</td>
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<td>v.5</td>
<td>Whoso mocketh the poor reproacheth his Maker: and he that is glad at calamities shall not be unpunished.</td>
<td>2 Chron 30.10 So the posts passed from city to city through the country of Ephraim and Manasseh even unto Zebulun: but they laughed them to scorn, and mocked them.</td>
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<td>v.6</td>
<td>Children’s children are the crown of old men; and the glory of children are their fathers.</td>
<td>Ps 128.6; Yea, thou shalt see thy children’s children, and peace upon Israel.</td>
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<td>v.7</td>
<td>Excellent speech becometh not a fool: much less do lying lips a prince. <strong>NIV</strong> v.7</td>
<td>Isa 22.15 Thus saith the Lord GOD of hosts, Go, get thee unto this treasurer, <em>even</em> unto Shebna, which <em>is</em> over the house, <em>and say</em>...</td>
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<td>v.8</td>
<td>A gift <em>is</em> as a precious stone in the eyes of him that hath it: whithersoever it turneth, it prospereth.</td>
<td>Mic 7.3 That they may do evil with both hands earnestly, the prince asketh, and the judge <em>asketh</em> for a reward; and the <em>great</em> man, he uttereth his mischievous desire: so they wrap it up.</td>
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<td>v.9</td>
<td>He that <em>covereth</em> (ותך kacah) a transgression seeketh love; but he that repeateth a matter separateth <em>very</em> friends.</td>
<td>Songs 3.2 <em>I will seek him whom my soul loveth</em>: I sought him, but I found him not. <strong>See Prov 16.28.</strong></td>
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<td>v.10</td>
<td>A reproof entereth more into a wise man than an hundred stripes into a fool.</td>
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<td>2 Chron 32.26</td>
<td>Notwithstanding Hezekiah humbled himself for the pride of his heart, both he and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the wrath of the LORD came not upon them in the days of Hezekiah.</td>
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<td>Hezekiah was not perfect, but when he failed he acknowledged his faults.</td>
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<td>v.11</td>
<td>An evil man seeketh only rebellion: therefore a cruel messenger shall be sent against him.</td>
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<td>Isa 13.9 Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate: and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>The Assyrian king was sent as a “cruel messenger” against the people of Israel. In turn, the Assyrians themselves were sent a “messenger” (angel of death) to punish rebellion.</td>
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<td>v.12</td>
<td>Let a bear robbed of her whelps meet a man, rather than a fool in his folly.</td>
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<td>Hos 13.8 I will meet them as a bear that is bereaved of her whelps, and will rend the caul of their heart, and there will I devour them like a lion: the wild beast shall tear them.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Northern Israel had already endured the experience of being met by a wild beast (Assyria) but far worse was in store – now they would meet “a fool in his folly” – these “fools” were intriguing and playing politics with Assyria and Egypt. Dealing treacherously. It would not end well.</td>
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<td>v.13</td>
<td>Whoso rewardeth evil for good, evil shall not depart from his house.</td>
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<td>Ps 35.1 Plead my cause, O LORD, with them that strive with me: fight against them that fight against me.</td>
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<td>This proverb draws on a Davidic Psalm that contemplates rebellion and betrayal. A fitting Psalm in the context of the Assyrian crisis. See also Ps 35.12; They rewarded me evil for good to the spoiling of my soul.</td>
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<td>v.14)</td>
<td>The beginning of strife is as when one letteth out water: therefore leave off contention, before it be meddled with.</td>
<td>Judges 12.1 And the men of Ephraim gathered themselves together, and went northward...</td>
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<td>v.15)</td>
<td>He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both are abomination to the LORD.</td>
<td>Isaiah 5.3 Which justify the wicked for reward, and take away the righteousness of the righteous from him!</td>
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<td>v.16)</td>
<td>Wherefore is there a price in the hand of a fool to get wisdom, seeing he hath no heart to it?</td>
<td>2 Chronicles 30.10 So the posts passed from city to city through the country of Ephraim and Manasseh even unto Zebulun: but they laughed them to scorn, and mocked them.</td>
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<td>v.17)</td>
<td>A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.</td>
<td>1 Samuel 18.3 Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul.</td>
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<td>v.18)</td>
<td>A man void of understanding striketh hands, and becometh surety in the presence of his friend.</td>
<td>Proverbs 6.1 My son, if thou be surety for thy friend, if thou hast stricken thy hand with a stranger...</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| **v.19** | **He loveth transgression that loveth strife:** and he that exalteth his gate seeketh destruction. | **NIV** 
Isa 22.16

What are you doing here and who gave you permission to cut out a grave for yourself here, hewing your grave on the height and chiseling your resting place in the rock? | The Net bible states: “Some have taken this second line literally and interpreted it to mean he has built a pretentious house. Probably it is meant to be figurative: The gate is the mouth (the figure would be hypocatastasis) and so to make it high is to say lofty things – he brags too much (e.g., 1 Sam 2:3; Prov 18:12; 29:23); cf. NCV, TEV, NLT. C. H. Toy (Proverbs [ICC], 348) wishes to emend פיתחיו (pitkho, “his gate”) to פיו (piv, “his mouth”), but that is unnecessary since the idea can be obtained by interpretation”. However, this should be taken literally as Shebna had “exalted his gate” his ostentatious tomb accessed through the east gate of the city (amongst the tombs of the Kings) betrayed his dynastic ambitions. Abraham’s seed would possess the “gate of his enemies” (Gen 22.17) even the “gates of death” (cf. Job 38.17) would apparently not diminish the greatness of Shebna and his dynasty. It seems that he had struck some sort of deal with Assyria to take the place of the dying Hezekiah. |
|---|---|---|
| **v.20** | He that hath a froward heart findeth no good: and he that hath a perverse tongue falleth into mischief. | **Prov 6.12-15**

A naughty person, a wicked man, walketh with a froward mouth…. | This proverb finds parallels with Prov 6.12-15 which draws a composite picture based on historical incidents of priestly and royal rebellion. |
<p>| <strong>v.21</strong> | He that begetteth a fool doeth it to his sorrow: and the father of a fool hath no joy. | <strong>See verse 25</strong> | See verse 25 (for parallels) Abraham + Sarah = Isaac =joy (his name means laughter) in contrast to Esau who caused his parents “grief”; “Which were a grief of mind unto Isaac and to Rebekah” (Gen 26.35). Isaac typified Hezekiah (and the messiah) –re-establishing the Abrahamic covenant. |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>v.22) A merry heart doeth good like a medicine: but a broken spirit drieth the bones.</th>
<th>Prov 12.25 Heveniness in the heart of man maketh it stoop: but a good word maketh it glad.</th>
<th>See Prov 12.25 Jacob was devastated at the loss of his son Joseph, but revived when he found out that he was still alive: Thy servants shall bring down the gray hairs of thy servant our father with sorrow to the grave....And they told him all the words of Joseph, which he had said unto them: and when he saw the wagons which Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of Jacob their father revived (Gen.44: 31; 45:27). In similar fashion the miraculous recovery of Hezekiah was like “medicine” to the distraught nation.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>v.23) A wicked man taketh a gift out of the bosom to pervert the ways of judgment.</td>
<td>2 Kgs 18.31 Hearken not to Hezekiah: for thus saith the king of Assyria, Make an agreement with me by a present, and come out to me...</td>
<td>The Pentateuch forbade the giving of bribes; “And thou shalt take no gift: for the gift blindeth the wise, and perverteth the words of the righteous”(Exod 23.8). Sennacherib requested a “present” (tribute) but he did not hold to the “agreement”. It is doubtful that this was sent by Hezekiah (it was probably done in his name while he was ill). The Assyrian king realised that the “gift” was a delaying tactic while overtures were made to Egypt. In any case Micah makes it clear that corruption of justice was endemic during this period.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v.24) Wisdom is before him that hath understanding; but the eyes of a fool are in the ends of the earth.</td>
<td>Deut 33.17 He shall push the peoples to the ends of the earth...</td>
<td>To say that “the eyes of the fool run to the ends of the earth” means that he has no power to concentrate and cannot focus his attention on anything. The language is hyperbolic. Cf. NCV “the mind of a fool wanders everywhere.” It was prophesied that the tribe of Ephraim would project power “to the ends of the earth”, however, they had lost focus and acted like “fools” in believing that their manifold future destiny was somehow divorced from reality (their behaviour and faithfulness). It was foolish to look to future glory when they refused to see what was “before them” as the Hezekiah Psalm notes; “Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity; and quicken thou me in thy way” (Ps 119.37).</td>
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<tr>
<td>v.25) A foolish son is a grief to his father, and bitterness to her that bare him.</td>
<td>See verse 21</td>
<td>This proverb has parallels with verse 21. Ephraim was a “foolish son”; “Ephraim also is like a silly dove without heart: they call to Egypt, they go to Assyria” (Hos 7.11). Ephraim was like a dove that flies into a house....panicked and seeking escape. Ephraim grieved God and would bring no joy to Sarah (the covenant mother).....unlike Isaac (who typified Hezekiah)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>v.26</strong></td>
<td>Also to punish the just is not good, nor to strike princes for equity.</td>
<td><strong>Mic 5.1</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>v.27</strong></td>
<td>He that hath knowledge spareth his words: and a man of understanding is of an excellent spirit.</td>
<td><strong>Prov 16.32</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>v.28</strong></td>
<td>Even a fool, when he holdeth his peace, is counted wise: and he that shutteth his lips is esteemed a man of understanding.</td>
<td><strong>Job 13.5</strong></td>
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The major theme is the condemnation of intrigue and strife. Once again Ephraim informs the background as well as “northern” co-texts from Hosea and Micah. The Judean background is supplied by Isaiah and the arguments are reinforced by parallel intra-texts from other Proverbs. The antithesis is between Hezekiah and Shebna, between unfaithful Ephraim and the faithful remnant.
## Proverbs 18

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<th>Proverbs 18</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>v.1)</strong> Through desire a man, having <strong>separated</strong> himself, seeketh <strong>and</strong> intermeddleth with all wisdom.</td>
<td><strong>Isa 65.5</strong> Which say, Stand by thyself, come not near to me; for I am holier than thou. These <strong>are</strong> a smoke in my nose, a fire that burneth all the day.</td>
<td>The people of Israel were “separated” by God to be a holy nation (Ex 33.16). But the current rulers indulged themselves in a “false sanctity” believing themselves superior to their brethren (and to Hezekiah) all the while interfering, intriguing and offering their own opinions and sanctimonious advice (a bit like Job’s friends); “No doubt but ye are the people, and wisdom shall die with you” (Job 12.2). See the next proverb.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>v.2)</strong> A fool hath no delight in understanding, but that his heart may <strong>discover</strong> itself.</td>
<td><strong>Isa 65.2</strong> I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people, which walketh in a way that was not good, after their own thoughts.</td>
<td>This kind of person is in love with his own ideas and enjoys spewing them out (W. McKane, <em>Proverbs</em> [OTL], 515). It is the kind of person who would ask a question, not to learn, but to show everyone how clever he is (cf. TEV). The Hitpael infinitive construct <strong>בְּהִיתֵּגל וּתָּלָל</strong> (<strong>bÿhitgalot</strong>) functions nominally as the object of the preposition. The term means “reveal, uncover, betray.” So the fool takes pleasure “in uncovering” his heart. Job 13:5: “O that ye would altogether hold your peace! and it should be your wisdom”.</td>
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<td><strong>v.3)</strong> When the wicked cometh, <strong>then</strong> cometh also contempt, and with ignominy reproach.</td>
<td>The sentiment expressed in the “Songs of Degrees” (a Hezekiah Collection); See <strong>Psa 123.3-4</strong>; “Have mercy upon us, O LORD, have mercy upon us: for we are exceedingly filled with contempt. Our soul is exceedingly filled with the scorning of those that are at ease, and with the contempt of the proud”.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>v.4)</strong> The words of a man's mouth <strong>are</strong> as deep waters, and the wellspring of wisdom <strong>as</strong> a flowing brook.</td>
<td><strong>Prov 16.22</strong> Understanding is a wellspring of life unto him that hath it: but the instruction of fools <strong>is</strong> folly.</td>
<td>See the commentary on Prov 16.22. Many proverbs are repeated (in similar form) in this section. Understanding <strong>is</strong> a wellspring of life unto him that hath it: but the instruction of fools <strong>is</strong> folly. There is debate about the nature of the parallelism between lines 4a and 4b. The major options are: (1) synonymous parallelism, (2) antithetical parallelism (e.g., NAB, NIV, NCV) or (3) formal parallelism. Normally a <strong>וָּי</strong> (<strong>vav</strong>) would begin an antithetical clause; the structure and the ideas suggest that the second colon continues the idea of the first half, but in a parallel way rather than as additional predicates. The metaphors used in the proverb elsewhere describe the wise. This is an implied comparison (<strong>hypocatastasis</strong>), the fountain of wisdom being the person who speaks.</td>
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<td><strong>v.5</strong></td>
<td>It is not good to accept the person of the wicked, to overthrow the righteous in judgment.</td>
<td><strong>Isa 59.14</strong> And judgment is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off: for truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter.</td>
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<td><strong>v.6</strong></td>
<td>A fool’s lips enter into contention, and his mouth calleth for strokes.</td>
<td><strong>Prov 13.10</strong> Only by pride cometh contention: but with the well advised is wisdom.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **v.7** | A fool’s mouth is his destruction, and his lips are the snare of his soul. | **Prov 10.14** Wise men lay up knowledge: but the mouth of the foolish is near destruction.  
**Prov 12.13** The wicked is snared by the transgression of his lips: but the just shall come out of trouble. | The device of repetition is often employed as a learning aid. We might say the “fool” traps himself with his own mouth. His “mouth” is a gaping hole (like the grave) and by his own words he is condemned. It seems that different scribes were set the task to compile proverbs using the same source materials (Isaiah, Psalms etc). Some of these sayings may have already become oral proverbial maxims established among the different tribes—popularised by the people in the aftermath of Hezekiah’s recovery and the Assyrian defeat. The “fool” is applicable to the Assyrian king, to Shebna, unfaithful Ephraimites and to anyone else who opposed Hezekiah. |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>v.8</th>
<th>The words of a <strong>talebearer</strong> are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly.</th>
<th><strong>Prov 16.28;</strong> A froward man soweth strife: and a <strong>whisperer</strong> separateth chief friends.</th>
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<td>Again, this proverb is similar to Prov 16.19 (See commentary there). Slander was prohibited in the Torah; “Thou shalt not go up and down as a talebearer among thy people: neither shalt thou stand against the blood of thy neighbour: I am the LORD” (Lev 19.16). Talebearer or “slanderer”; KJV, NAB “talebearer”; ASV, NRSV “whisperer.” The word כְּמִתְלַׁהֲמִים (k’mithlahamim) occurs only here. It is related to a cognate verb meaning “to swallow greedily.” Earlier English versions took it from a Hebrew root הָלַם (halam, see the word לְמַׁהֲלֻמוֹת [lømahalumot] in v. 6) meaning “wounds” (so KJV). But the translation of “choice morsels” fits the idea of gossip better. Heb “they go down [into] the innermost parts of the belly”; NASB “of the body.” When the choice morsels of gossip are received, they go down like delicious food – into the innermost being. R. N. Whybray says, “There is a flaw in human nature that assures slander will be listened to” (Proverbs [CBC], 105).</td>
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<td>v.9</td>
<td>He also that is slothful in his work is brother to him that is a great waster.</td>
<td><strong>Prov 10.14;</strong> He becometh poor that dealeth with a slack hand: but the hand of the diligent maketh rich.</td>
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<td>Heb “possessor of destruction.” This idiom means “destroyer” (so ASV); KJV “a great waster”; NRSV “a vandal.” The one who was “slothful” was Ahaz (father of Hezekiah) who allowed the temple to fall into decay and who courted the Assyrians by placing an Assyrian altar there. The “great waster” was Sennacherib, who threatened Jerusalem with destruction.</td>
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<td>v.10</td>
<td>The name of the LORD is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe.</td>
<td><strong>Ps 61.3</strong> For thou hast been a shelter for me, and a strong tower from the enemy.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Psalm 61 a Davidic Psalm probably with the Absalом rebellion as background, suitable to the Hezekiah circumstances. “Trust ye in the LORD for ever: for in the LORD JEHOVAH is everlasting strength” (Isa 26.4)</td>
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<td>v.11</td>
<td>The rich man’s wealth is his strong city, and as an high wall in his own conceit.</td>
<td><strong>Prov 10.15</strong> The rich man’s wealth is his strong city: the destruction of the poor is their poverty.</td>
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<td>Repeating similar themes found in previous proverbs and in Psalm 49 – a Korah Psalm, suggesting a Hezekiah setting: “They that trust in their wealth, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches” [Shebna?] (Ps 49.6)</td>
<td><a href="http://www.christadelphianbooks.org/booker/psalms2/psabkb07.html">http://www.christadelphianbooks.org/booker/psalms2/psabkb07.html</a></td>
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<td>v.12) Before destruction the heart of man is haughty, and before honour is humility.</td>
<td>Prov 16.18 Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall. Prov 15.33 The fear of the LORD is the instruction of wisdom; and before honour is humility.</td>
<td>The same sentiment expressed in previous proverbs (see comments there) and also by Job (who typified Hezekiah); “Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes” (Job 42.6).</td>
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<td>v.13) He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him.</td>
<td>Isa 53:1 Who hath believed our report?</td>
<td>This proverb warns against making up your mind before viewing the evidence. Many did not believe the news that Hezekiah had recovered or that Jerusalem had been saved. The Torah warned against coming to premature conclusions, especially in judicial matters (Deut 13.14). The presumption was that Hezekiah (Job) must have sinned as he was being punished by God.</td>
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<td>v.14) The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity; but a wounded spirit who can bear?</td>
<td>Job 6.4 For the arrows of the Almighty are within me, the poison whereof drinketh up my spirit: the terrors of God do set themselves in array against me.</td>
<td>The figure of a “crushed spirit” (ASV, NAB, NCV, NRSV “a broken spirit,” comparing depression to something smashed or crushed) suggests a broken will, a loss of vitality, despair, and emotional pain. In physical sickness one can fall back on the will to live; but in depression even the will to live is gone. Job 1.21; “And said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD”.</td>
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<td>v.15) The heart of the prudent getteth knowledge; and the ear of the wise seeketh knowledge.</td>
<td>Prov 1.5 A wise man will hear, and will increase learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels.</td>
<td>This proverb repeats one of the guiding principles of this collection, the “getting of knowledge/wisdom” which is “knowledge of the Lord” or “fear of the Lord”. Psalm 119 (a Hezekiah Psalm) has a number of verses that reflect the same thematic; “I understand more than the ancients, because I keep thy precepts” (Ps 119.100).</td>
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<td>v.16</td>
<td>A man's gift maketh room for him, and bringeth him before great men.</td>
<td>Prov 17.8 A gift is as a precious stone in the eyes of him that hath it; whither soever it turneth, it prospereth.</td>
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<td>v.17</td>
<td>He that is first in his own cause seemeth just; but his neighbour cometh and searcheth him.</td>
<td>See the similar proverb in verse 18.</td>
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<td>v.18</td>
<td>The lot causeth contentions to cease, and parteth between the mighty.</td>
<td>Prov 16.33 The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the LORD.</td>
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<tr>
<td>v.19</td>
<td>A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city: and their contentions are like the bars of a castle.</td>
<td>Prov 6.19 A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren.</td>
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<td>v.20</td>
<td>A man's belly shall be satisfied with the fruit of his mouth; and with the increase of his lips shall he be filled.</td>
<td>Prov 13.2 A man shall eat good by the fruit of his mouth: but the soul of the transgressors shall eat violence.</td>
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<td><strong>v.21</strong></td>
<td>Death and life are in the power of the tongue: and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof.</td>
<td>This proverb summarizes the proverbs in the first half of the chapter, See verses 4-7</td>
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<td><strong>v.22</strong></td>
<td>Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the LORD.</td>
<td>Isaiah 62.4 Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken; neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate: but thou shalt be called Hephzibah, and thy land Beulah: for the LORD delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>v.23</strong></td>
<td>The poor useth intreaties; but the rich answereth roughly.</td>
<td>Isa 66.2 For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the LORD: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly: and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.

Net Bible 18:24
A person who has friends may be harmed by them, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.

The construction is “a man of friends” (cf. NASB) meaning a man who has friends (a genitive of the thing possessed). C. H. Toy, however, suggests reading יֵּש (yesh) instead of אִיש (ish), along with some of the Greek mss, the Syriac, and Tg. Prov 18:24. It would then say “there are friends” who are unreliable (Proverbs [ICC], 366) The text simply has לְהִתְרֹעֵעַ (lÿhitro’ea’), which means “for being crushed” or “to be shattered” (but not “to show oneself friendly” as in the KJV).

The Predominate theme is the damage inflicted by the mouth; a repetition of previous proverbs from the Hezekiah era with slight nuances on similar themes that suggests the gathering of variant popularized oral sayings from disparate tribal sources.
<table>
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<th>Proverbs 19</th>
<th>Inter-text</th>
<th>Comments</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>v.1</strong> Better is the poor that walketh in his integrity (זְמֵ֣ן תֹּם), than he that is perverse in his lips, and is a fool.</td>
<td>Isa 59.3 For your hands are defiled with blood, and your fingers with iniquity; your lips have spoken lies, your tongue hath muttered perverseness.</td>
<td>The Syriac and Tg. Prov 19:1 read “rich” instead of MT “fool.” This makes tighter antithetical parallelism than MT and is followed by NAB. However, the MT makes sense as it stands; this is an example of metonymical parallelism. The MT reading is also supported by the LXX. The Hebrew construction uses נָּפַל (nafal), “and he [is],” before “fool.” This may be rendered “one who is perverse while a fool” or “a fool at the same time.” The “poor” in this scenario is Job/Hezekiah: “And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? and still he holdeth fast his integrity (יְמוּתummah), although thou movest me against him, to destroy him without cause” (Job 2.3)</td>
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<td><strong>v.2</strong> Also, that the soul be without knowledge, it is not good; and he that hasteth with his feet sinneth.</td>
<td>Hos 4.6 My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children.</td>
<td>The interpretation of this line depends largely on the meaning of נפֶשׁ (nefesh) which has a broad range of meanings: (1) the breathing substance of man, (2) living being, (3) life, (4) person, (5) seat of the appetites, (6) seat of emotions and passions, (7) activities of intellect, emotion and will, (8) moral character, etc. (BDB 659-61 s.v.). In light of the synonymous parallelism, the most likely nuance here is “zeal, passion” (HALOT 713 s.v. 8). NIV takes the word in the sense of “vitality” and “drive” – “it is not good to have zeal without knowledge” (cf. NCV, TEV, and NLT which are all similar). The northern prophet Hosea was contemporary with Hezekiah and Isaiah. As Paul remarked; “they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge” (Rom 10.2). The prophet Isaiah sums up the rulers thus; “Their feet run to evil, and they make haste to shed innocent blood: their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity; wasting and destruction are in their paths” (Isa 59.7).</td>
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<tr>
<td>v.3) The foolishness of man perverteth his way: and his heart frettetth against the LORD.</td>
<td><strong>Isa 8.21</strong> And they shall pass through it, hardly bestead and hungry: and it shall come to pass, that when they shall be hungry, they shall fret themselves, and curse their king and their God, and look upward.</td>
<td>Particularly in the time of Ahaz (Hezekiah’s father) did they “fret” and curse God. In contrast see Ps 37.1 A <em>Psalm</em> of David often employed in proverbs; “Fret not thyself because of evildoers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity”. Perverts or “subverts” his way; The verb סָלַף (salaf) normally means “to twist; to pervert; to overturn,” but in this context it means “to subvert” (BDB 701 s.v.); cf. ASV “subverteth.” J. H. Greenstone comments: “Man’s own failures are the result of his own folly and should not be attributed to God” (Proverb, 201). Fret = “rage” The “heart raging” is a metonymy of cause (or adjunct); it represents the emotions that will lead to blaming God for the frustration.</td>
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<td>v.4) Wealth maketh many friends; but the poor is separated from his neighbour.</td>
<td><strong>Prov 14.20</strong> The poor is hated even of his own neighbour: but the rich hath many friends.</td>
<td>A nuanced repetition of previous similar proverbs. The “poor” or “needy” is Hezekiah/Job; “He hath put my brethren far from me, and mine acquaintance are verily estranged from me…..” (Job 19.13-17)</td>
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<tr>
<td>v.5) A false witness shall not be unpunished, and he that speaketh lies shall not escape.</td>
<td><strong>Prov 19.19</strong> A false witness shall not be unpunished, and he that speaketh lies shall perish. <strong>Prov 6.19</strong> A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren.</td>
<td>A partial repetition of previous proverbs (see there for comments). The same sentiment is expressed in the <em>Songs of Degrees</em> (A Hezekiah collection); “What shall be given unto thee? or what shall be done unto thee, thou false tongue?” (Ps 120.3).</td>
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<td>v.6) Many will intreat the favour of the prince: and every man is a friend to him that giveth gifts.</td>
<td><strong>Ps 45.2</strong> And the daughter of Tyre shall be there with a gift; even the rich among the people shall intreat thy favour.</td>
<td>Psalm 45 is a northern Psalm (Rendsburg) with a similar theme as Songs. Both Ps 45 and Songs (also northern origins) written with Hezekiah in mind particularly with regards to his marriage to Hephzibah, who was probably a Phoenician (Tyre) princess. Gifts were given and a political marriage alliance made after the Assyrian defeat. Even the Babylonians sent gifts to Hezekiah. Note also that this repeats Prov 18.16 (see there for comments).</td>
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### v.7) All the brethren of the poor do hate him: how much more do his friends go far from him? he pursueth them with words, yet they are wanting to him.

**Ps 38.11** My lovers and my friends stand aloof from my sore; and my kinsmen stand afar off.

This was the experience of David and Hezekiah/Job; in their times of need they were abandoned by everyone (except God). See comments on verse 4 above.

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### v.8) He that getteth wisdom loveth his own soul: he that keepeth understanding shall find good.

**Prov 8.6** But he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul: all they that hate me love death.

This is reminiscent of Proverbs 8.6. Proverbs 8 is a “hymn” to wisdom inter-textually connected with Isaiah 40.

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### v.9) A false witness shall not be unpunished, and he that speaketh lies shall perish.

**Isa 9.15-17** The ancient and honourable, he is the head; and the prophet that teacheth lies, he is the tail. For the leaders of this people cause them to err; and they that are led of them are destroyed, therefore.....

Another repetition, see verse 5 above.

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### v.10) Delight is not seemly for a fool; much less for a servant to have rule over princes.

**Hos 7.5** In the day of our king the princes have made him sick with bottles of wine; he stretched out his hand with scorners.

The northern kings and princes had abrogated their responsibility. They were “drunks” and “fools” ruled by their servants. The coming crisis had paralysed them—they turned to drink instead of God; “Woe to the crown of pride, to the drunkards of Ephraim” (Isa 28.1).
<p>| v.11 | The discretion of a man defereth his anger; and it is his glory to pass over a transgression. | See: Prov 12.16; Prov 14.29; Prov 15.18; Prov 16.32; Prov 17.14 | Very similar to previous proverbs (see there for commentary). |
| v.12 | The king's wrath is as the roaring of a lion; but his favour is as dew upon the grass. | Joel 3.16-18 The LORD also shall roar out of Zion... (v. 18) And it shall come to pass in that day, that the mountains shall drop down new wine, and the hills shall flow with milk | The King here is “Yahweh” as in the Joel prophecy from the same era. See also the similar proverb in 16.14 and comments on 20.2. Assyria defeated by the “destroyer” and Israel was consequently blessed during a Jubilee year. |
| v.13 | A foolish son is the calamity of his father: and the contentions of a wife are a continual dropping | See verse 26 Prov 17.25 A foolish son is a grief to his father, and bitterness to her that bare him. | See commentary on Prov 17.25. The “contentious woman” is the antithesis of the vitreous woman; “Then said his wife unto him, Dost thou still retain thine integrity? curse God, and die” (Job 2.9). The contentious wife represents the sapping of morale through the constant sniping and discouragement that Hezekiah received from the “unfaithful element” within Israel. They did not support his cause and encouraged him to abandon God and resign himself to his fate. |
| v.14 | House and riches are the inheritance of fathers: and a prudent wife is from the LORD. | Prov 31.10 Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies. | Proverbs 31 is about Ruth the progenitor of the Davidic line who became an archetype for the “virtuous woman”. Despite having no inheritance (from the fathers) it was her faithfulness and covenantal kindness that allowed Naomi to redeem her inheritance. Ruth functions as a type of the faithful remnant in Israel who together with the kinsman redeemer (Boaz/Hezekiah) recovered the inheritance of the fathers from the hand of the Assyrian king. |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verse</th>
<th>Proverb</th>
<th>Scripture</th>
<th>Commentary</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>v.15</strong></td>
<td>Slothfulness casteth into a deep sleep; and an idle soul shall suffer hunger.</td>
<td><strong>Isa 29.10</strong></td>
<td>For the LORD hath poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep, and hath closed your eyes: the prophets and your rulers, the seers hath he covered. See also: <strong>Prov 6.9-10</strong> and verse 24 below. The basis of this proverb is Esau who came back from the hunt hungry and sold his birthright for a mess of red pottage (Gen 25.29-34). Israel is depicted here as “slothful” – willing to “sell out” their heritage to the Assyrians because of spiritual laziness. God had purposely put them into a deep sleep.</td>
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<td><strong>v.16</strong></td>
<td>He that keepeth the commandment keepeth his own soul; but he that despiseth his ways shall die.</td>
<td><strong>Ecc 8.5</strong></td>
<td>Whoso keepeth the commandment shall feel no evil thing: and a wise man's heart discerneth both time and judgment. Ecclesiastes represents the memoirs of king Uzziah the great-great grandfather of Hezekiah. His leprous condition is used by Isaiah as a metaphor of the nation; “From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment” (Isa 1.6). Uzziah was struck with leprosy because his pride caused him to rebel against God. In the same way Adam refused to “keep the commandment” and would “surely die” so also Israel was disobedient and would face death at the hands of Assyria.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>v.17</strong></td>
<td>He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the LORD; and that which he hath given will he pay him again.</td>
<td><strong>Isa 58.7-11</strong></td>
<td>Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh? Is it not to do good and to relieve the afflicted? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh? The system of Mosaic justice had broken down in northern Israel. It was every man for himself, as they had endured numerous Assyrian forays into their territory and had been put to tribute. To show pity is to show grace. The participle חון (khonen, “shows favor to”) is related to the word for “grace.” The activity here is the kind favour shown poor people for no particular reason and with no hope of repayment. It is literally an act of grace. In other words they had to demonstrate the character of Yahweh who had revealed himself as “gracious” (Ex 33.19). The “poor” is Hezekiah who was despised in his extremis (Isa 53.3) – however, those who remained faithful and gracious towards the “suffering servant” would be saved (like he was).</td>
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</table>
v.18) Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying.

Isa 53.5 But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. Isa 38.5 ......I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears: behold, I will add unto thy days fifteen years.

The expression “do not lift up your soul/life” to his death may mean (1) “do not set your heart” on his death (cf. ASV, NAB, NASB, NRSV), or it may mean (2) “do not be a willing partner” (cf. NIV). The parent is to discipline a child, but he is not to take it to the extreme and destroy or kill the child. The Hiphil infinitive construct הֲמִיתוֹ (h'a mito) means “taking it to heart” in this line. The traditional rendering was “and let not your soul spare for his crying.” This involved a different reading than “causing his death” (J. H. Greenstone, Proverbs, 206-7). Hezekiah represented the nation. The faithful remnant recognised that Hezekiah’s suffering bore a corporate dimension. It was as if Hezekiah took upon himself the chastisement of the nation. We must not think here of Hezekiah as a substitute for the nation because the nation also suffered during this period. The difference was that Hezekiah’s suffering was undeserved. The thing is that God did spare his soul for his crying. God heard his cry and saved him and God also saved the faithful remnant. However, there was “no hope” for many in northern Israel and their cry was not heard, neither were they spared.

v.19) A man of great wrath shall suffer punishment: for if thou deliver him, yet thou must do it again. LXE v.19) A malicious man shall be severely punished, and if he commit injury, he shall also lose his life.

Isa 37.28 But I know thy abode, and thy going out, and thy coming in, and thy rage against me.

The second colon of the verse is very difficult, and there have been many proposals as to its meaning: (1) “If you save [your enemy], you will add [good to yourself]”; (2) “If you save [your son by chastening], you may continue [chastisement and so educate him]”; (3) “If you deliver [him by paying the fine for him once], you will have to do it again”; (4) “If you save [him this time], you will have to increase [the punishment later on].” All interpretations have to supply a considerable amount of material (indicated by brackets). Many English versions are similar to (3). This proverb is possibly about Sennacherib and his “rage” against Yahweh and if that is the case then the LXX (LXE) reading is more appropriate than the (modified) MT reading.

v.20) Hear counsel, and receive instruction, that thou mayest be wise in thy latter end.

Prov 1.8; Prov 2.1-9; Prov 8.34,35

This proverb has many similar counterparts (see comments there) “become wise in your latter end” (cf. KJV, ASV) or “by the end of your life” which is particularly pertinent to Uzziah who spent the latter end of his life repenting while quarantined and urges his readers to “Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them” (Ecc 12.1).
<p>| v.21 | There are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless the counsel of the LORD, that shall stand. | Prov 12.2 A good man obtaineth favour of the LORD: but a man of wicked devices will he condemn. | Very similar to Prov 12.2 (see there for comments) |
| v.22 | The desire of a man is his kindness: and a poor man is better than a liar. | Prov 19.22; Prov 12.26; Prov 15.16; Prov 16.8 | A partial repetition of similar proverbs. See also Ps. 37.26; “He is ever merciful, and lendeth; and his seed is blessed”. The “poor” man being Hezekiah/Job. |
| v.23 | The fear of the LORD tendeth to life: and he that hath it shall abide satisfied; he shall not be visited with evil. | Prov 10.27 The fear of the LORD prolongeth days: but the years of the wicked shall be shortened. | With obvious reference to Hezekiah’s 15 year extension of life (Isa 38.5); “He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities” (Isa 53.11). |
| v.24 | A slothful man hideth his hand in his bosom (טסלחן tsallachath), and will not so much as bring it to his mouth again | See verse 15 Heb. “bosom” (טסלחן tsallachath) translated as “bowl” or “dish” (NKJ/ASV/JPS/RSV/NAB/NIV etc). A reference to Esau and his birthright; “The slothful man roasteth not that which he took in hunting: but the substance of a diligent man is precious”. (Prov 12.27, see comments there). |
| v.25 | Smite a scorner, and the simple will beware: and reprove one that hath understanding, and he will understand knowledge. | Prov 17.10 A reproof entereth more into a wise man than an hundred stripes into a fool. | Very similar to 17.10 (see comments there) |
| v.26 | He that wasteth his father, and chaseth away his mother, is a son that causeth shame, and bringeth reproach | See verse 13 Prov 17.25 A foolish son is a grief to his father, and bitterness to her that bare him. | Very similar to 17.25 (see there); see also the Torah regarding rebellious children in Deut 21.18-21 |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>v.27) Cease, my son, to hear the instruction <em>that causeth</em> to err from the words of knowledge.</th>
<th>Prov 14.7 Go from the presence of a foolish man, when thou perceivest not <em>in him</em> the lips of knowledge.</th>
<th>Very similar to 14.7 (see there) also the Torah prohibition in Deut 13.1-4 which warns against false prophets; “Thus saith the LORD concerning the prophets that make my people err, that bite with their teeth, and cry, Peace; and he that putteth not into their mouths, they even prepare war against him”. (Mic 3.5). These were the false prophets of the Hezekiah era ...declaring “peace” with Assyria.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>v.28) An ungodly witness scorneth judgment: and the mouth of the wicked devoureth iniquity.</td>
<td>Isa 28.14 Wherefore hear the word of the LORD, ye scornful men, that rule this people which is in Jerusalem.</td>
<td>They were “ungodly witnesses” or “false prophets” they would be made to swallow their words.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v.29) Judgments are prepared for scorners, and stripes for the back of fools.</td>
<td>Isa 29.20 For the terrible one is brought to nought, and the scorner is consumed, and all that watch for iniquity are cut off.</td>
<td>Isa 28.22 Now therefore be ye not mockers, lest your bands be made strong: for I have heard from the Lord GOD of hosts a consumption, even determined upon the whole earth. The “scorners”, especially the Ephraimites, would be punished. Some of them “watched for iniquity” waiting to see what would become of Hezekiah. He was delivered and they were destroyed.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Themes: evil speech, intrigue, spiritual laziness, rage and irresponsible behaviour. Repetition and variations of many previous themes contextualized during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah and the prophets Isaiah, Micah, Joel and Hosea.
Proverbs 20

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proverbs 20</th>
<th>Inter-text</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>v.1</strong> Wine <em>is</em> a mocker, strong drink <em>is</em> raging; and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise.</td>
<td>Isa 28.7 But they also have erred through wine, and through strong drink are out of the way; the priest and the prophet have erred through strong drink, they are swallowed up of wine, they are out of the way through strong drink; they err in vision, they stumble in judgment.</td>
<td>The ongoing crisis saw a descent into hedonism and an escape in heavy drinking as a means of escape. This was particularly true in northern Israel; “Whoredom and wine and new wine take away the heart” (Hos 4.11). Even royalty was involved; “In the day of our king the princes have made him sick with bottles of wine; he stretched out his hand with scorners” (Hos 7.5). Similar themes are elaborated in Prov 23.29-35 and Prov 31.4.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>v.2</strong> The fear of a king <em>is</em> as the roaring of a lion: <em>whoso</em> provoketh him to anger sinneth against his own soul.</td>
<td>Hos 11.10 They shall walk after the LORD: he shall roar like a lion: when he shall roar, then the children shall tremble from the west.</td>
<td>The roaring of the lion is equated with the voice of Yahweh the true king of Israel; “The lion hath roared, who will not fear? the Lord GOD hath spoken, who can but prophesy?” (Amos 3.8). This proverb is similar to Prov 19.12; “The king’s wrath <em>is</em> as the roaring of a lion; but his favour <em>is</em> as dew upon the grass”. The prophet Amos was contemporary with Uzziah who in turn was co-regent with Jotham and Ahaz and possibly saw the birth of Hezekiah.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>v.3</strong> <em>It</em> is an honour for a man to cease from strife: but every fool will be meddling.</td>
<td>Prov 17.4 The beginning of strife <em>is</em> as when one letteth out water: therefore leave off contention, before it be meddled with.</td>
<td>Very similar to Prov 17.4 (see there for comments)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>v.4</strong> The sluggard will not plow by reason of the cold; therefore shall he beg in harvest, and have nothing.</td>
<td>Prov 19.15,24 See also verse 13 below.</td>
<td>A variation of an oft repeated theme usually sloth is associated with loss of the birthright or inheritance. Here physical laziness and excuses represent the spiritual stupor that enveloped the nation during the Assyrian crisis. Farming is also employed in Prov 13.23 (see there) which draws on Isa 28.24-26; highlighting lack of judgement here the farming metaphor highlights spiritual laziness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v.5</td>
<td>Counsel in the heart of man is like deep water; but a man of understanding will draw it out.</td>
<td><strong>Isa 29.15</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v.6</td>
<td>Most men will proclaim every one his own goodness: but a faithful man who can find?</td>
<td><strong>Mic 7.2</strong></td>
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<td>v.7</td>
<td>The just man walketh in his integrity: his children are blessed after him.</td>
<td><strong>Prov 19.1</strong></td>
</tr>
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<td>v.8</td>
<td>A king that sitteth in the throne of judgment scattereth away all evil with his eyes.</td>
<td>See verse 26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v.9</td>
<td>Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?</td>
<td><strong>Job 14.4</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v.10</td>
<td><strong>Divers weights, and divers measures, both of them are alike abomination to the LORD.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Mic 6.11</strong> Shall I count <em>them</em> pure with the wicked balances, and with the bag of deceitful weights?</td>
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<tr>
<td>v.11</td>
<td><strong>Even a child is known by his doings, whether his work be pure, and whether it be right.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Isa 7.14-16</strong> Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel</td>
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<tr>
<td>v.12</td>
<td><strong>The hearing ear, and the seeing eye, the LORD hath made even both of them.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Exod 4.11</strong> And the LORD said unto him, Who hath made man's mouth? or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? have not I the LORD?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v.13</td>
<td><strong>Love not sleep, lest thou come to poverty; open thine eyes, and thou shalt be satisfied with bread.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Prov 6.9-11</strong> How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? when wilt thou arise out of thy sleep?.........</td>
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<tr>
<td>v.14</td>
<td><strong>It is naught, it is naught, saith the buyer: but when he is gone his way, then he boasteth.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Hos 12.7-8</strong> He is a merchant, the balances of deceit are in his hand: he loveth to oppress. And Ephraim said, Yet I am become rich, I have found me out substance: <em>in all my labours they shall find none iniquity in me that were sin.</em></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>v.15</strong></td>
<td>There is gold, and a multitude of rubies: but the lips of knowledge are a precious jewel.</td>
<td><strong>Prov 8.11</strong></td>
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<td><strong>v.16</strong></td>
<td>Take his garment that is surety for a stranger: and take a pledge of him for a strange woman.</td>
<td><strong>Prov 2.16</strong></td>
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<td><strong>v.17</strong></td>
<td>Bread of deceit is sweet to a man; but afterwards his mouth shall be filled with gravel.</td>
<td><strong>Prov 9.17-18</strong></td>
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<td><strong>v.18</strong></td>
<td>Every purpose is established by counsel: and with good advice make war.</td>
<td>See <strong>Prov 15.22; Prov 24.6</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>v.19</strong></td>
<td>He that goeth about as a talebearer revealeth secrets: therefore meddle not with him that flattereth with his lips.</td>
<td><strong>Prov 11.13</strong></td>
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<td>v.20</td>
<td>Whoso curseth his father or his mother, his lamp shall be put out in obscure darkness.</td>
<td>Prov 30.11</td>
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<td>v.21</td>
<td>An inheritance may be gotten hastily at the beginning; but the end thereof shall not be blessed.</td>
<td>Isa 8.3</td>
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<td>v.22</td>
<td>Say not thou, I will recompense evil; but wait on the LORD, and he shall save thee.</td>
<td>Duet 32.35</td>
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<tr>
<td>Verse</td>
<td>Text</td>
<td>See verse</td>
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<tr>
<td>v.23</td>
<td>Divers weights are an abomination unto the LORD; and a false balance is not good.</td>
<td>See verse 10</td>
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<tr>
<td>v.24</td>
<td>Man's goings are of the LORD; how can a man then understand his own way?</td>
<td>Ps 37.23 The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way.</td>
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<tr>
<td>v.25</td>
<td>It is a snare to the man who devoureth that which is holy, and after vows to make enquiry.</td>
<td>Ecc 5.5-6 Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldst vow and not pay. Suffer not thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin; neither say thou before the angel, that it was an error: wherefore should God be angry at thy voice, and destroy the work of thine hands?</td>
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<tr>
<td>v.26</td>
<td>A wise king scattereth the wicked, and bringeth the wheel over them.</td>
<td>Isa 28.27 For the fitches are not threshed with a threshing instrument, neither is a cart wheel turned about upon the cummin; but the fitches are beaten out with a staff, and the cummin with a rod.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
The spirit of man is the candle of the LORD, searching all the inward parts of the belly.

Psalm 119 is a “Hezekiah” Psalm

Mercy and truth preserve the king: and his throne is upheld by mercy.

Mercy and truth are technical terms for the covenants made with the patriarchs (Mic 7.20). Covenantal faith (as displayed by Hezekiah) would save the king and establish the Davidic throne. The emphasis is on the Davidic covenant (2 Sam 7:11-16; Ps 89:19-37). It is the Lord and his faithful love for his covenant that ultimately makes the empire secure. But the enjoyment of divine protection requires the king to show loyal love as well.

The glory of young men is their strength: and the beauty of old men is the gray head.

The Hebrew term תִּפְאֶּרֶת (tif'eret) means “beauty; glory”; in a context like this it means “honor” in the sense of glorying or boasting (BDB 802 s.v. 3.b). See commentary on 16.31.

The blueness of a wound cleanseth away evil: so do stripes the inward parts of the belly.

The nation’s sin was cleansed by the “suffering servant” (Hezekiah).

Various themes such as scorn, sloth, meddling; a repetition of many previous themes with slight variations. The proverbs may seem eclectic, unrelated and repetitive but they consistently tell the same story, namely the state of the nation in the 8th century BC which was a period of great change for several historically significant civilizations. The Neo-Assyrian Empire reached the peak of its power, conquering the Kingdom of Israel as well as nearby countries. Ephraim was taken captive but Judah was delivered because of the faithfulness of Hezekiah.
Proverbs 21-22.16

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proverbs 21</th>
<th>Inter-text</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>v.1</strong> The king’s heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will.</td>
<td><strong>Ps 119.11</strong> Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.</td>
<td>Psalm 119 is a Hezekiah psalm. Hezekiah meditated on the torah all the time. It was a lamp to his path and a guide to his feet. As such his “heart was in the hand of the Lord”. For Hezekiah the “torah” was not just a compendium of “priestly laws” but a foreshadowing of covenant promises concerning Messiah that demonstrated ethical and moral behaviour (social justice among other things). “Channels of water” (ַׁפֵּלָגֶי, palge) is an adverbial accusative, functioning as a figure of comparison – “like channels of water.” Cf. NAB “Like a stream”. Hezekiah’s eyes streamed with tears of frustration and regret at the obstinacy of the people in their refusal to keep torah. Nevertheless, Yahweh would turn that zeal and those tears to good use as Hezekiah became the “suffering servant”.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>v.2</strong> Every way of a man is right in his own eyes: but the LORD pondereth the hearts.</td>
<td><strong>Prov 16.2</strong> All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes; but the LORD weigheth the spirits.</td>
<td>A repeated proverb (see comments on 16.2). Even though people think they know themselves, the Lord evaluates motives as well. Hezekiah was not perfect but accepted admonishment when he had done wrong.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>v.3</strong> To do justice and judgment is more acceptable to the LORD than sacrifice.</td>
<td><strong>Isa 1.12</strong> To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the LORD: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats.</td>
<td>The Lord prefers righteousness above religious service (e.g., Prov 15:8; 21:29; 1 Sam 15:22; Ps 40:6-8; Isa 1:11-17). This is not a rejection of ritual worship; rather, religious acts are without value apart from righteous living. Particularly, the prophet Micah (6.6-8) and Isaiah condemn ritual as a substitute for true religion (that was characteristic of this period); “Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow” (Isa 1.17).</td>
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<tr>
<td>v.4</td>
<td>An high look, and a proud heart, and the plowing of the wicked is sin. <strong>JPS</strong> v.4</td>
<td><strong>Isa 2.11</strong> The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day. <strong>Isa 8.20</strong> To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.</td>
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<tr>
<td>v.5</td>
<td>The thoughts of the diligent tend only to plenteousness; but of every one that is hasty only to want. <strong>Prov 10.4</strong> He becometh poor that dealeth with a slack hand: but the hand of the diligent maketh rich. <strong>Prov 10.2</strong> Treasures of wickedness profit nothing: but righteousness delivereth from death.</td>
<td>A repeated theme. On the word “hasty” see the comments on Isa 19.2 and see also Prov 28.2. Spiritual sloth and laziness are constantly linked with reluctance to take up the inheritance. The Hebrew noun translated “plenty” comes from the verb יָׁתַר (<strong>yatar</strong>), which means “to remain over” not necessarily material abundance but pre-eminence. Ahaz refused the sign of the establishment of the Davidic dynasty (Isa 9.7).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v.6</td>
<td>The getting of treasures by a lying tongue is a vanity tossed to and fro of them that seek death. <strong>Isa 1.23-24</strong> Thy princes are rebellious, and companions of thieves: every one loveth gifts.</td>
<td>A repeated theme. True treasures are a gift from the Lord (Isa 45.3); “And I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places” (note: not promised to Cyrus, see the chapter: Hezekiah as the anointed in Isaiah 45). On seeking death see Prov 8.6 and Isa 2.19.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v.7</td>
<td>The robbery of the wicked shall destroy them; because they refuse to do judgment. <strong>Isa 1.23-24</strong> Thy princes are rebellious, and companions of thieves: every one loveth gifts.</td>
<td>See also Micah 3.9-12; “They build up Zion with blood, and Jerusalem with iniquity” (v.10).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### v.8
The way of man is froward and strange: but as for the pure, his work is right (ףש, yashar).

**2 Kgs 18.3** And he did that which was right (ףש, yashar) in the sight of the LORD, according to all that David his father did. Hezekiah’s reign is assessed favourably.

### v.9
It is better to dwell in a corner of the housetop, than with a brawling woman in a wide house.

**See verse 19**

In proverbs the woman is used to personify wisdom, foolishness, foreignness (strange woman) and contention (brawling woman). A similar theme to the saying in Prov 17.1; “Better is a dry morsel, and quietness therewith, than an house full of sacrifices with strife”. The wide house probably denotes a royal palace (cf. Jer 22.14). Heb “a wife of contentions”; KJV “a brawling woman”; TEV, CEV “a nagging wife.” (The Greek version has no reference to a quarrelsome wife, but instead mentions justice in a common house). The “wife of contentions” probably denotes the pro-Assyrian faction arguing against Hezekiah.

### v.10
The soul of the wicked desireth evil: his neighbour findeth no favour in his eyes.

**Isa 32.6** For the vile person will speak villany, and his heart will work iniquity, to practise hypocrisy, and to utter error against the LORD, to make empty the soul of the hungry, and he will cause the drink of the thirsty to fail. Similar to the theme in Prov 3.29; “Devise not evil against thy neighbour, seeing he dwelleth securely by thee”. The “neighbour” in this case is Hezekiah (Judah) who courted his northern brethren (Ephraim). Hezekiah was scorned and mocked. In general the system of Mosaic justice was ignored; “Who hate the good, and love the evil; who pluck off their skin from off them, and their flesh from off their bones; Who also eat the flesh of my people, and flay their skin from off them; and they break their bones, and chop them in pieces, as for the pot, and as flesh within the caldron” (Mic 3.2-3).

### v.11
When the scorner is punished, the simple is made wise: and when the wise is instructed, he receiveth knowledge.

**Prov 19.25** Smite a scorner, and the simple will beware: and reprove one that hath understanding, and he will understand knowledge. Repeated theme (see comments Prov 19.25)
<p>| v.12) The righteous man wisely considereth the house of the wicked: but God overthroweth the wicked for their wickedness. | Hos 14.9 Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? prudent, and he shall know them? for the ways of the LORD are right, and the just shall walk in them: but the transgressors shall fall therein. | The righteous man (Hezekiah and the faithful) considered the fate of Ephraim (already ravaged by Assyria and taken captive). This proverb draws on the Davidic Psalm 37.35-36; “I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree. Yet he passed away, and, lo, he was not: yea, I sought him, but he could not be found”. The situation in northern Israel was dire; “I have overthrown some of you, as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and ye were as a firebrand plucked out of the burning: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD” (Amos 4.11) |
| v.13) Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry himself, but shall not be heard. | Isa 1.15 And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood. | Isa 58.7-9 “Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? ......Then shalt thou call, and the LORD shall answer…..” |
| v.14) A gift in secret pacifieth anger: and a reward in the bosom strong wrath. | Prov 17.8 A gift is as a precious stone in the eyes of him that hath it: whithersoever it turneth, it prospereth. | Similar to Prov 17.8 (see there) and 18.16 (see there). Referencing the “present” requested by Sennacherib (2 Kgs 18.31) compare Jacob sending Esau a present (Gen 32.20). |
| v.15) It is joy to the just to do judgment: but destruction shall be to the workers of iniquity. | Job 29.12 Because I delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help him. | The story of Job is parabolic of Hezekiah. Psalm 119 is also a Hezekiah Psalm; “Unless thy law had been my delights, I should then have perished in mine affliction” (Ps 119.92). |
| v.16) The man that wandereth out of the way of understanding shall remain in the congregation of the dead. | Ps 125.5 As for such as turn aside unto their crooked ways, the LORD shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity: but peace shall be upon Israel. | Ps 125 belongs to the “Songs of Degrees” which is a Hezekiah collection (see the chapter on the Songs of Degrees). The departed are the Shades (the Rephaim). The literal expression “will rest among the Shades” means “will be numbered among the dead.” So once again physical death is presented as the punishment for folly. |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>v.17</th>
<th>He that loveth pleasure shall be a poor man: he that loveth wine and oil shall not be rich.</th>
<th>Amos 6:6 That drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the chief ointments: but they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph.</th>
<th>The drunkards of Ephraim (Isa 28).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>v.18</td>
<td>The wicked shall be a ransom for the righteous, and the transgressor for the upright.</td>
<td>Isa 43:4 Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee: therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy life.</td>
<td>Similar to Prov 11.8; “The righteous is delivered out of trouble, and the wicked cometh in his stead” (see there for comments).</td>
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<tr>
<td>v.19</td>
<td>It is better to dwell in the wilderness, than with a contentious and an angry woman.</td>
<td>See verse 9</td>
<td>The same sentiment is expressed in the “Songs of Degrees” (a Hezekiah collection); Ps 120.5-6; “Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar! My soul hath long dwelt with him that hateth peace”. Also reminiscent of the Davidic Psalm that had the Absalom rebellion as setting; “And I said, Oh that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away, and be at rest. Lo, then would I wander far off, and remain in the wilderness. Selah” (Ps 55.6-7). The idea seems to be a wish to escape the plotting, intrigue and arguments between pro-Assyrian, pro-Egypt and pro-Yahweh parties amongst the royal advisers.</td>
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<td>v.20</td>
<td>There is treasure to be desired and oil in the dwelling of the wise; but a foolish man spendeth it up.</td>
<td>Ecc 2.18-19 Yea, I hated all my labour which I had taken under the sun: because I should leave it unto the man that shall be after me. And who knoweth whether he shall be a wise man or a fool? .....</td>
<td>Ecclesiastes is based on the memoirs of Uzziah who was co-regent with Jotham and Ahaz. His great wealth went to his grandson Ahaz who was a pro-Assyrian “fool” who squandered Judah’s wealth, practiced syncretism and let the temple fall into disrepair (see the chapter on Ecclesiastes).</td>
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<td>v.21) He that followeth after righteousness and mercy findeth life, righteousness, and honour.</td>
<td>Isa 51.1 Hearken to me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the LORD: look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged.</td>
<td>Based on the appeal by Isaiah. Similar to Prov 15.9; “The way of the wicked is an abomination unto the LORD: but he loveth him that followeth after righteousness” (for comments see there).</td>
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<td>v.22) A wise man scaleth (יהלְךָ 'alah); the city of the mighty, and casteth down the strength of the confidence thereof.</td>
<td>Isa 14.13 For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend (יהלְךָ 'alah) into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north.</td>
<td>The city of the mighty is Nineveh founded by the mythical “mighty hunter” Nimrod (Gen 10.9). The “wise” one (the word man is not in the original text) is Yahweh. Scaleth (climb) should be rendered as “ascend” (יהלְךָ 'alah); this is a reaction to what the Assyrian kings (Sargon, Sennacherib et al) wished to do, “ascend the heights” (of the temple mount metaphorically ascend to the mythical mountain of the “gods”). Instead, Yahweh (the only wise God) would “ascend” to the city of the mighty (Nineveh) and their “stronghold” (their God Asshur) by destroying the confidence of the Assyrian kings who thought of themselves as invulnerable. The word “strength” is a metonymy of adjunct, referring to the place of strength, i.e., “the stronghold.” “Confidence” is a genitive of worth; the stronghold is their confidence, it is appropriate for the confidence of the city. In the end Nineveh, the “bloody city” (Nahum 3.1) disappeared from the pages of history. In contrast; “The LORD is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble; and he knoweth them that trust in him” (Nahum 1.7). See the note about Nahum at the end of this table.</td>
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<tr>
<td>v.23) Whoso keepeth his mouth and his tongue keepeth his soul from troubles.</td>
<td>Prov 10.19 In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin: but he that refraineth his lips is wise.</td>
<td>A repeated theme (Prov 13.3; Prov 17.27, 28), also, Prov 12.13; “The wicked is snared by the transgression of his lips: but the just shall come out of trouble” (see there for comments).</td>
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<tr>
<td>v.24) Proud and haughty scorners is his name, who dealeth in proud wrath.</td>
<td>Prov 16.18 Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.</td>
<td>Another repeated theme (Prov 18.12; Prov 19.29). See there for comments.</td>
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<tr>
<td>v.25</td>
<td>The desire of the slothful killeth him; for his hands refuse to labour.</td>
<td>See Prov 22.13 below</td>
<td>Variations on a repeated theme (Prov 6.6-11; Prov 12.24,27; Prov 13.4; Prov 15.19; Prov 19.24; Prov 20.4; Prov 22.13; Prov 24.30-34; Prov 26.13,16) See there for comments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v.26</td>
<td>He coveteth greedily all the day long: but the righteous giveth and spareth not.</td>
<td>See Prov 22.9 below Ps 37.26 He is ever merciful, and lendeth; and his seed is blessed.</td>
<td>Expresses the sentiment of the oft employed Davidic Psalm 37 and has similarities with Psalm 112 (a Hezekiah Psalm); “He hath dispersed, he hath given to the poor; his righteousness endureth for ever; his horn shall be exalted with honour”( Ps 112.9). <a href="http://www.christadelphianbooks.org/booker/psalms5/psabke06.html">http://www.christadelphianbooks.org/booker/psalms5/psabke06.html</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v.27</td>
<td>The sacrifice of the wicked is abomination: how much more, when he bringeth it with a wicked mind?</td>
<td>Amos 5.21 I hate, I despise your feast days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies.</td>
<td>Links with the prophetic condemnation of hypocrisy by the prophets (Isa 1.11-16; Isa 66.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v.28</td>
<td>A false witness shall perish: but the man that heareth speaketh constantly.</td>
<td>Prov 19.9 A false witness shall not be unpunished, and he that speaketh lies shall perish.</td>
<td>Variations of a theme for comments see; Prov 6.19; Prov 19.5,9; Prov 25.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v.29</td>
<td>A wicked man hardeneth his face: but as for the upright, he directeth his way.</td>
<td>Ps 119.59 I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies.</td>
<td>Psalm 119 is a Hezekiah Psalm. See also commentaries on similar proverbs; Prov 28.14; Prov 29.1.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v.30</td>
<td>There is no wisdom nor understanding nor counsel against the LORD.</td>
<td>Isa 7.7 Thus saith the Lord GOD, It shall not stand, neither shall it come to pass. Prov 19.21 There are many devices in a man’s heart; nevertheless the counsel of the LORD, that shall stand.</td>
<td>Plots and counsel against the Lord (and his king) would not succeed. Even though Ahaz was an unfaithful king and refused the sign given to him (concerning the establishment of the Davidic dynasty), Yahweh would not allow the plot to replace him with a Syrian puppet to succeed (Isa 7.7). Neither would the plots against Hezekiah succeed. See also Isa 8.9,10; Isa 14.27; Isa 46.10,11.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Proverbs 22.1-16

| v.31) The horse is prepared against the day of battle: but safety is of the LORD. | Isa 31.1 Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help; and stay on horses, and trust in chariots, because they are many; and in horsemen, because they are very strong; but they look not unto the Holy One of Israel, neither seek the LORD! | Solomon, who is the “archetype” of the wise king had relied on Egyptian chariots and horses (1 Kgs 10.26-29) although this was expressly forbidden in Deut 17.6. Egypt had always been Israel’s downfall and the prophet Isaiah warns against Judah relying on Egyptian military might. |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proverbs 22.1-16</th>
<th>Inter-text</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>v.1) A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favour rather than silver and gold.</td>
<td>Ecc 7.1 A good name is better than precious ointment; and the day of death than the day of one's birth.</td>
<td>Ecclesiastes is based on the memoirs of Uzziah the great grandfather of Hezekiah. The precious ointment here is a reference to the priestly anointing oil (Uzziah attempted to become a Melchizedek king-priest) the day of his “death” was his consignment to the leper house where he had time to contemplate his sin. The Proverb also refers to a good name (reputation) and “loving favour” (high esteem NLT) rather than wealth. Solomon had wisdom and fame (1 Kgs 10.7) as well as wealth. Uzziah attempt to be like David and Solomon failed and he lost his reputation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v.2) The rich and poor meet together: the LORD is the maker of them all.</td>
<td>Job 34.19 How much less to him that accepteth not the persons of princes, nor regardeth the rich more than the poor? for they all are the work of his hands.</td>
<td>Job is a parabolic play on the Hezekiah situation. The Lord is sovereign over both rich and poor, that is, he has had the final say whether a person is rich or poor. People would do well to treat all people with respect, for God can as easily reduce the rich to poverty as raise up the poor to wealth. Job lost his position of esteem as did Hezekiah but both were restored afterwards. (See the chapter on the evaluation of Job by Andrew Perry)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**v.3)** A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself: but the simple pass on, and are punished.  

**Isa 26.20-21** Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast. For, behold, the LORD cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity: the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain.  

Entering into the “chamber” and “hiding” is a reference to the Passover ritual in which the participants were safe from the angel of death (destroyer). A reference to the Passover deliverance of Jerusalem from the Assyrians. (See the chapter on Passover Deliverance)

<p>| v.4) | By humility and the fear of the LORD are riches, and honour, and life. | <strong>Isa 33.6</strong> And wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of thy times, and strength of salvation: the fear of the LORD is his treasure. | See also the Hezekiah Psalm 112.1-3; “Praise ye the LORD. Blessed is the man that feareth the LORD, that delighteth greatly in his commandments. His seed shall be mighty upon earth: the generation of the upright shall be blessed. Wealth and riches shall be in his house: and his righteousness endureth for ever”. |
| v.5) | Thorns and snares are in the way of the froward: he that doth keep his soul shall be far from them. | <strong>Isa 45.2</strong> I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight: I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron: | The prophet Isaiah declared that the crooked way would be made straight or plain and obstacles would be levelled for the faithful. (See the chapter; Hezekiah as the anointed in Isaiah 45). Very similar to Prov 15.19; “The way of the slothful man is as an hedge of thorns: but the way of the righteous is made plain”. One proverb condemns the forward (perverse towards the covenant) the other the slothful (not diligent towards the inheritance). |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>v.6)</strong> Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it cease.</th>
<th><strong>Ps 78.3</strong> Which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us.</th>
<th>See psalm 78.3-6. Like all the Asaph psalms (50, 73-83), this belongs to the time of Hezekiah (2 Kings 18:18). Both Psalm 78 and Proverbs contain the rare expression “dark sayings” indicating that Asaph was one of the composers of this collection. Psalm 78.2 I will open my mouth in a parable: I will utter dark sayings of old. Proverbs 1.6 To understand a proverb, and the interpretation; the words of the wise, and their dark sayings. The expression is also used in the Korah Psalm 49.5 (translated as proverb) a psalm that has an inter-textual connection with Isaiah 22.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>v.7)</strong> The rich ruleth over the poor, and the borrower is servant to the lender.</td>
<td>See <strong>Prov 22.16</strong> below</td>
<td>Amos 8.4-6; “Hear this, O ye that swallow up the needy, even to make the poor of the land to fail, That we may buy the poor for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes; yea, and sell the refuse of the wheat?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>v.8)</strong> He that soweth iniquity shall reap vanity: and the rod of his anger shall fail.</td>
<td><strong>Hos 8.7</strong> For they have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind: it hath no stalk: the bud shall yield no meal: if so be it yield, the strangers shall swallow it up. (see Hos 10.13)</td>
<td>The verse is making an implied comparison (a figure of speech known as hypocatastasis) between sowing and sinning. One who sins is like one who sows, for there will be a “harvest” or a return on the sin – trouble. There is a variant reading in the LXX; instead of “the rod of his wrath” it reads “the punishment of his deeds.” C. H. Toy wishes to emend שֶׁבֶּט (shevet) to שֶׁבֶּר (shever), “the produce of his work” (Proverbs [ICC], 416). But the Hebrew text is not obscure, and שֶׁבֶּר does not exactly mean “produce.” The expression “rod of his wrath” may not follow the imagery of 8a very closely, but it is nonetheless understandable. The “rod” is a symbol of power; “wrath” is a metonymy of cause indicating what wrath will do, and an objective genitive. The expression signifies that in reaping trouble for his sins this person will no longer be able to unleash his fury on others. The malcontents in Hosea (Ephraim) would find that their “rod of anger” (abuse of power) would fail as it would meet with a greater “rod of anger’ (Assyria); “O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, and the staff in their hand is mine indignation” (Isa 10.5). Assyria itself would (in turn) be punished for exceeding its remit by using excessive cruelty and hubris; “For through the voice of the LORD shall the Assyrian be beaten down, which smote with a rod” (Isa 30.31).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v.9)</td>
<td>He that hath a bountiful eye shall be blessed; for he giveth of his bread to the poor.</td>
<td>See Prov 21.26 above</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v.10)</td>
<td>Cast out the scorner, and contentation shall go out; yea, strife and reproach shall cease.</td>
<td>See Prov 21.24 above</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v.11)</td>
<td>He that loveth pureness of heart, for the grace of his lips the king shall be his friend.</td>
<td>Ps 45.2 Thou art fairer than the children of men: grace is poured into thy lips: therefore God hath blessed thee for ever.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v.12)</td>
<td>The eyes of the LORD preserve knowledge, and he overthroweth the words of the transgressor.</td>
<td>Job 1:7 And the LORD said unto Satan, Whence comest thou? Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The object of the verb is the “words of the traitor” (בֹּגֵּד דִּבְרֵּי, divre voged); cf. NASB “the words of the treacherous man.” What treacherous people say is treachery. In this context “traitor, treacherous” refers to one who is “unfaithful” (cf. NIV). The proverb affirms that God in safeguarding true knowledge will frustrate deception from faithless people – what they say will not have its intended effect. Job is a parabolic play on the Assyrian crisis and the Hezekiah situation. The “eyes of the Lord” is the report brought back by “Satan” voicing the accusation that Job (Hezekiah) serves God out of self interest. Satan should not be thought of here as a “rebellious angel” but rather the angel who performs the “oversight” of Judah. The words of the “treacherous” (traitors) are the “friends” of Job (Hezekiah) who blame him for his misfortune and accuse him of unspeakable crimes against God.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>v.13</th>
<th>The slothful man saith, There is a lion without, I shall be slain in the streets.</th>
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</table>

See **Prov 21.25** above  
**Isa 5.29** Their roaring shall be like a lion, they shall roar like young lions: yea, they shall roar, and lay hold of the prey, and shall carry it away safe, and none shall deliver it.

The irony of the situation is that this proverb was a self fulfilling prophecy. Because of slothfulness (spiritual laziness) they refused to make sure their birthright and inheritance. Their excuse was that it was too dangerous to honour the covenant towards Yahweh.....because the Assyrian “lion” was in the street. This was particularly true of Ahaz who defiled the temple and erected an Assyrian altar. The winged human headed lion of Assyria:
v.14) The mouth of strange women is a deep pit: he that is abhorred of the LORD shall fall therein.

See Prov 2.16-19; Prov 5.3-23; Prov 6.24-29; Prov 7.5-27; Prov 23.27

A proverb with many variations. The “strange” or “foreign” woman being Assyria (in this case). Adopting Assyrian religious practices was the road to hell.

v.15) Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him.

Prov 13.24 He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes.

Prov 13.24; Prov 19.18; Prov 23.13,14; Prov 29.15,17

A proverb with many variations (see there for comments).

v.16) He that oppresseth the poor to increase his riches, and he that giveth to the rich, shall surely come to want.

See Prov 22.7 above Isa 24.2-3 And it shall be, as with the people, so with the priest; as with the servant, so with his master; as with the maid, so with her mistress; as with the buyer, so with the seller; as with the lender, so with the borrower; as with the taker of usury, so with the giver of usury to him. The land shall be utterly emptied, and utterly spoiled: for the LORD hath spoken this word.

The old adage “what goes around comes around” is relevant here. The prophet Isaiah had warned them as did the Torah; “Love thy neighbour”. Exploitation would not go unpunished and fortunes would be reversed.

Theme: God tests true motivations as he did with Job-Hezekiah. Another “tour de force” that reinforces and repeats previous lessons “line upon line” drawing on the faithfulness of the “suffering servant” to amplify eternal truths.
Note on Prov 21.22

The prophecy of Nahum could have been written as little as 34 years after the defeat of Sennacherib. It recounts the defeat of Thebes by Ashurbanipal (667-663) in Nah 3.8-10; “In 667 BCE, attacked by the Assyrian king Ashurbanipal’s army, Taharqa abandoned Lower Egypt and fled to Thebes. After his death three years later his nephew (or cousin) Tantamani (alt. Tanutamun) seized Thebes, invaded Lower Egypt and laid siege to Memphis, but abandoned his attempts to conquer the country in 663 BCE and retreated southwards. The Assyrions pursued him and took Thebes [Boederman, *op.cit.*, pp.700ff], whose name was added to a long list of cities plundered and destroyed by the Assyrians:

>This city, the whole of it, I conquered it with the help of Ashur and Ishtar. Silver, gold, precious stones, all the wealth of the palace, rich cloth, precious linen, great horses, supervising men and women, two obelisks of splendid electrum, weighing 2500 talents, the doors of temples I tore from their bases and carried them off to Assyria. With this weighty booty I left Thebes. Against Egypt and Kush I have lifted my spear and shown my power. With full hands I have returned to Nineveh, in good health. The fall of this mighty city came as a shock to the Hebrews, who had been living in the Egyptian sphere of influence for centuries”.

[http://www.reshafim.org.il/ad/egypt/the_destruction_of_thebes.htm#rem5]

Nahum 3.8-10;

>Art thou better than No [Thebes], that was situate among the rivers, that had the waters round about it, whose rampart was the sea, and her wall was from the sea? Ethiopia and Egypt were her strength, and it was infinite; Put and Lubim were thy helpers. Yet was she carried away, she went into captivity: her young children also were dashed in pieces at the top of all the streets: and they cast lots for her honourable men, and all her great men were bound in chains

The scholarly consensus is that the “book of vision” was written at the time of the fall of Nineveh at the hands of the Medes and Babylonians (612 BC) but that is not necessary as it could have been written shortly after the fall of Thebes, making the “lament of the fall of Nineveh” largely predictive. The book of Proverbs, although compiled by the “men of Hezekiah” (Prov 25.1) would have still been in its formative period during this time. It would have been difficult (but not impossible) to work on scripture during the reign of Manasseh who was exiled during this period (carried in chains to Babylon by the Assyrians, cf., 2 Chron 33.11). Whether or not the prophecy of Nahum was available at this stage to the scribes safeguarding the Proverbs is largely a moot point because Prov 21.22 rests on inter-textual links with Genesis and Isaiah.
Introduction

The Words of the Wise

Proverbs 22.17-24.34
Introduction to the Wisdom Book (WB)
(Words or Sayings of the Wise)
Proverbs 22.17-24.34

Bow down thine ear, and hear the words of the wise, and apply thine heart unto my knowledge (Proverbs 22.17)

A new section begins at verse 17 of Chapter 22 known as “The words (or sayings) of the wise”. The whole section is reproduced below (KJV). The introduction to the “Wisdom Book” (WB) runs from verse 17 to verse 20. The section that follows is thought to contain “Thirty Sayings” (from verse 22.22 onwards). A number of passages in the Instruction of Amenemope (Am) have been compared with the Book of Proverbs and these are found from 22.17 to 23.11 (highlighted yellow). A new section begins in 23.23 (highlighted grey) which has the Septuagint title (LXX); “These also are sayings of the wise” and it forms a sort of “appendix” to the previous sayings. It runs until the end of the chapter (24.34) as chapter 25 begins with the words; “These are also proverbs of Solomon, which the men of Hezekiah king of Judah copied out” (25.1).

Introduction Proverbs 22:17

17 Bow down thine ear, and hear the words of the wise, and apply thine heart unto my knowledge. 18 For it is a pleasant thing if thou keep them within thee; they shall withal be fitted in thy lips. 19 That thy trust may be in the LORD, I have made known to thee this day, even to thee. 20 Have not I written to thee excellent things in counsels and knowledge, 21 That I might make thee know the certainty of the words of truth; that thou mightest answer the words of truth to them that send unto thee?

Thirty Sayings?

22 Rob not the poor, because he is poor: neither oppress the afflicted in the gate: 23 For the LORD will plead their cause, and spoil the soul of those that spoiled them. 24 Make no friendship with an angry man; and with a furious man thou shalt not go: 25 Lest thou learn his ways, and get a snare to thy soul. 26 Be not thou one of them that strike hands, or of them that are sureties for debts. 27 If thou hast nothing to pay, why should he take away thy bed from under thee? 28 Remove not the ancient landmark, which thy fathers have set. 29 Seest thou a man diligent in his business? he shall stand before kings; he shall not stand before mean men.

Proverbs 23:1 When thou sittest to eat with a ruler, consider diligently what is before thee: 2 And put a knife to thy throat, if thou be a man given to appetite. 3 Be not desirous of his dainties: for they are deceitful meat. 4 Labour not to be rich: cease from thine own wisdom.
Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? for riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven. Eat thou not the bread of him that hath an evil eye, neither desire thou his dainty meats: For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he. Eat and drink, saith he to thee; but his heart is not with thee. The morsel which thou hast eaten shalt thou vomit up, and lose thy sweet words. Speak not in the ears of a fool: for he will despise the wisdom of thy words. Remove not the old landmark; and enter not into the fields of the fatherless: For their redeemer is mighty; he shall plead their cause with thee.

Apply thine heart unto instruction, and thine ears to the words of knowledge. Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell. My son, if thine heart be wise, my heart shall rejoice, even mine. Yea, my reins shall rejoice, when thy lips speak right things. Let not thine heart envy sinners: but be thou in the fear of the LORD all the day long. For surely there is an end; and thine expectation shall not be cut off. Hear thou, my son, and be wise, and guide thine heart in the way. Be not among winebibbers; among riotous eaters of flesh: For the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty: and drowsiness shall clothe a man with rags. Hearken unto thy father that begat thee, and despise not thy mother when she is old.

Buy the truth, and sell it not; also wisdom, and instruction, and understanding. The father of the righteous shall greatly rejoice: and he that begetteth a wise child shall have joy of him. Thy father and thy mother shall be glad, and she that bare thee shall rejoice. My son, give me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways. For a whore is a deep ditch; and a strange woman is a narrow pit. She also lieth in wait as for a prey, and increaseth the transgressors among men. Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine. Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright. At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder. Thine eyes shall behold strange women, and thine heart shall utter perverse things. Yea, thou shalt be as he that lieth down in the midst of the sea, or as he that lieth upon the top of a mast. They have stricken me, shalt thou say, and I was not sick; they have beaten me, and I felt it not: when shall I awake? I will seek it yet again.

Be not thou envious against evil men, neither desire to be with them. For their heart studieth destruction, and their lips talk of mischief. Through wisdom is an house
Intro WB  261

Amenemope and Proverbs

Does the Hebrew book of Proverbs “plagiarize” the Egyptian book of Proverbs known as the Instruction of Amenemope? It depends on who you ask. There are no doubt similarities between some verses and scholars with a “critical” bent are likely to accept it as fact and therefore the “consensus” among scholars is largely in favour of that position. However, minority positions that argue for the priority of Proverbs do exist and they question the

builted; and by understanding it is established: 4 And by knowledge shall the chambers be filled with all precious and pleasant riches. 5 A wise man is strong; yea, a man of knowledge increaseth strength. 6 For by wise counsel thou shalt make thy war: and in multitude of counsellors there is safety. 7 Wisdom is too high for a fool: he openeth not his mouth in the gate. 8 He that deviseth to do evil shall be called a mischievous person. 9 The thought of foolishness is sin: and the scorner is an abomination to men. 10 If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small. 11 If thou forbear to deliver them that are drawn unto death, and those that are ready to be slain; 12 If thou sayest, Behold, we knew it not; doth not he that pondereth the heart consider it? and he that keepeth thy soul, doth not he know it? and shall not he render to every man according to his works? 13 My son, eat thou honey, because it is good; and the honeycomb, which is sweet to thy taste: 14 So shall the knowledge of wisdom be unto thy soul: when thou hast found it, then there shall be a reward, and thy expectation shall not be cut off. 15 Lay not wait, O wicked man, against the dwelling of the righteous; spoil not his resting place: 16 For a just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again: but the wicked shall fall into mischief. 17 Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth, and let not thine heart be glad when he stumbleth: 18 Lest the LORD see it, and it displease him, and he turn away his wrath from him. 19 Fret not thyself because of evil men, neither be thou envious at the wicked; 20 For there shall be no reward to the evil man; the candle of the wicked shall be put out. 21 My son, fear thou the LORD and the king: and meddle not with them that are given to change: 22 For their calamity shall rise suddenly; and who knoweth the ruin of them both? 23 These things also belong to the wise. It is not good to have respect of persons in judgment. 24 He that saith unto the wicked, Thou art righteous; him shall the people curse, nations shall abhor him: 25 But to them that rebuke him shall be delight, and a good blessing shall come upon them. 26 Every man shall kiss his lips that giveth a right answer. 27 Prepare thy work without, and make it fit for thyself in the field; and afterwards build thine house. 28 Be not a witness against thy neighbour without cause; and deceive not with thy lips. 29 Say not, I will do so to him as he hath done to me: I will render to the man according to his work. 30 I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding; 31 And, lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down. 32 Then I saw, and considered it well: I looked upon it, and received instruction. 33 Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: 34 So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth; and thy want as an armed man.
“direction of influence” (that Proverbs influenced Amenemope rather than Am influencing Pro). Textual witnesses to Am are very ancient:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dates B.C.</th>
<th>Dynasties</th>
<th>Fragment</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Lines</th>
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<tr>
<td>1069 - 0712</td>
<td>21-22</td>
<td>Stockholm MM 18416</td>
<td>Papyrus</td>
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<td>0945 - 0712</td>
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<td>Medinet Habu</td>
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<td>0747 - 0525</td>
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<td>late 26-early 27</td>
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</table>

The later part of this period, under the 19th and 20th Dynasties (1292–1069 BC), is also known as the Ramesside period. It is named after the 11 Pharaohs that took the name Ramesses, after Ramesses I, the founder of the 19th Dynasty. So, this dates roughly to the period of Moses or later, but before Solomon. This of course, allows some to argue that the “Sayings of the Wise” comes from the time of Solomon and that he was perhaps influenced by the “Wisdom of Egypt” others would contend that Am was influenced by the Hebrews who lived in Egypt for centuries. This exposition charts a “middle path” between Egyptian plagiarism and Hebrew authorship and finds itself in alignment with Philip Pang; “In light of the above reasons, a more moderate and better position would he an indirect dependence with adaptation of WB on Amn” (more on this anon).

Israel and Egypt

Before we proceed it is perhaps instructive to reflect on the relationship between Israel and Egypt. The Jewish nation was formed in Egypt. Joseph was a vizier to Pharaoh and Moses was a royal prince in the court of Egypt. Joseph married an Egyptian wife, therefore his son Ephraim (who gave his name to the northern tribes) was half Egyptian. Solomon married Pharaoh’s daughter and we are told that, “Solomon’s wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the children of the east country, and all the wisdom of Egypt” (1 Kgs 40.30). The book of Proverbs demonstrates an Ephraimite influence therefore it should be unsurprising that an Egyptian echo can be detected. Williams notes that, “Egyptian influence on Israel and Judah was particularly strong in the reign of Hezekiah during Egypt’s Third Intermediate Period.”

However, influence does not mean dependence. Much is sometimes made of the fact that Egypt went through a “monotheistic” period at the time when Am appeared. Amun-Ra in this period (16th to 11th centuries BC) held the position of transcendental, self-created

160 Rendsburg classifies the language of Proverbs as Northern Israelite.
creator deity “par excellence”, he was the champion of the poor or troubled and central to personal piety. His position as King of Gods developed to the point of virtual monotheism where other gods became manifestations of him. Keimer put it this way: “All in all, one has the impression that there is for Amenemope but one God; it remains open to the individual, however, to represent this highest being as he will”. However, the “chief” in a pantheon of “gods” is not the same as monotheism and the “covenant theology” integral to Yahwehism is not present in Am (more on this anon). Amenemope was a henotheist god is one in essence yet millions in manifestation. Further, the impetuous towards an Egyptian form of “monotheism” (if we can call it that) was considered by many Egyptians as “heretical” and may have been inspired by the fact that Hebrews had lived among them for centuries.

The book of Proverbs did not appear in a vacuum as it was a literary genre well known in the A.N.E., for example, Aramaic proverbs are given in a collection known as the Words of Ahiqar. Ahiqar was a sage in the court of the Assyrian kings Sennacherib (704-681 B.C.) and Esarhaddon (680-669 B.C.) during the Hezekiah period. There was no doubt a lively exchange of scribes, translators and diplomats between the royal courts of the A.N.E. and “learned men” were no doubt aware of other literature and ideas emanating from the surrounding nations but that does not necessarily mean that they plagiarized freely. It will be demonstrated that Proverbs has a unique theology and context, so while there may be influence to speak of dependence is an exaggeration. D.A. Carson points out, “The openness to learning from the wisdom of other peoples reflects the theological conviction that the God of Israel is God of all nations and of all of life. It is not therefore surprising when other peoples perceive truths about life which the people of God can also profit from.”

The value of the Hebrew material is not in the fact that they were the only ones ever told “The Secret,” or to comprehend some truth, but in the fact that they perceived the religious value of wisdom literature beyond other contemporary cultures, and credited the moral authority of that wisdom to a source different than their neighbours. As Wood notes, “Israel took the

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164 Archer writes, Compare Jeremiah 18:18, which speaks of the wise men as a class of experts on a par with priests and prophets in the preexilic generation. There can be no question that wisdom literature had a very early origin in the history of Egypt, going back at least to Ipuwer in the Sixth Dynasty (ca. 2500 B.C.). It is also evident from 1 Kings 4:30 that there was a long tradition of pre-Solomonic sages in Israel, and it is quite unwarranted to hold that the tenth century was to early for this kind of literature to have arisen among the Hebrew people (Gleason L. Archer, Jr. A Survey of Old Testament Introduction, 480).
whole idea of Wisdom further than any of its predecessors, and used it...to enable man to come to a deeper understanding of God’s way with His world.”

The “Egyptian” Proverbs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wisdom Book (WB) KJV</th>
<th>Amenemope (Am)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>(Proverbs 22:17-18)</strong>: &quot;Bow down thine ear, and hear the words of the wise, and apply thine heart unto my knowledge. For it is a pleasant thing if thou keep them within thee; they shall withal be fitted in thy lips&quot;.</td>
<td><strong>(Amenemope, ch. 1)</strong>: &quot;Give thine ear, and hear what I say, And apply thine heart to apprehend; It is good for thee to place them in thine heart, let them rest in the casket of thy belly; That they may act as a peg upon thy tongue&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>(Proverbs 22:22)</strong>: &quot;Rob not the poor, because he is poor: neither oppress the afflicted in the gate&quot;.</td>
<td><strong>(Amenemope, ch. 2)</strong>: &quot;Beware of robbing the poor, and oppressing the afflicted.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>(Proverbs 22:24-5)</strong>: &quot;Make no friendship with an angry man; and with a furious man thou shalt not go: Lest thou learn his ways, and get a snare to thy soul&quot;.</td>
<td><strong>(Amenemope, ch. 10)</strong>: &quot;Associate not with a passionate man, Nor approach him for conversation; Leap not to cleave to such an one; That terror carry thee not away.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>(Proverbs 22:29)</strong>: &quot;Seest thou a man diligent in his business? he shall stand before kings; he shall not stand before mean men&quot;.</td>
<td><strong>(Amenemope, ch. 30)</strong>: &quot;A scribe who is skillful in his business findeth worthy to be a courtier&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>(Proverbs 23:1-3)</strong>: &quot;When thou sittest to eat with a ruler, consider diligently what is before thee: And put a knife to thy throat, if thou be a man given to appetite. Be not desirous of his dainties: for they are deceitful meat&quot;.</td>
<td><strong>(Amenemope, ch. 23)</strong>: &quot;Eat not bread in the presence of a ruler, And lunge not forward(?) with thy mouth before a governor(?). When thou art replenished with that to which thou has no right, It is only a delight to thy spittle. Look upon the dish that is before thee, And let that (alone) supply thy need.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>(Proverbs 23:4-5)</strong>: &quot;Labour not to be rich: cease from thine own wisdom. Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? for riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven&quot;.</td>
<td><strong>(Amenemope, ch. 7)</strong>: &quot;Toil not after riches; If stolen goods are brought to thee, they remain not over night with thee. They have made themselves wings like geese. And have flown into the heavens.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>(Proverbs 23:10)</strong>: &quot;Remove not the old landmark; and enter not into the fields of the fatherless&quot;.</td>
<td><strong>(Amenemope, ch. 6)</strong>: &quot;Remove not the landmark from the bounds of the field...and violate not the widows boundary&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Analysis of the Egyptian Theory

There is most certainly some correspondence between Am and WB as the above chart makes clear. However, it tells us little about the direction of influence or what weight should be placed on the correlation. We can do no better than cite the work of Philip Pang \(^{168}\) who summarises the issues as follows; “The dating of Amn is generally taken to be during the Ramesside period which is earlier than the Solomonic period. With regard to dependence theories, the direct dependence and translation theories are to be rejected for the following reasons. 1) For the argument of similarity in structure and form, such pattern is not exclusively unique to these works but a common structural element. 2) While it is entirely possible that the reading “thirty” using the consonant of the Qere אֱלִישְׁיִם in Prov 22:20 is the original reading,\(^{169}\) it provides little to argue for the direct dependence theory. 3) Regarding the identification of the thirty units in Proverbs, Mercer follows Grassmann and argues against Erman that the thirty units in the WB should include the introduction and begin from 22: 7. \(^{170}\) Murphy points out that there is a general lack of consensus in the division of the thirty sayings. \(^{171}\) Soo Hoo takes up this task and performs a detail analysis in proper section identification based upon linguistic cues. \(^{172}\) He identifies 31 units in addition to the introductory unit of 22: 17-21. \(^{173}\) The issue of exact division of subunits is actually not as bad as it looks for there are only a few instances where division is unclear. \(^{174}\) 4) If one were to consider dependence on subject matter, only a few subjects correspond and their order differs. \(^{175}\) 5) There is no parallel between the two works after 23:11 and the remaining

\(^{168}\) Ruffle (1995), Whybray (1995) and Pang (2014) doubt the relationship between Amenemope and Proverbs. For instance, Ruffle (1975) claims that the connection so casually assumed between the parallel texts are superficial, and mere coincidences that cannot survive detailed examination, while Whybray (1995) argues that only a few of the topics in the Egyptian texts can be found in Proverbs 22: 17-24:22, with their sequences differing. Furthermore, Pang (2014) compares the theologies of Proverbs 22:17– 24:22 to Amenemope and concludes that theologically, Amenemope is fully compatible with other Egyptian Wisdom Literatures, but not with Bible book of Proverbs. Philip Pang, Comparison of the Theologies of Prov 22:17-24:22 and Amenemope. Footnotes included but they required supplementation (by myself) as some where left blank indicated thus [?].


\(^{169}\) One must realize that the Qere reading basically lacks external support because it is only partially supported by the LXX Syriac, Targum and Vulgate. The LXX reading of "threelfold" was followed by the Syriac, Targum and Vulgate. The external evidence is considered weak here for two reasons. First, the LXX reading is not "thirty" but "threelfold". Second, strictly speaking LXX is the only support because of the dependence.


\(^{171}\) He identifies 30 units including the introduction. Since the discovery of Amenemope, it is possible that scholars are biased to subdivide this section into thirty units one way or another. The fact that commentators before Amenemope, such as Toy and Delitzsch, do not agree on the subdivision may suggest that subunit boundaries are at time ambiguous.

\(^{172}\) He identifies boundaries of sections by observing markers such as la plus jussive for admonitions and introductory markers.

\(^{173}\) His identification is in agreement with Murphy except that Murphy includes 24:10 as belonging to 25:11-12. Soo Hoo concludes his study that there is no literary dependence of Wisdom Book on Amenemope.

\(^{174}\) There are generally four occasions where it is uncertain whether that verse should stand alone or included in the previous or following section. They are 23:19, 26:24:7, 10.

\(^{175}\) Overland manages to list 17 parallels between the two because the fragments one saying in Proverbs into multiple units and finds parallels from different places. He has four parallels in the introduction. Some of his
chapters of Amn finds parallels outside WB. 6) The similarity in content can be explained as a general debt as Fox explains that, “the relation between the similar proverbs may in fact be only that of the general debt of Israelite to Egyptian wisdom.”\textsuperscript{176} In light of the above reasons, a more moderate and better position would be an indirect dependence with adaptation of WB on Amn”. \textsuperscript{177}

**Disputed Evidence NAB translation**

Bold italic emphasis in the NAB indicates textual changes:

|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| 22:17 The sayings of the wise:  
Incline your ear, and hear my words,  
and apply your heart to my doctrine; | 22:17 Incline your ear and hear the words of the wise,  
and apply your heart to my knowledge; |
| 22:18 For it will be well if you keep them in your bosom,  
if they are ready on your lips. | 22:18 For it is a pleasant thing if you keep them  
within you; let them all be fixed upon your lips. |
| 22:19 That your trust may be in the LORD,  
I make known to you the words of Amen-em-Ope. | 22:19 So that your trust may be in the LORD;  
I have instructed you today, even you. |
| 22:20 Have I not written for you the “Thirty,”  
with counsels and knowledge, | 22:20 Have I not written to you excellent things  
Of counsels and knowledge, |
| 22:21 To teach you truly  
how to give a dependable report to the one who sends you? | 22:21 That I may make you know the certainty of the words of truth,  
That you may answer words of truth to those who send you? |


22.17 **doctrine** (NAB) has “apply your heart to doctrine” the NKJ; “apply your heart to my knowledge” and Am; “apply thine heart to apprehend”. The Hebrew word da’ath is not translated as “doctrine” (dogma) or as “instruction” which is a different word (muwcar, probably done by the translators to echo “the instruction of Am”) but as “knowledge” (KJV/NKJ/YLT/JPS) the NIV/NIB has the dynamic paraphrase, “to what I teach.”

22.18 **ready on your lips** (NAB/NIB/NIV), the NKJ has, “fixed on your lips”, ASV and JPS “established together upon thy lips”; YLT, “prepared together for thy lips” and Am; “as a peg upon thy tongue”. The Hebrew here is kuwn the niphal imperfect form of the verb meaning established or firm. It is often used to describe the establishment of the Davidic dynasty (1 Chron.17:11 c.f. 2 Sam. 7: 12) and derivative forms are employed for temple parallels are forced. For example, Prov 22:23a, “For the LORD shall argue their case” parallels Amen 4:19. 4b “Thou Moon, bring forward his crime!”This parallel is problematic for two reasons. First, the content bears resemblance only remotely at best. Second Amen 4:19 is no longer addressing the one who robs the poor because the subject has already switched to the “heated man” in 4:17.

\textsuperscript{176} John H. Walton, Ancient Israelite Literature in Its Cultural Context,(Zondervan,1990),195 \[?\]

\textsuperscript{177} Rufik's proposal of the memory theory is entirely plausible.
furniture (i.e. the establishment of the “base” (pillars, laver) the brass of which was carried to Shinar and melted down denoting the disestablishment of the kingdom).  

Patrick Clarke concludes, “Finally, a number of authors have suggested emendations to the Proverbs passage above, most notably Gressman  who suggested that ייחדו in verse 18 ought emended to ‘like a tent peg’ a mooring post’. The link between ‘tent peg’ and ‘mooring post’ is tenuous at best: more than learning by rote. Williams’ attempted analogy using a ‘tent peg’ to parallel the Egyptian ‘mooring post’ fails precisely because he deletes the all-important Hebrew word כוּן kuwn (Niphal imperfect), and replaces the Hebrew securely fixed with the clumsy analogy of a tent peg in comparison to the elegant Egyptian ‘mooring post’. The difference between the fourth lines of the respective wisdom teachings is that the Egyptian version uses metaphor (a very common practice of the Egyptians); the Hebrew does not. It is clear that Williams has no scholarly or ethical basis for such emendations”.

22.19 I make known to you the words of Amen-em-Ope (NAB); “I have made them known to thee this day, even to thee” (KJV/ASV/JPS); “I caused thee to know to-day, even thou” (YLT); “I teach you today, even you” (NIV/NIB). Patrick Clarke states, “The solution chosen by the NAB translators apparently takes the Hebrew consonants for “this day, even you” i.e. אַהֲמֵנֶה אֶמְפּה הָיֶם ‘p’ th to be a garbled version of the consonants for הָיֶם אֶמְפּה imn-ipt, thereby yielding the rendering: “That your trust may be in the Lord, I make known to you the words of Amen-em-Ope.”

The verse is rendered by ISA as follows:

http://www.biblaridion.info/resources/shinar.pdf
179 Gressman,H., Zusammenhang der Weltliteratur 1:274,1924
180 My note: ייחדו yachad (root): translated as; “they shall withal” (KJV); “Let them all” (NKJ); “let them be” (JPS), with reference to the “words” i.e. “let them be established”(JPS). Translated in the KJV as 1) union, unitedness adv 2) together, altogether, all together, alike (KJV translates 120 times as “together”), literally together (united) established (fixed).
181 My note: From יתַּחַד yathad, tent peg as in Judges 4.22
183 Patrick Clarke, Wisdom literature and the question of priority Solomon’s Proverbs or Amenemope’s Instruction, JOURNAL OF CREATION 26(2) 2012,p.54
184 Ibid, p. 54
185 Out of interest the name Amenemope translates as Anun-in-Karnak
186 Regrettably, the NAB translators failed to explain the logic of their position, stating only that the original transcription of the Hebrew is ‘uncertain’ and their new reading of the passage is ‘conjectural’.
187 Interlinear Scripture Analyzer (ISA basic 3.0.2)
We turn to the commentator and linguist Delitzsch (Ibid, Proverbs); “In 19b the accentuation Está אַף־אָתְךָ is, after Gesen. § 121. 3, an emphatic repetition of “thee;” likebaum 23:15; 1Ki. 21:19. Hitzi is knows of no contrast which justifies the emphasis. But the prominence thus effected is not always of the nature of contrast (cf. Zec. 7:5, have ye truly fasted to me, i.e., to serve me thereby), here it is strong individualizing; the te etiam te is equivalent to, thee as others, and thee in particular. Also that, as Hitzi remarks, there does not appear any reason for the emphasizing of “to-day,” is incorrect: הַיּוֹם is of the same signification as at Psa. 95:7; the reader of the following proverbs shall remember later, not merely in general, that he once on a time read them, but that he to-day, that he on this definite day, received the lessons of wisdom contained therein, and then, from that time forth, became responsible for his obedience or his disobedience”.

22.20 Thirty sayings (NAB); The “Thirty” is meant to stand for “thirty sayings” and the NAB is one of the translations who amend the text (followed by NIB/NIV/RSV). The YLT has “Have I not written to thee three times” and “excellent things” is the translation offered by ASV/KJV/NKJ and JPS. The discussion for the similarities between Proverbs and Amenemope begin with Adolf Erman, who first argued the received text of Proverbs 22.20 should be altered (by substituting selosim for silsom); thereby reading, “Have I not written for you the "Thirty," with counsels and knowledge” (NAB). This would reflect the thirty chapters in Amenemope, and ever since Erman pointed this out there has been a consensus among scholars on a literary relationship, though that exact relation is debated by some. There is obvious confusion as how to treat this. The LXX has trissw/j (trissOs) which is the adverb denoting “three times” and the LXX has obviously translated from an earlier Hebrew Vorlage. It has something to do with the number three or threefold but it is unlikely that it denotes “thirty”. On Proverbs 22.20 Delitzsch writes, “The LXX reads כָתַבְתֳ and finds in 20a, contrary to the syntax and the usus loq., the exhortation that he who is addressed ought to write these good doctrines thrice (τρισσῶς) on the tablet of his heart; the Syr. and Targ. suppose the author to say that he wrote them three times; Jerome, that he wrote them threefold — both without any visible meaning, since threefold cannot be equivalent to manchfeltiglich (Luther) [= several times, in various ways]. Also the Ker•מִי, which without doubt is the authentic word, is interpreted in many unacceptable ways; Rashi and

188 The Net Bible states: Older English versions and a few more recent ones render this phrase as either “excellent things” following the Qere (so KIV, ASV, NASB, NKJV), “officers,” or “heretofore” [day before yesterday], following the Ketib. However (as in most recent English versions) the Qere should be rendered “thirty,” referring to the number in the collection (cf. NAB, NIV, NRSV, NLT).
189 Carl Ferdinand Howard Henry, God, Revelation, and Authority (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books, 1999), 3:311.
Elia Wilna, following a Midrash explanation, think on the lessons of the Law, the Prophets, and the Hagiographa”....

22.21 Dependant Report (NAB); “to give a dependable report to one who sends you”, (KJV/NKJ); “answer the words of truth to them that send unto thee”, (YLT); “To return sayings of truth to those sending thee”, (JPS); “bring back words of truth to them that send thee”. The verse is rendered by ISA as follows:

Delitzsch comments; “Without doubt נשלוח and נודע stand in correlation to each other: he who lets himself be instructed must be supposed to be in circumstances to bring home, to those that sent him out to learn, doctrines which are truth, and thus to approve himself”. Truth is preferable to “dependable report”, especially as “Truth” is a technical term meaning “covenants of promise” (as in Micah 7.20). The sayings are therefore not merely conveying a report....but a particular kind of truth.

The Hebrew setting

Similarity of language does not necessarily imply a dependent relationship. For example, the Proverb in 23.10-11 contains a reference to the “redeemer” which is a specific Israelite institution;

KJV Proverbs 23:10-11 Remove not the old landmark; and enter not into the fields of the fatherless: For their redeemer is mighty; he shall plead their cause with thee.

The Hebrew word “mighty” (חזק chazaq) is a play on Hezekiah (יהודה חזקיה Chizqiyah) which has the same root form (Yah is my strength or might). The participle גואל (go’el) describes a

191 DELITZSCH BIBLE COMMENTARY - THE BOOK OF PROVERBS
“kinsman redeemer. The Hebrew term describes a “kinsman-redeemer.” That individual would be a rich or powerful relative who can protect the family; he does this by paying off the debts of a poor relative, buying up the property of a relative who sells himself into slavery, marrying the widow of a deceased relative to keep the inheritance in the family, or taking vengeance on someone who harms a relative, that vengeance often resulting in delivering (“redeeming”) the relative from bondage. If there was no human “kinsman redeemer,” then the defenceless had to rely on God to perform these actions (e.g., Gen 48.16; Exod 6.6; Job 19.25; Isa 41-63). A variant of this proverb is also found in Prov.22.8 (supposedly also part of the Am collection).

One might ask why so much emphasis (repeated twice) on “removing boundaries” in the short section known as The Sayings of the Wise? It is not just a warning to Israel but to the surrounding nations. God had set the boundaries of the nations and the Assyrians were exceeding their remit;

KJV Deuteronomy 32:8 When the most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he [Yahweh] set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel.

KJV Isaiah 10:13 For he saith, By the strength of my hand I have done it, and by my wisdom; for I am prudent: and I have removed the bounds of the people, and have robbed their treasures, and I have put down the inhabitants like a valiant man:

Moreover, the law concerning boundaries was already present in the Torah;

KJV Deuteronomy 19:14 Thou shalt not remove thy neighbour's landmark, which they of old time have set in thine inheritance, which thou shalt inherit in the land that the LORD thy God giveth thee to possess it.

KJV Deuteronomy 27:17 Cursed be he that removeth his neighbour's landmark. And all the people shall say, Amen.

On moving boundary stones the IVP Background Commentary says the following on Deut 19.14; "Since the land had been given to the people by God and apportioned according to a God-given formula, to move boundary stones and thus appropriate territory unlawfully was a crime of theft against God. The antiquity of laws concerning property rights is affirmed by inscriptions on sixteenth-century B.C. Kassite kudurru boundary stones, admonitions in

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192 KJV Proverbs 22:28 Remove not the ancient landmark, which thy fathers have set.
eleventh-century B.C. Egyptian wisdom literature against relocating a surveyor’s stone (Teachings of Amenemope) and in the curse in Hosea 5:10. Each example calls on the gods to protect the owner’s rights against encroachment”.

Contemporary with Hezekiah, the prophet Hosea says;

**KJV Hosea 5:10** The princes of Judah were like them that remove the bound: therefore I will pour out my wrath upon them like water.

The princes of Judah are like those who remove a landmark: This means that the political leaders of Judah were corrupt and cheaters. They were the kind of men who would change property boundaries to their advantage if they thought they could get away with it. This reminds us that while Judah may have been better than Israel, they still had to repent.

What can we conclude from this? Firstly, that respect for “boundaries” was not specific to Egypt as many nations prohibited abuse of property rights. Secondly, Israel did not require property laws until they possessed the land and thirdly, “boundaries” in the Torah had *theological and covenantal* implications that they simply did not have in the surrounding nations. Property law existed in Egypt (and other nations) *before* Israel inherited the land, it is therefore natural to expect some correspondence, however, as the setting of Yahwehistic law is covenantal we concur with Pang’s conclusion when he says, “In light of the above reasons, a more moderate and better position would he an indirect dependence with adaptation of WB on Amn”.

William Kelly Simpson identifies one of the most important themes in Am as the contrast between the angry and the quiet man which finds its parallel in Prov 22:24-25;

**KJV Proverbs 22:24-25** Make no friendship with an angry man; and with a furious man thou shalt not go: Lest thou learn his ways, and get a snare to thy soul.

Simpson states; “There are indeed close parallels between verses in Amenemope and the Book of Proverbs, especially Proverbs 22:17, 24:22. For the most part, however, the concepts presented in Amenemope are present in earlier Egyptian instruction literature and must be viewed in that context. The contrast between the intemperate, hot-headed man and the tranquil, truly silent man is one of the main themes of the text”.

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However, this motif is found elsewhere in the Torah. Sennacherib is depicted as the angry man raging against Yahweh (2 Kgs 19.27-28; Isa 37.28-29) and Hezekiah is depicted as the silent man (2 Kgs 18.36 see also Amos 5.13). Moreover, when Moses acts in an impetuous manner he kills an Egyptian (and after his angry response in the wilderness he is denied entry into the land) but in his role as *divine spokesman in Egypt he needs help with speaking* (the silent man). The antithesis between the “angry” and “silent” man obviously has deep roots in the A.N.E. but once again it is the theological context that defines Hebrew usage. The “silent” or quiet man relies on Yahweh for deliverance; “The LORD shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace” (Exod 14.14). It is therefore not a secular saying on the merits of anger management (Am) but rather a desired characteristic that demonstrates covenantal faith in the deliverance of Yahweh.

Proverbs 22.29-23.3 also has a close parallel with Am;

*Proverbs 22:29 - 23:3*  
Seest thou a man diligent in his business? he shall stand before kings; he shall not stand before mean men.  

*Proverbs 23:1* When thou sittest to eat with a ruler, consider diligently what is before thee:  
2 And put a knife to thy throat, if thou be a man given to appetite.  
3 Be not desirous of his dainties: for they are deceitful meat.

Could this Proverb be inspired by the story of Joseph? Joseph was sold as a slave into Egypt but became the head of Potiphar’s house, then subsequently a trusted prisoner and finally second to Pharaoh himself. His Hebrew brothers were invited to eat a meal with him while he remained incognito (Gen 43.32-34) and they were accused of stealing his “dainties” (Gen 44.1-12). If the Joseph cycle is the source of this proverb we might well expect Egyptian and Hebrew versions or some sort of cross-over between both. In that case a specific historical setting gave rise to a generic saying – in Egypt as advice for petitioners who appear before rulers but in Proverbs with the added dimension of the Torah Joseph cycle as background and the pre-destined covenantal care displayed by Yahweh (through Joseph). It is also reminiscent of the covenant meal enjoyed by the 70 in the wilderness and desiring the “dainties” that belong to the ruler is akin to Adam eating that which he should not.

**The Theology of Proverbs**

Douglas T. Mangum puts the case as follows; “The book of Proverbs lacks references to the covenant history of Israel. Similarly, the moral and ethical teachings of Proverbs are not connected to religious law to legitimize their validity as standards for acceptable human behaviour. Some (notably Zimmerli 1976) have argued that the theology of Proverbs is “creation theology,” not covenant theology”.

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195 The term “torah” in Proverbs is usually a general word for “teaching” or “instruction” and does not refer to the religious law. “Torah” occurs five times in Proverbs where the referent is ambiguous - either referring to
The argument for “creation theology” is based on a misreading of Proverbs 8 which is intertextually linked with Isaiah 40 and 45 (see exegesis on Prov 8). One could speak of the “creation” of a “covenant community” but as such it still falls under “covenant theology”. One of the main indicators of the covenantal approach is the use of the covenant name “Yahweh” as noted by Mangum;

“Proverbs is unique among Israelite wisdom books for its regular use of the divine name YHWH as its primary way of referring to God. The book of Job, for example, only uses YHWH for God in the prologue, epilogue, the quotative frames in Job 38-42, and once in the dialogues in Job 12:9. The typical names used for God in Job are forms of ‘El, ‘Elohim, or ‘Eloah. In fact, Ecclesiastes never refers to YHWH and always uses one of the more generic names for God. By contrast, Proverbs uses the divine name eighty-eight times versus only six times for ‘Elohim or ‘Eloah. Clearly, it would be overstating the case to extrapolate simply from the use of the divine name that Proverbs is grounded in Yahwistic covenant theology when the book lacks explicit references to the fundamental elements of that theology – the Temple and the Torah. However, application of the insight gleaned from the comparison of Amenemope with the Egyptian cult leads to the hypothesis that Israelite wisdom is similarly translating the Torah-oriented teaching of the Temple cult from the social context of religion into that of social behaviour – secular morality and ethics. The concept of God in Proverbs then becomes the grounding principle for the moral and ethical teaching, implicitly reminding the practitioners of human wisdom of the God YHWH whose presence undergirds the religious culture of sacrificial cult and covenantal law”.197

Although Mangum breaks down the occurrences of YHWH in Proverbs we have replaced his schema with a more accurate rendition which is based on his chosen subdivision of Proverbs but uses WTM pos tags as “word counts” so that relative percentages can be compared even over smaller sections (such as The Sayings of the Wise):

197 Ibid, pages 6 and 7
The average for Proverbs is 0.74%.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapters</th>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Yahweh</th>
<th>Words</th>
<th>%</th>
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</table>
| **Proverbs 1-9**
Introductory Lectures
(presented as Proverbs of Solomon) | A | 20 | 2412 | 0.83 |
| **Proverbs 10:1—22:16**
Wise Sayings of Solomon | B | 55 | 3528 | 1.56 |
| **Proverbs 22:17—24:34**
Sayings of the Wise | C | 5 | 856 | 0.58 |
| **Proverbs 25:1—29:27**
More Wise Sayings of Solomon | D | 6 | 1403 | 0.43 |
| **Proverbs 30-31**
Four Appendices | E | 2 | 677 | 0.30 |

Ave=0.74

*The Sayings of the Wise* have 5 occurrences of YHWH (0.58%) which is close to the average for the complete collection (0.74%). As Mangum notes; ¹⁹⁸

Most of the references to God in Proverbs fall into one of the following five categories:
1. Justice
2. Blessing / Protection
3. Moral Standard
4. Creation
5. Order

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid*, p.8
Mangum concludes that, “This relationship supports the hypothesis offered above that Proverbs could be understood as the practical application of the teachings of the Temple cult translated from the social context of organized religion into that of social behaviour – secular morality and ethics. The concept of God in Proverbs becomes the fundamental grounding principle for the moral teaching in such a way that the concept of God undergirding the Temple cult provides the background context for understanding the concept of God in wisdom”.  

Conclusion

The theology of Proverbs and inter-textual links with the Torah demonstrate that The Sayings of the Wise are not a cut and paste exercise or a simple transference of Egyptian material; moreover, Egyptian influence should be expected granted that the origins of the Proverbs are Northern Israelite (Ephraimite). The composition history of Proverbs is complex (like much of Scripture). Some of these early Proverbs (from the time of Solomon) follow a complex transmission route as they demonstrate Egyptian influence (via Ephraim) and were obviously adapted to fit eighth century circumstances by the “men of Hezekiah”.

In Wisdom in Israel and in the Ancient Near East, ed. M. North and D. Winton Thomas (Leiden, Netherlands: E. J. Brill, 1960), 13. LaSor et al write, Prov. 25:1 makes clear that the book could not have been completed before Hezekiah’s time (ca. 715-686). The last two chapters may well have been added during or shortly after the Exile (ca. 500). Most likely chs., 10--29 were edited during Hezekiah’s time and the introductory and concluding chapters were added during the two following centuries. The fifth century is a reasonable date for the final editing, although most of the contents are much earlier, with most individual proverbs and even longer speeches stemming from long before the Exile (LaSor, Hubbard, and Bush, Old Testament Survey, 558; see also A. Cohen, Proverbs: Hebrew Text & English Translation with an Introduction and Commentary, xii).

Translations such as the NAB do a disservice as they practice simplification and reductionism in pursuit of a theory. Such speculation is not translation and the simplification of a complex developmental composition history with multiple strands into one of linear transference is tendentious and poor scholarship.

199 Ibid, p. 13
## Proverbs 22.17-24.34

### Sayings of the Wise

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proverbs 22.17</th>
<th>Inter-text</th>
<th>Comments</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>v.17</strong> Bow down thine ear, and hear the words of the wise, and apply thine heart unto my knowledge.</td>
<td>Ps 40.6; Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened: burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required.</td>
<td>The introductory section to the sayings has many allusions to the Davidic Psalm 40 which probably has as background his affair with Bathsheba. To “incline the ear” means to “listen carefully” (cf. NCV); the expression is metonymical in that the ear is the instrument for hearing. It is like telling someone to lean closer to hear well. It is a common formula also employed by the prophets in the time of Hezekiah; “Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David” (Isa 55.3). A similar formula is applied in Prov 2.2 and Prov 5.1-2 there is no need to refer to Am to explain such a common formula.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>v.18</strong> For it is a pleasant thing (נֵיאִם na’îym) if thou keep them within thee; they shall withal be fitted ( paypal kuwn) in thy lips.</td>
<td>Ps 40.8-9; I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart. I have preached righteousness in the great congregation: lo, I have not refrained my lips, O LORD, thou knowest.</td>
<td>The nation was exhorted to keep Torah in order to make them wise; “Keep therefore and do them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.” (Deut 4.6). However, this goes beyond “binding them” to external objects (Deut 6.8) in order to manifest outward religiosity but rather speaks of the inner life. The Heb word “pleasant” is probably a play on Naomi, (נְמוֹיִם No’omiy) the ancestor of Hezekiah who lost everything (Ruth 1.20). Her inheritance was restored by the kinsman redeemer Boaz (See the use of the unusual term in Prov 23.11). The Heb. fitted or established ( paypal kuwn) is often employed in connection with the Davidic dynasty. In fact, the two pillars supporting the temple porch were called Jachin (from paypal kuwn) and Boaz (1 Kgs.7.21); He will established in strength. See Prov 23.11 where the redeemer theme is continued.</td>
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<td><strong>v.19</strong> That thy trust may be in the LORD, I have made known to thee this day, even to thee.</td>
<td>Ps 40.4; Blessed is that man that maketh the LORD his trust, and respecteth not the proud...</td>
<td>Hezekiah was ridiculed because he placed his trust in Yahweh; “Neither let Hezekiah make you trust in the LORD, saying, The LORD will surely deliver us, and this city shall not be delivered into the hand of the king of Assyria” (2 Kgs.1.30). In the story of Ruth the kinsman redeemer (Boaz) found no rest “until he have finished the thing this day”. (Ruth 3.18). See the Olley article on “Trust” and the stylometrics chapter.</td>
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<td>v.20) Have not I written to thee excellent things in counsels and knowledge,</td>
<td>Ps 40.7; Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me</td>
<td>Yahweh had written to the nation with his own finger; “And the LORD said unto Moses, Come up to me into the mount, and be there: and I will give thee tables of stone, and a law, and commandments which I have written; that thou mayest teach them” (Exod 24.12). But the Torah was not just a book of law as the counsels and knowledge of Yahweh was also concerned with the messianic covenants.</td>
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<td>v.21) That I might make thee know the certainty of the words of truth; that thou mightest answer the words of truth to them that send unto thee?</td>
<td>Ps 40:9-10; I have preached righteousness in the great congregation: lo, I have not refrained my lips, O LORD, thou knowest. I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart; I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation: I have not concealed thy lovingkindness and thy truth from the great congregation.</td>
<td>The words of truth were the covenant promises (Micah 7.20) that Yahweh had sent to Jacob (Isa 9.8) embodied in the life of the “suffering servant”(Hezekiah). The people had refused the “waters of Shiloah” (the one sent by God cf. John 9.7). The Pool of Siloam was first built during the reign of Hezekiah (715–687/6 BCE), to provide a water supply inside the City to protect it from a siege. The pool was fed by the newly constructed Siloam tunnel. Sennacherib also “sent” a message (of reproach) to Yahweh (Isa 37.17) and because Hezekiah had faith in the certainty of the words of truth he sent back the following answer; “This is the word which the LORD hath spoken concerning him; The virgin, the daughter of Zion, hath despised thee, and laughed thee to scorn; the daughter of Jerusalem hath shaken her head at thee” (Isa 37.22).</td>
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<td>v.22) Rob not the poor, because he is poor: neither oppress the afflicted in the gate:</td>
<td>Ps 40.17; But I am poor and needy; yet the Lord thinketh upon me: thou art my help and my deliverer; make no tarrying, O my God.</td>
<td>Hezekiah (like Job) represented the “poor and needy”. He was despised and rejected and yet he gathered the people in the gate and “spake comfortably to them” (2 Chron 32.7-6) acting in the manner of his ancestor Boaz the kinsman – redeemer who spoke up for afflicted Naomi in the gate (Ruth 4.1).</td>
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<td>v.23</td>
<td>For the LORD will plead their cause, and spoil the soul of those that spoiled them.</td>
<td><strong>Isa 3.13</strong>; The LORD standeth up to plead, and standeth to judge the people.</td>
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<td>v.24</td>
<td>Make no friendship with an angry man; and with a furious man thou shalt not go:</td>
<td><strong>2 Kgs 19.27</strong> But I know thy abode, and thy going out, and thy coming in, and thy rage against me.</td>
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<td>v.25</td>
<td>Lest thou learn his ways, and get a snare to thy soul.</td>
<td><strong>Isa 55.8</strong>; For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD.</td>
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<td>v.26</td>
<td>Be not thou one of them that strike hands, or of them that are sureties for debts.</td>
<td>See <strong>Prov 6.1-6</strong></td>
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<td>v.27</td>
<td>If thou hast nothing to pay, why should he take away thy bed from under thee?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Proverbs 22</td>
<td>Inter-text</td>
<td>Comments</td>
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| **v.28)** Remove not the ancient landmark, which thy fathers have set. | **Isa 10.13;** For he saith, By the strength of my hand I have done it, and by my wisdom; for I am prudent: and I have removed the bounds of the people, and have robbed their treasures, and I have put down the inhabitants like a valiant man: | Yahweh had set the boundaries of the nations (Deut 32.8) and the fathers (under Joshua) had divided the tribal inheritance. Sennacherib wished to remove the “ancient landmark”.

v.29) Seest thou a man diligent in his business? he shall stand before kings; he shall not stand before mean men. | **Isa 22.15;** Thus saith the Lord GOD of hosts, Go, get thee unto this treasurer, even unto Shebna, which is over the house… | This applies to Joseph and finds a parallel in the Instruction of Amenemope, chap. 30, 27:16-17 [ANET 424]. In the case of Hezekiah it refers to Shebna called the “treasurer” and also “the scribe” (2 Kgs 19.2). The word translated “skilled” is general enough to apply to any crafts; but it may refer to a scribe or an official (R. N. Whybray, Proverbs [CBC], 134).

**Proverbs 23**

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<tr>
<td><strong>v.1)</strong> When thou sittest to eat with a ruler, consider diligently what is before thee:</td>
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<td><strong>v.2)</strong> And put a knife to thy throat, if thou be a man given to appetite.</td>
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<td><strong>v.3)</strong> Be not desirous of his dainties: for they are deceitful meat.</td>
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<tr>
<td>v.4) Labour not to be rich: cease from thine own wisdom.</td>
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<tr>
<td>v.5) Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? for riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle (nesher, vulture) toward heaven.</td>
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<tr>
<td>v.6) Eat thou not the bread of him that hath an evil eye, neither desire thou his dainty meats:</td>
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miserliness but calculated treachery (Isa 24.16) the antithesis of which was Hezekiah inviting the northern tribes for fellowship at a generous Passover Feast (meal) and to his wedding feast; “I have drunk my wine with my milk: eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved” (Songs 5.1b). See Prov 27.6

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<th>v.9) Speak not in the ears of a fool: for he will despise the wisdom of thy words.</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Isa 36.21</strong>; But they held their peace, and answered him not a word: for the king’s commandment was, saying, Answer him not.</td>
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| Commenting on Egyptian literature Simpson observes that; “The contrast between the intemperate, hot-headed man and the tranquil, truly silent man is one of the main themes of the text” (W. K. Simpson, 2003: 223). The hot-headed angry man in Am finds his counterpart in scripture with the “fool” (כבייל keciyl) who acts in an impetuous, rash manner. He shows lack of restraint (Prov 14.16), especially in his anger (Prov 29.11, Ecc 7.9). He trusts in his own wits (Prov 28.26) and is too proud to listen to warning (Ecc 4.13), but most of the time he is displaying his folly (Prov 13.16 cf.12.23). The fools in verse 8 of Ps 94 are described in vv.4-7 as the wicked and arrogant oppressors who do not acknowledge the omniscience of Yahweh. (Psalm 94 is a rewritten Davidic Psalm from the Hezekiah era; see below) The antithesis is the silent man who relies on God (Hezekiah). 

http://www.christadelphianbooks.org/booker/psalms4/psabkd05.html | v.10) Remove not the old landmark; and enter not into the fields of the fatherless: v.11) For their redeemer (גוֹאֵל go’el) is mighty; he shall plead their cause with thee. |
|------|
| **See Prov 22.28**  
**Isa 47.4;** As for our redeemer (גוֹאֵל go’el), the LORD of hosts is his name, the Holy One of Israel. **The participle גֹּאֵל (go’el) describes a “kinsman redeemer.” Some English versions explicitly cite “God” (e.g., NCV, CEV) or “the Lord” (e.g. TEV). The Hebrew term describes a “kinsman-redeemer.” That individual would be a rich or powerful relative who can protect the family; he does this by paying off the debts of a poor relative, buying up the property of a relative who sells himself into slavery, marrying the widow of a deceased relative to keep the inheritance in the family, or taking vengeance on someone who harms a relative, that vengeance often resulting in delivering (“redeeming”) the relative from bondage. If there was no human “kinsman redeemer,” then the defenseless had to rely on God to perform these actions (e.g., Gen 48:16; Exod 6:6; Job 19:25; Isa 41–63). Isa 49.7; “Thus saith the LORD, the Redeemer (גוֹאֵל go’el) of Israel, and his Holy One, to him whom man despiseth, to him whom the nation abhorreth, to a servant of rulers, Kings shall see and arise, princes also shall worship, because of the LORD that is faithful, and the Holy One of Israel, and he shall choose thee”. See also **Ruth 4.4** |
<p>| v.12 | Apply thine heart unto instruction, and thine ears to the words of knowledge. | See Prov 23.19 | A common introductory formula: Prov 2.2-6; Prov 5.1,2; Prov 22.17. Heb “bring.” The Hiphil imperative “come; enter” means “to apply the heart,” to use the heart or mind in the process. The same would be true in the second half: “to bring the ears” would mean to listen very carefully. Cf. TEV “Pay attention.” |
| v.13 | Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die. | 2 Sam 7.14; I will be his father, and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men. | The term שְּאוֹל (“Sheol”) in this context probably means “death” (so NIV, NCV, NLT) and not the realm of the departed (wicked) spirits (cf. NAB “the nether world”). In the wisdom of other lands, Ahiqar 6:82 says, “If I strike you, my son, you will not die.” The idea is that discipline helps the child to a full life; if the child dies prematurely, it would be more than likely a consequence of not being trained by discipline. Here however, the reference is the promise in 2 Sam 7 concerning the Davidic dynasty. The words of Hezekiah in Isa 38.18; “For Sheol cannot thank You, Death cannot praise You; Those who go down to the pit cannot hope for Your faithfulness”. |
| v.14 | Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell ( ثنائي Sheol) | Job 42.7; …for ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job hath. | The Father rejoices when the lips of the son speak “right things” in particular when those “right things” pertain to the character and purpose of Yahweh. Job is parabolic of the Hezekiah situation and the Assyrian crisis. Job (Hezekiah)…..spoke “right things” about Yahweh. Neither Job nor Hezekiah cursed God in their extremis. They may have been confused and suffering but they did not lose covenant hope – they believed that Yahweh would eventually justify them. |
| v.15 | My son, if thine heart be wise, my heart shall rejoice, even mine. | | |
| v.16 | Yea, my reins shall rejoice, when thy lips speak right things. | | |
| v.17 | Let not thine heart envy sinners: but be thou in the fear of the LORD all the day long. | Ruth 1.12; Turn again, my daughters, go your way; for I am too old to have an husband. If I should say, I have hope, (нятие tiqvah) if I should have an husband also to night, and should also bear sons; | The Heb נַעֲמָה tiquvah is associated with “covenant hope” especially children in the Davidic line of Judah (cf. Josh 2.21). Naomi, the ancestress of Hezekiah thought she was without (messianic) “hope” and Hezekiah was about to die childless. This is another occasion where the Davidic Psalm 37 is alluded to in Proverbs; “Fret not thyself because of evildoers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity. For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb. Trust in the LORD, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed” (Ps 37.1-3). A repeated theme; Prov 24:1,19; Prov 3:31. |
| v.18 | For surely there is an end; and thine expectation (нятие tiqvah) shall not be cut off. | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>v.19)</th>
<th>Hear thou, my son, and be wise, and guide thine heart in the way.</th>
<th><a href="#">Isa 5.11</a>; Woe unto them that rise up early in the morning, <em>that</em> they may follow strong drink; that continue until night, <em>till</em> wine inflame them!</th>
<th>The state of the nation was appalling; <a href="#">Isa 22.13</a>; “And behold joy and gladness, slaying oxen, and killing sheep, eating flesh, and drinking wine: let us eat and drink; for tomorrow we shall die”. The prophet Isaiah condemned the “drunkards of Ephraim; “But they also have erred through wine, and through strong drink are out of the way; the priest and the prophet have erred through strong drink, they are swallowed up of wine, they are out of the way through strong drink; they err in vision, they stumble in judgment. For all tables are full of vomit and filthiness, <em>so that there is no place clean</em>” (<a href="#">Isa 28.7-8</a>). The prophet Hosea also; “In the day of our king the princes have made him sick with bottles of wine; he stretched out his hand with scorners” (<a href="#">Hos 7.5</a>). Rather than turning to Yahweh during the Assyrian crisis unfaithful elements took solace in feasting and drinking –hedonism rather than hope.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>v.20)</td>
<td>Be not among winebibbers; among riotous eaters of flesh:</td>
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<td>v.21)</td>
<td>For the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty: and drowsiness shall clothe <em>a man</em> with rags.</td>
<td><a href="#">Isa 51.2</a>; Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah <em>that</em> bare you: for I called him alone, and blessed him, and increased him.</td>
<td>They would rather get drunk than hope in the covenants promised to the patriarchs.</td>
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<tr>
<td>v.22)</td>
<td>Hearken unto thy father that begat thee, and despise not thy mother when she is old.</td>
<td><a href="#">Micah 7.20</a>; Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob, <em>and</em> the mercy to Abraham, which thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old.</td>
<td>Truth refers to the covenant promises. They had sold out either to the pro-Assyrian party or the pro-Egyptian party. They should be buying the truth not selling it. They should live by hope rather than despair and hedonism.</td>
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<tr>
<td>v.23)</td>
<td>Buy the truth, and sell it not; also wisdom, and instruction, and understanding.</td>
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<td>v.24) The father of the righteous shall greatly rejoice: and he that begetteth a wise child shall have joy of him.</td>
<td>Gen 15.6; And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness.</td>
<td>The father of the righteous was Abraham and his son Isaac carried a name that means “laughter” or “rejoicing” (Gen.17.7,19). Sarah’s incredulous laughter was turned into joy. Isaac typified Hezekiah (and Christ)....Isaac was the child of promise and the first son born into the Abrahamic covenant. Abraham was the “father” of all those who held the hope of the messianic promise. Abraham and Sarah would laugh and rejoice to find such hope and faith alive in their descendants; “Abraham saw my day and was glad” (John 8.56)</td>
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<tr>
<td>v.25) Thy father and thy mother shall be glad, and she that bare thee shall rejoice.</td>
<td>Prov 22.14; The mouth of strange women is a deep pit: he that is abhorred of the LORD shall fall therein.</td>
<td>A virtual repeat of Prov 22.14. Heb “foreign woman” (so ASV). The term נָכְרִיָּה (nokhriyyah, “foreign woman”) often refers to a prostitute (e.g., Prov 2:6; 5:20; 6:24; 7:5). While not all foreign women in Israel were prostitutes, their prospects for economic survival were meagre and many turned to prostitution to earn a living. Israel had committed whoredom with the “foreign” woman (Assyrians/Egyptians/Canaanites) and adultery (idolatry) with their gods. They often indulged in sacred prostitution at the shrines. Hosea was instructed to marry a prostitute and raise bastards as a sign (Hos 1.2). The proverb likens such actions to jumping into a narrow grave. In either case, whether a prostitute or an adulteress wife is involved, the danger is the same. The metaphors of a “deep pit” and a “narrow well” describe this sin as one that is a trap from which there is no escape. The “pit” is a gateway to Sheol, and those who enter are as good as dead, whether socially or through punishment physically.</td>
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<tr>
<td>v.26) My son, give me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways.</td>
<td>Prov 22.14; The mouth of strange women is a deep pit: he that is abhorred of the LORD shall fall therein.</td>
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<td>v.27) For a whore is a deep ditch; and a strange woman is a narrow pit.</td>
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<td>v.28) She also lieth in wait as for a prey, and increaseth the transgressors among men.</td>
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See **Prov 23.19-21**

The eighteenth saying is about excessive drinking. The style changes here as the sage breaks into a vivid use of the imagination. It begins with a riddle describing the effects of drunkenness (v. 29) and gives the answer in v. 30; instructions follow in v. 31, with the consequences described in v. 32; the direct address continues in vv. 33 and 34; and the whole subject is concluded with the drunkard’s own words in v. 35 (M. E. Andrews, “Variety of Expression in Proverbs 23:29-35,” VT 28 [1978]: 102-3).

The intoxicated does not even feel the pain when he is beaten – such was the state of the nation. The “drunkards of Ephraim” had surrendered themselves to an alcoholic stupor. They did not repent or seek Yahweh for help. The looming crisis had sapped their strength. Even the rulers were busy becoming inebriated. Rather than face reality, when they woke up covered in vomit they were eager to get drunk again. The leaders had become “fools” meanwhile the faithful king (Hezekiah) lay on his death bed. The “suffering servant” who was despised and smitten for their sins.

**v.30** They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine.

**v.31** Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright.

**v.32** At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder.

**v.33** Thine eyes shall behold strange women, and thine heart shall utter perverse things.

**v.34** Yea, thou shalt be as he that lieth down in the midst of the sea, or as he that lieth upon the top of a mast.

**v.35** They have stricken me, shalt thou say, and I was not sick; they have beaten me, and I felt it not: when shall I awake? I will seek it yet again.
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Proverbs 24</th>
<th>Inter-text</th>
<th>Comments</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>v.1</strong> Be not thou envious against evil men, neither desire to be with them.</td>
<td><strong>Ps 37.1</strong>; Fret not thyself because of evildoers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity.</td>
<td>A repeated theme; Prov 3:31, Prov 23.17, Prov 24:1, 19 based on the Davidic Psalm 37. The “wicked devices” (Ps 37) and “mischief” are the plots against David and Hezekiah. In David’s case it was Absalom in Hezekiah’s case it was Shebna who was the chief plotter. The external enemies (Sennacherib and his spokesman Rabshakeh) also “talked mischief”. Isa 24.16; “From the uttermost part of the earth have we heard songs, even glory to the righteous.</td>
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<td><strong>v.2</strong> For their heart studieth destruction, and their lips talk of mischief.</td>
<td><strong>Ps 37.7</strong>; Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for him: fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass.</td>
<td>But I said, My leanness, my leanness, woe unto me! the treacherous dealers have dealt treacherously; yea, the treacherous dealers have dealt very treacherously”. Psalm 73 which is an Asaph Psalm from the time of Hezekiah continues the same theme. See the commentary provided there: <a href="http://www.christadelphianbooks.org/booker/psalms3/psabkc01.html">http://www.christadelphianbooks.org/booker/psalms3/psabkc01.html</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>v.3</strong> Through wisdom is an house builded; and by understanding it is established:</td>
<td><strong>Ps 127.1</strong>; Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain.</td>
<td>Psalm 127 is from the Hezekiah collection “Songs of Degrees”. The “house” is the Davidic dynasty which Yahweh had promised to establish; “And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom” (2 Sam 7.12). Ahaz refused the sign of Immanuel but it was given anyway because although man may be faithless, God is always faithful; “If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established” (Isa 7.9).</td>
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<tr>
<td>v.4) And by knowledge shall the chambers (cheder) be filled with all precious and pleasant (na`iym) riches.</td>
<td>Song 1.4; ...the king hath brought me into his chambers (chered) Song 1.16; Behold, thou art fair, my beloved, yea, pleasant (na`iym): also our bed is green.</td>
<td>Song of Songs was performed at the wedding of Hezekiah (to Hephzibah) and tells of his “courtship” and reformation of the northern tribes and the survival of the Assyrian crisis. When the bride groom went away (could not be found) is a metaphor for his sickness (which nearly killed him). Coincidentally (sic) the Heb pleasant (na`iym) is the root for Naomi, the ancestress of Hezekiah who nearly died childless and lost her inheritance.</td>
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<tr>
<td>v.5) A wise man (geber) is strong (ba’oz); yea, a man of knowledge increaseth (amats)strength (koach).</td>
<td>2 Chron 32.5; Also he strengthened himself, and built up all the wall that was broken...</td>
<td>The twenty-first saying seems to be concerned with the need for wisdom in warfare. In line with that, the word used here is גֶּבֶּר (geber), “mighty man; hero; warrior.” The expression בַּעוֹז (ba’oz) employs a beth essentiae, meaning he “is strong,” not “in strength.” Different synonyms are used throughout this saying for strength. Hezekiah’s name means “Yah has strengthened” and coincidentally (sic) his ancestor was Boaz (married to Naomi’s daughter in law Ruth).</td>
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<td>v.6) For by wise counsel thou shalt make thy war: and in multitude of counsellors there is safety.</td>
<td>See Prov 11.14; Prov 15.2</td>
<td>The challenge issued by Sennacherib (via Rabshakeh) was; “I say, sayest thou, (but they are but vain words) I have counsel and strength for war: now on whom dost thou trust, that thou rebellest against me?” (Isa 36.5) The Jews had the “Wonderful Counsellor” (Isa 9.6) Hezekiah, who received his counsel from the Spirit of Yahweh.</td>
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<td>v.7) Wisdom is too high for a fool: he openeth not his mouth in the gate.</td>
<td>Isa 7.11; Ask thee a sign of the LORD thy God; ask it either in the depth, or in the height above.</td>
<td>The fool here is Ahaz (= he has grasped), who could not grasp the significance of the “Sign of Immanuel” (concerning the establishment of the Davidic dynasty) in the “heights” and “depths” which he refused. The sign in the height indicated the origin of Immanuel (=God with us) and the sign in the depths indicated his destiny (resurrection). Hezekiah typified this by his birth; his mother was Abijah (=Yah is my Father) and his recovery from death (the depths of Sheol) typified the resurrection. Unlike his ancestor Boaz, Ahaz kept his mouth shut in the gate and forfeited his inheritance which was vouched safe by Hezekiah (ultimately by Christ).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v.8</td>
<td>He that deviseth to do evil shall be called a mischievous person.</td>
<td>Isa 22.16; What hast thou here? and whom hast thou here...</td>
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<td>v.9</td>
<td>The thought of foolishness is sin: and the scorners is an abomination to men.</td>
<td>See Prov 24:8; Prov 23:7</td>
</tr>
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<td>v.10</td>
<td>If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small.</td>
<td>Isa 40.31; But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.</td>
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<tr>
<td>v.11</td>
<td>If thou forbear to deliver them that are drawn unto death, and those that are ready to be slain;</td>
<td>Isa 58.6-7; Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke?...... (see v.7)</td>
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<tr>
<td>v.12</td>
<td>If thou sayest, Behold, we knew it not; doth not he that pondereth the heart consider it? and he that keepeth thy soul, doth not he know it? and shall not he render to every man according to his works?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prov 22.17-24.34</td>
<td>289</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| **v.13** My son, eat thou honey, because *it is* good; and the honeycomb, *which is* sweet to thy taste: | **Ps 119.103**; How sweet are thy words unto my taste! *yea*, sweeter than honey to my mouth!  
**Isa 53.8**; ...for he was cut off out of the land of the living; for the transgression of my people was he stricken. |
| **v.14** So *shall* the knowledge of wisdom *be* unto thy soul: when thou hast found it, then there shall be a reward, and thy expectation (טִוָּחַ֖י tikvah) shall not be cut off. | The twenty-sixth saying teaches that one should develop wisdom because it has a profitable future. The saying draws on the image of honey; its health-giving properties make a good analogy to wisdom. Psalm 119 is a Hezekiah Psalm. The bridegroom (Hezekiah) had “eaten honeycomb with honey” when he came into his garden (Songs 5.1) indeed it was prophesied that the young boy would grow up eating honey (Isa 7.15). The “bridegroom” would have children; “he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days” (Isa.53.10). Hezekiah would establish his dynasty and messianic hope would be kept alive (*not cut off*); The Heb word for “hope” (טִוָּחַ֖י tikvah) is also found in Prov. 23.18. Moreover, the sweetness of honey is a reference to manna in the wilderness; see the comment on Prov 27.7. |
| **v.15** Lay not wait, O wicked man, against the dwelling of the righteous; spoil not his resting place: | **Ps 37.32**; The wicked watcheth the righteous, and seeketh to slay him.  
**Ps 37.32**; The saying warns that it is futile and self-defeating to mistreat God’s people, for they survive – the wicked do not. The warning is against a deliberate, planned assault on their places of dwelling as in Isa 32.18; “And my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places”. The same sentiment is expressed in another Davidic Psalm (It is not difficult to understand why this psalm was included in Hezekiah’s Psalter. Some of the words fit his circumstances remarkably well); “The proud have hid a snare for me, and cords; they have spread a net by the wayside; they have set gins for me. Selah” (Ps 140.5). The book of Job is parabolic of the Hezekiah situation and echo’s the proverb; “He shall deliver thee in six troubles: yea, in seven there... |
| **v.16** For a just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again: but the wicked shall fall into mischief. |  |
shall no evil touch thee” (Job 5.19). Delitzsch (Proverbs) comments; “The reason, 16a, sounds like an echo of Job. 5:19. שׁבַע signifies, as at Psa. 119:164, seven times...” Both Job and Psalm 119 trace their origins to the men of Hezekiah. The one “laying in wait” outside the dwelling of the righteous is obviously Sennacherib.

| v.17 | Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth, and let not thine heart be glad when he stumbleth: | **Job 31.29;** If I rejoiced at the destruction of him that hated me, or lifted up myself when evil found him: | Once again a parallel is found in Job. Hezekiah did not gloat or display vindictiveness at the destruction of the Assyrians. The judgment of God should strike a note of fear in the heart of people (e.g., Lev 19:17-18). His judgment is not to be taken lightly, or personalized as a victory. Yahweh says; “Vengeance is Mine, and recompense” (Deut 32.35)... for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord (Rom 12.19). The vengeance of God is a function of his justice. His judgment is always correct and his punishment always measured. Isa 34:8; “For it is the day of the LORD’S vengeance, and the year of recompences for the controversy of Zion”. If gloating was to happen, then the Lord might take pity on the enemies in their calamity, for he champions the downtrodden and defeated. These are probably personal enemies (like Shebna); the imprecatory psalms and the prophetic oracles present a different set of circumstances for the downfall of God’s enemies – even the book of Proverbs says that brings joy to the community. |
| v.18 | Lest the LORD see it, and it displease him, and he turn away his wrath from him. | **Ps 37.1;** Fret not thyself because of evil men, neither be thou envious at the wicked; | The author of the Sayings of the Wise was obviously familiar with Psalm 37 (Ver. 19 is a variation of Psa. 37:1 so Delitzsch) as the motif is repeated in Prov 23.17 and Prov 24.1. This was the argument of Bildad the Shuite in Job; “Yea, the light of the wicked shall be put out, and the spark of his fire shall not shine” (Job 18.5) which was countered by Job’s (Hezekiah’s) observation; “How oft is the candle of the wicked put out! and how oft cometh their destruction upon them! God distributeth sorrows in his anger” (Job 21.17). Life had taught Job that the wicked often got away with it! However, his observation was wrong and was influenced by despair but his friends were also wrong with their simplistic theological world view! The saying warns against envyng the wicked; v. 19 provides the instruction, and v. 20 the motivation. The motivation is that there is no future hope for |
| v.19 | Fret not thyself because of evil men, neither be thou envious at the wicked; | **Ps 37.1;** Fret not thyself because of evildoers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity. |  |
| v.20 | For there shall be no reward to the evil man; the candle of the wicked shall be put out. |  |  |
Prov 22.17-24.34

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verses</th>
<th>Commentary</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prov 22.17-24.34</td>
<td>them – nothing to envy, or as C. H. Toy explains, there will be no good outcome for their lives (Proverbs [ICC], 449). The candle of the wicked is not just their life but their hope. They had no future messianic hope - they were snuffed out forever.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v.21</td>
<td>My son, fear thou the LORD and the king: and meddle not with them that are given to change: NIV 21) Fear the LORD and the king, my son, and do not join with the rebellious,</td>
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</table>
### Further Sayings of the Wise

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verse</th>
<th>Text</th>
<th>Commentary</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>v.23</td>
<td>These things also belong to the wise. It is not good to have respect of persons in judgment.</td>
<td>These things also belong to the wise. It is not good to have respect of persons in judgment. Amos 5.12; For I know your manifold transgressions and your mighty sins: they afflict the just, they take a bribe, and they turn aside the poor in the gate from their right.</td>
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<tr>
<td>v.24</td>
<td>He that saith unto the wicked, Thou art righteous; him shall the people curse, nations shall abhor him:</td>
<td>Amos 5.12; For I know your manifold transgressions and your mighty sins: they afflict the just, they take a bribe, and they turn aside the poor in the gate from their right.</td>
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<td>v.25</td>
<td>But to them that rebuke him shall be delight, and a good blessing shall come upon them.</td>
<td>Isaiah 5.20,23; Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! Which justify the wicked for reward, and take away the righteousness of the righteous from him!</td>
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<td>v.26</td>
<td>Every man shall kiss his lips that giveth a right answer.</td>
<td>1 Kings 5.6,7; And the house, when it was in building, was built of stone made ready before it was brought thither: so that there was</td>
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<tr>
<td>v.27</td>
<td>Prepare thy work without, and make it fit for thyself in the field; and afterwards build thine house. YLT v.27) Prepare in an out-place thy work, And make it ready in the field --</td>
<td>1 Kings 6.7; And the house, when it was in building, was built of stone made ready before it was brought thither: so that there was</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
**Verses 29-30** is ostensibly about false witness and exacting personal revenge. The context is the *vineyard of Naboth* which was confiscated after false charges were brought against him and he was murdered. **Verses 28-34** relates to the *neglect of the vineyard* (the house Israel) caused through sloth (neglecting to take up the inheritance) and spiritual laziness. But the warning is not just to the house of Israel as the king of Judah, Ahaz, had let the “house” (temple) fall into decay and it was Hezekiah who restored it. Poverty literally descended on them like an armed man in the guise of the ruthless Assyrians who found a weak, faithless and fractured state with the exception of Hezekiah’s brave reformation and resistance.

| **v.28** | Be not a witness against thy neighbour without cause; and deceive not with thy lips. | **Exod 23.1;** Thou shalt not raise a false report: put not thine hand with the wicked to be an unrighteous witness. **Prov 20.22;** Say not thou, I will recompense evil; but wait on the LORD, and he shall save thee. | “And there came in two men, children of Belial, and sat before him: and the men of Belial witnessed against him, even against Naboth, in the presence of the people, saying, Naboth did blaspheme God and the king. Then they carried him forth out of the city, and stoned him with stones, that he died” (1 Kgs 21.13). “Arise, go down to meet Ahab king of Israel, which is in Samaria: behold, he is in the vineyard of Naboth, whither he is gone down to possess it. And thou shalt speak unto him, saying, Thus saith the LORD, Hast thou killed, and also taken possession?” (1 Kgs 21:18-19). |
| **v.29** | Say not, I will do so to him as he hath done to me: I will render to the man according to his work. | **Isaiah 5:6-7;** For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel. **Isaiah 5:6-7;** And I will lay it waste: it shall not be pruned, nor digged; but there shall come up briers and thorns: I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it. For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant: and he looked for judgment, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry. |

| go afterwards, Then thou hast built thy house. | neither hammer nor axe nor any tool of iron heard in the house, while it was in building. **1 Kgs 5.18;** And Solomon's builders and Hiram's builders did hew them, and the stonesquarers: so they prepared timber and stones to build the house. |  |  |
| v.31 | And, lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down. |
| v.32 | Then I saw, and considered it well: I looked upon it, and received instruction. |
| v.33 | Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: |
| v.34 | So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth; and thy want as an armed man. |

**Ecc 10.18;** By much slothfulness the building decayeth; and through idleness of the hands the house droppeth through.

King Uzziah (his memoirs form the sub-text of Ecclesiastes) sat idly by (from his position of quarantine for leprosy) and had to watch with frustration as his grandson Ahaz slowly allowed the kingdom crumble and the temple fall into disrepair. Like the kings of Israel, Ahaz was reluctant “slothful” to take up the “inheritance” as he disbelieved the messianic covenants. Just as the vineyard of Israel had fallen into neglect and despotism so also Judah gave way to syncretism and vacillation. This slow age of degeneration and decay would be hastened by another Assyrian invasion. Isa 10:6; “I will send him against a hypocritical nation, and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge, to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets”. Micah 1:6; “Therefore I will make Samaria as an heap of the field, and as plantings of a vineyard: and I will pour down the stones thereof into the valley, and I will discover the foundations thereof”. But all was not lost as Yahweh would redeem a faithful remnant and restore his faithful servant; “And they that shall be of thee shall build the old waste places: thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; and thou shalt be called, The repairer of the breach, The restorer of paths to dwell in”. (Isa 58.12)
Introduction to the Hezekiah Collection

Chapters 25-29
The “Hezekiah Collection” (Proverbs 25-29)

Bruce K. Waltke notes that, “In 1972 G. E. Bryce, by using certain methods of French structuralism, showed that Prov 25:2–27 constitutes a literary unit”. It is possible to find ourselves in agreement with Bryce’s conclusion on structural unity even though his emphasis on Egyptian literary parallels is exaggerated. As previously stated, we would expect some influence – after all Israel came out of Egypt and the tribe of Ephraim had Egyptian origins. Writings do not happen in a vacuum so it would be more surprising if we found no influence. In his PhD diss., “Leadership in the book of Proverbs” Gideon Omoniyi Bakare offers useful insights and a survey of some of the most prominent literature on Proverbs. He summarizes as follows; “He (Bryce) claims that the Egyptian Sehetepibre and Kemyt ‘provide literary models’ (1972: 147) that can illuminate our understanding of the structure and Sitz im Leben of Proverbs 25:2–27. He argues that a link is possible because Proverbs 25:2–27 has a similar structure and a summary clause. He also finds a single theme, formal structure and a conceptual unity within the sub-structure of the text. Bryce identifies the ruler (6–15) and the wicked (16–26) as the main subjects of the two sections under one theme, which is leadership”.

The scholarly discussion seems to focus on the aim of the book (a manual for instructing kings or courtiers or both) the origins of the book (reliant on Egyptian literature, written in the royal courts of Israel and/or Judah, a special wisdom school, or collected folk sayings etc). However, as Bakare points out; “Dell’s exploration of the Yahweh proverbs, and the role of Yahweh in Proverbs, motivates her to think that the theological context of Proverbs is enormous. She urges her readers to integrate this wisdom theology inherent in Proverbs with other parts of the Old Testament. Dell’s analysis of the different contexts in Proverbs is also illuminating; she has shown that it is hard to support any evidence for a single setting in Proverbs”. We find ourselves largely in alignment with Dell’s observation regarding the theological scope of the work and her doubts about a single setting. The book of Proverbs is a collection and that in itself suggests that the component parts may have had various original settings. However, those settings were most likely in the royal courts of Judah and Israel or in priestly, scribal and prophetic circles. However, the “Finalization” of such a collection must have occurred in a single setting.

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201 Geographically and culturally, the ancient Near East is the world of the Old Testament, while humanly speaking the Old Testament is a part of the ancient Near Eastern literature, history, and culture. Therefore, what can be known about the history, literatures, linguistics, religion etc., of the ancient orient will have a direct bearing on the same aspect of the Old Testament. Kitchen, K. A., Ancient Orient and Old Testament. (London: Inter-Varsity Press, 1966), 24
203 Ibid, 110
Egyptian influence is by and large a red herring and cannot be pressed beyond a generalization. Golka insisted that “if we continue to regard Israel’s wisdom through Egyptian spectacles, its indigenous features are unlikely to become much clearer.”

In other words, if we keep looking through an “Egyptian lens” we will miss the features that are uniquely Israelite. Although Whybray acknowledges the link between the ANE materials, he urges caution with uncritical scholarly presuppositions. The work of Yoder is a good example of scholarly “miss-direction”; Bakare summarizes as follows;

“Her socio-economic and historical reading of the text leads her to conclude that the woman of substance is a businesswoman and a leader (Yoder, 2003: 436–437). ‘She is a typical Persian period bride’ (2003: 432), who brings social, political and economic opportunities to her husband. She sets the time of the editorial work of Proverbs within the post-exilic Persian period. She also connects Proverbs 1–9 and 31:10–31 in order to explore the situation of women during the Persian period”.

In the exegesis of Proverbs 31 (in this commentary) it is demonstrated beyond doubt that the woman is typified by “Ruth” who is the virtuous woman and the woman of substance who uses the “Law of Kindness” (Law concerning the kinsman redeemer) to restore her mother-in-laws fortunes thereby becoming the progenitor of the Davidic dynasty. It does not bode well for scholarship when such obvious inter-textual clues are ignored.

Bekare observes; “One of the questions that Stuart Weeks investigates is whether the ‘contents or presentation of material in any part of Proverbs suggest an origin or redaction within the royal court or bureaucracy’ (Weeks, 1994: 41). In his attempt to answer the question, Weeks calls for caution on the superscriptions in Proverbs 1:1, 10:1 and 25:1, because they involve Solomon. Following Toy (1899) and Baumgartner (1951) he casts doubt on Solomon’s composition of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, the Song of Songs, the Wisdom of Solomon, and Psalms 72 and 127. He notes that the pseudonymous ascription of important ‘literature to a famously wise personage’ is a common practice (1994: 42). For Weeks, the arrangement of the titles in Proverbs 1:1; 10:1, 22:17, 24:23; 25:1; 30:1 and 31:1 ‘suggests an artificial classification’ (1994: 43)”.

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204 Golka, F. W., The Leopard’s Spots, (Edinburgh: T & T Clark,1993),16
207 Ibid, 110
208 Ibid, 103
It is perhaps useful to repeat Bekare’s conclusion at the end of his summary; “At this point it will be helpful to summarise the arguments and observations contained in this chapter, and lay out clearly their consequences for the study of leadership in Proverbs. Bryce’s intention is to demonstrate the arrangement and structure of Proverbs 25:2–27 and make a case for its use for the training of courtiers; Humphreys focuses on the motif of the wise courtier in Proverbs and offers conclusions that the motif is clear only in 16:1–22:16 and 25:2–27; Golka, on the other hand, finds a link between Israelite wisdom and the pre-literate African proverbs; Malchow accepts Proverbs 28–29 as a manual for future monarchs; Whybray shows the need to put the royal proverbs in the right perspective; Weeks warns his readers to be sceptical about using Egyptian records to explain Israelite wisdom; Brown identifies character as the overarching theme in wisdom literature; he calls attention to the relevance of character in biblical wisdom literature; Dell uncovers a fresh approach to the social and theological settings of Proverbs; Yoder concentrates on the significance of Proverbs 30 and 31 for leadership; Hatton finds some leadership texts in Proverbs; while, for Ansberry, the royal court argument is still relevant.”

The Men of Hezekiah

Our approach is grounded in the literature of the seventh and eighth centuries and has independently reached a similar (but less ambivalent) conclusion as Michael Carasik, namely, that Proverbs 25-29 has a Hezekiah background. In fact, our exegesis demonstrates that the influence of “men of Hezekiah” went beyond the shaping of 25-29. The socio-economic and historical background of that century informs the whole of Proverbs. Any Solomonic material has been thoroughly assimilated. We might look at proverbs that are concerned with discipline and correction such as “He that spareth his rod hateth his son” (13.24). This would fit the time of Solomon who acted as “judge” and no doubt dispensed jurisprudence and punishment. Variations of these sayings are found throughout Proverbs (10.13, 13.24, 22.15, 23.13-14, 29.15) with the variations possibly reflecting adaptation by ordinary people as oral “folk sayings” about rebellious children and “fools” but this saying was first used by Yahweh in connection with the king “I will be his father, and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men” (2 Sam 7.14). This Proverb originated as part of the Davidic covenant and Yahweh would use Assyria as his “rod” to discipline his “son” (the king and the people cf. Isa 10.15). If what we propose is correct then the covenant admonition made during the early monarchy was adapted by Solomon as a judgement saying and further adapted and transmitted as a “folk saying” (which explains the variations). This supposes a

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208 Ibid, 119
chain of transmission where early sayings are both preserved and adapted whether written or oral. However, the final redaction and placing of a proverb in a collection must be understood within a much larger theological context that elevates the maxim beyond the mundane. It is no longer a “proverb” of Solomon or a “folk saying” or a “derivative of Egyptian wisdom literature” or a “court saying” etc (we could go on) – it is a unique look at wisdom inspired by Israelite history and experience writ large as a teaching instrument. It is written not just for the “king” but for “a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation” (Exod 19.6) that was meant to lead by example and dispense justice to the surrounding 70 nations through their Sanhedrin.

Michael Carasik commences his article by saying; “By contrast, the notice in Prov. 25:1 that these particular Solomonic proverbs were “transmitted” (he’tiqu) by the men of Hezekiah, king of Judah, seems rather specific. It is this specificity, and the notice’s apparent lack of tendentiousness, which have led scholars to accept it as historical evidence for “a school or scribal establishment under royal patronage, where literary records of the past were assembled and new literature was produced.” “There is no reason,” argues Crenshaw, “for the tradition to arise associating Hezekiah with wisdom unless a historical basis for such thinking existed.”

Carasik concludes that the ascription to the “men of Hezekiah” in Prov. 25.1 “could just as well be exegetical as it could historical”. He speculates that originally the collection (25-29) had no ascription or link with Solomon and therefore an ascription was presumably added later by the scribes based on inter-textual evidence and this occurred before the finalization of the LXX: “Here, the MT and LXX arrange the material slightly differently—in the Greek, chs. 25-29 immediately precede the “Women of Valor” poem. Yet the Hezekiah reference is found in both versions. It is unlikely that the heading was added by both versions independently; hence the Hezekiah reference must have become part of 25-29 while these chapters were still a separate collection. Thus I locate the superscription in the chronological interval after 25-29 came together but before the book of Proverbs had taken

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210 Carasik’s article has no page numbering (citation is from the first and second page and includes footnotes).
211 The root ימープ seems to have had an original meaning of “proceed” or “advance”, as in Gen. 12:8, 26:22. The unusual usage of Prov. 25:1, by an extension of this meaning, is generally taken as indicating that the men of Hezekiah were passing along wisdom from an earlier time, that is, copying it. The notion of “editing” suggested by Whybray may be understood as part of the process but is not, I think, expressed in this verb (“The Sage in the Israelite Royal Court,” in The Sage in Israel [n. 1], p. 138).
214 (n. 2) pp. 25 and 94. More recently, similar sentiments are expressed by Roland E. Murphy, The Tree of Life: An Exploration of Biblical Wisdom Literature (New York, 1990) pp. 5 and 22, and by a wide range of scholars in The Sage in Israel and the Ancient Near East.
its final form.” The reference to Hezekiah must therefore have already been attached to 25-29 before the translation of the LXX (2/3 rd century), the question is whether it was a post exilic or pre-exilic addition.

The different arrangement of the LXX has already been noted and as Carasik (and others) have observed, even the LXX retains the ascription. The LXX arrangement is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Range</th>
<th>Note</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I-III</td>
<td>1:1—24:1–22</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI, part 1</td>
<td>30:1–14</td>
<td>‘The words of Agur,’ first part</td>
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<tr>
<td>IV</td>
<td>24:23–34</td>
<td>‘Also words of the wise’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI, part 2</td>
<td>30:15–33</td>
<td>‘The words of Agur,’ second part</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII</td>
<td>31:1–9</td>
<td>‘The words of Lemuel,’ first part</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>25–29</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIII</td>
<td>31:10–31</td>
<td>(an acrostichon about the virtuous woman, formally representing ‘the words of Lemuel,’ second part)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tov summarizes as follows:

“In other words, the LXX separates between the two parts of section VI (‘The words of Agur’) and of chapter 31 (VII [‘the words of Lemuel’] and VIII [the acrostichon of the virtuous woman]). Furthermore, it reverses the internal order of sections IV, V, VI and VII, part 1. When turning to a comparative analysis of the sequence in the MT and LXX, neither one of the two systems should be preferred. The connection between the sections is such that both can be equally correct. From the outset the juxtaposition of sections III and IV, as in MT, is to be preferred to the arrangement of the LXX as III contains ‘the words of the wise’ and IV ‘also the words of the wise’ (thus Frankenberg [n. 18] who considers IV a ‘Nachtrag’ to III). However, one could also argue against the arrangement of MT. For why should collection IV need a separate heading if both it and the previous collection contain ‘words of

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215 Ibid, third page from the end.
216 In the chapter on stylometrics under the section on repetitions.
217 Tov also notes that the translator often misunderstood the nature of the headings and he gives examples were ascriptions were absorbed by integration into the proverb. He states; "Another indication of a different Vorlage is the fact that in various instances the text of the LXX is shorter than that of MT: 8:29a, 33; 11:4, 10b, 11a; 15:31; 16:1,3; 18:23–24; 9:1–2; 20:14–19; 21:5, 18b; 22:6; 23:23. The number of these examples is too large to assume a scribal phenomenon (parablepsis)". E. Tov, “Recensional Differences between the Masoretic Text and the Septuagint of Proverbs,” in Of Scribes and Scrolls, Studies on the Hebrew Bible, Intertestamental Judaism, and Christian Origins Presented to John Strugnell, (eds. H. Attridge et al.; Lanham, Md., 1992), 429–431. [http://www.emanueltov.info/docs/papers/28.prov.1999.pdf?v=1.0] See also the Appendix (summary) differences between MT and LXX.
the wise’? Therefore, the arrangement of the LXX has more to be recommended than that of MT, since the separation of IV from III requires a separate heading for IV, as in the LXX. The separation in the LXX between the different sections of ‘the words of Agur’ and ‘the words of Lemuel’ is contextually no better or worse than their juxtaposition in MT. One should remember that both of these collections are composed of at least two segments whose contents are not necessarily connected. Thus not all of the sayings in chapter 30 should be considered as ‘the words of Agur.’ In any event, vv. 15–33 (various numerical sayings) are set apart, and could certainly be placed elsewhere. Likewise, chapter 31 is composed of different segments; its second part, an acrostichon about the virtuous woman, is not connected to the first part, ‘the words of Lemuel,’ and could therefore be placed elsewhere, as it is in the LXX. In the arrangement of the LXX the second part of ‘the words of Agur’ (VI, part 2) has no separate heading, and therefore belongs, as it were, to section IV (‘also words of the wise’); contextually this arrangement is equally as good as that of MT. On the other hand, both Agur (VI) and Lemuel (VII) are described as ‘of Massa’ (‘the Massaite’), so that their juxtaposition in MT, at the end of the book is preferable to their separation in the LXX. However, even in MT the ‘words of Agur’ are not really juxtaposed to ‘the words’ of Lemuel,’ since the second part of chapter 30 actually does not contain sayings of Agur. In this description, the arrangement of MT has been compared with that of the presumed Vorlage of the LXX, beyond the understanding of the translator”.

It is obvious that the arrangement of the collection was (to a certain extent) still “fluid” when the LXX was written and it is probable that more than one Hebrew arrangement existed. Whether or not the LXX arrangement is preferable to the MT is somewhat subjective. For example the words of Lemuel are split into two sections and this is seemingly supported by the fact that the second section is an acrostic poem. However, our exegesis demonstrates that the first nine verses of chapter 31 introduce the poem that follows. If the collections are arranged in accordance with stylistic analysis the following two highly associated groups emerge (light blue and dark blue):
In the above light blue ellipse Collection 1 and 2 share style correspondence. Collection 2 has been deliberately arranged along the lines of the LXX (the exception being chapter 31 which has been reunified). The dark blue group (Collections 3 and 4) also contains material that shares the strongest stylistic affinities and the most repetitions. For want of better terms we could call Collection 1 “Solomon” and Collection 2 “The Wise” and Collections 3 and 4 in the dark blue ellipse “Hezekiah”. Of course, this is “hypothetical” but even so, it demonstrates how easily different arrangements (ordering) could have come into existence especially if they were written on separate scrolls. Any number of combinations can be made by re-arranging the order of the collections. Tov concludes “When Proverbs was translated into Greek, presumably in the second century BCE, a scroll was used that contained an editorial stage of the book differing from that now contained in MT. Such an understanding parallels views developed previously regarding other biblical books. This view does not imply that the editorial changes were made as late as the time of the Greek translation, but that at that time, in a geographically remote center of Judaism, such early scrolls were still available”.218

Weeks, has the following observation: 219

“If we compare with each other the superscriptions to the different collections, certain similarities and cross-references become obvious. Firstly, two of the superscriptions appear to refer back to previous superscriptions: thus 251 tells us that "These also (gam-ēlleh) are proverbs of Solomon", and 2423 that "These also (gam-ēlleh) are (sayings) of the wise". These apparently refer back to 101 (and 11?) and 2217 respectively.220 Further, the use of "mišlē", 'mashals', is restricted to the Solomonic ascriptions, 'words' being used elsewhere. This may suggest that the term "mišlē šēlōmō" is a cliche; although there is a certain consistency about the form of the sayings in the first part of the collection 101-2216, there is no good reason, when all the instances are taken into account, to suppose that the phrase is a technical term for a certain type of saying.221

218 Ibid, 431
220 Fn. [5]: 2217 is usually taken to be a title 'absorbed' into the text, rather as in 11. See Fichtner in BHS, ad loc., and also the unnatural position of λόγοις σοφῶν at the beginning of the sentence in LXX.
The arrangement of titles is interesting in itself:

1: mashals of Solomon...
10: mashals of Solomon.
22: Words of the wise.
24: Also of the wise.
25: Also mashals of Solomon...
30: Words of Agur.
31: Words of Lemuel...

This arrangement is, perhaps, suggestive of an artificial classification: 1 introduces the first section and the book with the longest description of Solomon, and it is followed by a collection of mashals of Solomon, and then by a collection of words of the wise. Then come two collections, attributed to the wise and to Solomon respectively, and Lemuel (or his mother). The ascriptions do not cover all the collections isolated by modern scholars, and the neatness of their arrangement may suggest that they form an essentially unified classification of the text. They are quite likely not, therefore, titles which belonged to the individual collections before those collections were brought together.

It is tempting to speculate that the 'also' ascriptions mark a stage of redaction in which further collections were added to an original collection. However, the evidence for all this is very slight, and we can reasonably go no further than to suggest that the broad consistency of the basic ascriptions tells against their originality”.

We find ourselves in agreement with Week’s cautionary approach. Delitzsch, for example, understands 1: mashals of Solomon as the probable title of the whole book but doubts as to whether it extends to the hortatory discourses of the first chapter in which he detects another hand. He understands what he terms as the first great collection of Solomonic proverbs as beginning with 10: mashals of Solomon (10-22.16) with the “also” of 25: Also mashals of Solomon... as a reference back to 10-22.16. Delitzsch may well be correct in his assessment but just because both collections are called mashals of Solomon does not necessarily mean that all the proverbs (or the whole book) originated with Solomon it may simply be a reference to genre or style rather than authorship attribution.
That the men of Hezekiah copied

The unusual naming of the "men of Hezekiah" has already been highlighted as has the options put forward by scholars of it being "exegetical" (determined by exegesis in order to give an unnamed collection a heading) or "historical". Whatever the case may be, it had to be an early attribution as it was already established by the time of the LXX translation. Next we turn to the word "copied" implying that the "men of Hezekiah" copied out earlier Solomonic proverbs.

Once again we turn to Week's assessment:222

"If there is a perceptible pattern of ascriptions in Proverbs, then the 'men of Hezekiah' in 25 appear to lie outside it. They are not described as authors, the basic ascription being to Solomon, but are associated in some way with the presence or transmission of the collection. The verb used for their activity is the hiphil form of 'tq’, which the LXX here translates by ἐγράφαντο, and the Vulgate by transtulerunt. The Vulgate implies an understanding of the verb as meaning 'transfer', and this would concur with the post-biblical Hebrew use of the verb for 'transcribe'; the Greek probably means 'copy' (for oneself?). The other occurrences of this form of 'tq' in the OT are in Gen. 128, 2622 and Job 3215, where the use is intransitive and the sense 'move away', and in Job 3215, where it is used of 'removing' mountains (// 'overthrow'). The meaning 'transcribe' is not attested until very late, and the sense of the verb here was still debated by the rabbis:223 there are certainly no grounds for assuming that such a meaning existed earlier, and it accords badly with other OT usage. The supposition of Scott, that it means 'bring forward', i.e., 'bring forward from the past', 'transmit', and therefore 'transcribe',224 seems ill-founded, since the other occurrences of the verb in the OT do not, as he seems to believe, have any implication of progression or advance.225 If it does mean 'copy', then this note is unique in the OT as a reference to the transmission of a text, and this must in itself make us suspicious. When the obscurity of the verb and the anonymity of 'the men' are taken into account also, it would seem most ill-advised to place great weight on the verse as an historical clue.

223 Fn. [7]: Rabbinic suggestions include 'suppress', 'translate', 'consider'; cf. esp. M. Jastrow, A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature (New York and Berlin, 1926), ad loc., and the references there, particularly Yalk. Prov. 961. I am aware of no comparative philological evidence to suggest an early sense 'copy'. 'tq in Ugaritic is attested in a causative form only in the name š’tqt; the verb is otherwise used intransitively for 'enter', or of the passing of days, cf. Gordon's glossary ad loc. in his Ugaritic Textbook, Analecta Orientalia 38 (Rome, 1965).
225 Fn. [9]: This is particularly clear in Job 3215, where the implication is that words have deserted the speakers, not 'advanced from' them.
However, Gressmann has written of this verse that:

"Für die absolute Chronologie ist 25\(^1\) von entscheidener Bedeutung. Die eigenartige Notiz über "die Männer Hiskias" läBt sich, obwohl sie sonst nirgends bestätigt wird, einleuchtend nur aus guter Überlieferung erklären; wenigstens hat bisher noch niemand zu zeigen vermocht, warum und zu welcher Zeit sie erfunden sein sollte". [226]

This opinion is, as we have seen, shared by Scott, and many, if not most, scholars have viewed the verse as reliable historical data, in a way which the ascriptions to Solomon are not. Such confidence has been founded in part on the lack of a clear traditional association of Hezekiah with wisdom in the OT, and in part on the very specific nature of the verse.

On the latter point, Toy long ago pointed out that "...still more definite statements are prefixed to certain obviously late psalms ascribed to David (see, for example, ψ51-60)..." [227] If later exegetical tradition sought to place Psalms in the appropriate period of David's life, it is interesting to wonder whether a similar process was at work here, seeking to associate with Hezekiah a collection of proverbs which was already linked with Solomon. We may note that in Is.38\(^9\) a psalm is inserted, apparently by a later editor, into the prose text, and attributed to Hezekiah, which may indicate a traditional association of Hezekiah with literary activity. It is certainly noteworthy that the title in Proverbs is followed immediately by an unusual series of sayings which deal with the king and with behaviour in his presence. This and the series of miracle and other stories associated with Hezekiah in 2 Kg. 18-20 and Is. 36-38, allow the possibility, though by no means the presumption, that the association of Prov. 25ff. with Hezekiah in 25\(^1\) is the result of a late interpretation of the king and court proverbs which follow the title as specific references to the court of Hezekiah, perhaps on the basis of a tradition no longer known to us. Oesterley, who holds this view, sees the roots of such a tradition in specific items of the account in 2 Kg. : the prominence of Shebna in 2 Kg. 18\(^37\), 19\(^3\), the crediting of Hezekiah with the utterance of a proverb in 19\(^3\), and more generally Hezekiah's piety and commitment.

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226 Fn. [10]: H. Gressmann, "Die neugefundene Lehre des Amen-em-ope und die vorexilische Spruchdichtung Israels", ZAW 42 (1924), pp. 272-296. See p. 286. Google translate: For the absolute chronology 25\(^1\) is of decisive importance. The peculiar note about "the men of Hezekiah," although it is nowhere confirmed, can only be plainly explained by good tradition; At least no one has yet been able to show why and at what time it should have been invented.

to the law. He notes that the verb used in 18' for Hezekiah's 'prospering', is found also in Prov. 1\(^3\), with the sense 'wise dealing'.\[228\]

If none of this specific evidence is especially compelling, it does at least cast doubt on the assertion that this verse is explicable only as a genuine historical notice. If a process of traditional exegesis was at work here, there may be a further extension of this exegesis visible in the LXX and Targum readings of 'friends' for 'men'.\[229\] The 'men of Hezekiah' are quite unspecified in the Hebrew, and the translators have, perhaps, seen a reference to the friends of Prov. 25\(^8, 9, 17, 18\). Despite the claims built on this verse, the 'men', incidentally, cannot be assumed to have been scribes, or any professional servants of Hezekiah; similar OT usage does no more than suggest that they were in some way supporters of him, or under his patronage (like the men of David in, e.g., 1 Sam. 23\(^3, 5\))".

Delitzsch, on the other hand, has no problem with the meaning of the word ('tq);

“The meaning of the word הֶעְתִיךְ is not doubtful. It signifies, like the Arameo-Arabic ת싼, to remove from their place, and denote that the men of Hezekiah removed from the place where they found them the following proverbs, and placed them together in a separate collection. The words have thus been understood by the Greek translator. From the supplementary words αἱ ἀδιάκριτοι (such as exclude all διάκρισις) it is seen that the translator had a feeling of the important literary historical significance of that superscription, which reminds us of the labours of the poetical grammarians appointed by Pisistratus to edit older works, such as those of Hesiod”.

The Septuagint (LXX) has the following title: αὐταὶ αἱ παιδείαι σαλωμώντος αἱ ἀδιάκριτοι ἀς ἔξεγραφαντο οἱ φίλοι ἐξεκίου τοῦ βασιλέως τῆς Ιουδαίας.

\[autai\] these (ai) [are] the (paideiai) instructions (salOmOntos) of Solomon (ai) [are] the (adiakritoi) miscellaneous [LXE] (as) which (exegrapsanto) copy or write out (oi) the (philo) friends (ezekiou) of. Hezekiah (tou) the (baseleOs) king (tEs) the (ioudaias) of Judah

\[228\] Fn. [12] Oesterley, op. cit. (1929), pp. 219f. See also Toy, op. cit. (1899), ad loc.
\[229\] Fn. [13]: See Fichtner in BHS, ad loc., and A. Baumgartner, Étude Critique sur L’État du Texte du Livre des Proverbes d’apres les Principales Traductions Anciennes (Leipzig, 1890), ad loc.
What is meant by ἀδιάκριτοι is uncertain. It has been translated "impossible to distinguish," equivalent to "miscellaneous;" "beyond doubt," equivalent to "genuine," "hard to interpret," as in Polyb; 15.12, 9. St. The Greek adiakritoi (ἀδιάκριτοι) occurs only here in the LXX of Prov 25.1 and in the NT only in James 3.17 where the term applies to wisdom, but the interpreters there are not agreed as to the meaning, it being rendered "without partiality," "without variance," "without doubtfulness," without inconstancy etc. For example the KJV; “But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.” The Greek adiakritoi (ἀδιάκριτοι) is a negative and adjectival form of diakrino (διακρίνω) which occurs in James 2.4; “Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts?” Vines Expository Dictionary states – “This meaning seems to have had its beginning in near proximity to Christianity.’ It arises naturally out of the general sense of making distinctions (Moulton and Milligan)”. In James 2.4 diakrino means “separatist” or “distinction” as in....don’t be a separatist or make distinctions which has Delitzsch understanding the LXX title in Proverbs as referring to separation or exclusion of certain proverbs from a larger Solomon collection. However, it is no coincidence that James uses the negative derivative term adiakritoi from Prov 25.1 in reference to “wisdom” specifically divine wisdom in the sense that divine wisdom is “not separatist” in other words such wisdom does not cause separations or divisions. Thus James uses the negative form in a sense contra Delitzsch – e.g., not separate. Understanding it this way the Wisdom of Solomon is not separate from the wisdom of the friends of Hezekiah – the wisdom from above is not separatist or divisive. In fact, it does not belong to any one person as it is a gift from God. The Wisdom of Solomon was directly attributable to divine inspiration – it did not die with Solomon (No doubt but ye are the people, and wisdom shall die with you; Job 12.2) it was viewed as a gift of the Spirit that unified the people of God both in the Old and the New Testaments.

Despite his objections Delitzsch confirms Week’s observations. The Hebrew does not mean “copy” or “transcribe”. Both the Hebrew and the Aramaic have synonyms for “copy” meaning “duplicate” or “repeat” (מְשֵׁנָה mishneh) or the Aramaic פְּשֶׁנִין (parshegen) and these are not employed but rather the obscure עֹקֵץ (’tq). The verb ʿatîq does contain the idea of moving or removing of settled things hence the idea of becoming old. The Aramaic form is used in Dan 7.9 for the “Ancient of Days” (וְעַתִּיק יֹומִין, wĕʿattîq yōwmîn) the adjective ʿātāq carries connotations of “stubborn” or “arrogant sayings” (Ps 31.18[19]; 94.4). Smith and Wegner230 state; “The adj. ʿattîq, old or moved, occurs only twice in the OT, and it is uncertain as to how the word can have such different meanings. In Isa 28:9 it

refers to a child weaned or removed from the breast, but in 1 Chron 4:22 the adj. refers to an old list or a list handed down from antiquity.” Smith (et al) also point out that the form ‘ātēq meaning “hereditary” occurs only in Prov 8:18.

If we rule out “copy” or “transcribe” this leaves us with “remove” or “move on” (as Delitzsch suggests) meaning that these proverbs were removed from a greater “Solomonic” collection that no longer exits. However, this does not solve the problem of why these proverbs are (we would argue) recognizably about Hezekiah and therefore (whether exegetically or historically) connected with him. Moreover, the final form of these chapters (25-29) points to a carefully structured unit rather than a cut and paste exercise. So, even if we accept the meaning “remove” at face value it still does not solve the problem.

Perhaps a sense closer to “inherit” (as in pass on i.e., move on) would be the most appropriate – indicating that the “men of Hezekiah” are the true recipients of wisdom – what has “moved on” is the Spirit of Wisdom not necessarily the literal written proverbs themselves but the inspiration that animates them. It is the same Spirit that resided in Daniel “for the spirit of the holy gods is in thee” (Dan 4.18). Daniel was wiser than all the “wise men of Babylon” it was the “wise” that would “understand” while the wicked were left in ignorance (Dan 12.10). The book of Daniel is of course of later origins than the book

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231 Strong’s ref. numbers: 6275: a’tiq: (verb) move, remove (cf. Gen 26.22); 6277: ‘ātāq (hard things Ps 94.4); 6276: ‘ātēq (hereditary cf. Prov 8.18); 6267: ‘āttîq (adj.) removed, ancient, (Isa 28.9, 1 Chron. 4.22). The first time the verb is used (Gen 12.8) Abram “removes” (a’tiq) himself from the altar that he built upon receiving the promise and pitches his tent between Bethel (house of God) and Hai (destruction) indicating his perilous position in the Promised Land. The second time a’tiq is used (Gen 26.22) is when Isaac “removes” himself from the well he dug at Sitnah (strife) to dig another well at Rehoboth (wide space or room). Isaac is the child of promise, the first born into the Abrahamic covenant. Isaac attempts to renew the covenant (re-open the blocked wells built by Abraham) and meets resistance but eventually achieves success - Isaac functions as a type of Hezekiah in the sister-wife narratives.

232 The “Wise” in Daniel may well represent a "guild" or literary school with pre-exilic origins. Scholarship generally recognises a connection between the “wise” (maskilim) of Daniel and the suffering servant (cf. Hezekiah/Job) of Isaiah 53:11 (cf. Dan. 12.3). See, H. L. Ginsberg, “The Oldest Interpretation of the Suffering Servant”, VT 3 (1953) 400-404 Martin Hengel comments; “......Ginsberg therefore wants to see Daniel 11:33-12:10 as “the oldest interpretation of the suffering servant,” a view Lacocque follows in his Commentary (p.92)....... The resurrection from the “dust of the earth” in Daniel 12:2 would correspond to the overcoming of the grave in Isaiah 53:9” (p.98). Martin Hengel, Traces of Isaiah 53 in the book of Daniel in The Suffering Servant: Isaiah 53 in Jewish and Christian Sources, (ed., Bernd Janowski and Peter Stuhlmacher, translation Daniel P. Bailey Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2004, 90-98), 92, 98. Koch argues persuasively that the way in which the term Maskil is used in Daniel 11-12 gives the impression that the term was “an established term for the authors of Daniel [...] not their invention.” Charlotte Hempel notes...“Both groups, though they emerged some time in the second century BCE, lay claim to having ideological or historical (or conceivably both) roots in the exile...” [K. Koch, “Stages in the Canonization of the Book of Daniel”, in The Book of Daniel, (eds. J. J. Collins and P. W. Flint; 2 vols; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2001), 2:421-426(429)]. On these “groups” (the writers of Daniel and the Qumran covenanters) Hempel concludes (2006:156); “Whereas Matthias Henze has stated rather eloquently that “The covenanters have made Daniel’s language their own”, [Henze, Madness of King
of Proverbs; nevertheless, the tradition was established early on that wisdom was a gift from God (a gift of the Spirit) endowed on Kings like Solomon to make them wise rulers. Of course, Solomon later apostatized and his wisdom was corrupted. From the book of Daniel we see that “royal princes” and courtiers could also receive this gift. Moreover, the prophetic movement was spirit driven. We would argue that Hezekiah is being portrayed as “Solomon redivivus”, that is why Hezekiah is portrayed in both Kings and Chronicles with key words usually associated with Solomon. Hezekiah and his men became heirs of the Spirit of Wisdom that animated Solomon and was subsequently “passed on” from him; as such the writings can be legitimately described as mashals of Solomon.

This does not necessarily mean that the proverbs were all composed and completed during the reign of Hezekiah although we would argue that his reign should be considered the terminus a quo with the terminus ad quem sought during the reign of Josiah – definitely before the exile. The reign of Josiah suggests itself from the work done by Perry who sees Josiah acting as a patron of sacred literature. Further consideration of Perry’s suggestion makes it increasingly attractive. Any work commenced by Hezekiah (his “men”) would have been rudely interrupted by the persecutions of Manasseh and Amon. The reign of Josiah saw another reformation and it is likely that he looked upon Hezekiah as a hero of faith to be emulated and instructed his scribes to finish the work commenced by the “men of Hezekiah”. Perry sets the writing if not the completion of Job in this era. By the time that Josiah took to the throne enough time had elapsed since the death of Hezekiah to see him idealized as inheritor of Solomonic Wisdom and as the representative “suffering servant”.

Moreover, it was during the reign of Josiah that “the book of the law” was found in the temple (2 Kings 22.8). It is usually presumed that this was the book of Deuteronomy because of the “curses” or that it is a “pious fraud” but leaving that aside (without further comment) the terror of the Manasseh and Amon persecutions supports the fact that certain writings would be hidden or preserved in the temple. Perhaps, these writings also contained earlier uncompleted work from the Hezekiah era. Perhaps it contained a fragment of Proverbs that we now known as Proverbs 25-29 but it had no title. Perhaps the scribes of Josiah and the high priest read it and concluded that this material was concerned with “King Hezekiah” displaying the “wisdom of Solomon” and they added the title. At this late stage we can never know but it fits the facts as far as they can be ascertained.

Nebuchadnezzar, p. 242] I have tried to suggest that, to some extent, it was their own. In other words the overlap can just as well be accounted for by the shared roots of these movements than by the influence of Daniel upon Qumran. Charlotte Hempel, Maskil(im) and Rabbim: from Daniel to Qumran. In: Biblical traditions in transmission,(Brill, Leiden ; Boston, 133-156, 2006),133 online: http://eprints.bham.ac.uk/291/ . See P. Wyns, God is Judge: A Commentary on the book of Daniel,(Biblaridion media, 2011) online Chapter 21 pp. 410-412. http://www.biblaridion.info/daniel/danhtml/dch21.html#P394
Men of Hezekiah or “friends” of Hezekiah?

We return to the intriguing observation noted earlier by Weeks and repeated again here;

“If a process of traditional exegesis was at work here, there may be a further extension of this exegesis visible in the LXX and Targum readings of ‘friends’ for ‘men’.

[233] The ‘men of Hezekiah’ are quite unspecified in the Hebrew, and the translators have, perhaps, seen a reference to the friends of Prov. 25 8,9,17,18. Despite the claims built on this verse, the ‘men’, incidentally, cannot be assumed to have been scribes, or any professional servants of Hezekiah; similar OT usage does no more than suggest that they were in some way supporters of him, or under his patronage (like the men of David in, e.g., 1 Sam. 233,5 )”.

This is indeed interesting – both the LXX and the Targum render “men” as “friends of Hezekiah” and the reason we find this so striking is because Perry has identified the book of “Job” as being a parabolic play based on the Assyrian crisis in the Hezekiah era. The main characters in this play (besides Job) are his “friends” or companions – who come to comfort him (Job 2.11) but end up delivering forward or arrogant sayings, i.e., ‟ātāq (“hard things” Ps 94.4). The book concludes with Job being instructed to make intercession for his “friends” (Job 42.10). It is particularly in the “frame” of Job (are the prologue and epilogue by a different hand?) that the “friends” of Job (Hezekiah) are employed to book-end the parabolic play. Perhaps a word play is intended as the “friends of Hezekiah” (friends of Job) no longer deliver ‟ātāq (hard sayings) to Hezekiah but rather they ‟ātēq (pass on) ancient (‟āttîq) wisdom, a spirit that was removed (a‟tiq) from Solomon but that now resides with the “friends of Job/Hezekiah”, who (unlike Solomon) repented. These “friends” of Hezekiah/Job now become the true custodians of the mashals of Solomon. This also fits the context of Josiah where the king repented (2 Kings 22.9) after having previously sent (v.3) “the son of Meshullam (= friend) the scribe” to account for the temple reparation finances. It was this “son of Mershulam” (i.e., Shaphan) who returned from the temple with the newly discovered law book which he then read to the king. So, “the son of a friend” reads the law book to King Josiah and the “friends” (LXX) of King Hezekiah he‟tīqû (remove/pass on etc) the mashals of Solomon because the “friends” (after their repentance at having dispensed false advice to Job) have now inherited true wisdom. Perhaps it is serendipity?

233 Fn. [13]: See Fichtner in BHS, ad loc., and A. Baumgartner, Étude Critique sur L’État du Texte du Livre des Proverbes d’apres les Principales Traductions Anciennes (Leipzig, 1890), ad loc.
The proposal here is that Proverbs is connected both stylistically and inter-textually with Hezekiah. The connection may be “exegetical” rather than “historical” but if so it occurred at a time period not far removed from his era (e.g., during the reign of Josiah) where neglected literature was being preserved and expanded and Hezekiah functioned as the idealized Davidide – willing to suffer for his people and willing to offer unconditional service to Yahweh without hope of reward. Jewish tradition may have ascribed authorship of the entire book of Proverbs to the “men” or “friends” of Hezekiah on the basis of this verse: “Hezekiah and his company wrote the Proverbs” (b. Baba Batra 15a). With that sentiment we find ourselves in agreement at the very least Proverbs employs Hezekiah as a template for the idealized Davidide.
### Proverbs 25

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Proverbs 25</th>
<th>Inter-text</th>
<th>Comments</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>v.1) These are also proverbs of Solomon, which the men of Hezekiah king of Judah copied out.</strong></td>
<td>See the previous section (introduction to 25-29) for an analysis of the ascription.</td>
<td>The proverbs in these lines differ from the earlier ones in that these are multiple line sayings using more similes; chapters 28-29 are similar to 10-16, but chapters 25-27 differ in having few references to God.</td>
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<td><strong>v.2) It is the glory of God to conceal a thing: but the honour of kings is to search out a matter.</strong></td>
<td>Deut 29.29; “The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law”. <strong>Contrast:</strong> Job 42.3; “Who is he that hideth counsel without knowledge? therefore have I uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not”.</td>
<td>Michael Carasik observes; “It is ... the glory of a king to plumb a matter” (25:2). This very first verse of the collection could have been taken as a reference to Hezekiah’s searching deep under the ground for a way to ensure that blockaded Jerusalem would have a source of fresh water within the fortified wall. (Though hqr, “plumb” or “probe,” has its figurative sense here, it is used in the mining passage of Job 28:3 for digging underground; the existence of hqq, especially as used in Isa. 22:16, suggests an original biliteral roothq with the meaning “hew into rock,” from which the trilateral roots hqq and hqr developed)”. Carasik is most certainly correct in understanding the Hezekiah Tunnel as a metaphor for plumbing the depths of a matter. Psalm 47.2 employs a similar metaphor – the tunnelers commenced at each end and met in the middle – no mean engineering feat! As they approached each other they called out. Ps 42.7; “Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy waterspouts: all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me”. Carasik, Michael, “Who Were the “Men of Hezekiah” (Proverbs XXV 1)?” (1994). Departmental Papers (Jewish Studies). 16.</td>
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<tr>
<td>v.3) The heaven for height, and the earth for depth, and the heart of kings is unsearchable.</td>
<td>The LXE translates the LXX as a genitive (a king’s heart) rather than a plural as suggested by the Hebrew (the heart of kings).</td>
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<td>LXE v.3) Heaven is high, and earth is deep, and a king’s heart is unsearchable.</td>
<td>This proverb is multi-faceted and should be understood in the context of the previous proverb which alludes to Deut 29.29 where Yahweh “conceals” things - his ways are inscrutable and impossible to understand such is the distance between his ways and our ways unless Yahweh chooses to reveal himself. He did so with king Ahaz and offered him a sign (virgin birth); Isa 7.11; “Ask thee a sign of the LORD thy God; ask it either in the depth, or in the height above”.</td>
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<td>The “sign” was Immanuel (God with us cf. John 3.2 and 3.12). The messianic sign was in the height (origins) and depth of the earth (resurrection). However, they did not need to go to extremes (height/depth) to find the “word”. Deut 30.14; “But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it”. Isa 55.11; “So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it”. In Romans 10.3-8 the apostle Paul combines Deut 30.12-14 with Isaiah to produce a new reading demonstrating a nexus between Deut and Isaiah. (See CEJBI, Vol. 2. No. 3. Jul 2008, pp.29-37; <a href="http://www.christadelphian-eibi.org/PA/efjournal08q3.pdf">http://www.christadelphian-eibi.org/PA/efjournal08q3.pdf</a>)</td>
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<td>Yahweh’s plans and decisions are beyond the comprehension of mere mortals (even kings).</td>
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<td>Yahweh’s ways are literally in the height and depth. The point is that Yahweh although inscrutable (height/depth) offered a sign (height/depth) to the Davidic dynasty concerning the origins (height) and resurrection (depth) of “God with us” (Immanuel) typified by the “suffering servant” Hezekiah. In other words they had no need to go to the height/depth or any other extreme as Yahweh had brought his word to them (to their level) so that they might believe and take it to heart.</td>
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v.4) Take away the dross from the silver, and there shall come forth a vessel for the finer.

Isa 1.25-26; “And I will turn my hand upon thee, and purely purge away thy dross, and take away all thy tin: And I will restore thy judges as at the first, and thy counsellors as at the beginning: afterward thou shalt be called, The city of righteousness, the faithful city.”

King Ahaz was faithless and practiced syncretism. He did not believe the messianic promise (height/depth). The nation and city of Jerusalem would be purged and refined. The vessel that emerged was Hezekiah and the faithful remnant. The Hebrew כֶּלִי (keli) means “vessel; utensil” (cf. KJV, ASV, NASB). But purging dross from silver does not produce a “vessel” for the silversmith. Some versions therefore render it “material” (e.g., NIV, NRSV). The LXX says “that it will be entirely pure.” So D. W. Thomas reads לְקַלָי (kalil) and translates it “purified completely” (“Notes on Some Passages in the Book of Proverbs,” VT 15 [1965]: 271-79; cf. NAB). W. McKane simply rearranges the line to say that the smith can produce a work of art (Proverbs [OTL], 580; cf. TEV “a thing of beauty”). The easiest explanation is that “vessel” is a metonymy of effect, “vessel” put for the material that goes into making it (such metonymies occur fairly often in Psalms and Proverbs). See Prov 26:23; “Burning lips and a wicked heart are like a potsherd covered with silver dross”.

v.5) Take away the wicked from before the king, and his throne shall be established (ך וּן kuwn) in righteousness.

Isa 7.9; “If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established” (ך וּן ‘aman).

Isa 9.7 (cf. Isa 16.5); “Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this”.

Michael Carasik observes; “Remove the wicked from the king’s presence, and his throne will be established in justice” (25:5). The first half of the verse recalls Hezekiah’s iconoclasm (2 Kgs 18:4); the second echoes 1 Kgs 2:12, “And Solomon sat upon the throne of his father David, and his rule was firmly established.”

Solomon set up the pillars (Jachin and Boaz) supporting the temple porch that carried the meaning “established in strength” (1 Kings 7.21). The covenant promise of Yahweh to David would establish the dynasty “forever” through a Davidic messiah....but they refused to believe.
The “king” here can refer either to Yahweh or to Hezekiah (as Yahweh’s agent). It is deliberately ambiguous. “Take away the wicked” could be a reference to Ahaz who died after a 16 year reign. It could be a reference to Shebna who was deported and killed. It may even be a reference to Sennacherib and his proxy Rabshakeh (or to all the above). In any case Hezekiah’s throne was established and the Davidic covenant vouched safe and in so doing Yahweh’s kingship and faithfulness is also established.

| v.6 | Put not forth thyself in the presence of the king, and stand not in the place of great men: | 2 Chron 26.16; “But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction: for he transgressed against the LORD his God, and went into the temple of the LORD to burn incense upon the altar of incense”. | If the “king” here is “Yahweh” then the one who forced himself into the divine presence is Uzziah. If the “king” is Hezekiah then Shebna is probably in view. The verse is applicable to both situations. |
| v.7 | For better it is that it be said unto thee, Come up hither; than that thou shouldest be put lower in the presence of the prince whom thine eyes have seen. | Isa 22.15-16; “Thus saith the Lord GOD of hosts, Go, get thee unto this treasurer, even unto Shebna, which is over the house, and say, What hast thou here? and whom hast thou here, that thou hast hewed thee out a sepulchre here, as he that heweth him out a sepulchre on high, and that graveth an habitation for himself in a rock?” | In Isa 22.15-16 Shebna is condemned for his royal ambitions in 2 Sam 7.18-19 David is invited into the divine presence. David does not force his way in (like Uzziah). In fact, he acknowledges that he has no right to be there as he is not a Levite (what is my house).

2 Sam 7.18-19
“Then went king David in, and sat before the LORD, and he said, Who am I, O Lord GOD? and what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto? 19 And this was yet a small thing in thy sight, O Lord GOD; but thou hast spoken also of thy servant's house for a great while to come. And is this the manner of man, O Lord GOD?” |
| v.8 | Go not forth hasty (מַהְרָה ἀργυρός) to strive, lest thou know not what to do in the end thereof, when thy neighbour hath put thee to shame. | Isa 8.3; “Then said the LORD to me, Call his name Mahershalalhashbaz”. hasty is booty, speedy is prey" | Isa 7.1; “And it came to pass in the days of Ahaz the son of Jotham, the son of Uzziah, king of Judah, that Rezin the king of Syria, and Pekah the son of Remaliah, king of Israel, went up toward Jerusalem to war against it, but could not prevail against it”. The kings of Syria and Israel were quick (hasty) to pick a fight – don’t start something you cannot finish. Similarly, Ahaz was warned that the Assyrians were coming. They would also be hasty to spoil the nation and they would also pick a fight that they could not win. |
| v.9 | Debate thy cause with thy neighbour himself; and discover not a secret to another: NIB v.9 If you argue your case with a neighbour, do not betray another man's confidence | See: Prov 11.13; Prov 20.19 | Repeated or similar Proverbs; see there for comments. The verse begins with the direct object רִיב (riv, “your case”) followed by the imperative from the same root, רִיב (riv, “argue”). It is paralleled by the negated Piel jussive. The construction of the clauses indicates that the first colon is foundational to the second: “Argue…but do not reveal,” or better, “When you argue…do not reveal.” |
| v.10 | Lest he that heareth it put thee to shame (חסד,ḥesid), and thine infamy turn not away. | See: Prov 16.28 | The Hebrew hsd (חסד, n-yḥsdk) occurs only in Prov 25.10 as a verb in the piel form; and it occurs twice more in the hitpael form הָסָד (ḥesid), in 2 Sam 22.26 and in Ps 18.25. Samuel 22 and Psalm 18 are parallel passages. The Strong’s reference for this entry is 2616 (NIDOTTE: G/K, 2873/2874). Strong’s makes no distinction and lists the occurrences as 2 Sam 22.26, Ps 18.25; Prov 25.10. The verb means, kindness, goodness or mercy in Sam22//Ps 18 and shame, reproach in Prov 25.10. It is difficult to understand such divergent (and opposed) meanings as the unpointed verbs are the same. The nom. form occurs in Prov 14.34 (Strong’s 2617); “Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach (חַסְדָּה, wēḥesed) to any people.” |
The noun דיבָּה (dibbah, “infamy; defame; evil report; whispering”) is used of an evil report here (e.g., Gen 37.2), namely a true report of evil doing. So if a person betrays another person’s confidence, he will never be able to live down the bad reputation he made as one who betrays secrets (cf. NIV). Before the title “Servant of the Lord” is applied to David in Psalm 18 it was a title given only to Moses (Deut. 34:5; Josh. 1:1, 2) and Joshua (Josh. 24:29). The “servant” is used in Isaiah both collectively (for the nation) and for an individual (Hezekiah). David refused to defend himself against Nabal’s slander by bringing an evil report against Saul and he was also persuaded by Abigail not to seek personal retribution; “I kept myself from mine iniquity” (Ps 18.23). Psalm 18 (although Davidic) is very applicable to the Hezekiah situation and Prov 25.10 seems to invert the meaning of הָסֶד (ḥṣd) from one of loyalty and faithfulness to shame and reproach. The exhortation is to retain integrity and not to justify yourself by sinking to the level of your opponent. In the Hezekiah situation it may be a reference to Rabshakeh who betrayed the confidence of the negotiators when he revealed everything to the bystanders (2 Kgs 18.26-27), Hezekiah’s response was silence. For Psalm 18 see;

v.11) A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver. The Hebrew text and the translation is extremely doubtful (see Toy and Lagarde, and BDB under the separate words). The phrase “a word fitly spoken” is rather strange – literally – “word/on-being- spoken/him/of-wheels” (dābār dābur ʿal-ʾāpnāyw). Johann P. Lange comments --אָּפְּנָׁיו, regarded by Bött., as well as by Z., and others as derived from אֹפָּן, wheel, the form is dual, the plural form with the same suffix being אֹּפָּנָיו; the meaning will then be “on its (pair of) wheels. But later expositors, as also some of the ancients, do not regard the word אָּפְּנָיו, (ophnayv,) as derived from אָפָן, (ophan,) a wheel [1] but from, אָפָנ, (ʿpn,) “to turn” as suggested by Orelli based on Abulwalid comparison of the Arabic (ʾiffan) ((ʿibban), also (ʿifan), whence (ʿaly ‘ifanihi), justo tempore), which, (according to Keil and Delitzsch) Orelli has shown in his Synon. der Zeitbegriffe, p. 21f., comes from the roots (af ab), to drive (from within) going out, time as consisting of individual moments, the one of which drives on the other, and thus denotes time as a course of succession.
The Hebrew for turn or “turn back” e.g. in Deut 1.7 is, פְּנוּ וּסְּעו (pĕnû ûsĕʿû) literally - face-about-you! and journey-you! Strong's ref., 6437, G/K 7155, פָׁנָה (pān) for “turn” or “turn back or around” etc cf. also “face” or the “front (side)” Strong's ref., 6440, G/K 7156, פָׁנִים (pānîm); to set the face towards, denotes movement, also pn is the verb “to turn” in CAL (Comprehensive Aramaic Lexicon) [2] All these words denoting movement or direction have pn in common (wheel, turn, face [towards]). The suggestion is that this proverb is a play on the cherub (wheels/face/turn) when the shadow on the sundial went backwards (Isa 38.7-8) because the sun was outshone by a far greater light source (the Shekinah glory) thereby redirecting (turning) the shadow. Time and seasons are based on the way the sun, moon and stars seemingly “move” and rotate in a circular course across the heavens. The “shadow” was moved backwards effectively demonstrating that Yahweh controls time and he grants fifteen years extension of life to Hezekiah. Note the phrase in Isa 38.7b----- yhwh 'et-haddābār hazze 'āsher dibbêr with the doubling of the use of dabar; “the LORD will do this thing (dabar) that he hath spoken” (dabar) which is similar to Prov 25.11. So, the dynamic translation “a word fitly spoken” is probably better translated as “a word timely spoken” with “timely” a play on the “turning/revolving/wheeling” of time (i.e., the shadow on the sundial) as well as the appropriateness (aptness) of the saying is like “apples of gold in pictures of silver” -- the Heb. picture, maskith seems to be used generally in the sense of “image,” “sculpture,” being derived from the verb רַכְרֵשׁ, “to see;” from this it comes to signify "ornament". Keil and Delitzsch state; “Since כסף, besides, signifies a metallic substance, one appears to be under the necessity of thinking of apples of gold; cf. the brazen pomegranates” (but they then argue that “golden apples is a poetic description of oranges). Pomegranates (rimmown,) are not the same as apples (tappuwach,) apples may have been deliberately chosen because of their association with Ephraim and Manasseh (cf. Josh 17.8 and the border town “apple city”) the tribes appealed to by Hezekiah. The apple is used to describe the bridegroom and also the bride in Song of Solomon (Cant. 2.3, 5; 7.8; 8.5) which is an allegory based on the Hezekiah reformation (courtship) of the northern tribes. Various commentators link the silver with filigree, or suggest baskets or chains but no one makes the leap to 1 Kings 7.17 where networks (interwoven lattice work) and chains are engraved together with pomegranates to decorate the two pillars (Jachin and Boaz) that speak of the establishment of the Davidic dynasty and of a multitudinous seed. The timely word spoken by Yahweh to Hezekiah saved him from death and established the Davidic dynasty. Such a word was indeed like the “golden apples” resting among the silver filigree work on the columns that spoke of establishing in strength. NOTES: [1] The short form of wheel, פן, (ohan,) is פּן , which is pointed as, פּן (ophan,) the unpointed form is interchangeable effectively. Orelli interprets פּן, (turn) from פּן, (wheel).

<table>
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<tr>
<th>v.12) As an earring of gold, and an ornament of fine gold, so is a wise reprover upon an obedient ear.</th>
<th>Job 42.11; Then came there unto him all his brethren, and all his sisters, and all they that had been of his acquaintance before, and did eat bread with him in his house: and they bemoaned him, and comforted him over all the evil that the LORD had brought upon him: every man also gave him a piece of money, and every one an earring of gold.</th>
<th>The story of Job is a parabolic play based on the Assyrian crisis. The restored Job is pictured receiving an earring of gold from all his relatives and acquaintances signifying his “obedient ear”. It was Elihu (and Yahweh himself) that spoke the truth to Job (Hezekiah) and reproved him. The friends of Job, on the other hand, did not speak correctly concerning Yahweh and their reproof and accusations were wrong. In the end it was Job who made intercession for his friends and Hezekiah who made intercession for the nation.</th>
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<tr>
<td>v.13) As the cold of snow in the time of harvest, so is a faithful messenger to them that send him: for he refresheth the soul of his masters.</td>
<td>See also verse 25 2 Kings 19.2; And he sent Eliakim, which was over the household, and Shebna the scribe, and the elders of the priests, covered with sackcloth, to Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz. 2 Kings 19.35; And it came to pass that night, that the angel of the LORD went out, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians an hundred fourscore and five thousand: and when they arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses.</td>
<td>Michael Carasik; “Like the coldness of snow at harvest time is a trusty messenger to those who send him; he lifts his master’s spirits [lit.: restores his master’s life]” (25:13). The messenger would be those Hezekiah sent to Isaiah in 2 Kgs 19:2. Though “trust” here is not from the root bth, the contrast with the perfidiousness (from the Israelite point of view) of Sennacherib’s messenger (see below), would be well taken. Alternatively or additionally, the messenger might be taken for the angel of 2 Kgs 19:35 who effected the rescue of the city, and “restoring the life” for a reference to Hezekiah’s recovery from life-threatening illness, which follows this story”. Of course, the reference might be to Isa 52.7 where the messengers bring the good tidings (gospel) that the enemy (Assyria) has been defeated and the captives (POW’s) released; “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!”</td>
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<td><strong>v.14</strong></td>
<td>Whoso boasteth himself of a false gift is like clouds and wind without rain.</td>
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<td><strong>NAB</strong></td>
<td>Like clouds and wind when no rain follows is the man who boastfully promises what he never gives.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>v.14</strong></td>
<td>This speaks of someone promising something that they cannot deliver. In verse 23 the north wind is mentioned as bringing the rain. Any rain usually comes from the west (from the sea) as with Elijah (1 Kgs 18.44) not from the north. The north wind brings empty clouds without rain. The one “boasting” is Sennacherib and his servant Rabshakeh; the “northern” invader who was an empty “bag of wind” like the clouds and wind without rain.</td>
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<th><strong>v.15</strong></th>
<th>By long forbearing is a prince persuaded, and a soft tongue breaketh the bone.</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>CLV</strong></td>
<td>By slowness of anger a captain can be enticed, And a tender tongue can break the rib.</td>
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The commentators equate the “prince” or “ruler” in v.15 with a “judge” who has to be gently persuaded. The Hebrew term qatsiyn (ךַּתְּיִן) occurs only 12 times and is particularly prominent in Isaiah and Micah. Although they were expected to exercise judgement (as Micah makes clear) the Hebrew is more correctly translated as “captain, commander or ruler” cf. “heads of the house of Jacob” (Micah 3.9). The use of qatsiyn in Isaiah 22.3 is particularly relevant as that chapter condemns Shebna, “which is over the house” (Isa 22.15). Also, nearly all the translations render pathah (ןַחַד) as persuaded when it can equally (and more fittingly) be rendered enticed as for example in Prov 16.29 and 1.10; “My son, if sinners entice (pathah) thee, consent thou not”. The CLV (Concordant Literal Version 2.1) produces a more accurate rendering of the translation. It can be garnered from Isaiah 22 that Shebna was involved in some sort of government coup (Shebna is one of the qatsiyn in Isaiah 22.3). He was taking advantage of Hezekiah’s illness. As one of the negotiators sent out to parley with Rabshakeh it can only be assumed that he was enticed to accept an underhand deal that would see Shebna establishing a dynasty under Assyrian protection. The “tongue” is a metonymy of cause; and so the expression here refers to soft or gentle speech. This fits well with the parallel idea of patience (“long of anger”) – through a calm patient persuasion much can be accomplished. Some English versions relate this figure directly to the persuasion of a ruler in the previous line (cf. TEV “can even convince rulers”). The argument probably went along the lines – “Hezekiah is dying anyway…..make a deal with us….we hear that Hezekiah has no heir to the throne….we will help you establish a dynasty….once he is dead offer us terms for peace”.

See verse 23

 Isa 10.15; “Shall the axe boast itself against him that heweth therewith?”

2 Kgs 18.35; “Who are they among all the gods of the countries, that have delivered their country out of mine hand, that the LORD should deliver Jerusalem out of mine hand?”

This speaks of someone promising something that they cannot deliver. In verse 23 the north wind is mentioned as bringing the rain. Any rain usually comes from the west (from the sea) as with Elijah (1 Kgs 18.44) not from the north. The north wind brings empty clouds without rain. The one “boasting” is Sennacherib and his servant Rabshakeh; the “northern” invader who was an empty “bag of wind” like the clouds and wind without rain.
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<th>verse</th>
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<tr>
<td>v.16</td>
<td>Hast thou found honey? eat so much as is sufficient for thee, lest thou be filled therewith, and vomit it.</td>
<td>See verse 27. Tasting a “little honey” can enlighten the eyes (cf. 1 Sam 14.29) but over indulgence can make one sick. Eating honey is likened to obtaining wisdom (cf. Prov 24.13-14) but such knowledge must be acquired legitimately (cf. Gen 2.17) it cannot be “grasped” forcefully and certainly not used for the purpose of self-aggrandizement. Honey is again mentioned in verse 27 (about Shebna) where over indulgence is contrasted with self-aggrandizement (“glory”) in other words it is compared with the attempt of Adam to become like the Elohim when eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.</td>
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<td>v.17</td>
<td>Withdraw thy foot from thy neighbour’s house; lest he be weary of thee, and so hate thee.</td>
<td>Isa 1.11; To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the LORD: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats. Isa 1.14; Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them. The Heb. reaˋ (עֱַֽעֲרַ) which is usually translated as neighbour, associate or friend is also translated 23 times in the KJV (total 102) as the more neutral “another”. In other words - “Let your foot be seldom in another’s house”. This house need not be a neighbour’s house or a friend’s house, simply the house of the “other” (another) in this case God’s house. The Heb. word for withdraw here is often translated as “precious”. In other words the appearance of your foot should be “precious” i.e., it should appear sparingly (seldom) in another’s house. The modern saying is that “familiarity breeds contempt”. Similar language is used by Isaiah – Yahweh is “full” or “satiated” by the sacrifices (“I am weary to bear them”; Isa 1.14) that are constantly brought to his house (cf. “house of my glory”; Isa 60.7) and he “hates” their feasts (Isa 1.14). They would not think of barging in uninvited into a neighbour’s (another) house so what made them think it was acceptable to force their foot into the door of Yahweh’s house? Think here especially of King Uzziah who was struck with leprosy for attempting to force himself into the house (temple), with the leprous king becoming symbolic of the nation; “….the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint” (Isa 1.5).</td>
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<td>Prov 25</td>
<td>322</td>
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<td><strong>v.18</strong></td>
<td>A man that beareth false witness against his neighbour is a maul, and a sword, and a sharp arrow.</td>
<td>A repeated theme in Proverbs: 6.19 12.17-18 14.5,25 19.5,9,28 21.28 24.28 25.18</td>
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| **v.19** | Confidence (מבִּיתָךְ mibtach) in an unfaithful man in time of trouble is like a broken tooth, and a foot out of joint. | **2 Kings 19:3;**  
“And they said unto him, Thus saith Hezekiah, This day is a day of trouble, and of rebuke, and blasphemy: for the children are come to the birth, and there is not strength to bring forth”. | Carasik observes; “I believe that the combination of yom tsarah and the root bth in the concluding phrase of the proverb, mivtah boged be-yom tsarah, was the “germinal linguistic link” between Prov. 25 and 2 Kgs 18-19. The day of the Rabshakeh’s speech to the besieged citizens of Jerusalem, then, was the yom tsarah par excellence—literally the textbook case of a yom tsarah. Hezekiah, however, was yaskil enough to know that his day of distress was also a day of tokhahat, of chastisement. As we shall see, he also knew better than the hypothetical subject of Prov. 25:19 where to place his trust. The issue of trust (mivtah) which is key to the understanding of Prov. 25:19 is also a key motif in the story of Sennacherib’s siege of Jerusalem. Various forms of the verb bth occur a total of nine times there. Seven of them are in the speech of the Rabshakeh, who challenges Judah’s reliance on Egypt and on the Lord. In the end of the story as told here, of course, Hezekiah’s reliance on the Lord did prove wise, and the siege was lifted. But the redactor of the books of Kings has already signalled this to us in the same introductory passage where the word yaskil was used. 2 Kgs 18:5 tells us of Hezekiah, “He trusted (bth) only in the LORD the God of Israel.” Now, outside this story, there is only one place in the books of Kings where the root bth occurs. In 1 Kgs 5:5 we read, “All the days of Solomon, Judah and Israel from Dan to Beer-sheba dwelt in safety (labetah), everyone under his own vine and under his own fig tree”. |
v.20) As he that taketh away a garment in cold weather, and as vinegar upon nitre, so is he that singeth songs to an heavy heart.

Job 16.1-4;
“Then Job answered and said, I have heard many such things: miserable comforters are ye all. Shall vain words have an end? or what emboldeneth thee that thou answerest? I also could speak as ye do: if your soul were in my soul’s stead, I could heap up words against you, and shake mine head at you”.

Job typifies Hezekiah and is parabolic of the Assyrian crisis. Job and Hezekiah could find no comfort from their companions from which the English expression (Merriam Webster Dictionary); “Job’s Comforter” (noun): a person who discourages or depresses while seemingly giving comfort and consolation. Not only did they give no comfort, they ended up blaming him and accusing him, all the while bring spurious theological arguments and dubious philosophies. They did not speak that “which was right” about God (but Job did). Even so, Job himself needed to be taken to task – God did not owe him an explanation. God does not have to “justify” himself to man. His dealings are beyond our ken. It is enough to know that he is all wise and righteous and will always deal righteously even when (in our eyes) in may not seem so.

v.21) If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink:

2 Chron 28.15;
“And the men which were expressed by name rose up, and took the captives, and with the spoil clothed all that were naked among them, and arrayed them, and shod them, and gave them to eat and to drink, and anointed them, and carried all the feeble of them upon asses, and brought them to Jericho, the city of palm trees, to their brethren: then they returned to Samaria”.

At the urging of the prophet Oded, the men of Ephraim took the captives (their brethren) from the tribe of Judah in the time of Ahaz (father of Hezekiah) and ministered to them before releasing them (cf. Isa 7.3; Shearjashub – “a remnant shall return”)

Good things should be offered even to the “wicked” because that is what God does for us! Rain falls on the just and the unjust and it is the divine wish that all repent and turn to him. The likelihood is however, that such magnanimous forgiving behaviour will be despised and regarded as “weakness” and therefore invoke divine punishment.
| Prov 25:23 | Joel 2.20-23; | The KJV has “drive” away (rain) most of the other translations have “bring” (rain). The north wind drives away rain. So St. Jerome (Ventus Aquilo dissipat pluvias), Symmachus, Aben Ezra, and others. The Heb. (חֻוּל, chuwl) has the following usage in the AV - pain 6, formed 5, bring forth 4, pained 4, tremble 4, travail 4, dance 2, calve 2, grieved 2, grievous 2, wounded 2, shake 2, misc 23; 62. Therefore it can mean something like “twist” or “writhe” or “whirl” - it denotes movement (sometimes painful i.e., giving birth) sometimes erratic (dancing). If the KJV is accepted as a correct translation, then the north wind is preventing the rain (carried by the west wind) from falling. The “north wind” is “twisting” or “whirling” the rain clouds (driving them away) not forming them. Even in passages where chuwl is translated “formed” such as Psalm 90.2 it is better translated as “travail”; Before the mountains were brought forth (born CLV), or ever thou hadst formed (and-you-are-travailing CLV) the earth and the world. This is birthing language........describing movements “twist”, “writhe”, etc.

So, just like the “certainty” of the “northern wind” (Assyrian invasion) preventing the rain (times of refreshing i.e., the outpouring of the spirit = messianic blessings) so also the certainty of the righteous anger of Yahweh would prevent the proud and blasphemous tongue (Rabshakeh the mouth piece of Sennacherib).

This proverb is intended ironically. There never was any absolute certainty of the north wind driving (twisting away) away the rain. The north wind blew at Yahweh’s behest just as the axe chopped at his behest. Yahweh employed the axe (or wind) to remove the dead wood but Assyria sealed its own fate once the “ax” started “boasting” (Isa 10.15), blaspheming and ridiculing Yahweh. It was now Yahweh’s turn to scorn, laugh and enact his anger against the enemy.

<p>| The north wind driveth away (חֻוּל, chuwl) rain: so doth an angry countenance a backbiting tongue. | The north wind will remove far off from you the northern army, and will drive him into a land barren and desolate…. and he will cause to come down for you the rain, the former rain, and the latter rain in the first month”. |
| Prov 25:23 | Isa 37.22-23; |
| The north wind brings forth rain And a backbiting tongue an angry look. | “…The virgin, the daughter of Zion, hath despised thee, and laughed thee to scorn…. Whom hast thou reproached and blasphemed? and against whom hast thou exalted thy voice, and lifted up thine eyes on high? even against the Holy One of Israel”. |
| NetBible: The north wind brings forth rain, And a gossiping tongue brings forth an angry look. | Isa 26.18; |
| We have been with child, we have been in pain (חֻוּל, chuwl), we have as it were brought forth wind; we have not wrought any deliverance in the earth; neither have the inhabitants of the world fallen”. | We have been with child, we have been in pain (חֻוּל, chuwl), we have as it were brought forth wind; we have not wrought any deliverance in the earth; neither have the inhabitants of the world fallen”. |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>v.24)</th>
<th>It is better to dwell in the corner of the housetop, than with a brawling woman and in a wide house.</th>
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<td>Prov 19.13; Prov 21.9,19; Prov 27.15,16</td>
<td>See also commentary on Prov 17.25. The “contentious woman” is the antithesis of the vitreous woman; “Then said his wife unto him [Job], Dost thou still retain thine integrity? curse God, and die” (Job 2.9). The contentious wife represents the sapping of morale through the constant sniping and discouragement that Hezekiah received from the “unfaithful element” within Israel. They did not support his cause and encouraged him to abandon God and resign himself to his fate.</td>
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<td>v.25)</td>
<td>As cold waters to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country.</td>
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<td>See also verse 13 2 Kings 19.36-37; So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed, and went and returned, and dwelt at Nineveh. And it came to pass, as he was worshipping in the house of Nisroch his god, that Adrammelech and Sharezer his sons smote him with the sword: and they escaped into the land of Armenia. And Esarhaddon his son reigned in his stead.</td>
<td>Michael Carasik says; “Like cold water to a parched throat is good news from a distant land” (25:25). The good news would have been that of Sennacherib’s assassination by two of his sons, which in 2 Kgs 19:36-7 seems to follow immediately upon his return to Nineveh, rather than 20 years later as it actually did. That the murder could have been viewed not just as a historical note but in an extremely positive way is confirmed by the tradition preserved in B. Sanh. 96b, according to which the two sons became converts to Judaism”.</td>
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<td>v.26)</td>
<td>A righteous man falling down before the wicked is as a troubled fountain, and a corrupt spring.</td>
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<td>2 Kings 18.31-32; “Hearken not to Hezekiah: for thus saith the king of Assyria, Make an agreement with me by a present, and come out to me, and then eat ye every man of his own vine, and every one of his fig tree, and drink ye every one the waters of his cistern:</td>
<td>The verb מָׁט(mat) means “to give way; to move.” This probably refers to the integrity of the righteous being lost – comparing it to moving [off course]. T. T. Perowne writes, “To see a righteous man moved from his steadfastness through fear or favour in the presence of the wicked is as disheartening as to find the stream turbid and defiled at which you were longing to quench your thirst” (Proverbs, 161). But the line may refer to the loss of social standing and position by the righteous due to the plots of the wicked – just as someone muddied the water, someone made the righteous slip from his place.</td>
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**v.26** A righteous man who falters before the wicked is like a murky spring and a polluted well.

Until I come and take you away to a land like your own land, a land of corn and wine, a land of bread and vineyards, a land of oil olive and of honey, that ye may live, and not die: and hearken not unto Hezekiah, when he persuadeth you, saying, The LORD will deliver us.”

Shebna listened to Assyrian propaganda. He made a deal with the devil to save his own skin. He would stay behind in Jerusalem as an Assyrian puppet, while many others would be deported to a “land of milk and honey” (sic). It heralded the end of the Davidic dynasty. They were promised that they would drink from their own wells but the cisterns would be in a strange land under a strange god—it was a lie—akin to drinking from a polluted well.

**v.27** It is not good to eat much honey: so for men to search their own glory is not glory.

See verse 16

Isa 22.18; He will surely violently turn and toss thee like a ball into a large country: there shalt thou die, and there the chariots of thy glory shall be the shame of thy lord’s house.

This is about Shebna and his betrayal as is the previous verse. Elijah had been taken away by a whirlwind of fire causing his successor Elisha to exclaim; “My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof” (2 Kgs 2.12). Elisha had been promised a doubling of power if he managed to see the glory and so become a worthy successor to Elijah. In contrast when the schemer Shebna had his plans unmasked to succeed Hezekiah he fled the city. He failed in his attempt to escape the siege in his own chariot and to outrun the Assyrian cavalry. His chariot of glory became a chariot of shame; he was not a worthy successor and would die as a captive in Assyria.

**v.28** He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls.

Isa 22.5; “For it is a day of trouble, and of treading down, and of perplexity by the Lord GOD of hosts in the valley of vision, breaking down the walls, and of crying to the mountains”.

Isa 22.10; “And ye have numbered the houses of Jerusalem, and the houses have ye broken down to fortify the wall”.

Michael Carasik says; “Like an open city without walls is a man whose temper is uncurbed” (25:28). Like 25: 9, this might describe the danger Jerusalem would have been in had Hezekiah not been the sage he was”.

Isaiah 22 speaks of the condemnation of the “rulers” (v.3) and particularly Shebna. My servant (Hezekiah) is called to Eliakim (that is how it should read in v.20) and the servant is clothed and given the “Key of David”. This is a messianic passage. The “nail” of Shebna is removed and the “nail” of the suffering servant is hammered home. EVERYTHING would hang on that nail. Truly, God has “nailed it”.

Isaiah 22 speaks of the condemnation of the “rulers” (v.3) and particularly Shebna. My servant (Hezekiah) is called to Eliakim (that is how it should read in v.20) and the servant is clothed and given the “Key of David”. This is a messianic passage. The “nail” of Shebna is removed and the “nail” of the suffering servant is hammered home. EVERYTHING would hang on that nail. Truly, God has “nailed it”.
Proverbs 26

The first twelve verses of this chapter are sometimes called “the Book of Fools” because they deal with the actions of fools followed by what many call “the Book of Sluggards” (vv. 13-16) and nine proverbs against malice and deceit (vv.20-28).

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<tr>
<th>Proverbs 26</th>
<th>Inter-text</th>
<th>Comments</th>
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<td>v.1) As snow in summer, and as rain in harvest, so honour is not seemly for a fool.</td>
<td>1 Sam 12.17; “Is it not wheat harvest today? I will call unto the LORD, and he shall send thunder and rain; that ye may perceive and see that your wickedness is great, which ye have done in the sight of the LORD, in asking you a king”.</td>
<td>According to Jerome, Comm. in Amos 4.7, rain in harvest time is in Palestine a thing not heard of, and even impossible. In 1 Sam 12.7 a sudden thunderstorm at this season appears as a miracle from God as from October to November “the sky is almost always clear,” (Robinson, Pal. II. Proverbs 307). The Hebrew קָבָוד (kabowd) for “honour” is often translated “glory” (156x out of 200 in the KJV). In Samuel Yahweh was displeased at what amounted to a rejection of his kingship. God does not give his glory to another (Isa 42.8) this proverb is also related to kingship namely the giving of “glory” to Shebna (the chariots of thy glory shall be the shame of thy lord's house: Isa 22.18). Shebna is the man “who would be king”, but giving Shebna glory/honour is as incongruous as a rain storm during harvest – which itself was a sign of wickedness at “asking for a king”. Rejection of Yahweh’s agent (Hezekiah) was tantamount to rejecting Yahweh’s kingship. NetBible adds; “Honour” in this passage probably means respect, external recognition of worth, accolades, advancement to high position, etc. All of these would be out of place with a fool; so the sage is warning against elevating or acclaiming those who are worthless. See also J. A. Emerton, “Notes on Some Passages in the Book of Proverbs,” VT 15 (1965): 271-79”.</td>
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<td>v.2) As the bird by wandering, as the swallow by flying, so the curse causeless shall not come.</td>
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<td><strong>Isa 31.5;</strong></td>
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<td>“As birds flying, so will the LORD of hosts defend Jerusalem; defending also he will deliver it; and passing over he will preserve it”</td>
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<td><strong>Heb</strong> “causeless curse” (KJV similar) describes an undeserved curse (cf. NIV, NRSV). The Hebrew word translated “causeless” is the adverb from חָׁנַּן (khanan); it means “without cause; gratuitous.” The MT has the negative with the verb “to enter; to come” to mean “will not come” (לֹּא תָּבֹא, loʾ tavoʾ). This is interpreted to mean “will not come to rest” or “will not come home.”</td>
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<td>This proverb is a reference to the <strong>Passover</strong> with the angels likened to “birds” hovering above or “passing over”. Those who kept the Passover would be protected from harm the curse (of death) would have no cause to alight on the faithful. In contrast the Assyrian army was destroyed by the angel of death. The ellipsis should be supplied:</td>
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<td><strong>As a birds hovering and as sparrows flying (and passing over) so also the curse without a cause (will pass over).</strong></td>
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<td>v.3) A whip for the horse, a bridle for the ass, and a rod for the fool's back.</td>
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<td><strong>See;</strong></td>
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<td>Prov 10.13; Prov 17.10; Prov 19.25; Prov 27.22;</td>
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<td>Ps 32.9;</td>
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<td>“Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto thee”.</td>
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<td>See the comments on similar proverbs. Ephraim is referred to as a wild ass (Hos 8.9) and Assyria required a “bridle” (2 Kgs 19.28) to force a change of direction – the “fool” in this case is Sennacherib and his proxy Rabshakeh who challenged Yahweh (cf. Ps 14.1).</td>
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v.4) Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest thou also be like unto him.

v.5) Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own conceit.

2 Kings 18.36;
"But the people held their peace, and answered him not a word: for the king’s commandment was, saying, Answer him not”.

2 Kings 19:21-22;
“This is the word that the LORD hath spoken concerning him: The virgin the daughter of Zion hath despised thee, and laughed thee to scorn; the daughter of Jerusalem hath shaken her head at thee. Whom hast thou reproached and blasphemed? and against whom hast thou exalted thy voice, and lifted up thine eyes on high? even against the Holy One of Israel”.

The proverb in v. 4 apparently contradicts the proverb in v. 5 and commentators suggest either different settings (e.g. secular vs. religious matters – so, the Rabbi’s) or different import (respond only to significant issues—so, W. G. Plaut, Proverbs, 266) or that the proverbs are in deliberate tension dependent on outcome e.g. becoming stupid/preventing conceit (See B. Waltke, The Book of Proverbs [NICOT], 348-350.)

The commentators fail to contextualize the proverbs – the fool is Rabshakeh who was arrogant and blasphemous and told the Jews that they would soon be drinking their own piss and eating their own shit (v.27) due to the siege. The instruction of Hezekiah was not to answer him. Instead, Hezekiah withdrew into the temple with the letter (message) from Sennacherib that Rabshakeh had delivered.

The answer that came from Yahweh (via the prophet Isaiah) matched the scornful challenge of Sennacherib. Yahweh would despise and laugh (cf. Ps.2.4). The daughter of Jerusalem would “shake her head” (in derision and scorn). God would have the “last laugh”......the folly (scorn/derision) of the fool would be returned in full measure.

The difference between v.4 and v.5 is that v.4 is counselling the human response – don’t answer the stupid arrogant fool, instead take the problem to God.

The divine response is in verse 5 is that the scorn and derision should be returned on the head of the fool --- the fool is being warned that God will not be mocked and that the conceited fool will suffer divine derision and punishment.
He that sendeth a message by the hand of a fool cutteth off the feet, and drinketh damage.

The “feet” are a metonymy for a “messenger” – the feet that bring glad tidings are beautiful (Isa 52.7) not so in the case of Rabshakeh the messenger of Sennacherib who reproached the Lord. This proverb is intimately connected with the threat posed by Rabshakeh in 2 Kgs 18.27 as it also contains the same key root forms for drink (שֹׁתֶה) and feet (רגל). The word “feet” is not apparent in the English translation but it literally reads; To drink their piss-waters-of-the-feet (i.e. to drink the urine they normally relieve themselves of). They were threatened with drinking their own piss-waters-of-the-feet in contrast Sennacherib would not drink piss but drink violence in fact his piss-waters-of-the-feet would end up cutting of his feet. The image is of a man violently relieving himself with so much pressure so that the urine stream cuts off his own feet! These are the very feet that Sennacherib had boasted that the “soles of my feet have dried up all the rivers of the besieged places (Isa 37.25). The proverb is about the feet of Sennacherib in a literal and in a metaphorical sense – sending a stupid messenger (your feet) with a violent message is like cutting of your own feet (with a violent piss stream). No one would be so stupid to cut-off their feet so why send a stupid messenger? The Hebrew for violence (חָמָס) occurs first in the flood account of Genesis 6. God would wipe out humans because the earth was “filled” with injustice, cruelty and violence. The army of Sennacherib was about to be destroyed. Note also that Rabshakeh is a title Rab (great/chief) Shakeh (cup bearer). The chief cupbearer was a figure of state and very influential. Probably a deported Jewish prince (and traitor) educated and castrated (eunuch?) in the royal court of Assyria. The word Shakeh is derived from שַׁקה (shaqah) to give to drink or irrigate compare שָתָה (shathah) as in drink (shathah) piss-waters-of-the-feet.
v.7) The legs of the lame are not equal: so is a parable in the mouth of fools.

2 Sam 5:6; Except thou take away the blind and the lame, thou shalt not come in hither: thinking, David cannot come in hither.

See also verse 9

When David besieged Jerusalem the Jebusites placed the blind and lame on the walls to taunt David...as if to say that the city was so impregnable that it could be defended by cripples. The “lame” on the walls were mocking David. With Rabshakeh the reverse is true, namely, the men on the wall are silent but Rabshakeh is playing the part of the arrogant, scornful “lame” who mocked David. The Heb “thighs dangle from the lame.” The verb is דַּלְּי (dalyu), from דָּלָה (dalah) or דָּלַּל (dalal) bi-forms which mean “to hang down” and possibly by extension “to let down/lower/below” and “to draw [water]” i.e. lowering a bucket into a well and drawing it up. The mocking of the Lord’s anointed was like a parable in the mouth of a fool because such taunting is lame. In English we have a similar meaning when we speak of a “lame joke” – a cliché, not funny etc. Finally it should be noted that the unpointed Heb for lame, פּסח is the same as “to pass over” used to describe the Passover in Exod 12:13 and Isa 31:5 (pacach). The Assyrian army was destroyed at the Passover so a wordplay between lame (picceach) and pass over (pacach) is probably intended as the root word means “to skip over” hence to “limp”. A reference to Jacob may also be intended as he was touched in the thigh making him lame (Gen 32:31-32). The idea being that God was defending Jerusalem and was therefore taunting Rabshakeh with his “lame” servant Jacob (represented by the dying king Hezekiah). Such multiple associations are not beyond scripture with allusions and echoes pointing simultaneously to the siege, the Passover, lame Jacob, lame defenders and lame taunts. In the end the fool would trip over his unequal, lame parable and Yahweh’s anointed would be victorious.
v.8) As he that bindeth a stone in a sling, so is he that giveth honour to a fool.

JPS v.8) As a small stone in a heap of stones, so is he that giveth honour to a fool.

Isa 22.16; ‘What hast thou here? and whom hast thou here, that thou hast hewed thee out a sepulchre here, as he that heweth him out a sepulchre on high, and that graveth an habitation for himself in a rock?’

See verse 1
Also Prov 19:10; Prov 30:22

This verse is translated incorrectly in nearly all the versions. The closest translation is found in the Jewish Publication Society (JPS). Firstly “binding” in the Heb. (binding) has qere and a kethiv reading demonstrating that the scribes made a marginal note of written variations of this word. It is translated “pebble” in 2 Sam 17.13 and “grain” in Amos 9.9 and “small stone” in the JPS version. Secondly the word “sling” מרגמה (mrgmh) occurs only here and therefore the translation is at best a guess. The root r-g-m (רַגְמָ) means stone in Aramaic. NIDOTTE (Vol.3 p.1050) states; “the nom. margêmâ in Prov 26:8 is obscure. The NIV follows the LXX and translates “sling”, but HALAT suggests “heap of stones”. McKane (Proverbs, 1970, 598) insists that margêmâ must be translated “sling” or “cairn”. A “cairn” is a pile of stones usually erected as a memorial. The Heb. is also similar to the nom. מרגע (margûa’) or, מרגעה (margēʿâ) for resting place (see NIDOTTE G/K 8088 and 8089 Vol.3 p.1053).

Just as a chip (pebble) is incongruous within a stone mausoleum so is anyone who accords honour to a fool. Shebna carved a resting place for his dynasty out of the rock but his “glory” (same word as honour) would be the “shame of his lord’s house” (Isa 22.18). The NIV has “you (Shebna) disgrace to your master's house!” and the LXE has “the house of thy prince to be trodden down”. Shebna’s self glorification would come to an end. He would not even get to enjoy the grandiose rock tomb that he was constructing to intern his “royal dynasty” (compare the pharaohs) as he was destined to perish in a foreign land.
v. 9: As a thorn goeth up into the hand of a drunkard, so is a parable in the mouth of fools.

v. 10: The great God that formed all things both rewardeth the fool, and rewardeth transgressors.

This proverb is about the Drunkards of Ephraim in Isa 28.1. They had a "drunken parable" about living in the "moment" and making an agreement "with hell". They were literally drunken fools. The picture is one of seizing a thornbush and having the thorn pierce the hand (עָׁלָה בְּיַד־ʿalah vyad). A drunk does not know how to handle a thornbush because he cannot control his movements and so gets hurt. The "thorn" is also a symbol of the "curse" e.g., they are so drunk that they take hold of the curse rather than allowing the "right hand" (NetBible, Isa 41.13) to hold them (through the prophets and Hezekiah). In other words, God reaches out to help them (through the prophets and Hezekiah) but they are so drunk that they grab hold of a thornbush during the siege and told each other drunken proverbs.

See also Prov 23.35:

"They have stricken me, and I was not sick; they have beaten me, and I felt it not: when shall I awake? I will seek it yet again."
| Prov 26:334 | This verse supports a word play on Rabshakeh the “great” or “chief” cupbearer now becomes the “great” hire (mercenary). The word **rab** (רַב) speaks for itself and hire (or wages) is the **Heb. root šēkār** (שָׁכָר) which is similar (phonetically) to the Heb. root **šāqē** (שָׁקָה) for “drink” as in **rab-šāqē** (Rabshakeh). The CLV translates the word as “hire”...... “Yet the hire of the stupid person and his hirer shall pass away”. In other words RAB SHAKAR is a sound play on RAB SHAQEH depicting him as a (traitorous) mercenary. The CLV translation (Concordant Literal Version) is the closest to expressing this. The suggested translation of this verse is:

**Great (RAB) travails and wounding, yet the hire (SAKAR) and his hirer shall pass away.**

The above translation retains “wound” (NIV/NetBible etc) and also “travail” (CLV) which is the same **Heb. word (קהר)** used in Prov 25.23 (see comment there) associated with the pain, travail and “twisting” caused by the northern invader. The “hire” is the mercenary Rabshakeh and the “hirer” is Sennacherib.

| CLV v.10 | Much travails forth all the more, Yet the hire of the stupid person and his hirer shall pass away |
| NIV v.10 | Like an archer who wounds at random is he who hires a fool or any passer-by. |
| LXE v.10 | All the flesh of fools endures much hardship; for their fury is brought to nought. |

<p>| v.11 | As a dog returneth to his vomit, so a fool returneth to his folly. |
| Isa 30.2 | “That walk to go down into Egypt, and have not asked at my mouth; to strengthen themselves in the strength of Pharaoh, and to trust in the shadow of Egypt!” |
| Isa 31.1 | “Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help; and stay on horses, and trust in chariots, because they are many; and in horsemen, because they are very strong; but they look not unto the Holy One of Israel, neither seek the LORD!” |
| The prophet Isaiah had warned them that Egypt was untrustworthy; “Lo, thou trustest in the staff of this broken reed, on Egypt; whereon if a man lean, it will go into his hand, and pierce it: so is Pharaoh king of Egypt to all that trust in him” (Isa 36.6). The apostle Peter cites this proverb (2 Pet 2.22) because returning to Judaism was akin to returning to the bondage (slavery) of Egypt. Whenever the nation faced trouble Egypt was the “default” position even the prophet Jeremiah warned them; “Saying, No; but we will go into the land of Egypt, where we shall see no war, nor hear the sound of the trumpet, nor have hunger of bread; and there will we dwell” (Jer. 42.14). Returning to Egypt was like a dog licking up his vomit. |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>v.12) Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit?</th>
<th>Joshua 2.18; “Behold, when we come into the land, thou shalt bind this line of scarlet thread (tiqvah) in the window which thou didst let us down by: and thou shalt bring thy father, and thy mother, and thy brethren, and all thy father’s household, home unto thee”.</th>
<th>Previously it was noted that the Heb. (tiqvah) hope is often associated with having offspring particularly “messianic hope” first used in conjunction with Rahab (Josh 2.1) then in Ruth (1.12). Both Rahab and Ruth became matriarchal progenitors of the messiah. To have “no hope” is to hold no stake in messianic deliverance promised to David. Shebna attempted to replace the Davidic dynasty effectively Shebna cut himself off from the messianic promises (hope). If he had only lowered a “scarlet thread” (hope) from his window (like Rahab) and trusted in divine deliverance (and in Hezekiah the suffering servant) his household would have been saved. Instead he died (without hope) in a foreign land. The Heb word for “conceit” is “eye” (ayin) e.g. “wise in his own eyes” a word first used in the temptation account in Gen 3.5-7. This is about thwarted ambition by the man “who would be king”.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>v.13) The slothful man saith, There is a lion in the way; a lion is in the streets.</td>
<td>Prov 22.13; The slothful man saith, There is a lion without, I shall be slain in the streets.</td>
<td>Heb “in the broad plazas”; NAB, NASB “in the square.” This proverb makes the same point as Prov 22.13 – the “lion” is Assyria – see comments there.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v.14) As the door turneth upon his hinges, so doth the slothful upon his bed.</td>
<td>Prov 6.9-10; How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? when wilt thou arise out of thy sleep? Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep.</td>
<td>The context of the word slothful (’atsele) is related to “obtaining the inheritance” (Judge 18.9) even in the NT (Heb 6.12) and not selling out your birth-right (like Esau). The slothful man is depicted as creaking when he turns over. He has become so atrophied through his lack of action that he might as well be dead. Apart from the creaking noise would anybody notice? Such was the wasted state of the nation – from head to toe putrid festering sores (Isa 1.6).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The slothful hideth his hand in his bosom; it grieveth him to bring it again to his mouth.

NKJ v.15) The lazy man buries his hand in the bowl; it wearies him to bring it back to his mouth.

LXX v.16) A sluggard seems to himself wiser than one who most satisfactorily brings back a message.

See verse 12. The LXX is working from a different Vorlage and in this case the LXX probably renders a better translation. The word “men” is not present in the original Hebrew although the ellipsis “men” is supplied by most translations to supplement “seven” (seven men). Keil and Delitzsch state; “Seven is the number of manifoldness in completed unfolding (Pro. 9:1).....and....seven is a round number of plurality, v. 25, 24:16; 6:31”. The LXX Greek phrase; πλησμονὴ ἀποκομίζοντος ἀγγελίαν – transliterated as: plēsmonē apokomizōntos angelian is difficult. The first word (plēsmonē) means plenty (full or satiated) and the Greek word is probably meant to perform the same function as the Hebrew word “seven” as in denoting “completeness”(which LXE translates as satisfactorily). The last word (angelian) means; message, news or report (KJV has reason JPS has answer). It is the middle compound word (apokomizōntos) that is problematic. A similar word is fund in Acts 8.2 - οὐσεκόμισαν (synekomisan) from sun (with) and komizō (carry) literally; they-together-carry (the body of Stephen) e.g., they buried. Komizō is defined as to carry away, escort, Xen.: to carry away captive, Thuc.: Pass. to take oneself off, get away, Id.: to return, Hdt. In Proverbs Komizō has the preposition ἀπό (apo) in the genitive meaning; from; away from; by means of; of; because of, as a result of; since, ever since; about, for; with etc.

The idea of the phrase points to something like a complete (full) reversal (turning/carrying back) probably best expressed as; “The arrogant
sluggard is carried away (captivated) by a message”. This Greek phrase is similar to the LXX of 2 Kings 19.7 (LXE); Behold, I send a blast upon him, and he shall hear a report, (ἀγγελίαν, angelian) and shall return (ἀποστραφήσεται, apostraphēsetai) to his own land; and I will overthrow him with the sword in his own land. In this case the Greek ἀποστρέφω (apostrophō) is used (from which we get apostrophe) which means turn away (from) rather than ἱμιζώ (to carry away). The sluggard who betrayed his inheritance is in this case probably the renegade Jew Rabshakeh who arrived with an arrogant and blasphemous message and got “turned back” along with Sennacherib. His army was destroyed by plague and further rumours forced him to withdraw to Assyria where he met his death.

<p>| v.17) He that passeth by, and meddleth with strife belonging not to him, is like one that taketh a dog by the ears. | 2 Chron 35.21; “But he sent ambassadors to him, saying, What have I to do with thee, thou king of Judah? I come not against thee this day, but against the house wherewith I have war: for God commanded me to make haste: forbear thee from meddling with God, who is with me, that he destroy thee not”. This proverb describes faithful king Josiah meddling in the affairs of Necho. He persisted even though he was warned not to interfere. The finalization of proverbs must have occurred just after the death of Josiah. The word מִיתעַבֵּר (mitʿabber) means “to put oneself in a fury” or “become furious” (BDB 720 s.v.). The Latin version apparently assumed the verb was עָרַב (ʿarav), for it has the sense of “meddle” (so also NAB, NASB, NIV, NRSV). However, the MT reading could easily fit the verse, referring to anyone passing by who gets furious over a fight that is not his. |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>v. 18</th>
<th>As a mad man who casteth firebrands, arrows, and death,</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>YLT v. 18</td>
<td>As one pretending to be feeble, Who is casting sparks, arrows, and death,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LXE v. 18</td>
<td>As those who need correction put forth fair words to men, and he that first falls in with the proposal will be overthrown;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v. 19</td>
<td>So is the man that deceiveth his neighbour, and saith, Am not I in sport?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although most of the modern versions render כמתלהלה [kmtlhlh] as “mad” there is no consistent traditional translation as the Greek versions Aquila and Symmachus and the Jewish Targum and rabbinic commentators all offer different suggestions. The YLT has “As one pretending to be feeble, Who is casting sparks, arrows, and death”. In this the YLT follows “faint”, “feeble” or “weak” (ὡμοίως) from Gen. 47.13 (According to Keil and Delitzsch similar derivatives are posited by Aben Ezra, Rashi and Saadia). Also we note that the YLT implies “pretending” so also the Geneva Bible; As he that feigneth himself mad. The Greek LXX is completely different and also problematic. The LXE translates as; "As those who need correction put forth fair words to men, and he that first meets the word will be overthrown; so are all they that lay wait for their own friends, and when they are seen, say, I did it in jest." which seems garbled but is sometimes rendered as "Even as those who are under medical treatment (ἰώμενοι) throw words at men, and he who first meets the word will be overthrown; so are all they that lay wait for their own friends, and when they are seen, say, I did it in jest." Tov notes the parallelism in the first phrase; כמתלהלה // ὥσπερ οί ἱώμενοι (as...like...this....[?]) andὴρέα //προβάλλουσιν (shoot/throw) and also notes that the last Greek word ὑποκατελθήσεται is also found in Prov 10.8; A wise man in heart will receive commandments; but he that is unguarded in his lips shall be overthrown in his perverseness. We note that the Hebrew הַלָּהַ כְּמַ תְלָהַ (kĕmitlahlēah) in 26.18 is very similar to מִימי כְּמִתְלַהֲּ (kĕmitlahămîm) in 26.22 both unpointed expressions are the same except for the last few letters. The word in 26.18 is therefore probably a scribal error known as a dittography (mechanical repetition) of הַל (in effect we have lh-lh-h). If that is the case the word does not mean “mad” or “feeble” but carries a similar meaning to 26.22 where it is translated as choice morsel or as a delicacy from the Arabic cognate “to swallow” (lahima). Interestingly, later Mishnaic Hebrew has a homograph mitlahוימ (kĕmitlahhām) one who pretends to join; hypocritical sympathiser and Prov 26.22 is used in a midrash on Num 11.1 with reference to slanderers who were speaking like sympathisers (Sipre Num 85). The suggestion is that the Greek translation (which comes from a different Hebrew Vorlage) and the Hebrew translation should be dynamically translated thus;

(1) Greek translation from a variant Vorlage: 
*Even as one tossing healing words to men,* 
*Prior a message to overthrow,* 
*Likewise the man who says, I am only scoffing,* 
*When overthrowing his neighbour.*  

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234 English translation (in parenthesis) added. The [?] represents ἱώμενοι translated as “cure, treatement etc or “correction” (LXE). From the Parallel Aligned Hebrew-Aramaic and Greek texts of Jewish Scripture in Unicode by the CATSS project under the direction of E. Tov (CCAT & Tyndale House)  
235 NIDOTTE, G/K #4269, Vol 2.p.766.
(2) Hebrew translation:

*Even as one tossing delicious morsels,*
*But casting firebrands, arrows, and death,*
*Likewise the man who says, I am only scoffing,*
*When overthrowing his neighbour.*

The historic situation is suggested by Rabshakeh who promised that the Jews would sit under their own fig trees and eat from their own vines (Isa 36.16) but the properties promised by Rabshakeh would be in a different country (v.17) which meant that “enjoyment” entailed overthrow and deportation if they refused they could eat shit (instead of grapes) and die. Rabshakeh (Sennacherib) and his supporters were promoting firebrands, arrows, and death (Isa 50.11) but they would lie down in sorrow as a consequence of their rage and arrogance. The “scoffing” is no doubt also a reference to the resistance and offense perpetrated against Hezekiah by Ephraim (2 Chron 30.10). In refusing to unite Israel under Yahweh’s king they were contributing to the overthrow of their neighbour and such behaviour could not be excused as merely a bit of fun.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>v.20</th>
<th>Where no wood is, there the fire goeth out: so where there is no talebearer, the strife ceaseth.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>See also v.22;</td>
<td>Prov 16.28; Prov 18.8; Prov 22.10;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isa 29.24;</td>
<td>“They also that erred in spirit shall come to understanding, and they that murmured shall learn doctrine”.</td>
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<tr>
<td>An oft duplicated variant proverb –see comments there. The word “talebearer” also translated as “murmur” or “whisper” denoting someone who complains or slanders behind someone’s back. Compare the murmuring against Moses in the wilderness. Describes the subversive propaganda campaign waged against Hezekiah. Once the chief instigator was removed (Shebna) the campaign stopped.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>v.21</th>
<th>As coals are to burning coals, and wood to fire; so is a contentious man to kindle strife.</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prov 15.18;</td>
<td>Prov 29.22; Prov 30.33; Prov 10.12;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isa 50.11;</td>
<td>“Hatred stirreth up strifes: but love covereth all sins”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks: walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled. This shall ye have of mine hand; ye shall lie down in sorrow”.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>These troublemakers would not succeed. Neither the flooding “waters” of Assyria (Euphrates) nor the treacherous fire of a propaganda campaign would dislodge the people of God; “When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee” (Isa 43.2).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>v.22</strong></td>
<td>The words of a talebearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly.</td>
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<td>---</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>v.23</strong></td>
<td>Burning lips and a wicked heart are like a potsherds covered with silver dross.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>v.24</strong></td>
<td>He that hateth dissembleth with his lips, and layeth up deceit within him;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>v.25</strong></td>
<td>When he speaketh fair, believe him not: for there are seven abominations in his heart.</td>
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</tbody>
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[Latin Vulgate (LXX)]

| **v.25** | Though thine enemy intreat thee with a loud voice, consent not: for there are seven abominations in his heart. | The LXE is closer to the historical situation the MT seems to have turned a specific saying into a more generic proverb. A similar proverb is found in 12.2 - see comments there. The meaning of the rare Piel form of חָנַּן (khanan) is “to make gracious; to make favorable.” The subject is קוֹל (qolo, “his voice”), a metonymy of cause for what he says. The idea is that what he says is very gracious in its content and its effect. | The LXE is closer to the historical situation the MT seems to have turned a specific saying into a more generic proverb. A similar proverb is found in 12.2 - see comments there. The meaning of the rare Piel form of חָנַּן (khanan) is “to make gracious; to make favorable.” The subject is קוֹל (qolo, “his voice”), a metonymy of cause for what he says. The idea is that what he says is very gracious in its content and its effect. |
| v.26 | Whose hatred is covered by deceit, his wickedness shall be shewed before the whole congregation. | Ps 55.21; “The words of his mouth were smoother than butter, but war was in his heart: his words were softer than oil, yet were they drawn swords”. | Hidden deceit that will be openly revealed such as occurred when Shebna’s treachery was revealed in Isa chapter 22. Very similar to David’s betrayal by his counsellor. A man mine equal, my guide, and my acquaintance. We took sweet counsel together. Every phrase in Psalm 55.13-14 is appropriate to Ahithophel, David’s chief counsellor (2 Sam. 15:12, 31; 16:23; 17:1-3) but can also be fittingly applied to Shebna. |
| v.27 | Whoso diggeth a pit shall fall therein: and he that rolleth a stone, it will return upon him. | Ps 7.15-16; “He made a pit, and digged it, and is fallen into the ditch which he made. His mischief shall return upon his own head, and his violent dealing shall come down upon his own pate”. | גלל used in Prov 16.3. The writer of this proverb had Psalm 37.5 in mind; “Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass”. The word “trust” forms a unique inter-textual link connecting Solomon to Hezekiah. Compare also Psalm 119.22 (A Hezekiah Psalm); “Remove from me reproach and contempt; for I have kept thy testimonies”. This proverb is very similar to Psalm 7.15-16 where David has a special individual persecutor in mind (probably Saul). Note the Psalm refers to the “rage” of the enemy in v.6 and compare the “rage” in Isa 37.38-39 against Yahweh (and his “anointed” cf. Ps 2.1). |
| v.28 | A lying tongue hateth those that are afflicted by it; and a flattering mouth worketh ruin. | Prov 7.21-23, Prov 6.24; “To keep thee from the evil woman, from the flattery of the tongue of a strange woman” | Very similar to Proverbs 7.21-23, note particularly Prov 6.24 where the “strange” or “foreign” woman represents Assyria. The LXX has “a lying tongue hates the truth” (this is self evident so probably wrong) but the MT makes the tongue either “afflict the owner” or “hate the enemy” (also obvious). Probably the NAB represents the best translation – the lying tongue causes ruin to a third party by falsely flattering them, however, at the same time it also causes damage to itself. |
Proverbs 27

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proverbs 27</th>
<th>Inter-text</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>v.1)</strong> Boast not thyself of tomorrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.</td>
<td>Isa 56.12; “Come ye, say they, I will fetch wine, and we will fill ourselves with strong drink; and tomorrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant”.</td>
<td>The drunkards of Ephraim (Isa 28) adopted a nihilistic, fatalistic hedonism in which they boasted of their impregnability.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>v.2)</strong> Let another man praise thee, and not thine own mouth; a stranger, and not thine own lips.</td>
<td>Prov 25.27; “It is not good to eat much honey: so for men to search their own glory is not glory”.</td>
<td>A similar sentiment is expressed in Prov 25.27 (see comments there). The Heb. stranger can also be translated as “a foreigner” (KJV, ASV, NASB, NRSV “a stranger”). Of Hezekiah (who typified the messiah) it was said; “I will make thy name to be remembered in all generations: therefore shall the people praise thee forever and ever” (Ps 45.17). Note that foreigners also came with gifts (Ps 45.12) which is a reflection of; “And many brought gifts unto the LORD to Jerusalem, and presents to Hezekiah king of Judah: so that he was magnified in the sight of all nations from thenceforth” (2 Chron 32.23).</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>v.3)</strong> A stone is heavy, and the sand weighty; but a fool’s wrath (ka’as) is heavier than them both.</td>
<td>2 Kings 23.26; “Notwithstanding the LORD turned not from the fierceness of his great wrath, wherewith his anger was kindled against Judah, because of all the provocations (ka’as) that Manasseh had provoked him withal”.</td>
<td>The subject matter is the vexation produced by a fool. The term כַּעַס (ka’as) means “vexation” (ASV); “provocation” (NAB, NASB, NIV, NRSV); “anger” (KJV “wrath”) and usually refers to undeserved treatment. Cf. NLT “the resentment caused by a fool.” Notably the word is used in connection with the provocation caused by Manasseh the son of Hezekiah. This suggests that Proverbs was finalized during the reign of Josiah (the last good king).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
v.4) Wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous; but who is able to stand before envy?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prov 27:34.4</th>
<th>Job 5:2; “For wrath killeth the foolish man, and envy slayeth the silly one”.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>v.5)</td>
<td>Open rebuke (הַחֵקָּחַה, towkechah) is better than secret love.</td>
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</table>

| Prov 27:34.5 | This verse and verse 6 has parallels with the speech of Eliphaz the Temanite made in Job chapter 5. It has been argued elsewhere that Job is a parabolic play that reflects the Assyrian crisis and that Song of Songs was produced to celebrate the wedding of Hezekiah and his attempt to court the northern tribes. Song of Solomon 8:6-7; “Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm: for love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave: the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it: if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned”. The Heb of Proverbs 27 verse 4 “fierceness of wrath and outpouring [= flood] of anger.” A number of English versions use “flood” here (e.g.,NASB, NCV, NLT). The Assyrian invasion is likened to a flooding river in Isaiah (8.7) and the giving of tribute (substance) by Hezekiah (done in his name during his illness) was despised as the siege was continued. The Assyrians were cruel but the envy came from within Hezekiah’s own cabinet (Shebna). |
| Prov 27:34.6 | 2 Kings 19:3; “And they said unto him, Thus saith Hezekiah, This day is a day of trouble, and of rebuke (הַחֵקָּחַה, towkechah), and blasphemy: for the children are come to the birth, and there is not strength to bring forth”. |

| Prov 27:34.7 | Heb “revealed” or “uncovered” (Pual participle from הָגָל, galah). This would specify the reproof or rebuke as direct, honest, and frank, whether it was coming from a friend or an enemy. The nation was rebuked by God in the time of Hezekiah (2 Kgs 19.3) and Hezekiah himself was openly rebuked in 2 Kings 20:16-19; “And Isaiah said unto Hezekiah, Hear the word of the LORD. Behold, the days come, that all that is in thine house, and that which thy fathers have laid up in store unto this day, shall be carried into Babylon: nothing shall be left, saith the LORD. And of thy sons that shall issue from thee, which thou shalt beget, shall they take away; and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon. Then said Hezekiah unto Isaiah, Good is the word of the LORD which thou hast spoken. And he said, Is it not good, if peace and truth be in my days?” |
v.6) Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.

*Job 5.17-18;* “Behold, happy is the man whom God correcteth: therefore despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty: For he maketh sore, and bindeth up: he woundeth, and his hands make whole”.

Ps 141.5; “Let the righteous smite me; it shall be a kindness: and let him reprove me; it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head: for yet my prayer also shall be in their calamities”.

The Niphal participle of יָּאמַן (ʾaman) means “faithful; reliable; sure; trustworthy.” The word indicates that the wounds from a friend “can be trusted” (so NIV, NCV) because they are meant to correct and not to destroy (e.g., 25:12; Deut 7:9; Job 12:20). The first time ʾaman is employed is with reference to the faithfulness of the “friend of God” (Abram) in Gen 15. It is also used a number of times in Psalm 89 (a Hezekiah Psalm) which contemplates the end of the Davidic dynasty (Hezekiah was childless) see also the comments on ʾaman in Proverbs 8. Similar themes are found in the book of Job (5.17-18) and in the Davidic Psalm 141. Psalm 141 is also used in Proverbs 23.6 (see comments there). The “enemy” who practices deceit was Hezekiah’s counsellor Shebna which bears similarities with David being betrayed by Ahithophel.

v.7) The full soul loatheth an honeycomb; but to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet.

*Isaiah 5.24;* “...because they have cast away the law of the LORD of hosts, and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel”.

Num 11.6; “But now our soul is dried away: there is nothing at all, beside this manna, before our eyes”.

*Isaiah 38.17;* Behold, for peace I had great bitterness: but thou hast in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption: for thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back.

The manna given to feed Israel during their wilderness journey tasted like “wafers made with honey” (Ex 16.31). The manna is equated in Deuteronomy (and by Jesus) with being reliant on the word of God (his commandment to his wilderness Angel [=the Holy one of Israel] to give them their daily bread); Deuteronomy 8:3; “And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live”. However, some Israelites loathed the “manna” and wanted the bread, meat and garlic of Egypt. This was also true in Isaiah’s time – they despised the word of God. They were “full” of “honeycomb” and wanted a change of diet. In contrast with this the righteous (like Hezekiah) would even find the “bitter” words of God sweet. See also comment on Prov 24.13.
| v.8 | Psalm 84:3-4;  
"Yea, the sparrow hath found an house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, even thine altars, O LORD of hosts, my King, and my God.  
Blessed are they that dwell in thy house: they will be still praising thee. Selah".  
The place was Jerusalem (Deut 12.5, 13, 14, 18, 21, 26). The form נודدت (nodedet) is the Qal participle from נדד (nadad), “to wander; to stray; to flutter; to retreat; to depart”; cf. NIV, NRSV, NLT “strays.” It will be directly paralleled with the masculine participle in the second colon. Psalm 84 is a Davidic Psalm adapted by and applicable to Hezekiah.  
The same form of the word נדד (nadad) is used in Isa 10.14 (e.g., removed/wander away etc) were Jerusalem is likened to a bird nest by Sennacherib. In his stele Sennacherib boasts that he had trapped Hezekiah like a bird in a cage; “And my hand hath found as a nest the riches of the people: and as one gathereth eggs that are left, have I gathered all the earth; and there was none that moved the wing, or opened the mouth, or peeped”. Note that the same word is also used in Isa 22.3 a chapter that condemns the rulers and particularly the royal treasurer and counsellor Shebna who is predicted to die in a land far away literally becoming a man that wandered (was removed) from his place.  
| v.9 | Ointment and perfume rejoice the heart: so doth the sweetness of a man’s friend by hearty counsel.  
LXE v.9) The heart delights in ointments and wines and perfumes: but the soul is broken by calamities.  
2 Chron 26.18;  
“And they withstood Uzziah the king, and said unto him, It appertaineth not unto thee, Uzziah, to burn incense unto the LORD, but to the priests the sons of Aaron, that are consecrated to burn incense: go out of the sanctuary; for thou hast trespassed; neither shall it be for thine honour from the LORD God”.  
Some think the MT is unintelligible as it stands (“Suggestions and Objections,” ZAW 55 (1937): 69-70). The LXX reads “and the soul is rent by misfortunes.” The MT, for want of better or more convincing readings, may be interpreted to mean something like “[Just as] ointment and incense brings joy to the heart, [so] the sweetness of one’s friend [comes] from his sincere counsel.”(Net Bible). The suggestion here is that the “ointment” refers to the holy anointing ointment made by the priests (Exod 30.25). Uzziah (Hezekiah’s great grandfather) attempted to appropriate the priestly function (anointing the forehead with ointment) and was instead “anointed” in his forehead with leprosy. The LXX version chimes well with this (broken by calamities) on the other hand the “hearty counsel” in the MT can be explained as the warning issued by the priests not to persist with his wilfulness to enter the most holy place (on the Day of Atonement?)
**Prov 27 346**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>v.10</th>
<th>Isaiah 41.8-10; “But thou, Israel, art my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend. Thou whom I have taken from the ends of the earth, and called thee from the chief men thereof, and said unto thee, Thou art my servant; I have chosen thee, and not cast thee away.  Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness”.</th>
<th>The Hebrew <em>rea`</em> (fellow or companion) is translated as friend 5 times in this chapter (v.9, 10 [x2], 14, 17), however, the word “friend” in v. 6 is the much stronger Hebrew word <em>‘ahab</em> (literally love). This proverb is an exhortation not to forsake the covenants of the “fathers”. Yahweh was Abraham’s “friend” (the friend of thy father)......Yahweh was also <em>their friend</em> (cf. John 15.13-15). They were not to forsake the one who was both their friend <em>and the friend of their father Abraham</em>. They were also instructed not to go into their brother’s house <em>in the day of their calamity</em> (day of trouble cf. Isa 37.3). This is the “day of Jacobs’s trouble” – no help would be forthcoming from Jacob’s brother Esau (Edom cf. Isa 63 and Obadiah). The reference to the “brother” may also be a reference to northern Israel (Ephraim) who would neglect to offer brotherly help. The Hebrew <em>shaken</em> for neighbour (Strong’s 7934 =neighbour, inhabitant) is very similar to the unpointed Hebrew <em>shaken</em> (7931) for “dwell’ or “tabernacle” from which shekinah is derived to describe the in dwelling Shekinah Glory of Yahweh. The neighbour (7934 <em>shaken</em>) in this case would be Hezekiah (the suffering servant) who typified the messiah (7931 <em>shaken</em> = dwell, tabernacle cf. John 1.14 Greek <em>skenoo</em>). To paraphrase the proverb; “Stick with the Abrahamic covenants, (stick with your friend i.e., God and his friend Abraham) don’t turn to Edom or Ephraim (your brethren) in your time of trouble – better to trust in the near neighbour (tabernacling one?), i.e., Hezekiah than the far-off (brother). The fact is that although Hezekiah and Christ were despised as having no beauty (Isa 53.2) they both represented the in-dwelling grace of Yahweh and as such they were the embodiment of the covenant promised to God’s friend Abraham.</th>
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<tr>
<td>v.11</td>
<td>Prov 23.24; “The father of the righteous shall greatly rejoice: and he that begetteth a wise child shall have joy of him”.</td>
<td>Abraham rejoiced at the birth of Isaac. The name Isaac means laughter or rejoicing. Isaac unblocked all the Abrahamic wells and functions as a type of Hezekiah (and Christ). Hezekiah did not immediately answer the reproach of Sennacherib but first went to the temple to enquire. Yahweh himself answered the reproach (Isa 37.17-38).</td>
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<td>Verse</td>
<td>Translation and Notes</td>
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<td><strong>v.12</strong></td>
<td>A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself; but the simple pass on, and are punished. &lt;br&gt; <strong>Repeat of Prov 22.3 Prov 18.10;</strong> “The name of the LORD is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe”. This noun is plural, while the earlier substantival adjective “shrewd” is singular. The contrast may suggest that the naive are in a group, each one doing what the others do, while insightful person had to go against the flow. That is, the naive go along with the bandwagon; but the shrewd person thinks for his/herself and makes good decisions accordingly.</td>
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<td><strong>v.13</strong></td>
<td>Take his garment that is surety for a stranger, and take a pledge of him for a strange woman. &lt;br&gt; <strong>See Prov 6.1-4; Prov 20.16</strong> This proverb is virtually identical to 20.16 (see comments there) which has a rare variant spelling of the initial imperative verb and has the masculine plural “strangers” as its Kethib reading, while matching 27.13 with the feminine singular “stranger” as its Qere reading.</td>
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<td><strong>v.14</strong></td>
<td>He that blesseth his friend with a loud voice, rising early in the morning, it shall be counted a curse to him. &lt;br&gt; <strong>LXE v.14</strong> Whosoever shall bless a friend in the morning with a loud voice, shall seem to differ nothing from one who curses him. &lt;br&gt; <strong>NIV v.14</strong> If a man loudly blesses his neighbor early in the morning, it will be taken as a curse. &lt;br&gt;The verse begins with the Piel participle from (barakh). It could be taken as the subject, with the resulting translation: “Blessing...will be counted as a curse.” However, that would be rather awkward. The Net Bible states that it is preferable to take the first line as the condition (“if someone blesses”) and the second as the consequence (“[then] it will be counted”). Many of these expressions are used for the first time in the story of Abraham, who was promised; “And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed” (Gen 12.3). Abraham was faithful and the Lord “counted it to him for righteousness” (compare counted it as a curse). It was faith that made Abraham “rise up early in the morning” (Gen 22.3) to sacrifice Isaac. The proverb sets up a number of contrasts with Abraham. The nation that “blessed” Abraham would be blessed – but what if that “blessing” was inappropriate? What if the blessing was a curse in disguise? What if “rising early” implied the opposite of the Abrahamic context (which was zeal to accomplish God’s word). The phrase “rising early” is also used when proclaiming the prophetic word (Jer 7.3). The suggestion is that the one with the “loud voice” was Rabshakeh who propagandized the prophetic word. Rabshakeh was obviously familiar with the prophetic blessings pronounced by Isaiah and Micah; “But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth of the LORD of hosts hath spoken it” (Mic 4.4). This prophecy (blessing) was twisted by Rabshakeh; “Then Rabshakeh stood and cried with a loud voice in the Jews' language, and spake, saying, Hear the word of the great king, the king of Assyria...come out to me, and then eat ye every man of his own vine, and every one of his fig tree” (2 Kgs 18.28-31). His “blessing” was in fact a curse – they would be deported as prisoners to a strange land. Rabshakeh had “risen up early” to “bless” the Jews with a “loud voice” but in the morning those same Jews “rose up early” and “behold they (the Assyrians) were all dead corpses (2 Kgs 19.35).</td>
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v.15) A continual dropping in a very rainy day and a contentious woman are alike.

Prov 19.13; Prov 21.9,19; Prov 25.24; Job 2.9-10;

“Then said his wife unto him, Dost thou still retain thine integrity? Curse God, and die. But he said unto her, Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? In all this did not Job sin with his lips”.

Heb “a wife of contentions” (an attributive genitive). Cf. NAB, NIV “a quarrelsome wife”; NLT “a nagging wife.” See the parallel proverbs for comments. The wife of Job represents the fatalistic, faithless element within Hezekiah’s cabinet depicted as a “nagging” wife. Their solution was to accept the fact that Hezekiah was about to die without an heir. Accept that the Davidic dynasty was about to be destroyed. Accept the fact that Yahweh was not going to miraculously rescue them from the Assyrian onslaught. They thought that Hezekiah was living in denial – insisting on his own integrity and still hoping for divine deliverance. If only Hezekiah would accept the facts on the ground then they could either make peace with Assyria or appeal to Egypt for help. Nag...nag...nag...drip...drip...drip.

v.16) Whosoever hideth her hideth the wind, and the ointment of his right hand, which bewrayeth itself.

LXE v.16) The north wind is sharp, but it is called by name propitious.

The participle and the verb are both from the root צָׁפָן (tsafan) “to store up,” and by extension perhaps, “to hide” (so KJV). To “store up” wind would entail “restraining” it (so NASB, NIV, ESV, Holman) or “containing” it, a gloss which is closer to the basic meaning of the term. A contentious woman is uncontrollable. The wind can gust at any moment; so too the contentious woman can nag or complain without warning. The verb is the Qal imperfect of קָרָא (qaraʾ); BDB 895 s.v. 5.b defines it here as “call for = demand, require,” but acknowledges that it probably needs revision. R. B. Y. Scott interprets it to mean “grasping” oil in the hand, an expression he compares to the modern “butterfingers” The Net Bible remarks that the LXX took an etymologizing approach to the whole verse and translated it “the north wind is a severe wind, but by its name is termed auspicious.” In this rendering the Hebrew text’s “oil” became “its name,” “right hand” became “auspicious,” and “grasp” became “called.” The unpointed Heb. (shm) for oil and the Heb. for name (shm) is very similar. The LXX is perhaps more accurate as the northern invader (Assyria) is likened to the north wind (cf. Prov 25.14, 23). This may explain “propitious” or “auspicious” which we might call “lucky, successful or blessed” as the name Assyria (from the god Asshur) is very similar and derivative from ‘ashar translated as “blessed in Gen 30.13 this may have prompted the LXX (working from a different Heb. Vorlage) to paraphrase “right-hand” (the hand of favour) as denoting something “propitious” or “auspicious”. In the context of the previous verse a comparison is being made with preventing a nagging woman (i.e., stopping internal policy erosion) —was like trying to stop the North wind (Assyrian invasion).
### v.17) Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend.

BDB classifies the verb in the first colon as a Qal apocopated jussive of חָׁדָה (khadah, “to grow sharp”; BDB 292 s.v.), and the verb in the second half of the verse (יַחַד, yakhad) as a Hiphil apocopated jussive. The difference would be: “let iron by means of iron grow sharp, and let a man sharpen the countenance of his friend.” But it makes more sense to take them both as Hiphil forms, the first being in pause. Other suggestions have been put forward for the meaning of the word, but the verb “sharpenes” fits the context the best, and is followed by most English versions. The verb may be a shortened form of the imperfect rather than a jussive. This is difficult to place (historically) although the precedent is fairly obvious. In the time of King Saul only Jonathan and Saul had iron swords — the Israelites had to travel to Philistine territory to sharpen their bronze implements. This was the start of the “iron age” and Israel had not yet mastered the superior iron forging technology (1 Sam 13.19-22). Suffice to say that only Saul and Jonathan could sharpen their swords — that is until David captured the sword of Goliath. The two friends (who made a covenant of friendship) are therefore David and Jonathan the “swords” being a metaphor for a stimulating relationship. Perhaps a description of the relationship between Hezekiah and Isaiah.

### v.18) Whoso keepeth the fig tree shall eat the fruit thereof: so he that waiteth on his master shall be honoured.

Ps 123.2; “Behold, as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress; so our eyes wait upon the LORD our God, until that he have mercy upon us”.

Psalm 123 is a song of Ascent or “Degrees” a collection of 15 Psalms that celebrate the 15 year extension of life given to Hezekiah when the sundial regressed 10 degrees. Isaiah 5 depicts the nation as Yahweh’s vineyard and Hosea (9.10) as the “first ripe fig”. Those who kept the fig tree and the vineyard and who waited on Yahweh (like Hezekiah did) would share in the reward (Song 8.12). For since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside thee, what he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him (Isa 64.4).

### v.19) As in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man.

Ps 42.7; “Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy waterspouts: all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me”.

The Net Bible states; “The verse is somewhat cryptic and so has prompted many readings. The first line in the MT has “As water the face to the face.” The simplest and most probable interpretation is that clear water gives a reflection of the face (cf. NASB, NIV, NRSV, NLT)”. However, “face answering to face” is similar to “deep calling to deep” which describes the engineers who dug Hezekiah’s water tunnel from opposite ends shouting out to each other as they attempted to meet in the middle and join the tunnel. Seeing the face of a fellow digger in the water tunnel was like seeing one’s reflection.
| **v.20)** Hell and destruction are never full; so the eyes of man are never satisfied. | **Ecc 1.8;**  
“All things are full of labour; man cannot utter it: the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing”. | The same sentiment is found in Ecclesiastes which is based on the memoirs of king Uzziah. |
|---|---|---|
| **v.21)** As the fining pot for silver, and the furnace for gold; so is a man to his praise. | **Prov 17.3;**  
“The fining pot is for silver, and the furnace for gold: but the LORD trieth the hearts”. | Ps 12.6; “The words of the LORD are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times”. A crucible and furnace are used to melt the metals, refining them or verifying their purity. Likewise, every person should test their praise. |
| **v.22)** Though thou shouldest bray a fool in a mortar among wheat with a pestle, yet will not his foolishness depart from him. | **Isa 1.5;**  
“Why should ye be stricken anymore? Ye will revolt more and more: the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint”. | In Isa1.5 the nation is depicted as leprous (like Uzziah). King Ahaz was also ruined by his foolishness; “And in the time of his distress did he trespass yet more against the LORD: this is that king Ahaz. For he sacrificed unto the gods of Syria, which smote him: and he said, Because the gods of the kings of Syria help them, therefore will I sacrifice to them, that they may help me. But they were the ruin of him, and of all Israel” (2 Chron 28.22-23). The LXX contains this paraphrase: “If you scourge a fool in the assembly, dishonoring him, you would not remove his folly.” |
| **v.23)** Be thou diligent to know the state of thy flocks, and look well to thy herds. | **Isa 40.11;**  
“He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young”. | The Good Shepherd looks after his sheep and knows the state of his flock (cf. Gen 33.13). The Good Shepherd lays down his life for his sheep (John 10.11); “He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth” (Isa 53.7). Hezekiah (as the “suffering servant” of Isaiah 53) typified the messiah. |
### v.24) For riches are not for ever: and doth the crown endure to every generation?

**Isa 9.7;**

“Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this”. The longevity of wealth and monarchy are limited with the exception of the promised messiah whose reign would endure forever. The “fame” of Hezekiah typified that of the coming messiah; “And I will set a sign among them, and I will send those that escape of them unto the nations, to Tarshish, Pul, and Lud, that draw the bow, to Tubal, and Javan, to the isles afar off, that have not heard my fame, neither have seen my glory; and they shall declare my glory among the Gentiles” (Isa 66.19).

### v.25) The hay appeareth, and the tender grass sheweth itself, and herbs of the mountains are gathered

Verses 25-27 are related. Verse 25 is the protasis and v. 26 the apodosis. The two verses say that when the harvest is taken in, then the grass will grow, and they can sell and use their livestock. The lambs will provide clothing, and the goats when sold will pay for land. The YLT has; “And the price of the field are he-goats” which tallies with v.27 as the female goats remain for milk production after the rams have been sold. Verse 25 is reminiscent of Ps 104.14; “He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man: that he may bring forth food out of the earth”. In other words the blessing of fruitfulness comes from Yahweh. The Assyrians pursued a burnt earth policy; “A fire devoureth before them; and behind them a flame burneth: the land is as the garden of Eden before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness; yea, and nothing shall escape them” (Joel 2.3). However, Yahweh would restore their fortunes; “For the LORD shall comfort Zion: he will comfort all her waste places; and he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the LORD; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody” (Isa 51.3). This is an allusion to the Emmanuel prophecy regarding the recovery of the land after the Assyrian invasion; “And it shall come to pass in that day, that a man shall nourish a young cow, and two sheep; And it shall come to pass, for the abundance of milk that they shall give he shall eat butter: for butter and honey shall every one eat that is left in the land” (Isa 7.21-23).

### v.26) The lambs are for thy clothing, and the goats are the price of the field.

And thou shalt have goats' milk enough for thy food, for the food of thy household, and for the maintenance for thy maidens.
Proverbs 28

| v.1) | The wicked flee when no man pursueth: but the righteous are bold בָׁטַּח (batakh) as a lion. | Isa 26.3; “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth (batakh) in thee”. | The verb נָשָׁב (nashav) means “to trust; to be secure; to be confident.” Cf. KJV, NASB, NIV, NRSV, NLT “bold.” In his article ‘Trust in the Lord’; Hezekiah, Kings and Isaiah (Tyndale Bulletin 50.1(1999) 59-77) John W. Olley describes the word thus; “The Hezekiah narrative (2 Kings 18-20 // Isaiah 36-39) is unique in the Former Prophets in its repeated use of נָשָׁב ‘trust, rely on’. An exploration of the context and content of נָשָׁב in the narrative and elsewhere in Isaiah, Psalms, Proverbs and other prophetic literature points to a consistent pattern of true and false grounds for trust”. The word “trust” becomes a key linking word between Hezekiah and Solomon. 1 Kings 4:25; “And Judah and Israel dwelt safely בָׁטַּח (batakh), every man under his vine and under his fig tree, from Dan even to Beersheba, all the days of Solomon. 2 Kings 18:5; “He (Hezekiah) trusted נָשָׁב (batakh) in the LORD God of Israel; so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor any that were before him” (see; every man of his own vine, and every one of his fig tree in 2 Kgs 18.31). The saying goes that the courageous man only dies once but the fearful dies a thousand deaths. If Israel refused to trust in Yahweh they would be cursed with fear (cf. Lev 26.17, Deut 28.5) as was the house of David under Ahaz (Isa 7.2). However, the keyword associated with Hezekiah was trust. See the chapter on stylometrics for the word “trust” in connection with Hezekiah. |
| v.2) | For the transgression of a land many are the princes thereof: but by a man of understanding and knowledge the state thereof shall be prolonged (גָּפָא ‘arak). | Isa 3.4-5; And I will give children to be their princes, and babes shall rule over them. And the people shall be oppressed, every one by another, and every one by his neighbour: the child shall behave himself proudly against the ancient, and the base against the honourable. | In such a chaotic time there will be many rulers, either simultaneously or in a rapid sequence. The days of the northern kings of Israel provide examples. Hezekiah had his life prolonged by 15 years and as a consequence the peace and prosperity of the nation was also prolonged; “Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong (גָּפָא ‘arak) his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand” (Isa 53.10). |

**YLT v.2)** By the transgression of a land many are its heads. And by an intelligent man, Who knoweth right -- it is prolonged
A poor man that oppresseth the poor is like a sweeping rain which leaveth no food.

The Net Bible comments that; “The MT reads “a poor man,” גֶׁבֶר לָשֵׁן (gever rash); cf. KJV, NASB, NLT. The problem is that the poor in the book of Proverbs is not an oppressor and does not have the power to be such. So commentators assume the word is incorrect. By a slight change to רשע (rasha’) the reading becomes “a wicked ruler” [Heb “a wicked mighty man”]. There is no textual support for this change. The LXX, however, reads, “A courageous man oppresses the poor with impieties” (so the Net Bible). However, the LXE translates andreios as a “bold man” and has “profitable rain” instead of “useless or unprofitable rain”. Emending the MT from “poor” to “wicked” or “godless” is correct as רשע (rasha’) also occurs in the next verse (v.4) and both verses are linked. The English translations of the Greek leave much to be desired – a hybrid paraphrase using the Greek and the Hebrew is perhaps better; “A mighty wicked man who oppresses the poor (by shouting godless imprecations) is like a violent storm that beats down crops”. The “rain” here must be thought of as the devastating rain and hail that plagued Egypt in Exodus 9. The oppressor here is Assyria (cf. Isa 52.4) in the person of Rab Shakeh the proxy of Sennacherib. Is the metathesis coincidental as the Hebrew for “wicked” רשע (rasha’) is the reverse (phonetically) of Asshur (Assyria)? The next verse (v.4) mentions the wicked again. The verb is the Hitpael imperfect of גרה (garah), which means “to stir up strife” but in this stem means “to engage in strife” (cf. NIV “resist them” or “contend” KJV). Tg. Prov 28:4 adds an explanatory expansion, “so as to induce them to repent.” However, the reading “contend” seems rather strange and the Greek has “fortify themselves with a wall”. This suggests that the Hebrew was corrupt as the word for “wall” גדר (gader) and “contend” גרה (garah) are very similar especially as the Hebrew letter r is often confused with d (and the Heb. was not pointed) this looks like a case of permutation where the word was not very legible in the MT source and better readable in the LXX Hebrew Vorlage. The suggestion is that this should be reconstructed as follows; “So they that forsake the law praise ungodliness; but they that love the law fortify themselves with a wall.” Historically, this relates to Rab-Shakeh throwing curses and challenges at the Jews stationed on the walls of Jerusalem with the “fortifying” being a reference to the support offered by Hezekiah (2 Kings 18.26-27, 36). However, the word translated “fortify” by the LXE is the Greek περιβάλλοντ ουσίαν (periballousin) is literally “clothed” as though donning a suit of armour when in reality the opposite is true as the same word is used in the LXX (cf. LXE) of 2 Kgs 19.1: “And it came to pass when king Hezekias heard it, that he rent his clothes, and put on sackcloth, (peribeblOmenous sakkous) and went into the house of the Lord”. The contrast is between those who forsake the law and praise the wicked (those who support Assyria like the
Jew Rab Shakeh) and those who keep the law and clothe themselves with humility. The wicked (rasha’) servants of Asshur who cursed and defied Yahweh—like Rab Shakeh (רַבִּ שָׁקָח) and those who humble themselves before Yahweh (with sackcloth כַּעַל saq). The Septuagint (cf. LXE) uses the same word in Mic 7.10 when describing exactly the same historical situation (Rab Shakeh); “And she that is mine enemy shall see it, and shall clothe (περιβαλεῖται peribaleitai) herself with shame, who says, Where is the Lord thy God? mine eyes shall look upon her: now shall she be for trampling as mire in the ways”.

v.5) Evil men understand not judgment: but they that seek the LORD understand all things.

Prov 15.24; Pro 24.7; Ps 92.6;
Ps 73.17; “Until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end”.

Until I went into the sanctuary of God. This Hezekiah did, carrying the letter of his humiliation to spread before the Lord (Isa. 37:14). “Then understood I their end” (v.17). This verse is not true of many men of faith, but it was literally true of Hezekiah: “Then Isaiah the son of Amoz sent unto Hezekiah, saying, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Whereas thou hast prayed to me against Sennacherib king of Assyria: This is the word which the Lord hath spoken concerning him: The virgin, the daughter of Zion, hath despised thee, and laughed thee to scorn: the daughter of Jerusalem hath shaken her head at thee... Because thy rage against me, and thy tumult, is come up into mine ears, therefore will I put my hook in thy nose, and my bridle in thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the way by which thou camest” (Isa. 37:21,22,29). Ps 73.18= Isa 37.36 and Ps 73.19-20 = Isa 29.7-8. See:
http://www.christadelphianbooks.org/booker/psalms3/psabkc01.html

v.6) Better is the poor that walketh in his uprightness, than he that is perverse in his ways, though he be rich.

See verse 18 Prov 16.8; Prov 19.1
Hos 12.8; “And Ephraim said, Yet I am become rich. I have found me out substance: in all my labours they shall find none iniquity in me that were sin”.

The Heb. מִקְשָׂה (iqqesh) “perverse” means literally twisted or crooked the word is found almost exclusively in the Psalms and Proverbs with the exception of Deut 32 and 2 Sam 22 which is parallel with Ps 18 (Deut. 32.5; 2 Sam. 22.27; Ps. 18.26; 101.4; Prov. 2.15; 8.8; 11.20; 17.20; 19.1; 22.5; 28.6). The Hebrew term translated “ways” is in the dual, (“the perverse in a double way,”) suggesting that the person has double ways, i.e., he is hypocritical. C. H. Toy does not like this idea and changes the form to the plural (Proverbs [ICC], 497), but his emendation is gratuitous and should be rejected. And yet this upright man was appointed a place among criminals and with the rich; NIV Isaiah 53:9; “He was assigned a
| v.7 | Whoso keepeth the law is a wise son: but he that is a companion of riotous men shammeth his father. | Prov 28.24; Prov 19.26; Prov 23.19-22; Prov 29.3,15; Prov 28.24; “Whoso robbeth his father or his mother, and saith, It is no transgression; the same is the companion of a destroyer”. | A proverb that is repeated with different variations (see there for comments). The “riotous men” are the “drunkards of Ephraim” and the “father” is Abraham. |
| v.8 | He that by usury and unjust gain increaseth his substance, he shall gather it for him that will pity the poor. | Job 27.16-17; “Though he heap up silver as the dust, And prepare raiment as the clay; He may prepare it, but the just shall put it on, And the innocent shall divide the silver”. | Heb “by interest and increase” (so ASV; NASB “by interest and usury”; NAB “by interest and overcharge.” The two words seem to be synonyms; they probably form a nominal hendiadys, meaning “by increasing [exorbitant] interest.” The law prohibited making a commission or charging interest (Exod 22:25; Lev 25:36-37; Deut 23:20; Ps 15:5). If the poor needed help, the rich were to help them – but not charge them interest. The book of Job which is a parabolic play based on the Assyrian crisis expresses the same sentiment. The rulers and merchants (especially of Ephraim) were condemned for their practices and oppression of the poor (e.g., Mic 6.10-13). |
### Prov 28:9

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>v.9) He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination.</th>
<th>Isa 1:15; “And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood”.</th>
<th>In particular this was true for the Day of Atonement – the day on which national forgiveness was sought see: Isa 58:7-11. God would not hear the priestly prayer for national forgiveness.</th>
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### Prov 28:10

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<th>v.10) Whoso causeth the righteous to go astray in an evil way, he shall fall himself into his own pit: but the upright shall have good things in possession.</th>
<th>Prov 26:27; Ps 7:15,16; Ps 9:15; Ecc 10:8</th>
<th>A sentiment oft repeated in the wisdom literature see for example the Davidic Psalm 37:25-26 “I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread. He is ever merciful, and lendeth; and his seed is blessed”. Hezekiah was restored to health and Shebna died as a captive in a foreign land. The plot to take advantage of Hezekiah’s illness failed.</th>
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### Prov 28:11

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<tr>
<th>v.11) The rich man is wise in his own conceit; but the poor that hath understanding searcheth him out.</th>
<th>Prov 18:11; Prov 23:4; Isa 5:21; “Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight!”</th>
<th>Isa 10:13-14; “For he (= the Assyrian king) saith, By the strength of my hand I have done it, and by my wisdom; for I am prudent......” The antithesis between rich and poor is not necessarily about wealth disparity but about power as a poor man is a weak and powerless one. Essentially the emphasis is on power relationships the difference between rich and poor being relative and subject to a different power dynamic. As such Hezekiah was “poor” and forced to pay tribute (taxed) by the “rich” Sennacherib. The form יָחֲקֵרֶנ (yakhqrennu cf. root_rq;chaqar) means “he searches him” (cf. KJV, ASV) or “he examines him”; a potential imperfect nuance fits well here to indicate that a discerning person, even though poor and powerless, can search the flaws of the rich and powerful and see through the pretension and the false assumptions (cf. NAB, NASB, NIV “sees through him”). The themes of hiding, covering, concealing and searching are expressed by different Hebrew words - in verse 11(root forms); יָחֲקֵרֶנ (chaqar) In verse 12 with חָפָש (chaphas) in verse 13 with כָּכָה (kacah) and in verse 28 כָּחָר (cathar).</th>
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<tr>
<td>Verse</td>
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<td>Notes</td>
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|v.12| When righteous men do rejoice, there is great glory: but when the wicked rise, a man is hidden (חָפָשׁ chaphas).|See verse 28

Isa 26.20; “Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide (חֲבָה chabah) thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast”.

The previous proverb speaks of searching out or examining (חָרַר chaqar) the wicked (in other words investigating what they are hiding) this proverb has men (or a man i.e., Adam) hiding (חָפָשׁ chaphas) when the wicked rise to power.

Adam hid (חֲבָה chabah) himself from God (Gen 3.8) because the wicked one (serpent) had gained power through deception. The meaning of “sought out” (חָרַר, ykhuppas) indicates that people have gone into hiding (cf. ASV, NIV, NRSV, NLT). Isaiah employs the same root form as Gen 3.8 to describe people hiding themselves when the Assyrian army was destroyed by the Passover angel.

Hitzig’s alters (בַּעֲלֹץ into בֵּחָלֵץ, suggested by the διὰ of the LXX) into “when righteous men are delivered.” Therefore the contrast is between the deliverance of righteous Hezekiah and the people who hid themselves in their chambers while the wicked were destroyed by the angel of death; “When the righteous is delivered there is great beauty but when the wicked become powerful men hide themselves”. Note also the use of רב rab (great) as a modifier for glory as it is probably intended as a play on Rab Shakeh. The Heb. “glory” is תִּפְחַר tipherah) first employed to describe the splendour of the priestly garments in Exodus 28.2 – in this proverb possibly a reference to Isa 22.21 (which refers to Hezekiah....I will call my servant to Eliakim).

v.13| He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.|Job 31.33; “If I covered (קָכַא kacah) my transgressions as Adam, by hiding mine iniquity in my bosom”

Isa 59.6; “Their webs shall not become garments, neither shall they cover (קָכַא kacah) themselves with

The previous proverb saw an allusion to Adam as does this proverb. Job (which is a parabolic play based on the Assyrian crisis) picks up the same typology. Adam “hid” in the garden and covered his nakedness with a fig leaf. However, it is God that provides a covering for Adam and God that allows the faithful to hide in their chambers during the Passover night. The prophet Isaiah says that they cannot “cover” their nakedness with their “works” (fig leaf) as their very works are iniquitous.
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<th>Verse</th>
<th>Text</th>
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<tr>
<td>v.14</td>
<td>Happy is the man that feareth always: but he that hardeneth his heart shall fall into mischief.</td>
<td>Gen 3.10; “And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself”. The theme of Adam is continued – Adam “feared” because he knew he had sinned. That is at least a good starting point for repentance; “For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the LORD: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word” (Isa 66.2). The nation needed to be humble before God. On this see the reaction of Job (Hezekiah); “Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes” (Job 42.6).</td>
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<td>v.15</td>
<td>As a roaring lion, and a ranging bear; so is a wicked ruler over the poor people</td>
<td>Amos 5.19; “As if a man did flee from a lion, and a bear met him...” The Assyrian invasion is likened to an attack by a lion in Isa 5.29; “Their roaring shall be like a lion, they shall roar like young lions: yea, they shall roar, and lay hold of the prey, and shall carry it away safe, and none shall deliver it”. God would allow the “wicked ruler” to attack them – the punishment was meted out by God himself; “I will meet them as a bear that is bereaved of her whelps, and will rend the caul of their heart, and there will I devour them like a lion: the wild beast shall tear them” (Hos 13.8).</td>
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<td>v.16</td>
<td>The prince that wanteth understanding is also a great oppressor: but he that hateth covetousness shall prolong his days.</td>
<td>Isa 53.10; “Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand”. The suffering servant (Hezekiah) was given a 15 year extension of life (prolong his days). The prince who lacked understanding was Shebna who was condemned in Isaiah 22 and tossed like a ball into a strange land (Isa 22.18).</td>
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<td>v.17</td>
<td>A man that doeth violence to the blood of any person shall flee to the pit; let no man stay him.</td>
<td><strong>Prov 28.359</strong></td>
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<td>v.18</td>
<td>Whoso walketh uprightly shall be saved; but he that is perverse in his ways shall fall at once.</td>
<td><strong>Prov 10.9,25;</strong> <strong>Prov 11.3-6;</strong> <strong>Isa 37.20;</strong> “Now therefore, O LORD our God, save us from his hand…”</td>
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<td>v.19</td>
<td>He that tilleth his land shall have plenty of bread: but he that followeth after vain persons shall have poverty enough.</td>
<td>See; <strong>Prov 12.11;</strong> <strong>Prov 14.14</strong></td>
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<td>v.20</td>
<td>A faithful man shall abound with blessings: but he that maketh haste to be rich shall not be innocent.</td>
<td>....maketh haste to be rich (see v 22)</td>
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who hastens to be rich is probably the pro-Assyrian (or double dealing pro-Egyptian?) Shebna. The Heb. for “haste” (יהי 'uwt) carries the idea of “rushing in” or, “pushing in” therefore; to be pressed, confined or narrow and this seems to play on the prophecy against Shebna who would be tossed into a “large country” (Isa 22.18).

| v.21) To have respect of persons is not good: for for a piece of bread that man will transgress. | **Prov 18.5;**
> “It is not good to accept the person of the wicked, to overthrow the righteous in judgment”.
  
  **Prov 24.3;**
> “These things also belong to the wise. It is not good to have respect of persons in judgment”.
  
  A version of a repeated proverb the “piece of bread” is a reference to Esau who sold his birth-right for “bread and pottage of lentils” (Gen 25.34). In previous proverbs “respect of persons” refers to showing partiality in judgement, here it refers to showing someone respect that is not due respect as they are a “sell out” such as Shebna who had high position but was plotting for advantage.

| v.22) He that hasteth to be rich hath an evil eye, and considereth not that poverty shall come upon him. | **He that hasteth to be rich (see verse 21)**
  
  Both verse 20 and 22 have been translated as “haste” but in v22 a different Heb. word is employed (יחנה bahal) translated as be hurried (hasten) is used in Isa 13.8; 21.3 and 2 Chron 32.18) to convey dismay or alarm at the Assyrian invasion. The Assyrian king boasted how he robbed the riches of the peoples (Isa 10.14).

| v.23) He that rebuketh a man afterwards shall find more favour than he that flattereth with the tongue. | **See Pro 27.5-6**
  
  Repeated version of a proverb see there for comments

| v.24) Whoso robbeth his father or his mother, and saith, It is no transgression; the same is the companion of a destroyer. | **Pro 19.26;**
> “He that wasteth his father, and chaseth away his mother, is a son that causeth shame, and bringeth reproach”.
  
  See there for comments. The mother and father are Abraham and Sarah.
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<th>Verse</th>
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<tr>
<td>v.25</td>
<td>He that is of a proud heart stirreth up strife: but he that putteth his trust in the LORD shall be made fat.</td>
<td><strong>2 Kings 18.5</strong>; &quot;He trusted in the LORD God of Israel; so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor any that were before him&quot;.</td>
<td>The Heb word (בַּח batach) occurs 7 times in 2 Kings 18 and is strongly associated with Hezekiah. The construction uses the participle בֹּטֵח boteakh followed by עַּל־יְּהוָֽה ʿal yhvah, which gives the sense of “relying confidently on the Lord.” This is the antithesis of the greedy person who pushes to get what he desires. Heb &quot;wide of soul.&quot; This is an idiom meaning “a greedy person.” The term נֶפֶש nefesh, traditionally, “soul”) has here its more basic meaning of appetites (a person is a soul, a bundle of appetites; BDB 660 s.v. 5.a). It would mean “wide of appetite” (רְהַּב־נֶפֶש, rehav nefesh) thus “greedy.”</td>
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<td>v.26</td>
<td>He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool: but whoso walketh wisely, he shall be delivered.</td>
<td><strong>2 Kings 19.10;</strong> &quot;Thus shall ye speak to Hezekiah king of Judah, saying, Let not thy God in whom thou trustest deceive thee, saying, Jerusalem shall not be delivered into the hand of the king of Assyria&quot;.</td>
<td>Trust=Hezekiah The verb form יִמָלֵט yimmalet is the Niphal imperfect; the form means “to escape.” In this context one would conclude that it means “to escape from trouble,” because the one who lives in this life by wisdom will escape trouble, and the one who trusts in himself will not.</td>
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<td>v.27</td>
<td>He that giveth unto the poor shall not lack: but he that hideth his eyes shall have many a curse.</td>
<td><strong>Isa 1.15;</strong> “And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood”.</td>
<td>A Davidic Psalm whose sentiment is also appropriate to Hezekiah; “Blessed is he that considereth the poor: the LORD will deliver him in time of trouble. The LORD will preserve him, and keep him alive; and he shall be blessed upon the earth: and thou wilt not deliver him unto the will of his enemies. The LORD will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing: thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness” (Ps 41.1-3).</td>
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<td>v.28</td>
<td>When the wicked rise, men hide themselves: but when they perish, the righteous increase.</td>
<td>See verse 12</td>
<td>The antithesis: “when the wicked rise...when they perish” is a repeat motif see comments -- Prov 11.10: “When it goeth well with the righteous, the city rejoiceth: and when the wicked perish, there is shouting” and Prov 29.2: “When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice: but when the wicked beareth rule, the people mourn”.</td>
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### Proverbs 29

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<tr>
<th>Proverbs 29</th>
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| **v.1)** He, that being often reproved hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy. | **Isa 48.4;**  
“Because I knew that thou art obstinate, and thy neck is an iron sinew, and thy brow brass”  
**Isa 30.13;**  
“Therefore this iniquity shall be to you as a breach ready to fall, swelling out in a high wall, whose breaking cometh suddenly at an instant”. | The idiom “to harden the neck” (מקָשֶׁה־עֹּרֶף, maqsheh ʿoref) is the idea of resisting the rebukes and persisting in obstinacy (e.g., Exod 32:9). The opposite of a “stiff neck” would be the bending back, i.e., submission. The Hebrew construction is אִישֶׁ תֹּכָּחֹת (ʾish tokhakhot, “a man of rebukes”), meaning “a man who has (or receives) many rebukes.” This describes a person who is deserving of punishment and who has been given many warnings. The text says, then, “a man of rebukes hardening himself.” The stubborn person refuses to listen; he will suddenly be destroyed when the calamity strikes (e.g., Prov 6:15; 13:18; 15:10). |
| **v.2)** When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice: but when the wicked beareth rule, the people mourn. | **Prov 11:10;**  
**Prov 28:12,28;**  
**2 Chron 30.25;**  
“And all the congregation of Judah, with the priests and the Levites, and all the congregation that came out of Israel, and the strangers that came out of the land of Israel, and that dwelt in Judah, rejoiced”  
**Isa 28.14;**  
“Wherefore hear the word of the LORD, ye scornful men, that rule this people which is in Jerusalem.” | The contrast is between righteous Hezekiah who caused Israel and Judah to rejoice and the wicked rulers of Jerusalem. A similar proverb is found in Prov 11.10 and in Prov 28.12 where the latter proverb contrasts open rejoicing (and glory) with hiding from the wicked. Prov 28.12; “When righteous men do rejoice, there is great glory: but when the wicked rise, a man is hidden”. Compare Isa 32.1-2; “Behold, a king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment. And a man shall be as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land”. In this proverb the antithesis is between rejoicing and mourning. The Niphal verb נָאָּחַ (ʾanakh) means “to sigh; to groan,” usually because of grief or physical and emotional distress. The word is a metonymy of effect; the cause is the oppression and distress due to evil rulers. |
| v.3 | Whoso loveth wisdom rejoiceth (םָמַך samach) his father: but he that keepeth company with harlots (זָנָה zanah) spendeth his substance. | **Isa 9.17;** Therefore the Lord shall have no joy (םָמַך samach) in their young men, neither shall have mercy on their fatherless and widows: for every one is an hypocrite and an evildoer, and every mouth speaketh folly. For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still. **Hos 4.14;** "I will not punish your daughters when they commit whoredom, (זָנָה zanah) nor your spouses when they commit adultery: for themselves are separated with whores (זָנָה zanah), and they sacrifice with harlots: therefore the people that doth not understand shall fall". | Elements of this saying are repeated throughout Proverbs (Prov 10.1; 15.20; 23.15,24,25; 27.11; 5.8-10; 6.26; 21:17, 20; 28.7, 19). The Heb. for joy or rejoice (םָמַך samach) also occurs in the previous verse (v.2) in the context of the people rejoicing. In this saying the “father” rejoices because of his wise son but Isaiah 9.17 (using the same word) expresses the antithesis; Yahweh has no joy because they speak folly. The nation literally kept company with harlots (temple prostitutes) but also figuratively the “harlot” or strange woman being the foreign influence. The prince of the tribe of Judah was known to have given his “substance” to a harlot (at least that is what he thought) in Gen 38.18 and they were the tokens of his office (cf. Gen 49.10) so this is an indirect warning to the kings of Judah (e.g. Hezekiah) not keep company with (e.g. the northern tribes, Ephraim) those who spend their substance (tribute) placating Assyria or who literally prostitute themselves (cf. Hos 4.14) through apostasy and syncretism. |

| v.4 | The king by judgment establisheth (עֶשֶׂר 'amad) the land: but he that receiveth gifts overthroweth it. | The Hebrew translated as establisheth (KJV) is the Hiphil imperfect form of the verb ⃒(amad, “to stand”), hence, “to cause to stand.” It means that the king makes the nation “stand firm,” with “standing firm” being a figure for strength, security, and stability. Cf. NCV “makes his country (the nation CEV) strong. The same word is used in Isaiah 36 and in the parallel account in 2Kings 18 that describes Rabshakeh standing ⃒(amad) and challenging Hezekiah; “And the king of Assyria sent Rabshakeh from Lachish to Jerusalem unto king Hezekiah with a great army. And he stood ⃒(amad) by the conduit of the upper pool in the highway of the fuller’s field” (Isa 36.2 see also v.13). Note that the challenge is issued while standing in the fuller’s field, the same place (Isa 7.3) where Ahaz had been offered a sign concerning the establishment and continuance of the Davidic dynasty (vv.10-11). |
On the KJV translation *receiveth gifts* the Net Bible comments; “The Hebrew text reads אִישׁ תְרוּמוֹת (ʾish trumot, “a man of offerings”), which could refer to a man who “receives gifts” or “gives gifts.” Because of its destructive nature on the country, here the phrase must mean that he receives or “exacts” the money (cf. NRSV “makes heavy exactions”). This seems to go beyond the ordinary taxation for two reasons: (1) this ruler is a “man of offerings,” indicating that it is in his nature to do this, and (2) it tears down the country. The word “offerings” has been taken to refer to gifts or bribes (cf. NASB, NIV, CEV, NLT), but the word itself suggests more the idea of tribute or taxes that are demanded; this Hebrew word was used in Leviticus for offerings given to the priests, and in Ezek 45:16 for taxes. The point seems to be that this ruler or administrator is breaking the backs of the people with heavy taxes or tribute (e.g., 1 Sam 8:11-18), and this causes division and strife”. The context of the one receiving gifts and then overthrowing the land is again the Assyrian onslaught in the time of Hezekiah; “Now therefore give pledges, I pray thee, to my master the king of Assyria, and I will give thee two thousand horses, if thou be able on thy part to set riders upon them” (Isa 36.8).

**v.5** A man that flattereth (ךָלָאַק chalaq) his neighbour spreadeth a net for his feet.

**Ps 55.21**; “The words of his mouth were smoother (ךָלָאַק chalaq) than butter, but war was in his heart: his words were softer than oil, yet were they drawn swords”.

There is some ambiguity concerning the referent of “his steps.” The net could be spread for the one flattered (cf. NRSV, “a net for the neighbor’s feet”; NLT, “their feet,” referring to others), or for the flatterer himself (cf. TEV “you set a trap for yourself”). The LXX (LXE) supports the TEV reading; “entangles his own feet in it” moreover, the LXX has “prepares a net” rather than “flattereth” (ךָלָאַק), the MT also employs יָכִין chalaq in v.24 which is3 translated there as “partner” (KJV) as one who “shares” (LXX). The root hlq occurs with two different core meanings 1. To be smooth (e.g. flatter) 2. Divide/apportion (share) but the distinction is not always clear-cut to translators (*NIDOTTE*, #2744). The proverb is very similar to the Davidic Psalm based on David’s flight from Jerusalem due to the rebellion of Absalom verse 21 describes the deceitful scheming of both Ahithophel (David’s chief counsellor) and Absalom (2 Sam. 15.5,6). Compare the lips of the strange woman in Prov. 5.3,4. The Psalm is also suited to describing the treachery of Shebna towards Hezekiah.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>v.6</th>
<th>In the transgression of an evil man there is a snare: but the righteous doth sing and rejoice.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NIV v.6</td>
<td>An evil man is snared by his own sin, but a righteous one can sing and be glad.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LXE v.6</td>
<td>A great snare is spread for a sinner: but the righteous shall be in joy and gladness.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Prov 5.22**; “His own iniquities shall take the wicked himself, and he shall be holden with the cords of his sins”.  
**Isa 38.20**; “The LORD was ready to save me: therefore we will sing my songs to the stringed instruments all the days of our life in the house of the LORD”.  
**Isa 12.6**; “Cry out and shout, thou inhabitant of Zion: for great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee”.  

The NetBible comments; “The two verbs (sing and rejoice) create some difficulty because the book of Proverbs does not usually duplicate verbs like this and because the first verb יָרֻן (yarun) is irregular. The BHS editors prefer to emend it to יָרֻץ (yaruts, “will rush”; cf. NAB “runs on joyfully”). W. McKane emends it to “exult” to form a hendiadys: “is deliriously happy” (Proverbs [OTL], 638). G. R. Driver suggests changing the word to יָדוֹן (yadon) based on two Hebrew mss and an Arabic cognate dana, “continue.” He translates it “but the righteous remains and rejoices” (“Problems in the Hebrew Text of Proverbs,” Bib 32 [1951]: 193-94). None of these changes are particularly helpful. The verb is unusual for a geminate root, but Gesenius shows several places where the same pattern can be seen in other geminate verbs (GKC 180 §67.a). In light of this it is preferable to retain the reading of the MT here”.  However, a similar hendiadys is found in Isa 12.6 (cry and shout) and Hezekiah recorded how “his sings” (Psalms) would be sung (Isa 38.20). If the “evil man” is Shebna (which seems likely as this proverb is connected to the previous one) then the reference is to Shebna being trapped by his own perfidy and this is contrasted with the singing and rejoicing of Hezekiah at his deliverance. As the prophet Isaiah so eloquently says – one nail will be removed and another nail will be hammered home (Isa 22.23-25).  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>v.7</th>
<th>The righteous considereth the cause of the poor: but the wicked regardeth not to know it.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Job 29.16; “I was a father to the poor: and the cause which I knew not I searched out”.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The book of Job is parabolic of the Assyrian crisis and the suffering of Job portrays the tribulation of Hezekiah. Job defends himself as one who was sympathetic to the cause of the poor (e.g. their legal rights).  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>v.8</th>
<th>Scornful men bring a city into a snare: but wise men turn away wrath.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prov 11.11; By the blessing of the upright the city is exalted: but it is overthrown by the mouth of the wicked.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The NetBible comments; “ Heb “men of scorn”; NAB “Arrogant men”; ASV, NRSV “Scoffers”; NIV, NLT “Mockers.” The verb means “to blow; to breathe” (BDB 806 s.v. בּנִ). In the Hiphil imperfect its meaning here is “to excite; to inflame” a city, as in blowing up a flame or kindling a fire. It is also used with “words” in 6.19 and 12.17 – they “puff out words.” Such scornful people make dangerous situations worse, whereas the wise calm things down (e.g., 2 Sam 20).”
This attitude describes Rabshakeh and his arrogant scorn but it is also a fitting description of the “drunkards of Ephraim” (Isa 28) within the city who were destroying morale with their fatalism, cynicism, mocking and unfaithful hedonism.

| v.9) if a wise man contendeth with a foolish man, whether he rage or laugh, there is no rest (Nachath). | **Isa 30.15:** “For thus saith the Lord GOD, the Holy One of Israel; In returning and rest (Nachath) shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength: and ye would not”. | The noun נָחַּת (nakhat) is a derivative of נּוּח (nuakh, “to rest”) and so means “quietness” or “rest,” i.e., “peace.” The proverb is saying that there will be no possibility of settling the matter in a calm way, no matter what mood the fool is in (e.g., Prov 26.4). R. N. Whybray says one can only cut the losses and have no further dealings with the fool (*Proverbs* [CBC], 168). Hezekiah instructed the people not to answer Rabshakeh (2 Kgs 18.36) – he could not be placated or reasoned with (no rest) – instead they would find their rest by returning to God. |
| v.10) The bloodthirsty hate the upright: but the just seek his soul. | **Isa 66.5:** “Hear the word of the LORD, ye that tremble at his word; Your brethren that hated you, that cast you out for my name’s sake, said, Let the LORD be glorified: but he shall appear to your joy, and they shall be ashamed”. | The NetBible comments; Heb “men of bloods.” The Hebrew word for “blood” is written in the plural to reflect the shedding of blood. So the expression “men of bloods” means people who shed blood – murderers, bloodthirsty men, or those who would not hesitate to commit murder in order to get what they want. Isa 66.5 explains the reaction to the messengers sent out by Hezekiah to the northern tribes to celebrate the Passover (2 Chron 30.10). NetBible; “Heb “and the upright seek his life.” There are two ways this second line can be taken. (1) One can see it as a continuation of the first line, meaning that the bloodthirsty men also “seek the life of the upright” (cf. NIV, NRSV). The difficulty is that the suffix is singular but the apparent referent is plural. (2) One can take it as a contrast: “but as for the upright, they seek his life” – a fairly straightforward rendering (cf. ASV). The difficulty here is that “seeking a life” is normally a hostile act, but it would here be positive: “seeking” a life to preserve it. The verse would then say that the bloodthirsty hate the innocent, but the righteous protect them (W. McKane, *Proverbs* [OTL], 637; cf. |
NAB, NASB, TEV). Here we use seek in the same sense that it is used (multiple times) in Song of Solomon to describe the bride desperately seeking her beloved who had disappeared. Seeking her beloved refers to the near death experience of Hezekiah and the siege of the city. The antitheses is between those who rejected the overtures and courtship of Hezekiah (the bloodthirsty haters) and those (the just) who pray and hope for his life and the deliverance of their city.

v.11) A fool uttereth all his mind: but a wise man keepeth it in till afterwards.  

Amos 5.13; “Therefore the prudent shall keep silence in that time; for it is an evil time”.

The prophet Amos was a contemporary of Isaiah. Amos’s connection to the simple life of the people made its way into the centre of his prophecies, as he showed a heart for the oppressed and the voiceless in the world. More than almost any other book of Scripture, the book of Amos holds God’s people accountable for their ill-treatment of others. Amos exhorts the wise to remain silent….the time for talking was long gone…judgement day was coming (upon northern Israel). Now judgement day was approaching for Judah. As already noted (in v.9) Hezekiah also instructed the people not to answer Rabshakeh (2 Kgs 18.36). Hezekiah “kept it in till afterwards” (kept his counsel) because he first entered the temple with the arrogant letter (Isa 37.14) delivered by Rabshakeh. Hezekiah received a response from Yahweh via the prophet Isaiah that included assurances that the Assyrian army would be destroyed overnight. Hezekiah was not required to respond to Rabshakeh…..Yahweh did it for him!

v.12) If a ruler hearken to lies, all his servants are wicked.  

NIV v.12) If a ruler listens to lies, all his officials become wicked.  

Unlike the LXX rendering of “King”, the MT employs “ruler” (מָשָׁל mashal) - this is someone of high station who listens to lies; the Hebrew phrase is, עלkees (al-dēbar-šāqer) or literally “on-word-of-falsehood” the last word šāqer (ש ָקֶר) being almost identical with šāqah (ש ָקָה) as in the envoy of Sennacherib, Rabshakeh. The warning is not to listen to the false assurances of Rabshakeh. The verb שָׁרַּת (sharat) means “to minister; to serve” the Piel plural participle here refers to the ministers of the ruler who attend to him (cf. NIV, NRSV, TEV, CEV “officials”; NLT “advisers”). In other words the “wickedness” rubs off on the entourage. Shebna and his supporters are in view here.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>v.13) The poor and the deceitful man meet together: the LORD lighteneth both their eyes.</th>
<th>The Hebrew word for “deceitful” is literally “the crusher” or oppressor, thus usually someone who is rich. It implies a power imbalance with one party at a disadvantage. The Septuagint (LXX) which is in all probability derived from a different Hebrew Vorlage renders this proverb more clearly by juxtaposing a creditor with a debtor. In other words, the Lord oversees them both to make sure they stick to their agreement. Despite Hezekiah paying tribute Sennacherib still laid siege to Jerusalem and continued the war (2 Kgs 18.13-17) all the while demanding more payments; “Make an agreement with me by a present, and come out to me” (2 Kgs 18.31). The “poor” in the Hebrew text refers to someone who is oppressed (Hezekiah) and the deceitful refers to Sennacherib (Rabshakeh). As Delitzsch (Proverbs) remarks; “....both [creditor/debtor] poor and rich owe the light of life (Psa. 13:4) to God, the creator and ruler of all things, — a fact which has also its moral side: both are conditioned by Him, stand under His control, and have to give to Him an account...” In a literal sense Hezekiah was resurrected from his death bed (the Lord lighteneth his eyes) and later on Sennacherib was murdered by his own sons.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>v.14) The king that faithfully judgeth the poor, his throne shall be established for ever.</td>
<td>The king must judge “in truth” (בְּאֵמ, beʾemet). Some have interpreted this to mean “faithfully” (KJV, ASV) however “truth” in this era became a technical term for the covenant promises to the patriarchs; “Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham, which thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old” (Micah 7.20). The truth is the messianic promise of 2 Sam 7 and this covenant also made moral demands; “I will be his father, and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men” (2 Sam 7.14). King David did not judge the “poor” in accordance with the covenant as the parable told by Nathan made clear; “And the LORD sent Nathan unto David. And he came unto him, and said unto him, There were two men in one city; the one rich, and the other poor. The rich man had exceeding many flocks and herds....” (2 Sam 12.1-2). The term “throne” is a metonymy of subject; it represents the dynasty, the reign of this particular king and his descendants. The qualification of the enduring administration is its moral character. The language of this proverb reflects the promise of the Davidic Covenant (e.g., Prov 16:12; 20:28; 25:5; 31:5).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### v.15) The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame.

**Prov 17.25;**

"A foolish son is a grief to his father, and bitterness to her that bare him".

Various forms of this proverb are repeated. Reference to the “rod” (discipline) is another reference to the covenant in 2 Sam 7 (see comments on the above verse). Left to himself— the form is a Pual participle; the form means “to let loose” (from the meaning “to send”; cf. KJV, NIV “left to himself”), and so in this context “unrestrained.”

### v.16) When the wicked are multiplied, transgression increaseth: but the righteous shall see their fall.

See verse 2

**Isa 58.10;**

“The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance: he shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked”.

**Ps 37.34;**

“Wait on the LORD, and keep his way, and he shall exalt thee to inherit the land: when the wicked are cut off, thou shalt see it”.

Hezekiah saw the fall of the Assyrian army and the death of his enemies. The verb רָׁבָה (ravah), which is repeated twice in this line, means “to increase.” The first occurrence here is usually taken to mean that when the wicked increase they hold the power (cf. NRSV, NLT “are in authority”; TEV, CEV “are in power”). The text does not explain the details, only that when the wicked increase sin will increase in the land. The Hebrew verb translated “see” in this context indicates a triumph: The righteous will gaze with satisfaction, or they will look on the downfall of the wicked triumphantly (e.g., Ps 37.4 and 112:8). The verse is teaching that no matter how widespread evil may be, the righteous will someday see its destruction.

### v.17) Correct thy son, and he shall give thee rest; yea, he shall give delight unto thy soul.

**2 Sam 7.1;**

“And it came to pass, when the king sat in his house, and the LORD had given him rest (נָעַח nuwach) round about from all his enemies”

**2 Sam 7.11;**

“And as since the time that I commanded judges to be over my people Israel, and have caused thee to rest (נָעַח nuwach) from all thine enemies. Also the LORD telleth thee that he will make thee an house”.

As in verses 14 and 15 this proverb indirectly alludes to the covenant promise in 2 Sam 7 where Yahweh granted David rest. The “He” in this proverb is Yahweh. The promise is that God would grant rest and honour (LXX) to those who disciplined their son. In a collective sense the nation was therefore the “son” of the king (but also the “son” of Yahweh as the king was the divine agent). In a specific sense a descendant of David (the messiah) would become the son of God. The LXX has “honour” instead of the MT “delight”, literally “dainty food, which does not seem to make sense. The Hebrew words for honour (hadar) and dainty (ma’adan) do sound similar; perhaps this reflects oral transmission underlying the variants.
**v.18** Where there is no vision, the people perish: פָּרַּע (para’) but he that keepeth the law, happy is he.

| Amos 8.11-12; | The verb פָּרַַע (para’) means “to let go; to let alone.” It occurs here in the Niphal with the meaning of “[the people] are let loose,” meaning, they cast off restraint (e.g., Exod 32.25). Cf. NLT “run wild.” NKJ Exodus 32:25; “Now when Moses saw that the people were unrestrained (for Aaron had not restrained them, to their shame among their enemies)” Prophetic vision was absent in Exodus 32 because Moses had ascended the mount to receive the law (the law that the proverb exhorts to keep) in the meantime the people acted (depending on the translation) as “unrestrained”, “broken loose” or “naked”. This made them vulnerable to their enemies – the LXX (LXE) of Exod 32.25 has the enemies “rejoicing” in contrast with the bliss (happiness) of the proverbial law keeper. In Amos 8 there was a famine of vision and in Isaiah 30 there is a refusal to see vision or hear the law. The sickness of Hezekiah is equivalent to the absence of Moses – this can be seen in Song of Songs with the “disappearance” of the “beloved”. |
| – “Behold, the days come, saith the Lord GOD, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD: And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the LORD, and shall not find it”. |
| **Isa 30.9-10;** | “That this is a rebellious people, lying children, children that will not hear the law of the LORD: Which say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophesy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits”. |

| v.19 | A servant will not be corrected by words: for though he understand he will not answer. לְךָ | The “servant” in Isaiah has an individual and a collective element. As an individual the “servant” is Hezekiah as a collective the “servant” is the nation (for which Hezekiah became the representative). Isaiah 42.13-21 is based on Exodus deliverance: v.13 cf. Exod 15.3 “Man of War” v.15 crossing the Red Sea v.16 in the wilderness, pillar of cloud and fire v.17 golden calf v.19 covenant peace at Sinai v.21 the Law magnified (Sinai) The disobedient “servant” (nation), who refused to listen, was disciplined by God (using Assyria as a rod cf. Isa 10.5) |
| A stubborn servant will not be reproved by words: for even if he understands, still he will not obey. | **Isa 42:19-20;** | “Who is blind but My servant? And deaf as My messenger I send? Who is blind as he who is at peace, Yea, blind, as the servant of Jehovah? Seeing many things, but thou observest not; opening the ears, but he heareth not”.

**LXX** v.19 A stubborn servant will not be reproved by words: for even if he understands, still he will not obey.
| v.20) | Seest thou a man *that is* hasty in his words? *there is* more hope of a fool than of him. |
| See verse 11 Ecc 5.2; | “Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God: for God *is* in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few”. |
| Most translations render the verse as a present tense question (“Do you see?” so KJV, NASB, NIV, ESV). But the Hebrew has a perfect verb form (ךָּזִית; khazita) without an interrogative marker (see the NetBible translation). Qoheleth (Ecclesiastes) is based on the memoirs of Uzziah the great grandfather of Hezekiah. Well might the “preacher” counsel against precipitous words or actions; particularly towards God. Rabshakeh (on behalf of Sennacherib) took up arrogant and rash words against the God of Israel. |

| v.21) | He that delicately bringeth up his servant from a child shall have him become his son at the length. |
| Isa 49.5; | “And now, saith the LORD that formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob again to him, Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the LORD, and my God shall be my strength”. |
| Isa 41.8; | “But thou, Israel, art my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend”. |
| The netBible comments as follows -- “The word מָּנוֹן (manon) is a *hapax legomenon*; accordingly, it has been given a variety of interpretations. The LXX has “grief,” and this has been adopted by some versions (e.g., NIV, NCV). The idea would be that treating the servant too easily for so long would not train him at all, so he will be of little use, and therefore a grief. J. Reider takes the word to mean “weakling” from the Arabic root na’na (“to be weak”), with a noun/adjective form munaʾanaʾ (“weak; feeble”); see his “Etymological Studies in Biblical Hebrew,” VT 4 [1954]: 276-95. This would give a different emphasis to the sentence, but on the whole not very different than the first. In both cases the servant will not be trained well. Rashi, a Jewish scholar who lived a.d. 1040-1105, had the translation “a master.” The servant trained this way will assume authority in the household even as the son. This may be behind the KJV translation “son” (likewise ASV, NASB). Tg. Prov 29.21 and the Syriac have “to be uprooted,” which may reflect a different text entirely”. The MT translation is to be preferred as it expresses the sentiment found in Isaiah where Hezekiah is the “(suffering) servant” selected to reconcile Jacob, however, the nation is also collectively “my servant” but also “my son” (Exod 4.22, Hos 11.1) as was the King (the promised Immanuel). |

| NetBible v.20) | You have seen someone who is hasty in his words– there is more hope for a fool than for him. |
| LXE v.21) | He that lives wantonly from a child, shall be a servant, and in the end shall grieve over himself. |
### v.22) An angry man stirreth up strife, and a furious man abundeth in transgression.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prov 29:372</th>
<th>Is 37:28;</th>
<th>The one who rages is Sennacherib – his arrogance and anger come to Yahweh’s attention. <em>Heb</em> “an abundance of transgression.” The phrase means “abounding in transgression” (BDB 913 s.v. רב d]). Not only does the angry person stir up dissension, but he also frequently causes sin in himself and in others (e.g., 14:17, 29; 15:18; 16:32; 22:24).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Isa 37:28;</td>
<td>“But I know where you stay and when you come and go and how you rage against me”.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 Chron 32:25-26;</td>
<td>There is a wordplay here due to the repetition of the root שפּל (shafel). In the first line the verb תִּשְׁפִּילֵנ (tishpilennu) is the Hiphil imperfect of the root, rendered “will bring him low.” In the second line the word is used in the description of the “lowly of spirit,” שְׁפַל רוּחַ (shfal ruakh). The contrast works well: The proud will be brought “low,” but the one who is “lowly” will be honoured. In this instance the wordplay can be preserved in the translation. Hezekiah was brought low by pride but humbled himself.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“But Hezekiah rendered not again according to the benefit done unto him; for his heart was lifted up: therefore there was wrath upon him, and upon Judah and Jerusalem. Notwithstanding Hezekiah humbled himself for the pride of his heart, both he and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the wrath of the LORD came not upon them in the days of Hezekiah”.</td>
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</table>

### v.23) A man’s pride shall bring him low: but honour shall uphold the humble in spirit.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prov 29:372</th>
<th>2 Chron 32:25-26;</th>
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<td>“Thy princes are rebellious, and companions of thieves: every one loveth gifts, and followeth after rewards: they judge not the fatherless, neither doth the cause of the widow come unto them”.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>Is 1:23;</td>
<td>“Thy princes are rebellious, and companions of thieves: every one loveth gifts, and followeth after rewards: they judge not the fatherless, neither doth the cause of the widow come unto them”.</td>
<td>The NetBible comments; <em>Heb</em> “oath” or “imprecation”; ASV “adjuration.” This amounted to an “oath” or “curse” (cf. NAB “he hears himself put under a curse”; NRSV “one hears the victim’s curse”) either by or on behalf of the victim, that any witness to the crime must testify (cf. Lev5:1). However, in this legal setting referring to “a victim’s curse” could be misleading (cf. also KJV “he heareth cursing”), since it could be understood to refer to profanity directed against those guilty of the crime rather than an imprecation called down on a witness who refused to testify (as in the present proverb). The present translation specifies this as an “oath to testify.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### v.24) Whoso is partner with a thief hateth his own soul: he heareth cursing, and bewrayeth it not.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prov 29:372</th>
<th>Is 1:23;</th>
<th>The NetBible comments; <em>Heb</em> “oath” or “imprecation”; ASV “adjuration.” This amounted to an “oath” or “curse” (cf. NAB “he hears himself put under a curse”; NRSV “one hears the victim’s curse”) either by or on behalf of the victim, that any witness to the crime must testify (cf. Lev5:1). However, in this legal setting referring to “a victim’s curse” could be misleading (cf. also KJV “he heareth cursing”), since it could be understood to refer to profanity directed against those guilty of the crime rather than an imprecation called down on a witness who refused to testify (as in the present proverb). The present translation specifies this as an “oath to testify.”</th>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The oath to testify was not an oath to tell the truth before a court of law in the modern sense. Instead it was a “curse” or “imprecation” expressed by the victim of the theft, or by the legal authorities, called down on any witness of the crime who kept silent or refused to testify (as here). According to Lev5.1, if a witness does not speak up he is accountable for the crime. This person hears the adjuration, but if he speaks up he is condemned, and if he does not speak up he is guilty under the law. The proverb is an unusual one; it seems to be warning against getting mixed up in any way with the thief, for it will create a serious ethical dilemma.

**v.25** The fear of man bringeth a snare: but whoso putteth his trust (בְּחַיָּה batach) in the LORD shall be safe. LXX v.25) they fearing and reverencing men unreasonably have been overthrown, but he that trusts in the Lord shall rejoice. Ungodliness causes a man to stumble: but he that trusts in his master shall be safe.

Isa 57.11; “And of whom hast thou been afraid or feared, that thou hast lied, and hast not remembered me, nor laid it to thy heart? have not I held my peace even of old, and thou fearest me not?”

Scholarship has already noted the importance of בְּחַיָּה (batach) as an inter-textual connector in the Hezekiah narrative; this is further discussed in the styliometric chapter and the introduction to the Hezekiah Collection, see also Proverbs 28.1 and 28 vv.25-26. It is also noteworthy that it is used in the Songs of Degrees (a Hezekiah arrangement); Ps 125.1 [A Song of degrees.] They that trust in the LORD shall be as mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abideth for ever.

**v.26** Many seek the ruler's favour; but every man's judgment cometh from the LORD.

Isa 3.14; “The LORD will enter into judgement with the ancients of his people, and the princes thereof: for ye have eaten up the vineyard; the spoil of the poor is in your houses”.

The favour of the Assyrian kings was sought even though they dealt treacherously (Isa 33.1) but Yahweh would enter into judgement with Assyria and also with the nation of Israel.
v.27) An unjust (עָשַׁי, `evel) man is an abomination to the just: and he that is upright (יָשָׁר, yashar) in the way is abomination to the wicked.

2 Kgs 18.3; “And he did that which was right (יָשָׁר, yashar) in the sight of the LORD, according to all that David his father did”.

Isa 59.3; “For your hands are defiled with blood, and your fingers with iniquity; your lips have spoken lies, your tongue hath muttered perverseness (עָשַׁי, `evel)

Heb “who is upright in the way” (so NASB; KJV and ASV are similar). Here “in the way” refers to the course of a person’s life, hence “who lives an upright life.” Cf. NAB “he who walks uprightly.” The upright man is the “suffering servant” (Hezekiah) who was despised and rejected (cf. an abomination to the wicked).
Words of Agur

Chapter 30
Proverbs 30

Problems with verse 1

The first verse of this chapter is difficult and this can be observed in the different approaches by the translations shown below:

...from the Hebrew (MT):

“The words of Agur the son of Jakeh, even the prophecy: the man spake unto Ithiel, even unto Ithiel and Ucal’ (KJV).

“Words of a Gatherer, son of an obedient one, the declaration, an affirmation of the man: -- I have wearied myself for God, I have wearied myself for God, and am consumed” (YLT).

“The words of Agur son of Jakeh—the oracle: The averring of this master: I am tired, O El; I am tired, O El, and (all) finished” (CLV).

...and from the Greek (LXX):

“These things says the man to them that trust in God; and I cease” (LXE).

“My son, fear my words, and repent when you receive them; this is what the man says to those who believe in God: Now I stop” (NETS).

Whether or not the words of Proverbs 30 are to be considered as “prophetic” is brought into question by translations such as the NAB - “Jakeh the Massaite” or by the RSV, “Jakeh of Massa” this treats הַמַּשא(hammassa’) as a place name or a proper name rather than as a reference to a prophecy (a burden or oracle).²³⁶

²³⁶ The NAB does the same in Prov 31.1; The words of Lemuel, king of Massa (NAB) compare for example the KJV; The words of king Lemuel, the prophecy.
Greek – Hebrew Comparison

The first thing we note is the difference between the Greek and Hebrew translations – the LXE is the English Translation (Brenton) of the LXX (Septuagint) and NETS is the New English Translation of the Septuagint. Another notable difference is that some Hebrew translations treat the final clause as a vocative phrase (O God...) and other translations as a proper name (Ithiel and Ucal). In fact the YLT translates all the “names” as descriptive - - “a gatherer”(Agur) and “an obedient one”(Jakeh). Another problem is whether or not to regard this as a prophecy (or oracle) or declaration (utterance).

Finally we must take into account that the arrangement of this chapter in the MT is different to that in the Septuagint which “splits up” the sections (30.1–14 precedes 24.23 and 30.15–31.9 follows 24.34 in the LXX). Tov declares that, “The separation in the LXX between the different sections of ‘the words of Agur’ and ‘the words of Lemuel’ is contextually no better or worse than their juxtaposition in MT”. However, (whether it has been displaced or not) textual analysis will demonstrate the integrity of 30.1-14 as a cohesive unit.

Firstly we turn to the Parallel Aligned Hebrew-Aramaic and Greek texts of Proverbs 30 verse 1 from the CATTS (column 1&4) project (under the direction of E. Tov) to which we have added SBL Hebrew and Greek transliterations (column 2&5) and English translations (column 3&6) with CATTS abbreviations (see the Key below):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>KEY</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>v</td>
<td>Difference in vocalization (reading).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>@</td>
<td>Etymological exegesis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>{...}</td>
<td>Equivalent reflected elsewhere in the text, disregarded by indexing program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(d)</td>
<td>Reference to doublet (occurring between the two elements of the doublet.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>=@...a</td>
<td>Etymological exegesis according to Aramaic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.s</td>
<td>One word of MT separated into two or more words in the parent text of the LXX.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.hx =hapax</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#</td>
<td>Long line continuing in next one, placed both at the end of the line running over and at the beginning of the following line in the opposite column.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


238 This follows the Greek translation where the proper name has taken a verbal form.

239 Ibid, 430
**Parallel Hebrew and Greek versions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATTS (1)</th>
<th>Translit.(2)</th>
<th>Trans. (3)</th>
<th>CATTS (4)</th>
<th>Translit.(5)</th>
<th>Trans.(6)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>יִדְרָאָר</td>
<td>dbry</td>
<td>Saying, word, utterance</td>
<td>τούς ἐμοὺς λόγους</td>
<td>tous emous logos</td>
<td>The-of my-words(sayings)-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>סָנָר</td>
<td>'gwr / gwr</td>
<td>Agur</td>
<td>φοβήθητι</td>
<td>phobethēti</td>
<td>Revere, fear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>בֶּן</td>
<td>bn</td>
<td>son</td>
<td>ὑιέ</td>
<td>huie</td>
<td>son</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>{...}</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>φοβήθητι</td>
<td>phobethēti</td>
<td>Revere, fear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>יָקָח</td>
<td>yqh /yqb</td>
<td>Jakeh</td>
<td>καὶ δεξάμενος</td>
<td>kai dexamenos</td>
<td>And receive, accept</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>הַמֶּשַׁא</td>
<td>hms'</td>
<td>Load, burden, prophecy</td>
<td>αὐτοὺς</td>
<td>autous</td>
<td>(these) things</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>נַעָמ</td>
<td>n'm / nhm</td>
<td>Declare, utter</td>
<td>μετανοεῖ {d} τάδε λέγει</td>
<td>metanoiei tade legei</td>
<td>Repent (reconsider) this (one) explain, properly lay forth, relate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>הָגָבְר</td>
<td>hgrb</td>
<td>Man, mighty man</td>
<td>ὁ ἄνηρ</td>
<td>ho anēr</td>
<td>The man</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>לָאָיִתֶל</td>
<td>lʾtyʾl</td>
<td>Ithiel</td>
<td>τοῖς πιστεύουσιν θεό</td>
<td>tois pisteuousin theō</td>
<td>This (one) faithful (believe)God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>לָאָיִתֶל</td>
<td>lʾtyʾl, ʾyt</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>כֵּלָה</td>
<td>wʾkl / klh</td>
<td>Ucal</td>
<td>καὶ παύομαι</td>
<td>kai pauomai</td>
<td>Even left, cease (forsake)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Translation by Bruce K. Waltke

The following translation of the first verse is offered by Bruce K. Waltke in his Proverbs commentary:\textsuperscript{240}

\begin{quote}
The sayings of Agur son of Jakeh. An oracle.  
1b The inspired utterance of the man to Ithiel.  
"I am weary, O God, but I can prevail…."  
\end{quote}

On page 202 Waltke offers the following:\textsuperscript{241}

\textbf{1b} underscores his inspiration by introducing them as \textit{the inspired utterance of the man} (\textit{nē`ûm haggeber}, see n. 6) in apposition to “prophetic oracle.” Kosmala\textsuperscript{19} notes \textit{geber} in this formula signifies a man who stands in a special relationship with God (see I: 89). Kosmala also connects Agur’s inspired utterances with Agur’s assertions about the permanence and sufficiency of God’s word in verses 5 and 6. Agur addresses his inspired saying to \textit{Ithiel} (\textit{fē`ītī `ēl}) but in its canonical context the editor of \textit{Proverbs} addresses the universal people of God (see p. I: 37)\textsuperscript{100}. Finally, verset B summarizes Agur’s tension as a sage. He explains his statement, \textit{I am weary, O God} (\textit{lā`ītī `ēl}, see n. 9)\textsuperscript{101} in verses 2—3 as his quest for wisdom by natural reason, and he clarifies its antithesis \textit{but I can prevail} (\textit{wē`ūkāl}, see n. 10)\textsuperscript{102} in verses 5-6 as due to divine revelation. Agur is “weary” humanly speaking (vv. 2-4), but he can ‘prevail’ since God and his canonical word is his refuge (vv. 5-6). Admittedly, an autobiography in a superscription is unusual, but the logical particle “surely”/ “for” that introduces his autobiographical confession in verse 2 and that occurs medially in a discourse validates the emendation.\textsuperscript{103}


\textbf{Note 6} \textit{Nē`ûm} (“an inspired utterance”) occurs 365 of 376x in the formula \textit{nē`ûm yhw} (D. Vetter, \textit{TLOT}, 2:693 s.v. \textit{nē`ûm}). That construction designates the words that follow originated with the LORD and carry his authority. Once (Jer.23:31) it occurs absolutely with


\textsuperscript{241} Footnotes 5, 6 and 9 (page 96) are reproduced below (99-103 superscript footnotes are not reproduced).

**Note 9** Although Targ., Aquila. Theod. read with MT, the text should be emended by redividing and repointing f’ iti’ el as lâ‘îth ’el (cf. Num. 12:13; Ps. 83:2). C. Torrey (“Proverbs, Chapter 30,” *JBL* 73 [1954] 93-103), followed and modified by R.B.Y. Scott (*Proverbs*, p. 176), Crenshaw (“Clanging Symbols *Proverbs* 30:1-14),”*Justice and the Holy*, D. A. Knight and P.J. Paris, eds. [Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1980] pp. 51-64), et al, interpret l’yyyl as a scribal cover up in Aramaic for a blasphemy. Torrey (cf. NAB) thinks the text should read, l’’yy l (“I am not God, I am not God”). They essentially read lâ’ itay’lâh lâ’ itay’lâh (cf. Dan. 3:29), “there is no god, there is no god.” However, these critics arbitrarily dissect 30:1-6 into the words of sceptical Agur (vv. 1-4) and an orthodox response (30:5-6) and overlook or dismiss too easily Agur’s claim of inspiration. Finally, one must raise a sceptical eye that either the writer or a scribe inserted Aramaic into a passage otherwise expressed in Heb. Scott (*The Way of Wisdom in the Old Testament* [New York: The Macmillan Co., 1971], p. 169) retreated from reading Aramaic and emended text to lô’ ttô [sic! it tô] ’él lô’ itî! ’él “with whom God is not, I have not God.” This emendation finds some support in the grammar of the Vulg., *vir cum quo est deus* (“with whom is God”) but not in its content. The LXX also reads a relative clause but with very different content, *tois pisteuousi theoî* (“to those who believe God”). However, although n’ûm haggeber in Num. 24:3, 15 and 2 Sam. 23:1 is followed by a relative clause, it is not necessary. Moreover, Scott adds consonants to the text in addition to re-dividing them. Finally, Scott mishandles n’ûm haggeber of 24:3, 15 and 2 Sam. 23:1 that support Agur’s inspiration. In sum, the proposed and most widely accepted emendation is best from a text critical, exegetical and canonical point of view. In 1669 Cocceius proposed “I have
labored on account of God, and I have obtained” (cited by Toy, Proverbs, p. 519). In modern times, he has been accepted by B. Gemser (Sprüche Salomos [HAT 16; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1963], p. 102). Taking God as Vocative is favoured by many (e.g., O. Plöger (Sprüche Salomos (Proverbia) [BKAT XVII/2-4; Neukirchen-Vluyn; Neukirchner Verlag, 1984], p. 354), NEB, REB, NIV [text note], NRSV). R. Clifford (Proverbs OTL.; Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999), p. 258) conjectures an earlier and later stage. According to him an earlier sage claimed through conventional protestations of ignorance that his message was God’s, not his own, and a later sage reread this protestation as a genuine expression of misery that is answered by the assurance that every word of God is true. Clifford’s appeal to Psalms 12 and 18 suggests the later sage is assuring himself, not a redactor correcting him. The law of parsimony calls Clifford’s interpretation into question.

Assessment of Proverbs 30 v.1

The different translations and scholarly proposals can sometimes lead to confusion rather than clarification. One might ask why the first verse is so important. Ansberry\textsuperscript{242} sums up the importance of the first verse as follows:

“The generic designation gives way to the most notorious crux in the discourse. While the expression לְאִיתִיאֵל לְאִיתִיאֵּל וְאֻכָל may refer to addressees of the piece, or function as an agnostic, even atheistic confession (There is no God, there is no God. I low can I prevail”), it appears the expression represents an assertion concerning the futility of human efforts to attain knowledge of God (“I am weary, 0 God, I am weary, 0 God, but I can prevail”). This proposal is consistent with the remainder of the monologue”.

The following exegesis will demonstrate through supplementary inter-textual evidence that the translation offered by Waltke (highlighted grey above) is correct. Although it is difficult to establish a correct rendering solely on text critical grounds, it is nevertheless essential to examine the different textual suggestions. At the danger of labouring the point it behoves us to re-examine the above evidence in more depth. The pointed Hebrew MT of the first verse reads:

דִּבְרֵי אוֹר בִּנְיָקֶה הַמַּשָּא נְאֻם הַגֶּבֶר לְאִיתִיאֵל לְאִיתִיאֵל וְאֻכָל

dibrê ’āgûr bin-yāqe hammaśšā‘ nĕ’um haggeber lĕʾîtîʾēl lĕʾîtîʾēl wĕʾukāl

As already noted, the pointed MT might mean ‘The man says to Ithiel, to Ithiel and Ukal’, and this is how the older English translations (AV, RV, followed by RSV) render it. NRSV:

\textsuperscript{242} Christopher B. Ansberry, Be Wise, My Son, and Make My Heart Glad: An Exploration of the Courtly Nature of the Book of Proverbs, (Walter de Gruyter, 2011), 165
'Thus says the man: I am weary, O God...How can I prevail?'; NEB, REB: "This is the great man's very word: I am weary and worn out'.

Waltke (following Torrey) notes that the name Ithiel has a particle preposition לְ- to or towards...unto Ithiel לְאִיתִיאֵל (lĕʾîtîʾēl) and after the fashion of Num 12.13 the root for "weary" לאה (lah) can be repointed as lāîtî. Waltke leaves the first utterance as a proper name and only repoints the second (....to Ithiel."I am weary, O God...") in contrast with the CLV that treats both as verbal forms (I am tired, O El; I am tired, O El). Waltke has made the correct choice in treating the first as a name and the second as a phrase. Not only does this produce poetic assonance, it is critical to the inter-textual allusions (more on this anon).

One puzzling aspect is the difference between the Greek and the Hebrew –even if they were translating from different Hebrew versions, why would the Hebrew (MT) sentence end with either a name (Ucal) or the word “prevail” and the Greek translation with the word “cease” (or stop etc)?

According to Gesenius the proper name Ucal (KJV) [אֻכָל → ukāl], finds its root in לאָה (H0398 → ʾākal); to eat or consume. Interestingly, the unrelated root כָּלָה (H03615 → kālâ) rejected by Ansberry occurs together with לאָה in the phrase “finished eating” (eaten up KJV) in Gen 43.2, → killū leʾēkōl (בלעם → H3615; see next paragraph where [finished] is rejected in favour of prevail (or be able) יִכְל (H3201). The idea of eating, consuming or devouring is found in Isa 33.14 in the context of God being like a consuming fire [cf. Exod 3.2]; Who among us shall dwell [root גָּוָר H1481 → gûr] with the devouring [root לאָה H0398 → ʾākal] fire? Ansberry has an interesting footnote that may help explain the divergence between the MT and LXX texts, as without emending the constants, ukāl can

243 Num 12.13; אֵל נָא {רְפָא} נָא לָה (KJV) → nā is a particle interjection or entreaty → lāh is combined with the interjection giving a sense of direction (to her, towards her, in regard to her). The KJV translation adds a note of impatience (now) according to BDB the Qal of weary [root לאָה] לָה (lah) → H3811 can denote impatience but in Num 12.13 functions as a particle preposition (3rd person feminine singular suffix) so perhaps it captures both as indicated by the KJV (her now) — and in Ps 83:1(2) be not still, O God → לאָהוּלִתִּיהֵשׁ אֵל = → weʾal-tišqōt ēl where אֵל (ʾal) occurs in an entreaty formula (O, God!) as an adverb of negation (not).

244 Compare Isa 1.14: נִלְאֵיָּה יִכְלָאֵל – I am weary (cf. לֵּאֵיָּהוּלִתי). יִכְלָאֵל

245 The name Ithiel is found in the post-exilic period in Nehemiah 11.7.

246 The irony is that the bush was not consumed – Israel was able to dwell with God if they were holy.

247 Compare root H0103 אָגַר from which the proper name Agar in Prov 30.1 [H104 → גּוּר] the unpunctuated versions are very similar. YLT translates Agur as the verbal form from H0103 as the “gatherer” H1484 means dwell or abide.
be read as a defective Paul participle of ykl (which can mean cease or finished). His footnote 249 reads:

“This proposal emends לאויהי אל to לאויהי אל ("I am weary, 0 God") and reads לְאִיתִיאֵל as a defective form from the root יָכֹל ("to be able, prevail"). Many argue that אֻכָל derives from the root יָכֹל ("to be used up, spent") rather than יָכֹל (Franklyn, “The Sayings of Agur,” 243-44; Garrett, Proverbs, 210; Clifford, Proverbs, 260; 1ox, Proverbs 10—31, 854). However, the former reading is preferred, since the defective form of the root יָכֹל occurs several times in the Old Testament (Josh 7:12; Ps 18:39; Jer 20:11) and the verb is used without an object (Exod 1:23) or a complementary verb (Ps 101:5; Isa 1:13) in several instances (cf. Isa 16:12; Job 4:2). See Plöger, Sprüche Salomos, 354; Murphy, Proverbs, 226; Waltke, Proverbs: Chapters 15—31, 468 n. 102; BHQ; D. Barthélemy, ed., Proverbia (vol. 5 of Critique textuelle de l’Ancien Testament; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, forthcoming)."

This would explain why the Greek translation has cease or stop (CLV: finished) from the root לְאִיתִיאֵל (klh-H3615) rather than “prevail” from the defective root יָכֹל (ykl-H3201).251 We settle then on the meaning “prevail” or “be able” etc (although we note that there is probably an inter-textual paronomasia252 intended with key Isaiah texts).

As for the name Jakeh it is thought to originate from an unused root probably meaning to obey (Gesenius H3348) but as it is a hapax legomenon253 it is difficult to establish the meaning, the YLT “obedient one” is probably influenced by the Greek translation καὶ δέξαμενος (kai dexamenos) → “and receive or accept” as in someone who is obedient or receptive to the word.

250 This is probably a misprint and should read (Exod 2:3) instead of (Exod 1:23).
251 Both roots share the same spelling: יָכֹל (klh) or (fuller) יָכוֹל (yakol-yawl) is a primitive root; TWOT - 866; v יָכֹל (yakol) is a primitive root; TWOT - 982,983,984; v כָּלָה (kalah) is also a primitive root; TWOT - 982,983,984; v
252 Paronomasia, is a form of word play that exploits multiple meanings of a term, or of similar-sounding words, for an intended humorous or rhetorical effect. These ambiguities can arise from the intentional use of homophonic, homographic, metonymic, or figurative language.
253 A term of which only one instance of use is recorded.
Exegesis of Proverbs 30

Having accepted Waltke’s rendering of Prov 30.1 the interpretation that follows will demonstrate on inter-textual grounds why this rendering is correct. This commentary argues for the contextualization of Wisdom Literature in the 7th and 8th centuries.

The sayings of Agur son of Jakeh. An oracle.
1b The inspired utterance of the man to Ithiel. "I am weary, O God, but I can prevail...."

The first occurrence of Ithiel

The name *Ithiel* is very similar to *עִמָּנוּ אֵּל* → **Immanuel** → God is with us 255 the prophetic sign given in Isaiah 7.14. The people had been assured that God would be *with them* and Ahaz was assured that the Syro-Ephraimite invasion would fail (Isa 8.10); “Take counsel together, and it shall come to nought; speak the word, and it shall not stand: for *God is with us* (עִמָּנוּ אֵּל → Immanuel).” Immanuel was foreshadowed by Hezekiah (the suffering servant); “Be strong 256 and courageous, be not afraid nor dismayed for the king of Assyria, nor for all the multitude that is with him: for *there be* more *with us* (עִמָּנוּ אֵּל) than with him. With him *is* an arm of flesh; but *with us* (עִמָּנוּ אֵּל) is the LORD our God to...”

254 Ithiel (אִיתִיאֵל H0384) is related to the name Ittay (אֵיתַי H0863) who was a Gittite commander from Gath in David’s army origin probably from גָּת (’eth-H0854) BDB meaning → 1) with, near, together with 1a) with, together with 1b) with (of relationship) 1c) near (of place) 1d) with (poss.) 1e) from...with, from (with other prep)

255 The particle preposition *עִמָּנוּ* is cognate with *אֵל* in the book of Isaiah, forming *עִמָּנוּ אֵּל* meaning God with us. The suffix 1st person common plural form *עִמָּנוּ* occurs 42 times in the Old Testament; Gn 24:25, Gn 26:16, Gn 26:29, Gn 31:50, Ex 10:26, Ex 20:19 [x2], Ex 33:16, Num 10:32 [x2], Num 22:14, Dt 5:2, Dt 29:15 [x2], Jos 24:27, Jdg 6:13, Jdg 11:8, Jdg 18:19, Jdg 18:25, 1Sa 5:7, 15a 14:17, 1Sa 23:19, 1Sa 25:7, 1Sa 29:4, 1Sa 29:9, 2Sa 10:12, 2Sa 15:20, 1Ki 8:57, 2Ki 18:26, 1Ch 19:13, 2Ch 13:12, 2Ch 32:7, 2Ch 32:8, Jb 15:9, Ps 46:7, Ps 46:11, Ps 54:1, Ps 85:4, Ps 126:3, Isa 8:10, Jer 46:16, Ho 12:4

256 The Hebrew word for *strong* is a word play on the short form of Hezekiah → יְחִזְקִיָּהוּׁ (Y@chizqiyah) or יְחִזְקִיָּה (Yah is my strength) even though the longer form is used here יְחִזְקִיָּה (Y@chizqiyah) → H3169 (Yah has strengthened).
help us, and to fight our battles. And the people rested themselves upon the words of Hezekiah king of Judah” (2 Chron 32.7-8).

**The second occurrence of Ithiel**

> “I am weary, O God”

With the second occurrence of Ithiel we follow Waltke et al in reading Ithiel (after repointing) as “I am weary, O God” and this also fits the Immanuel prophecy;

> “And he said, Hear ye now, O house of David; Is it a small thing for you to weary men, but will ye weary 257 my God also?” (Isa 7.13)

The prophet Isaiah found Ahaz in the fuller’s field exhausting his men by directing the construction of defensive works for Jerusalem. However, his faithlessness was also making God weary. The house of David would not be established by building higher walls but through belief in the messianic promises and trust in Yahweh.

**The name Ucal**

> I can prevail

With the name of Ucal we follow Waltke et al in reading Ucal (after repointing) as “I can prevail” or “I prevail” as this also fits the circumstances of the Immanuel prophecy which in the first instance found typical fulfilment in Hezekiah. It was previously noted that the Chroniclers account of the Assyrian siege played on the name of Hezekiah (by using strong (חָזַק, chazaq) and with us (עִמָּנוּ, ʿimmānû) as in “God with us” [Immanuel]). Further correspondence is established when the same chapter employs forms of the word “prevail” or “be able” יָכָל (ykl) as in Sennacherib’s challenge to Yahweh in 2Chr. 32.13;

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257 The last phrase is – literally; → that you-are-tiring → לָאָה כִּי תַלְאוּ the root from לאה → tal’ûa

258 Gesenius: A primitive root; to be able, literally (can, could) or morally (may, might)—be able, any at all (ways), attain, can (away with, [-not]), could, endure, might, overcome, have power, prevail, still, suffer.
Know ye not what I and my fathers have done unto all the people of other lands? were the gods of the nations of those lands any ways able (הֲיָכֹל יָכְלוּׁ hăyākōwl yāklû) to deliver their lands out of mine hand? (KJV)

“Do you not know what I myself and my fathers have done to all the peoples of the lands? Could, yea could (הֲיָכֹל יָכְלוּׁ hăyākōwl yāklû) the elohim of the nations of the lands rescue their land from my hand?” (CLV)

The next two verses employ forms of the root הֲיָכֹל יָכְלוּׁ another two times; “…that your God should be able to deliver you out of mine hand?” (v.14) and “…was able to deliver his people out of mine hand” (v.15). A text where the terms for “prevail” (יָכֹל yāklû ← H3201 ← prevail) and the particle preposition (עִמָּנוּׁ ‘immānû ← with us) is found is Hosea 12.4 (KJV);

“Yea, he had power over the angel, and prevailed: he wept, and made supplication unto him: he found him in Bethel, and there he spake with us”.

וָיָּש ַר אֶל־מַלְאָ (וַיֻּכָל bāk wayyukāl (וַיֻּכָל yāklû ← H3201 ← prevail)) bâkā wayyithannen-lōw bêt-ʾēl yimṣā’ennû wēšām yēdabbēr ‘immānû (עִמָּנוּׁ ‘immānû ← with us)

It has already been observed that אֵל (ēl) in the book of Isaiah is cognate with ‘immānû. Jacob’s initial encounter with God was at Bethel (the house of EL) where God “spake with us” (cf. Immanuel). In this scenario Jacob represents the nation being “collectively” addressed (spoken to by the prophet). Hosea then proceeds to the end of Jacob’s time and his flight from his Syrian (cf. Assyrian) relative Laban – Jacob is fleeing for his life when he meets with and wrestles the angel. The text is often taken to mean that Jacob is victorious over the angel but that is not the case as Jacob “overcomes” or “prevails” against his old nature.259 Jacob is typical of the nation. The nation of Israel was taken captive by Assyria (cf. Assur in Hos 14.3) in ca. 722 BC.

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259 See, P. Wyns, Wrestling with God; Jacob as a paradigm for the nation of Israel @ http://www.biblaridion.info/resources/jacob.pdf
Having examined the inter-textual context we can understand the dual reference to prophecy and inspiration:

An oracle. The inspired utterance of the man

Returning to the commencement of the verse – the first two names are retained contra the YLT which expresses the verbal forms:

The sayings of Agur son of Jakeh.

Even so, in light of what has already been revealed perhaps the proper names of Agur and Jakeh have an inter-textual connection with the historical situation found in the Hezekiah era. Jakeh (H3348 יָקֶה Yaqeh) from which the rare yiqqahah (H3349 יְקָהָה) occurs in the promise to Judah in Gen 49.10 in the phrase “obedience (יִקְּהַת yiqqĕhat) of the people”. The same form occurs in verse 17 of Proverbs 30. Coincidentally (sic) the Hebrew גּוּר guwr phonetically similar but etymologically unrelated to Agur (H0094 אָגוּר) is found in the previous verse where it is translated as “whelp’ or (lion) cub. Genesis 49.9-10 is the Shiloh prophecy. The occurrence of guwr and yiqqĕhat in the blessing may be related (at least at the level of association/word play/assonance) with Agur and Jakeh. The blessing in Genesis is directed to Judah and Isaiah 7 is addressed to the house of David. The Genesis blessing of Judah is based on the unconventional means through which progeny was accorded to Shelah ensuring the continuance of the tribe. There are obvious parallels with the Immanuel prophecy (virgin conception) and also with Hezekiah who was about to die without an heir to the throne (thus ending the Davidic dynasty). Whether the connections with the blessing to Judah in Genesis 49 are real or imagined, the fact stands that the first verse is intimately connected with the Emmanuelle

260 Compare the etymologically unrelated but phonologically similar Hezekiah → חִזְקִיָּה Chizqiyah
261 לִיקֲּהַת־אֵּם liqqăhat-ʾēm to obey his mother(KJV); root H3349 yiqqahah which acts as a word play on Jakeh (Yaqeh); note also reference to “eat” אֲכַל (H0398 ṭāḵal) at the end of the verse which may be intended as a word play on יִכְל (cf.Ucal).
Prophecy of Isaiah 7 and with the Assyrian invasion during Hezekiah’s reign and this is supported by further evidence in the following verses (more anon).

**Comparison between Proverbs 30.1-4 and Isaiah 7**

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<tr>
<td><strong>Ithiel Meaning (a):</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Meaning (a):</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Surely I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man.</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Surely I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man.</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Ask thee a sign of the LORD thy God; ask it either in the depth, or in the height above.</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son,</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Ithiel = &quot;God is with me&quot;</td>
<td>Shall call his name Immanuel. (God with us)</td>
<td>weary</td>
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<td>But Ahaz said, I will not ask, neither will I tempt the LORD.</td>
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<td><strong>what is his name, and what is his son's name, if thou canst tell?</strong></td>
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**Verses 2 and 3 (KJV):**

> 2 Surely I *am* more brutish than *any* man, and have not the understanding of a man. 3 I neither learned wisdom, nor have the knowledge of the holy.

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263 Holy or the “Holy One”→ הַדֹּאָשׁ (qadowsh) or הַדֹּיֵשׁ (qadosh) is a title frequently encountered in Isaiah. The epithet “the Holy One” is the adjective “holy” put in the masculine plural (as in Prov 9:10). This will harmonize with the plural of majesty used to explain the plural with titles for God. However, NRSV takes the plural as a reference to the “holy ones,” presumably referring to angelic beings. Prov 30.3 is possibly also a secondary reference to Isa 6.3; “And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory”. The prophet Isaiah considered himself a man of “unclean lips” dwelling among a people of unclean lips (Isa 6.5) an obvious reference to leprosy (Lev.13.45) from which King Uzziah had just died (2 Chron 26.19, Isa 6.1). In a sense the prophet personifies the unclean nation in reality the next king (Ahaz the grandson of Uzziah) becomes the representative of the unbelieving nation.
When Ahaz was offered a sign his response revealed his ignorant and foolish nature and exposed his faithlessness and unbelief, he becomes “brutish” (like a beast). In Psalm 73, Hezekiah (the son of Ahaz) expresses the same sentiment –

“So foolish was I, and ignorant: I was as a beast before thee”. (Ps.73.22)

In this Psalm Hezekiah like Job) considers the fate of the wicked and their seeming prosperity in contrast with his unmerited suffering. However, Hezekiah’s flirtation with faithlessness was momentary (unlike that of Ahaz);

Until I went into the sanctuary of God.
This Hezekiah did, carrying the letter of his humiliation to spread before the Lord (Isa. 37:14).

Then understood I their end. This verse is not true of many men of faith, but it was literally true of Hezekiah:

“Then Isaiah the son of Amoz sent unto Hezekiah, saying, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Whereas thou hast prayed to me against Sennacherib king of Assyria: This is the word which the Lord hath spoken concerning him: The virgin, the daughter of Zion, hath despised thee, and laughed thee to scorn: the daughter of Jerusalem hath shaken her head at thee... Because thy rage against me, and thy tumult, is come up into mine ears, therefore will I put my hook in thy nose, and my bridle in thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the way by which thou camest” (Isa. 37:21,22,29).

18. Thou castedst them down into destruction:
“Then the angel of the Lord went forth, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians a hundred and fourscore and five thousand: and when they arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses” (Isa. 37:36).

19,20. How are they brought into desolation, as in a moment! they are utterly consumed with terrors. As a dream when one awaketh. This is a wonderful description of the devastation of the Assyrian camp, and remarkably like the words of Isaiah, describing the same event:

“And the multitude of all the nations that fight against Ariel [i.e., Jerusalem, see v. 1], even all that fight against her and her munition, and that distress her, shall be as a dream of a night vision. It shall even be as when an hungry man dreameth, and, behold, he eateth: but he awaketh, and his soul is empty: or as when a thirsty man dreameth, and behold, he drinketh: but he awaketh, and, behold, he is faint, and his soul hath appetite: so shall the multitude of all the nations be, that fight against mount Zion” (Isa. 29:7,8).

After expressing his ignorance (in Ps 73.22) Hezekiah concludes in the next verse;

“Nevertheless I am continually with thee: thou hast holden me by my right hand”. Whittaker and Booker state that; “The Hebrew makes a play on “Ahaz”.

The mother of Hezekiah was Abijah (Yah is my Father, 2 Chron 29.1 cf.2 Sam 7.14) and the conception of Hezekiah becomes a typical fulfilment of Immanuel. Therefore, Proverbs 30.2-3 reflects on (and contrasts) the different inter-textual responses of Ahaz and his son Hezekiah to the challenge of faith – in a sense it is a metaleptic narrative or an interactive conversation by an omniscient narrator between Isaiah 7, Psalm 73 and Isaiah 37. The brutish “have no knowledge of the holy” (Prov 30.3) – not only are they ignorant brutes but they accuse God of the same fault; “And they say, How doth God know? and is there knowledge in the most High?” (Ps.73.11). It is only when he went into the sanctuary of God that Hezekiah understood the truth of the matter.

Verse 4 (KJV):

4 Who hath ascended up into heaven, or descended? who hath gathered the wind in his fists? who hath bound the waters in a garment? who hath established all the ends of the earth? what is his name, and what is his son's name, if thou canst tell?

- Who hath ascended up into heaven, or descended?

This is a straightforward question and the answer is “no one”. No one in the time of Hezekiah had either literally gone up to heaven or come down from heaven. In other words, how is it possible to acquire knowledge of the holy if it is impossible to travel to the divine dwelling place? This obviously rests on Deut 30.12-14 where the people of Israel are told that they have no need to go to extremes of either height or depth to obtain the Law. However, concerning the “sure mercies of David” (Isa 55.3) the word of God would descend and ascend once it had accomplished the task for which it had been sent (Isa 55.11). The virgin birth and the resurrection both typified descending and ascending. The messiah was figuratively sent from heaven and was raised from the depths of Sheol. Hezekiah foreshadowed the “virgin birth” and typified the resurrection (raised from his death bed

265 Ahaz means “he has grasped” (e.g. hold the hand).

266 A different Hebrew word is used for knowledge in Ps 73.1 than in Prov 30.3.

267 The birth of Hezekiah was unusual (but not a virgin birth) – it seems that the young woman was unaware that she was pregnant and neither was King Ahaz. It has been known for women to carry full term without being aware of pregnancy. Abijah probably gave birth immediately after Isaiah announced the sign to Ahaz which would have come as a shock to both of them.
on the third day). A sign in the **height or the depth** was offered to Ahaz (Isa 7.11) – this was the sign of “Immanuel” (God with us), which pertained to the establishment of the Davidic dynasty in perpetuity. Ahaz denied the sign – it was the sign of heavenly origins (height) and resurrection (depth). That it should be understood this way is demonstrated by the apostle Paul in Romans 10 where he brings Isaiah and Deuteronomy together in midrashic fashion. Paul introduces the three explications with the phrase “*that is*” (*toutesti*)\(^{268}\) which is a common midrashic explication.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Romans 10</th>
<th>Isaiah</th>
<th>Deuteronomy 30</th>
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<tr>
<td>...going about to <strong>establish</strong> their own righteousness...for Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.</td>
<td>If ye will not <strong>believe</strong> ye shall not be <strong>established</strong>. Ask a sign of the Lord either in the depth or the height above (7: 9-10)</td>
<td>...if thou turn unto God with all thine heart, and all thy soul (30:10).</td>
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<td><strong>Say not in thine heart, who shall ascend into heaven?</strong></td>
<td>For thou hast <strong>said in thine heart</strong>, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God (14:13).</td>
<td>Who shall go up for us to heaven... (30:12a)</td>
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<td>That is, to <strong>bring Christ down</strong> from above..... Or who shall descend into the deep (abyss)? That is, to <strong>bring up</strong> Christ again from the dead</td>
<td><strong>Drop down, ye heavens</strong>, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness: let the <strong>earth open</strong>, and let them bring forth salvation (45:8).</td>
<td>..and bring it (the law) unto us that we may hear and do it? Neither is it beyond the sea (abyss), that thou shouldest say, who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, that we may hear and do it? (30:12b-13)</td>
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<td>But what saith it (=the righteousness which is of faith speaketh v.6) The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach;</td>
<td>I have not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth: I said not to Jacob, seek ye me in vain; I the Lord <strong>speak righteousness</strong>, I declare things that are right (45:19).</td>
<td>But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it (30:14).</td>
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<td><strong>That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.</strong></td>
<td>I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shalt not return, that unto me every knee should bow, <strong>every tongue shall swear</strong>. Surely, shall One say, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength: even to him shall men come; and all that are incensed against him shall be ashamed. In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory (45: 23-24).</td>
<td>And the Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live (30:6)</td>
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\(^{268}\) The Greek *toutéstai* - sometimes this is cited as a Pesher motif – but it is also a common midrashic formula (cf., e.g., Ber.6a; Sifre Num.139; Rom.9:8; Heb.2:14; 7:5; 10:20).
The mysterious origins of the messiah (and all believers) are discussed in the “born from above” discourse with Nicodemus (John 3) which is based on Isaiah 7. John references Immanuel in John 3.2; “no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him. The “height” (heavenly things) and the “depth” (earthly things) are also referenced; “If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things? And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven” (John 3.12-13). It is clear then that the “ascending” and “descending” motif is used in the OT for the Law (the Word), but also for the messianic sign.

- who hath gathered the wind in his fists? who hath bound the waters in a garment?

The next clause has thematic and structural parallels with Job 28.12-28 and also with Psalm 104. Job is a parabolic dramatization of the Assyrian crisis (and the suffering of Hezekiah) and Psalm 104 is based on the seraphim (cherubim) vision of Isaiah 6. In Ps104.2 the Lord covers himself with light as a garment (cf. Isa 6.1) and the “beam of his chambers” (KJV) is laid in the wind, which is a lyrical description of taking possession of the wind (cf. in his fists). The prosaic language of Prov 30.3 is also similar to the theophanic description of the cherub found in Psalm 18 where the poet describes the setting as (v.11) - - “His pavilion round about him were dark waters and thick clouds” (cf. bound around him like a garment). The next verse (verse 5) is also inter-textually connected with Psalm 18 (see there).

- who hath established all the ends of the earth?

The boundary between land and water is established in Genesis 1.9-10 where the land is named “earth” as opposed to the “sea”. The boundaries of the gentile nations was determined “according to the number of the children of Israel” (Deut 32.8), metaphorically in Isaiah the wicked (gentiles) are depicted as a roaring sea (Isa.57.20 cf. 60.5). Proverbs does not use כּוּן (kuwn) or קוּם (quwm) for “established” but rather אָמַן (aman). From this word we derive the English “amen”, the first time this root is employed is significant as it is in relation to the Abrahamic covenant;

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270 Compare the context; “Hath he not made thee, and established thee?” (Deut 32.6) with Prov 30.4; “Who hath established the columns” (quwm) - - all the ends of the earth?” Note that one of the temple columns was called Jachin (He will establish) deriving from H3359.
“And he believed וְהֶאֱמִן (wĕheʾĕmin) in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness” (Gen 15.6).

Now compare Isa 7.14b;

“If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established”.

The same word is used twice in Isaiah 7.14b creating a word play. The Hebrew root for establish (believe) is inter-textually connected and we follow it from Prov 30.4 to the Davidic covenant in Isa 7.9 and then back to the Abrahamic covenant in Gen 15.6. This is significant because as we shall shortly develop a connection between Prov 30.5 and Gen 15.1 and this is not coincidental.

• what is his name, and what is his son’s name, if thou canst tell?

This unusual phrase points to Exod 3.13 (What is his name?) and also to 2 Sam7.14 (I will be his father and he will be my son) – the former is an enquiry into the covenant name and the latter a reference to the Davidic covenant promise. His name is of course Yahweh and his son’s name is Yah saves (Jesus).

Verse 5 (KJV):

5 Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him.

This verse draws together many of the previous threads. It is worthwhile citing Waltke in full before adding additional comments to this important verse;
“Verse 5 is an adaptation of David’s victory song, celebrating his escape from his enemies and death (2 Sam. 22:31 [= Ps. 18:30 (31)]; see cf. also Ps. 105:19; 119:4). Agur’s changes of David’s text suggest he is employing the trope of metalepsis, a rhetorical and poetic device in which a later text alludes to an earlier one in a way that draws upon resonance of the earlier text beyond the explicit citation. Immediately after the text quoted by Agur, David gives God’s name: “Who is God but the LORD” (Ps. 18:31 [32]), the anticipated answer to Agur’s question in verset 4b. Also, David celebrates the LORD as the one who soars on the wings of the wind and who made the dark rain clouds his covering (Ps. 18:10f.[11f.]), a thought similar to Agur’s in 4a. The synthetic parallels the word of God (cf. 2:5; 25:2) in verset A and he (a reference to God himself) in verset B suggests that God and his word are inseparable. In verset A, the refiner’s imagery of purified (see 25:4) precious metal asserts the truthfulness of God’s teachings (cf. Pss. 12:6; 19:9b, 10a; 105:19b; 119:140). All of God’s inspired teachings perfectly represent the divinely established nexus of cause and effect. In verset B, the imagery of God as a shield (see 2:7) represents him as a warrior who protects his faithful ones from all their enemies, including death. The imprecise parallelism implies that those who seek refuge in him do so both by committing themselves to his inspired words (see 3:5-6) even in death (see 14:32). The revelation aims to promote trust in the Speaker, not to give bare knowledge. God’s revealed word and the disciple’s humble trust in God to keep it are fundamental aspects of “fear of the LORD”.271

Waltke’s reference to Psalm 18 is perceptive;

As for God, his way is perfect: the word of the LORD is tried: he is a buckler (shield) to all those that trust in him. For who is God save the LORD? or who is a rock save our God? It is God that girdeth me with strength, and maketh my way perfect. (Ps.18.30-32)

However, the chain of inter-textual allusion is more complex and polyvalent than even Waltke realizes; Prov 30.5 → Ps.18.30-32→“Who is like unto thee, O LORD” (Exod 15.11) → “What name?” (Exod 3.13)→ “What name?” (Prov 30.4)→“Whose son?” (Prov 30.4)→“My son” (2 Sam 7.14)→ “he is become my salvation” (yeshuw’ah in Exod 15.2)→ “shield” (Prov 30.5)→ “shield” (Ps 18.30)→ “Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward” (Gen 15.1)→ Prov 30.4→“established”→ “And he believed” (Gen 15.6)→ “If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established” (Isa 7.14b).

As Waltke notes Prov 30.5 is an adaption of David’s victory song which is in turn inspired by the “Song of the Sea” of Exodus 15. Both David and Moses declare the absolute uniqueness of God (Who is God? cf. What is his name?), there is no one who can save from death like him. Abraham was told that his descendants would be captive in Egypt (Gen 15.13-14) but they were saved on the Passover (like Hezekiah). Abraham refused the reward offered by the king of Sodom therefore God promised to be Abraham’s shield and later David also refers to the shield. Moreover the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants were established by belief (faith/trust) in the promised messiah – “Whose Son?” (My Son).

271 Ibid, Waltke, p.209 (footnotes not included).
The same Hebrew חסַה (chacah) is employed for “trust” in both Prov 30.5 and Ps 18.30. As previously noted in this commentary, the Hebrew בָּטַח (batach) translated as trust or security etc is the term most commonly associated with the Hezekiah narrative. The author chose the much rarer word (37x) חסַה (chacah) over the more frequent בָּטַח (220x) because it so obviously bridges a link between the proverb and the psalm. David also employs חסַה (chacah) in Ps 57.1 where it used twice and translated (KJV) as “trusteth” and subsequently “refuge” in the context of sheltering under the cherub wings; “...for my soul trusteth in thee: yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities be overpast”. The context in Ruth 2.12 is also the cherubim; “under whose wings thou art come to trust”. Therefore Proverbs chooses to link to Psalm 18 by using חסַה (chacah) instead of the “Hezekiah” term בָּטַח (batach) because it better suits the context of cherubim/seraphim and is appropriate to the Psalm and to Isaiah’s commissioning. If that is the case then why is the Hebrew “perfect” תָּמִים (tāmîm) in Ps 18.30 substituted for “pure” שְׁרָפִים (šĕrāpîm) of Isaiah 6.2. The suggestion is that the change was made in order to associate the word with the seraphim שְׁרָפִים (šĕrāpîm) of Isaiah 6.2.

Psalm 18 describes Yahweh riding the storm on the cherub (Ps 18.10) and Isaiah describes the seraphim (essentially the same creatures). The Hebrew for “pure” is therefore making a word play on seraphim. Isaiah was purged (kaphar cf. atonement) by a hot coal touching his lip- the Hebrew “pure” שְׁרָפִים (šĕrûpūdî) in Prov 30.5 denotes refining with fire (refining metal) and שְׁרָפִים (šĕrûpîm) means fiery (ones) from the root, ‘to burn’. Elsewhere, the prophet Isaiah (48.10) employs שְׁרָפִים (šĕrûpûdî) translated as “pure” in the sense of refining; “Behold, I have refined thee, but not with silver; I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction”. Note the allusion to fire (furnace of affliction). The “Hezekiah term” בָּטַח (batach) occurs four times in Psalm 115, three of them in conjunction with shield;

“They that make them are like unto them; so is every one that trusteth in them. O Israel, trust thou in the LORD: he is their help and their shield. O house of Aaron, trust in the LORD: he is their help and their shield. Ye that fear the LORD, trust in the LORD: he is their help and their shield” (Ps 115.8-11).

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272 See, P. Wyns, Cherubim and Seraphim in Scripture. Cherubim and Seraphim are the same creatures - they are connected with Life (Living Creatures) and typify the divine purpose as written in the stars and written in the being of every living creature. [http://www.biblaridion.info/Anthology/cherub.pdf](http://www.biblaridion.info/Anthology/cherub.pdf)
This psalm is most certainly a Hezekiah psalm\textsuperscript{273} note also the challenge in Ps 115.2; “Where is now their God”? Compare “God with us” (Immanuel) and Prov 30.4; “What is his name?” God was constantly challenged by Sennacherib and his proxy Rabshakeh (cf. 2Kgs 18.35, Ps79.10).\textsuperscript{274} Even more intriguing is the use of pure מְטֻרָה (ṣĕrûpâ) in the Acrostic Psalm 119:

\begin{quote}
“Thy word is very pure (מְטֻרָה); therefore thy servant loveth it”
\end{quote}

(Ps 119.140).

And again a reference to the word and a shield;

\begin{quote}
“Thou art my hiding place and my shield: I hope in thy word”
\end{quote}

(Ps 119.114).

Whittaker et al classify Psalm 119 as a Hezekiah Psalm\textsuperscript{275} and there is every reason to believe that it was composed by Isaiah or one of his compatriots. The reference to the word in Prov 30.5 uses an implied comparison (a figure of speech known as hypocatastasis): It compares the perfection of every word from God with some precious metal that has been refined and purified (e.g., Ps 12:6). The point is that God’s word is trustworthy; it has no defects and flaws, nothing false or misleading. The second half of the verse explains the significance of this point – it is safe to trust the Lord. Moreover, the people did not have to ascend to heaven or descend to hell in order to acquire the “word” as it had already been sent by God (Isa 55.11), according to Deuteronomy (30.14) the word was in fact very close to them (in their mouth and in their heart).

The word is usually taken as a reference to the Law and that is superficially correct, however, Abraham kept the Law 430 years before it was even given (Gen 26.5) and an inter-textual reading of the last chapters of Deuteronomy point to the Abrahamic covenant as the subtext – it was, after all, under the renewed covenant of circumcision that Israel entered the land (Josh 5.2-5 cf. Gen 17.10). To sum up then......the WORD (in which they hoped and sought refuge) was pure, the word in which they trusted......was the promised messiah (Immanuel) that God would send to save them (like he saved Israel from Egypt at the Passover and David from his enemies). The word is then the messiah that was promised to Abraham and to David -- the word was a personification and manifestation of God, no longer the “ten words” written on stone tablets but a singular “word” made of flesh and

\textsuperscript{273} On this see Psalm Studies by Whittaker et al
http://www.christadelphianbooks.org/booker/psalms5/psabke09.html

\textsuperscript{274} Psalm 79 fits the Assyrian Crisis in the time of Hezekiah. See Whittaker et al; “Every phrase, except one, fits neatly and easily into the picture of the Assyrian invasion by Sennacherib against Hezekiah’s Judah”.
http://www.christadelphianbooks.org/booker/psalms5/psabkc07.html#Heading51

\textsuperscript{275} On this see Psalm Studies by Whittaker et al http://www.christadelphianbooks.org/booker/psalms5/psabke13.html
blood which in that era was typified (foreshadowed) by Yahweh’s “Davidic son” (My son). The Judean king from the house of David was meant to be the divine agent (representative) and with Hezekiah this was especially true as his career was portended and confirmed by his unusual birth circumstances. Hezekiah enacted the part of the “suffering servant”-portraying in shadow likeness the Davidide who at that time was still future (Jesus Christ). Hezekiah was about to die childless (thus ending the Davidic dynasty) but like Job (and Abraham) he never gave up his hope and trust in the Lord and in the end Hezekiah was justified (as was Jesus Christ); “If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established”.

“Hezekiah was rescued and his faith rewarded. On the third day he was raised from his death bed and given a 15 year extension of life (and the Assyrian enemy was destroyed at Passover) – Hezekiah lived to produce a descendant and the Davidic covenant was not annulled. Jesus Christ was raised from the dead on the third day– his days are prolonged for evermore – Jesus has produced and will produce a multitudinous seed.

Verse 6 (KJV):

6 Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar.

Add not is usually understood as additions to the Law (Deut 4.2-3) but the context in Deuteronomy (on which this is based) makes it clear that the incident at Baalpeor (Num 25.1-9) is in mind. When Balaam was bribed to curse the people of Israel he admitted that he could not “go beyond the commandment of the LORD, to do either good or bad of mine own mind” (Num 24.13), nevertheless, as the Baalpeor incident occurred directly afterwards Balaam (the false prophet) must have offered advice to tempt Israel with licentiousness and idolatry which behaviour would result in God himself punishing (and cursing) them. Balaam could not curse them directly so he accorded them a blessing; “I shall see him, but not now; I shall behold him, but not nigh: there shall come a Star (Kochva) out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel....”(Num 24.17). This was regarded as a messianic prophecy and even led to speculation in later Judaism about a “messiah ben Joseph” – a messiah from Israel/Jacob (i.e., Ephraim) as well as a “messiah ben David” (a son of David i.e., from Judah). In Genesis 49 it is not yet apparent whether the messiah will come from Joseph (Ephraim) or from the tribe of Judah. As the first five verses of Proverbs 30 are concerned with messianic
prophecy it is likely that “adding to his words” in verse 6 should be understood in the same messianic context and it is remarkable (to say the least) that Num 24.17 was used by the chief Rabbi Akiva (ca. 132/3 AD) to declare Shimeon Kosiba as Shimeon Bar Kochva (Simon the Son of a star) as the messiah. The false messiah Bar Kochva caused absolute destruction and havoc to be unleashed by Rome and his three-and-one-half year rebellion (42 months) resulted in Jerusalem being declared a gentile city with the Jews utterly scattered. Bar Kochva was found to be a liar and Jewish-Christian renamed him Bar Koziv (son of a lie). The form of the verb is a Niphal perfect tense with a vav consecutive from the root קזב (kazav, “to lie”). In this stem it has the ideas of “been made deceptive,” or “shown to be false” or “proved to be a liar.” One who adds to or changes the word of the Lord will be seen as a liar. In Num 24.17 the star arises in Jacob – whose name means “deceiver” which supports the above suggestion (son of a lie). In contrast Balaam speaks the truth when he says; “God is not a man, that he should lie...” (Num 24.19), therefore paraphrasing Proverbs 30 verses 5 and 6 – the pure word is the messiah the added word(s) are a false messiah(s) [liar]. Jesus warned that such a false messiah comes in his “own name” (John 5.43) – therefore, to the question posed in verse 4 (“What is his name, and what is his son’s name?”) early Jewish-Christians responded during the Kochba revolt by playing on his Kochva epithet with Koziv, “son of a lie” (liar). In other words, the answer to the question posed in Prov 30.4 (What is his son’s name?) is furnished by the response formed in Prov 30.6 (a liar or false messiah). This demonstrates that the early church regarded (at the very least) Prov 30.1-6 as inspired messianic prophecy.

Although this approach regards Prov 30.1-6 as a long range messianic prophecy, nevertheless (as with all prophecy), a more immediate primary fulfilment should be sought and this is discovered during Hezekiah’s reign. The Assyrian king Sennacherib sent his chief officer Rabshakeh to Hezekiah who lied and abused messianic prophecies for propaganda purposes (2 Kgs 18.31; cf. Mic 4.4). The liar, says Prov 30.6, would be reproved ץָכַח (yakach) and Hezekiah employs the same word in his request to Isaiah;

“It may be the LORD thy God will hear all the words of Rabshakeh, whom the king of Assyria his master hath sent to reproach the living God; and will reprove ץָכַח (yakach) the words which the LORD thy God hath heard: wherefore lift up thy prayer for the remnant that are left” (2 Kgs 19.4).

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276 His epithet has a gematria of 666. On this see; P. Wyns, The Shema and Bar Kochba: the false messiah and 666, March 2018, 1-9 http://www.biblaridion.info/resources/kzb.pdf
Previously this commentary indicated that the book of Job is a parabolic play (theological discussion) based on the Assyrian crisis and the sufferings of Hezekiah, which in turn draws on the theme of “disinterested service”. The speech given by Job in chapter 13 draws on historical parallels found in the royal records (Kings/Chronicles) and Isaiah regarding the Assyrian crisis – Job 13 remonstrates with; “forgers of lies” (v4), those who, “talk deceitfully for him” (v.7), as God will “surely reprove יָכַח (yakach) you” (v.10) because, “an hypocrite shall not come before him” (v.16). Job’s friends turned against him as did some of Hezekiah’s advisors (Shebna).

**Summary of verses 1-6**

It has already been noted that the LXX treats Proverbs 30.1–14 as a textual unit which is placed elsewhere in the MT. It is clear that the first six verses are related to messianic prophecy and this is confirmed by the first verse with references to an “oracle” and “inspiration”. The next step of our investigation is to determine if the remaining verses in this unit (vv.7-14) belong (thematically) with the first six verses.

**Verse 7**

> Two things have I required of thee; deny me them not before I die:

The poetic phrasing “deny me them not” אַל־תִּמְנַע מִמֶּנִּי (ʾal-timnaʿ mimennî) is probably intended as a word play on manna מָנָה, the bread that fed Israel in the wilderness as the next verse makes reference to “convenient food” (KJV) which is thought to contribute to the Lord’s prayer; “Give us this day our daily bread” (Matt 6.11). The request to God for “two things” is also found in Job;

> Only do not two things unto me: then will I not hide myself from thee. Withdraw thine hand far from me: and let not thy dread make me afraid” (Job 13.20-21).
Note that inter-textual connections to Job 13 are also found in the previous verse (Prov 30.6). Whereas the request (two things) made by Job to God were to cease persecuting and terrifying him in Proverbs (below) the two requests relate to protection from temptation. The life of both Job and Hezekiah is characterised by the crisis and the restoration afterwards. The plea to stop the persecution belongs to the crisis period and the plea for the removal of temptation belongs to the aftermath (the recovery and restoration).

Verse 8

8 Remove far from me vanity and lies: give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me:

In this case the “two things” are (1); keep me away from lies and (2); keep me from material extremes. Vanity and lies is a hendiadys and most probably denotes idol worship; similar phraseology is employed in Isa 5.18 depicting ritualistic transport of an idol or perhaps the altar installed by Ahaz (2 Kgs 16.9-16). Most commentators believe that this verse advocates for the “golden mean” (the ideal moderate position between two extremes) and there is some truth in that as the following verse indicates, however, the word translated “convenient” in the KJV is from the Hebrew root חֹק (choq) usually referring to a commandment, law, statute, ordinance etc more rarely as a “portion” or “ration” i.e., something appointed (decreed) in other words a measure of something that has been proscribed. In the KJV translated as “convenient” (food) or literally convenient “bread” לֶחֶם (lechem). The obvious connection is to the daily manna in the wilderness making every Israelite dependent on God’s word (i.e., his commandment to his angels to feed the people);

“And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live” (Deut 8.3).
Convenient (חֹק, choq) food is therefore linked with bread from heaven and God’s word which verse 4 describes as the pure word (not the added word of v.6). The prophet Isaiah promised that God would send his word (Isa 55.11) which set against the background of the Immanuel prophecy has clear messianic implications. Therefore, in the first instance “convenient food” is the spoken word (from God to his angels) which sustains the nation, then it becomes the written word (the Law) and finally it is manifest as the Word made flesh (messiah).

The highest frequency in the OT for the Hebrew root חֹק (choq) is found in Psalm 119 which had previously been designated a “Hezekiah Psalm”. It is employed twenty one times in the acrostic Psalm and translated as “statutes” by the KJV throughout the chapter. Moreover, verses 114 and 140 of Psalm 119 are alluded to in Prov 30.5 (see above). An important linking function with the other texts is provided by the Heb יְשֵׁוּעַ (yeshuah) found near the end of the Psalm;

“I have longed for thy salvation, O LORD; and thy law is my delight” (Ps 119.174).

“The LORD is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation” (Exod 15.2a).

“He is the tower of salvation for his king” (2 Sam 22.51a).

“He also shall be my salvation: for an hypocrite shall not come before him” (Job 13.16).

Psalm 18 (a duplicate variant of 2Sam 22) employs יָשָּׁע (yasha) instead of its passive particle יְשֵׁוּעַ (yeshuah) nevertheless all the above texts are alluded to in Proverbs 30.1-8

277 Psalm 119, which typically is printed in subsections named after the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet, each section consisting of 8 verses, each of which begins with the same letter of the alphabet and the entire psalm consisting of 22 x 8 = 176 verses. Some scholars have suggested that these alphabetic acrostics indicate that God covers every aspect of life from A to Z (Aleph to Taw), therefore they signify completeness. It is notable that Psalm 119 employs many synonyms for what we would term the “law” notably; Statue (H2706) choq in verses 5, 8, 12, 23, 26, 33, 48, 54, 64, 68, 71, 80, 83, 112, 117, 118, 124, 135, 145, 155, 171 [21x]; Utterance (H0565) ‘imrah in verses 11, 38, 41, 50, 58, 67, 76, 82, 103, 116, 123, 133, 140, 148, 154, 158, 162, 170, 172 [19x]; Word (H1697) dabar in verses 9, 16, 17, 25, 28, 42, 43, 49, 57, 65, 74, 81, 89, 101, 105, 107, 114, 130, 139, 147, 160, 161, 169 [23x]; Law (H8451) torah in verses 1, 18, 29, 34, 44, 51, 53, 55, 61, 70, 72, 77, 85, 92, 97, 109, 113, 126, 136, 142, 150, 153, 163, 165, 174 [25x]; Testimonies (H5713) `edah in verses 2, 22, 24, 46, 59, 79, 95, 119, 125, 138, 146, 152, 167, 168 [14x]; Commandments (H4687) mitsvah in verses 6, 10, 19, 21, 32, 35, 47, 48, 60, 66, 73, 86, 96, 98, 115, 127, 131, 143, 151, 166, 172, 176 [22x]; Precepts (H6490) piqquwd in verses 4, 15, 27, 40, 45, 56, 63, 69, 78, 87, 93, 94, 100, 104, 110, 128, 134, 141, 159, 168, 173 [21x] and Judgements (H4941) mishpat in verses 7, 13, 20, 30, 39, 43, 52, 62, 75, 84, 91, 102, 106, 108, 120, 121, 132, 137, 149, 156, 160, 164, 175 [23x]. The total of these synonyms is 21+19+23+25+14+21+23 = 168 (8 x 21 = 4x42).

278 Frequencies: H3444 yeshu’ah, salvation [78x]; H3091 Joshua [216x]; H3468 yesha, salvation [36x]; H3467 yasha, to save [205x]. Note the following 216+36 =252 (12x21) and 216+78 =294 (14x21) and 205+16=421. The last calculation would be 20x21 or 10x42 if the tally was 420 instead of 421 -- it is suspected that one of the occurrences of yasha is incorrectly pointed giving 204+216=420.
forming a complex matrix drawing together the historical rescue of the nation at the Exodus, with the deliverance of David, culminating with the salvation of the nation in the time of Hezekiah.

Verse 9:

9 Lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the LORD? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain.

The Septuagint (LXE) and NETS for 9a has; “Lest I be filled and become false, and say, Who sees me?” instead of “Who is the Lord?” In all probability the LXX reflects a different Hebrew recension or vorlage, however, in this case the MT is to be preferred because it functions as a play on verse 4; “What is his name?” The verb translated deny כָּחַש (kakhash) means “to be disappointing; to deceive; to fail; to grow lean.” In the Piel stem it means “to deceive; to act deceptively; to cringe; to disappoint.” The idea of acting deceptively is illustrated in Hos 9.2 where it has the connotation of “disowning” or “refusing to acknowledge” (a meaning very close to its meaning here). The prophet Hosea castigated Israel for their material self-satisfaction and pride; “According to their pasture, so were they filled; they were filled, and their heart was exalted; therefore have they forgotten me” (Hos 13.6). Israel was taken into captivity by Sargon. Excess (fullness) caused Israel to sin and hunger (caused by the Assyrian invasion) would cause Judah to sin; “And they shall pass through it, hardly bestead and hungry: and it shall come to pass, that when they shall be hungry, they shall fret themselves, and curse their king and their God, and look upward” (Isa 8.21).

Here “fullness” indicates pride and self-satisfaction; failing to show gratitude or acknowledge God as the source of blessing or accomplishment is akin to denying him and this is expressed emphatically as “Who is the Lord?” This catch phrase is first found in the mouth of Pharaoh (Exod 5.2) and a similar sentiment is expressed by Sennacherib’s emissaries; “Who are they among all the gods...”(2 Kgs 18.35 cf. 2Chron 32.15,19) and this becomes, “Where is their God?” (Micah 7.10) In other words, this is a phrase of denial found in the mouth of foreign (heathen) kings; it is a sign of hubris and should not be found in the mouth of a Davidic King, especially not one who had recently experienced a spectacular deliverance and recovery;
“But Hezekiah rendered not again according to the benefit done unto him; for his heart was lifted up: therefore there was wrath upon him, and upon Judah and Jerusalem. Notwithstanding Hezekiah humbled himself for the pride of his heart, both he and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the wrath of the LORD came not upon them in the days of Hezekiah. And Hezekiah had exceeding much riches and honour: and he made himself treasuries for silver, and for gold, and for precious stones, and for spices, and for shields, and for all manner of pleasant jewels; Storehouses also for the increase of corn, and wine, and oil; and stalls for all manner of beasts, and cotes for flocks” (2 Chron 32.25-28).

Hezekiah (faithful servant that he was) humbled himself and his lapse was forgiven.

Verse 10

10 Accuse not a servant unto his master, lest he curse thee, and thou be found guilty.

In this verse the “servant” is Hezekiah and the “master” is Yahweh who “curses” the nation for falsely accusing his faithful servant. Think here of the accusations thrown at Job during his time of suffering.

The servant is “my righteous servant” (Isa 53.10) who was despised and rejected. Although Yahweh would find the nation guilty (אָשַם,’asham); --“Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin” (אָשָם,’asham). The Hebrew (shown above) for guilt and guilt offering are related forms one (Isa 53.10) is derived from the other (Prov 30.10) and differentiated by pointing (which was a late addition). The only place in Isaiah that the form found in Prov 30.10 occurs is in Isaiah 24.6 “Therefore hath a curse devoured the earth, and they that dwell therein are found guilty (אָשַם,’asham); therefore the inhabitants of the earth waste away, and men are left few” (JPS). The passage in Isa 24.6 has the same key terms as Prov 30.10 (cursing and guilt). The “righteous servant” (Hezekiah) represents the faithful remnant in his suffering – he becomes as it were a “guilt offering” and the accusations against him (cf. Job) are not substantiated because he God saves and vindicates him.
Verses 11-14

11 There is a generation that curseth their father, and doth not bless their mother.

12 There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness.

13 There is a generation, O how lofty are their eyes! and their eyelids are lifted up.

14 There is a generation, whose teeth are as swords, and their jaw teeth as knives, to devour the poor from off the earth, and the needy from among men.

The next four verses are introduced with the formulaic “There is a generation” indicating that these attitudes belong to a certain age or time period. A generation that despises their parents despises its origins and is therefore destined to fail. The “parents” of the nation were Abraham and Sarah; “Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you: for I called him alone, and blessed him, and increased him” (Isa 51.2). God had blessed Abraham because of his faithfulness – in turn those who cursed Abraham by doubting the divine ability to save would find themselves cursed (Gen 12.3).

This faithless generation regarded themselves as “pure” (not the same Heb as v.5; “every word of God is pure”) – it is not possible to be pure and lack faith. The point of the verse is that there are people who observe outer ritual (ritually pure) and think they are pure (tahor is the Levitical standard for entrance into the sanctuary), but who pay no attention to inner cleansing (e.g., Matt 23:27). The verb רחץ (rakhats) means “to wash; to wash off; to wash away; to bathe.” It is used of physical washing, ceremonial washings, and hence figuratively of removing sin and guilt through confession (e.g., Isa 1.16). Here the form is the Pual perfect (unless it is a rare old Qal passive, since there is no Piel and no apparent change of meaning from the Qal). The perfective meaning “has not been washed” focuses on the continuing result “are not washed.” This was the generation that Isaiah prophesied against; “Which say, Stand by thyself, come not near to me; for I am holier than thou. These are a smoke in my nose, a fire that burneth all the day” (Isa 65.5).

The chief characteristic of this generation is their pride and arrogance, yet they have nothing that warrants such hubris as they would soon discover; “The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the LORD alone shall be
exalted in that day” (Isa 2.11). In particular it was the “pride of Ephraim” (northern refugees in Jerusalem) that was condemned by the prophet (Isaiah 28).

This generation is pictured as having a mouth full of daggers and a jaw like a knife. Their appetite is rapacious and destructive. The “poor” and the “needy” are not necessarily lacking material goods (although that is possible) but they are oppressed. The “suffering servant” (Hezekiah) is probably in mind; “He was oppressed, and he was afflicted” (Isa 53.7). The “knives” and “daggers” associated with the mouth often refer to false words or slander and even false prophecy; “Thus saith the LORD concerning the prophets that make my people err, that bite with their teeth, and cry, Peace; and he that putteth not into their mouths, they even prepare war against him” (Micah 3.5). The Davidic psalmist employs similar language to describe the plotting against David; “My soul is among lions: and I lie even among them that are set on fire, even the sons of men, whose teeth are spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword” (Ps 57.4) and also; “The words of his mouth were smoother than butter, but war was in his heart: his words were softer than oil, yet were they drawn swords” (Ps 55.21). The latter psalm describes the deceitful scheming of both Ahithophel (the royal counsellor) and Absalom (2 Sam. 15.5-6). Compare the lips of the strange woman in Prov. 5.3-4 see also verse 20. Hezekiah was also being plotted against by his royal counsellor (the treasurer Shebna).

**Verses 15-17:**

15. The horseleach hath two daughters, crying, Give, give. There are three things that are never satisfied, yea, four things say not, It is enough:

16. The grave; and the barren womb; the earth that is not filled with water; and the fire that saith not, It is enough.

17. The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it

This is indeed a strange saying and the commentaries provide very little clarification and usually waste time on the etymology of “horseleach” (rendered as “leech” in many translations). The idea is straightforward enough – it is something that sucks you dry. It is
never satisfied and will eventually kill the host leaving an empty husk. This “leech” has two daughters and they are both called “Give” יָהַב (yahab).

This is clearly based on Gen 29.16; “And Laban had two daughters. Laban is depicted as a “leech” using his two daughters to suck the lifeblood out of Jacob with Rachel crying; “Give me children, or else I die” יָהַב (yahab) drawing the response from Jacob; “Am I in God’s stead, who hath withheld from thee the fruit of the womb?” (Gen 30.1-2 cf. and the barren womb in v 16). There is supreme irony in the words of Rachel because the desire for children would cause her death (Gen 35.17-18) and it is this incident that Hezekiah draws on when he recites the proverb; “Thus saith Hezekiah, This day is a day of trouble, and of rebuke, and blasphemy: for the children are come to the birth, and there is not strength to bring forth” (2 Kgs 19.3). The nation was having death-throes; labouring to give birth to a faithful remnant, struggling to keep messianic hope alive. It seemed as though the grave and the barren womb would triumph. Hezekiah was going to die without an heir to the throne and with him died Davidic hope. However, the “mother” and “father” of the nation had also been disobeyed and mocked (Gen 21.9). Sarah was barren and conceived Isaac immediately after exiting the harem of Abimelech (Gen 20.18-Gen 21.1) the mocking of Isaac (and therefore of Abraham) was along the lines of; “You are a bastard….you are Abimelech’s son….I am Abraham’s true heir” this was an act of disobedience (rebellion) by Hagar against her mistress. The “bondservant” was attempting to usurp her mistresses’ position and she was rightly sent away with her son. The Hebrew word לִיקָּהַת (liqqahat, “obeying”) occurs only here and in Gen 49.10; it seems to mean “to receive” in the sense of “receiving instruction” or “obeying.” C. H. Toy suggests emending to “to old age” (לְזִקְנַת, lziqnat) of the mother (Proverbs [ICC], 530). The LXX with γῆρας (gēras, “old age”) suggests that a root lhq had something to do with “white hair.” D. W. Thomas suggests emending from lhyqt to lyqht; it would have read, “The eye that mocks a father and despises an aged mother” (“A Note on לִיקָּהַת in Proverbs 30:17,” JTS 42 [1941]: 154-55); this is followed by NAB “or scorns an aged mother.”

The grave and the barren womb are enemies because they can never be satisfied – they suck the life out of messianic hope. However, the ones who despise and mock divine intervention will have their eyes plucked out. Unlike Abraham they will be unable to “see afar off” (Gen 22.4) for our God is both able to make the barren fruitful and triumph over the grave. Nothing is impossible with God (Gen 18.14; Matt 19.26).
Verses 18-20:

18 There be three things which are too wonderful for me, yea, four which I know not:

19 The way of an eagle in the air; the way of a serpent upon a rock; the way of a ship in the midst of the sea; and the way of a man with a maid.

20 Such is the way of an adulterous woman; she eateth, and wipeth her mouth, and saith, I have done no wickedness.

Below is the approach normally found in scholarship (taken from the NetBible);

It is difficult to know for certain what these four things had in common for the sage. They are all linked by the word “way” (meaning “a course of action”) and by a sense of mystery in each area. Suggestions for the connections between the four include: (1) all four things are hidden from continued observation, for they are in majestic form and then gone; (2) they all have a mysterious means of propulsion or motivation; (3) they all describe the movement of one thing within the sphere or domain of another; or (4) the first three serve as illustrations of the fourth and greatest wonder, which concerns human relationships and is slightly different than the first three. This last item in the series is the most difficult to understand. The MT reads וְדֶּרֶךְ גֶּבֶר בְּעַלְמָה (vderekh gever b’almah, “and the way of a man with a maid,” so KJV, NASB). The last term does not in and of itself mean “virgin” but rather describes a young woman who is sexually ready for marriage. What is probably in view here is the wonder of human sexuality, for the preposition ב (bet) in this sequence indicates that the “way of the man” is “with” the woman. This mystery might begin with the manner of obtaining the love of the young woman, but focuses on the most intimate part of human relationships. And all of this was amazing to the sage. All of it is part of God’s creative plan and therefore can be enjoyed and appreciated without fully comprehending it.

Although some good general points are made exegetes (once again) fail to contextualize the saying with regards to the previous sayings and within the larger literary domain. The key words in these verses are way (דרכ, derek) and wonderful (פלא, pala’). The first time the Hebrew פָּלָא (pala’) is employed is in Gen 18.14 where the term דֶּרֶךְ (derek)279 is also found (v.19) both in the context of messianic hope - lo, Sarah thy wife shall have a son (v.10).

279 The first time “way” is used is in Gen 3.24; “Guarding the way of life”; Genesis 18 is the fourth time that the Hebrew דֶּרֶך occurs.
“Is anything too hard (פָּלָא, pala’) for the LORD? At the time appointed I will return unto thee, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son” (Gen 18.14).

“For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way (דֶּרֶךְׁ, derek) of the LORD, to do justice and judgment; that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him” (Gen 18.19).

The inter-textual connections are thematically linked with the previous verses which speak of the “barren womb” – the idea is that God is about to do something “wonderful” (difficult or miraculous) that is beyond human comprehension but it will keep the “way” to life open – the writer then sets up a number of comparisons with natural systems to emphasise the point.

The first is the way of the eagle in the air. The eagle here may well be the griffon vulture or an eagle or another large bird of prey. The point is that they use the thermal air currents and their movement seems effortless. The next is the way of a serpent on a rock. This probably refers to a reptile other than a snake – a gecko type of lizard hanging or more likely moving upside down on a rock surface (cf. Blanford’s rock gecko) and able to defy gravity with its movements through using van der Waals force and electromagnetism. Similarly, the way of a ship in the midst of the sea, moved by invisible currents and winds; effortlessly gliding through the waters.

The unifying theme seems to be that the above objects are propelled by invisible forces – wind, water currents, thermals, and electromagnetism; the movement is seemingly effortless. They are driven by powers and forces outside themselves until they reach their destination. This was a “wonderful” (hard/marvellous etc) thing for the sage to consider because Yahweh could use those same mysterious powers to keep the way of life open through his promised messiah;

“Therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvellous work among this people, even a marvellous work and a wonder: for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid” (Isa 29.14).

Indeed, God’s ways are not men’s ways (Isa 55.8) and nothing is “too marvellous/hard” for the Lord. The penultimate “marvel” seems to be of a different calibre:
The way of a man with a maid

This phrase is only peripherally connected with sexual congress because the above context implies being propelled to a destination by invisible (and God directed) power and this applies to the virtuous maid Ruth and the man Boaz who kept messianic hope alive by acting as the kinsman redeemer;

“Then said she, Sit still, my daughter, until thou know how the matter will fall: for the man will not be in rest, until he have finished the thing this day” (Ruth 3.18).

The point is that in order for their ploy to work their assignation (which was not sexual) and motive had to remain hidden (unseen) from the village. The command to Ruth to “sit still” mimics the words of Moses; “Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD” (Exod 14.13). God is about to “keep the way of life” open by providing a kinsman redeemer – messianic hope so that the line of David will not die. Hope is not barren. Stand still.....sit still and watch the Lord do the wonderful and impossible thing and save the nation from the Assyrian and extend the life of Hezekiah and provide a Davidide for the throne. Note that the word “maid” עַלְמָה (`almah) employed in Prov 30.19 is only used five times in the OT one of them translated as “virgin” as in “the virgin will conceive” (Isa 7.14).

Finally, we have the way of the virtuous woman (cf. Ruth) contrasted with the way of an adulterous woman, who despises messianic hope and whores and prostitutes herself after the gods of the gentile nations. This is literally enacted by the prophet Hosea who is instructed to marry a harlot. Moreover, the harlot finds nothing amiss with her behaviour but her way leads to death instead of life.

“You were wearied by all your ways, but you would not say, `It is hopeless.' You found renewal of your strength, and so you did not faint” (Isa 57.10 NIB).

The last chapter of Proverbs (chapter 31) is stylometrically very similar to the “words of Agur” (can we suppose common authorship?). Prov 31 is based on Ruth and Boaz with messianic hope as the subtext. That chapter is an acrostic like Psalm 119 which also has thematic and intertextual connections with Prov 30. It seems then that we have a connection between Prov 30, Ps 119 and Prov 31.
Verses 21-23:

21 For three things the earth is disquieted, and for four which it cannot bear:

22 For a servant when he reigneth; and a fool when he is filled with meat;

23 For an odious woman when she is married; and an handmaid that is heir to her mistress.

The NIV has; "Under three things the earth trembles, under four it cannot bear up", the JPS has “quake” – figuratively the three examples that follow “shake things up” in other words they disturb the natural order and this is not always bad. For instance it might seem a bad thing for a servant to reign and this is juxtaposed with a fool (נָבָל, nabal) when he is filled with meat. Both of these examples come from 1 Sam 25 where the servant is literally David and the fool is literally Nabal (נָבָל, nabal);

“Now the name of the man was Nabal (נָבָל, nabal); and the name of his wife Abigail: and she was a woman of good understanding, and of a beautiful countenance: but the man was churlish and evil in his doings; and he was of the house of Caleb” (1 Sam 25.3).

“And Nabal answered David’s servants, and said, Who is David? and who is the son of Jesse? there be many servants now a days that break away every man from his master” (1 Sam 25.10).

“Let not my lord, I pray thee, regard this man of Belial, even Nabal: for as his name is, so is he; Nabal is his name, and folly is with him: but I thine handmaid saw not the young men of my lord, whom thou didst send” (1 Sam 25.25).

“And Abigail came to Nabal; and, behold, he held a feast in his house, like the feast of a king; and Nabal's heart was merry within him, for he was very drunken: wherefore she told him nothing, less or more, until the morning light. But it came to pass in the morning, when the wine was gone out of Nabal, and his wife had told him these things, that his heart died within him, and he became as a stone. And it came to pass about ten days after, that the LORD smote Nabal, that he died” (1 Sam 25.36-3).
David was the one accused of being a servant that had rebelled against his master (Saul) but David was God’s king of choice and the messianic promise was vouched safe to David, thus the “servant” was destined to reign. In contrast the fool Nabal was struck down when his belly was full. This is one of those “topsy turvy” things, the “servant” would reign and the rich fool would die because he despised Davidic hope.

The next saying concerns an odious woman. The Net Bible comments that; “The Hebrew word is a feminine passive participle from שָנֵּא (saneʾ), “to hate.” The verb can mean “to reject” or “to dislike, disregard” on various levels. Based on cognate use some have speculated that she might be odious (cf. KJV, ASV, NAB) or unattractive. An ancient Jewish Aramaic cognate uses this root to refer to divorce (Hoëtijzer, DISO 311). In contrast to “loved/preferred,” נָשָׁא (nashāʾ) can be relative “less beloved, neglected, scorned,” (Jenni, TLOT, 1278). The passive participle is used this way in situations where there are two wives (e.g., Gen 29:31, 33, of Jacob’s reaction to Leah, and Deut 21:15). Part of the difficulty in understanding this proverb is that the main verb is a Hebrew imperfect, and like all the verbs in this series refers to what she does, in this case “becomes married,” after having the status, in this case being נְשָׁא (neshāʾ) “unloved, hateful.” The passive participle more often refers to having received or bearing the imprint of the action, so perhaps she could be a rejected or unpreferred woman heading into an arranged marriage. Yet the problem behaviour in each of the other parts of the proverb belongs to person who is the subject of the verb, i.e. what the servant, fool, and female servant do or are implied to do. The parallels do not direct us to see the “unloved” woman as a victim in this marriage but as a cause of difficulty. The LXX inferred a contrast with the husband translating “when a hateful woman obtains a good husband.” Here it is taken to mean she has some hateful quality (e.g. being contentious, controlling, selfish”). In this case hate or odious is too strong a word because the “woman” is Leah;

“And when the LORD saw that Leah was hated, he opened her womb: but Rachel was barren” (Gen 29.31).

The NKJ and other translations have “unloved” rather than “hated” in other words Jacob showed favouritism towards one of the sisters. Note that the context is infertility and the word barren has already appeared in the proverb in verse 16. Leah kept bearing children until she gave birth to Judah (Gen 29.35) through which tribe the messiah would appear.

This is contrasted with the “handmaid that is heir to her mistress” (KJV). According to the NetBible the word heir is; “The verb יָרַשׁ (yarash), which means either (1) “to possess; to inherit” or (2) “to dispossess.” Often the process of possessing meant the dispossessing of
those already there (e.g., Hagar and Sarah in Gen 16:5; 21:10); another example is the Israelites’ wars against the Canaanites”. It has already been noted that the promise to Sarah was alluded to in verse 15-17 (see above). She was also barren and had a “wonderful” conception. Her handmaiden (Hagar) attempted to disposes her and claim the inheritance for her son Ishmael; instead she (with her son) was ejected from the camp of Abraham.

Once again we are dealing with one of those “topsy turvy” things – the unloved sister is the preferred choice as progenitor for messianic hope and the “handmaid” attempts to hijack “messianic hope” by dispossessing the true heir. The three things, Nay the four, that shake things up are all connected to messianic Davidic hope and this is important because Hezekiah was about to die without an heir……would God shake things up again…..is this another one of those back-to-front –upside down occasions?

Verses 24-28:

24 There be four things which are little upon the earth, but they are exceeding wise:
25 The ants are a people not strong, yet they prepare their meat in the summer;
26 The conies are but a feeble folk, yet make they their houses in the rocks;
27 The locusts have no king, yet go they forth all of them by bands;
28 The spider (lizard) taketh hold with her hands, and is in kings' palaces.

Waltke (226) observes an alternating pattern, verses 25 and 26 are linked by swarming animals (ants and locusts), and verse 27 and 28 by more isolated animals (rock badgers and lizard). The following verset places emphasis on things that are small yet exceeding wise. The Hebrew קָטָן (qatan) does not necessarily refer to stature (small) it can mean “insignificant” or “unimportant”. Here it refers to something that is weak (v.25), feeble (v.26), leaderless (v.27) and vulnerable (easy to catch) in v.28. Yet all these things are “exceeding wise”. Different forms of the word wise are used in the phrase “exceeding wise” a bit like saying “wise, wise” - The construction uses the Pual participle with the plural adjective as an intensive; these four creatures are the very embodiment of wisdom (BDB 314 s.v. חָכַם Pu). The prophet Amos, who uses a similar introductory formula (cf. Amos 2.4) for many of his prophecies (Thus saith the LORD; for three transgressions of Judah, and for four) says this about Jacob (Amos 7.5);
“Then said I, O Lord GOD, cease, I beseech thee: by whom shall Jacob arise? for he is small” קָטָן (qatan).

Jacob was a “bit player” in the power politics of the day. An insignificant middle power caught between the two super powers of Assyria and Egypt. Nevertheless, if they proved faithful their “smallness” would not matter;

“A little one קָטָן (qatan) shall become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation: I the LORD will hasten it in his time” (Isa 60.22).

The focus of the chapter has shifted; whereas the first 23 verses are related to Davidic hope ( messianic prophecy) from verse 24 onwards follows the outworking of that hope in Hezekiah’s time, namely the defeat of Assyria by Yahweh. The sage likens Judah to four things that are deceptively “small” or insignificant and yet they are exceeding wise because their wisdom comes from God.

The first is the ant. A single ant is easy to crush as they “are not strong” yet the wisdom of the ants is found in their diligent preparation כּוּן (kun) of food supplies in the summer for times in the winter when food is scarce. See S. P. Toperoff, “The Ant in the Bible and Midrash,” Dor le Dor 13 (1985): 179-83. According to this, being prepared ahead of time is a mark of true wisdom. However, for the sage that wisdom (exceeding wise) comes from God.

The ant’s preparations relate to the preparations that Hezekiah made for the coming siege:

“And when Hezekiah saw that Sennacherib was come, and that he was purposed to fight against Jerusalem, He took counsel with his princes and his mighty men to stop the waters of the fountains which were without the city: and they did help him. So there was gathered much people together, who stopped all the fountains, and the brook that ran through the midst of the land, saying, Why should the kings of Assyria come, and find much water? Also he strengthened himself, and built up all the wall that was broken, and raised it up to the towers, and another wall without, and repaired Millo in the city of David, and made darts and shields in abundance” (2 Chron 32.2-5).

The second is the feeble conies or “hyraxes.” This is the Syrian Hyrax, also known as the rock badger. KJV, ASV has “conies” (alternately spelled “coneyes” by NIV), a term usually associated with the European rabbit (Oryctolagus cuniculus) but which can also refer to the pika or the hyrax. Scholars today generally agree that the Hebrew term used here refers to a
type of hyrax, a small ungulate mammal of the family Procaviidae native to Africa and the Middle East which has a thick body, short legs and ears and a rudimentary tail. The simple “badger” (so NASB, NRSV, CEV) could lead to confusion with the badger, an entirely unrelated species of burrowing mammal related to weasels. Modern scholars identify this creature with the rock badger (the Syrian hyrax), a small mammal that lives in the crevices of the rock. Its wisdom consists in its ingenuity to find a place of security. This is what Hezekiah told the people:

“We have an arm of flesh; but with us is the LORD our God to help us (cf. Immanuel), and to fight our battles. And the people rested themselves upon the words of Hezekiah king of Judah” (2 Chron 32.8).

The point is that God provides shelter and security, they may be “feeble folk” but they have a reliable rock where they can hide. Psalm 18.30 already has an allusion in verse 5, which makes it likely that sage now has Ps 18.2 in mind:

“The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower” (Ps 18.2).

The third aphorism is the leaderless locusts, which have no king; even so, they go forth by “bands”. The Hebrew term means “divided”; they go forward in orderly divisions, or ranks (C. H. Toy, Proverbs [ICC], 535). Joel 1:4 describes their order and uses it as a picture of a coming invasion (e.g., Joel 2:7, 8). Therefore the wisdom of the locust is in their order and cooperation. However, although the “locust” is often used to depict the Assyrians (because like locusts they have a voracious appetite and their swarming behaviour strips the earth bare), in this case the emphasis is on their lack of leadership and therefore the Assyrians are not in view here. When desert locusts meet, their nervous systems release serotonin, which causes them to become mutually attracted, a prerequisite for swarming. The initial bands of gregarious hoppers are known as "outbreaks", and when these join together into larger groups, the event is known as an "upsurge". God is effectively their king and has made them “exceedingly wise” in that their organisation seems spontaneous when it is actually a function of their God given make-up. At one stage with the city besieged and Hezekiah on his death bed it must have seemed as though the people had no king;

“Now why dost thou cry out aloud? is there no king in thee? is thy counsellor perished? for pangs have taken thee as a woman in travail” (Micah 4.9).
However, Sennacherib was wrong – they were not a leaderless rabble. Just as the Lord is king over his natural creation (the locusts), he is also king over his people (Isa 33.22). There is perhaps also a double meaning intended as the Hebrew for “bands” חָצַץ (chatsats) has as the denominative the word for arrow חֵץ (chets) probably because an arrow divides the air (cf. into bands).

“Therefore thus saith the LORD concerning the king of Assyria, He shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow חֵץ (chets) there, nor come before it with shield, nor cast a bank against it” (2 Kgs 19.32).

Perhaps a double meaning is intended – the Jews are organised because God is their king (even when Hezekiah lay dying) in contrast the bands (arrows) of Assyrian locusts would not prevail.

Finally, we have the spider taking hold with her hands (KJV) which is a difficult translation. As Waltke notes (227) the meaning of the hap.leg., wall-lizard שְּמָמִית (śĕmāmît) is disputed. HALOT and others identify it "as a type of lizard: geko, hemidacrylus turicus,"but the committee on Translations of the United Bible Societies and others prefer "spider". The NIV gives a different sense; “a lizard can be caught with the hand, yet it is found in kings' palaces”. The LXX (NETS translation) has “and the lizard, though dependent on its hands and being easily caught, it lives in the king’s fortresses”. This has the best (or worst) of both worlds as it seems that the ancient LXX translator (probably working from a different Hebrew version) could not decide whether it was a genitive or not and therefore used both! He translates....easily caught (with the hand) and also (genitive) though dependent on its hands. The KJV appears to have followed Rashi in translating this term as “spider,” so also JPS (and the note in the NRSV). Lizard ולטאה is found in Lev. 11.30, where it is rendered as שְּממיתא in the Jerusalem Targum 280 (the writing here also varies between שׁ and שׂ or ס). But almost all modern English versions and commentators, following the Greek and the Latin versions, have “lizard.” See HALOT 1338 s.v. שְּממית. The point of this saying is that a weak creature like a lizard, that is so easily caught, cannot be prevented from getting into the most significant places. Significantly, Waltke (228) offers the following comment; “If the son, whom the wicked men and women want to capture, exercises caution, though as vulnerable as a lizard, he too will live in the chief residence of the realm (cf. Psalm 45)”.

280 The Samaritan has, Lev. 11:30, שְּממית, and the Syr. translates the latter word by שְּממיתא, which is used in the passage before us (cf. Geiger’s Urschrift, p. 68f.) for שְּממית; omakåto (Targ. akämetha) appears there to mean, not a spider, but a lizard.

281 Psalm 45 (a Hezekiah Psalm) has the words; “With gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought: they shall enter into the king’s palace” (v.15). The reference there is to the Tyrian wedding retinue (the virgins and companions which are also found in Canticles), They represent the gentiles and the released northern captives.
The prisoners of war that Sennacherib had captured were released upon his defeat. Sennacherib boasted on the Taylor Prism that he trapped Hezekiah – he had imprisoned him in Jerusalem like a bird in a cage. Rather than a trapped bird he is pictured here as a lizard running loose in the palaces, Ansberry comments; “The aphorism does not employ a virtue to compensate for the vulnerability of the lizard; rather it presents an implicit reward for integrating wisdom: access to the royal residence. The saying moves beyond provision, protection, and communal order to social promotion—elevation to the circle of the court”. The palaces (plural construct) are the “heavenly mansions” (cf John 14.2) and the king is Yahweh, it was the Davidides desire to dwell in the temple forever (cf Ps27.4).

As with the previous saying this one possibly also has a double meaning as some of the key phrases occur in Gen 39.12;

“And she caught him by his garment, saying, Lie with me: and he left his garment in her hand, and fled, and got him out”.

Genesis employs a similar verbal form and noun construct as Prov 30.28; taketh hold with her hands. Of course this might be coincidence as the subject matter is so different; in Genesis the wife of Potiphar seizes the garment of Joseph and falsely accuses him of rape for which he is imprisoned. It is notable that the Hebrew for garment is derived from a primitive root meaning treachery בֶּגֶד (beged), clothing, covering and בָּגַד (bagad), treachery, deceit (i.e. a cover up). This is significant because the “garment” in Genesis is repeatedly the vehicle for treachery. Jacob deceives Isaac with a garment, Jacob is in turn deceived by his sons by means of a garment; Joseph is also betrayed with a garment. Therefore the garment metaphorically denotes deceit or treachery. Joseph was a trusted overseer, twice the narrator tells us that everything that his master owned was placed in his hand. The point is that Joseph ended up in prison because she caught him (his garment) with her hand and used treachery. However, God restored Joseph and he ended up in the king’s palaces wielding supreme authority. This holds similarities with the vulnerable lizard (if that is what the hap.leg means) who is easily seized (with the hand) but ends up with a free run of the palaces. Hezekiah was betrayed by Sennacherib who did not lift the siege despite receiving a tribute payment and he was also betrayed by his own cabinet led by Shebna. The prophet declares the following:

“Woe to thee that spoilest, and thou wast not spoiled; and dealest treacherously, and they dealt not treacherously with thee! when thou shalt cease to spoil, thou shalt be spoiled; and when thou shalt
make an end to deal treacherously, they shall deal treacherously with thee” (Isa 33.1).

In fact a number of similar themes occur in this oracle. The historical situation that backgrounds Isaiah 33 fits Proverbs 30.24-28:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proverbs 30</th>
<th>Isaiah 33</th>
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<tr>
<td>....but they [small or insignificant things] are exceeding wise (v.24)</td>
<td>And wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of thy times (v.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>....they [Ants] prepare their meat in the summer (v.25)</td>
<td>Contrast: bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure (v.16b)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>....yet make they [badger] their houses in the rocks (v.26)</td>
<td>He shall dwell on high: his place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks (v.16a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The locusts have no king (v.27)</td>
<td>.....the LORD is our king; he will save us (v.22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>......yet go they [locusts] forth all of them by bands (v.27)</td>
<td>.....as the running to and fro of locusts (v.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>....and is in kings' palaces (v.28)</td>
<td>Thine eyes shall see the king in his beauty (v.17)</td>
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Verses 29-33:

29 There be three things which go well, yea, four are comely in going:
30 A lion which is strongest among beasts, and turneth not away for any;
31 A greyhound; an he goat also; and a king, against whom there is no rising up.
32 If thou hast done foolishly in lifting up thyself, or if thou hast thought evil, lay thine hand upon thy mouth.
33 Surely the churning of milk bringeth forth butter, and the wringing of the nose bringeth forth blood: so the forcing of wrath bringeth forth strife.

These verses are concerned with the stately deportment and unrelenting determination of a king that it is impossible to challenge. This king does not back back-down. The king in question is of course Yahweh who like a lion would roar out of Zion (Amos 1.2, Joel 3.6) but
he is also represented by his agent the “lion cub” (Gen 49.9), the faithful suffering servant from the tribe of Judah. The Hebrew term זַרְזִיר (zarzir) means “girt”; it occurs only here with “loins” or “thighs” in the Bible: “that which is girt in the loins” (BDB 267 s.v.). Some have interpreted this to be the “greyhound” because it is narrow in the flanks (J. H. Greenstone, Proverbs, 327); so KJV, ASV. Others have suggested the warhorse, zebra, raven, or starling. Tg. Prov 30:31 has it as the large fighting cock that struts around among the hens (so also Waltke’s translation). There is no clear referent that is convincing, although most modern English versions use “strutting rooster” or something similar (cf. CEV “proud roosters”).

As the word is a hap.leg., there is no supporting philological or etymological evidence, however, the animal in question could be the unspecified “behemoth” of Job 40.15-18 of which it is specifically said that “his strength is in his loins” (v.16) which may well shed light on “girt loins” (i.e. surrounded by muscles). Although the Hebrew is different the same sense is conveyed (great strength from the stomach muscles). Behemoth is possibly the hippopotamus who is very territorial and aggressive and does not back down when attacking humans (in one case in Niger, a boat was capsized by a hippo and 13 people were killed). Archaeological evidence exists of its presence in the Levant, dating to less than 3,000 years ago. The species was common in Egypt’s Nile region during antiquity, but has since been extirpated.

The he-goat or ram is also territorial and will challenge any other ram for supremacy; the Hebrew is derived from an unused root meaning to butt. Although Daniel uses a different Hebrew word for he-goat (ram) he depicts the struggling empires and kings with the figure of rams ramming each other and damaging their horns (Dan 8.7).

A king, against whom there is no rising up has inspired many suggestions. The MT has “with his army around him” (אַלְקוּם עִמּוֹ, ’alqum ʿimmo); so NIV. This has been emended to read “against whom there is no rising up” (so KJV, ASV) or “standing over his people.” The LXX has “a king haranguing his people.” Tg. Prov 30:31 has, “a king who stands up before his people and addresses them.” Another interpretation sees the word for “God” in the line: “a king with whom God is” (cf. Immanuel). The focus is on the stately appearance of the king at some auspicious moment. The word occurs only here, but if it is interpreted with its Arabic cognate in mind, then it refers to a band of soldiers (BDB 39 s.v. אַלְקוּם). On this last suggestion compare the description of the bride in Canticles 6.4,10; “terrible as an army with banners.” The ellipsis (army) must be supplied to the original text but it does refer to a military standard bearer.

Once again it is Isaiah 33 that comes to the rescue; “Now will I rise, saith the LORD; now will I be exalted; now will I lift up myself” (Isa 33.10). This is in opposition to the arrogant fool Rabshakeh, spokesman for Sennacherib (compare Prov 30.32: foolishly in lifting up thyself).
“Whom hast thou reproached and blasphemed? and against whom hast thou exalted thy voice, and lifted up thine eyes on high? even against the Holy One of Israel” (Isa 37.3).

Yahweh would lift himself up against the proud Assyrians. Like a lion, a hippo or a ram he would meet them head on because they had “raged against him” in fact he would put a hook in their nose:

“Because thy rage against me and thy tumult is come up into mine ears, therefore I will put my hook in thy nose, and my bridle in thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the way by which thou camest” (2 Kgs 19.28).

Actions have consequences. If you churn milk you get butter if you twist the nose of an idiot (by putting a hook in it to turn him around) then it will bleed. There is a subtle wordplay in the last proverb with the word for anger: It is related to the word for nose in the preceding colon. So, if you stir up trouble do not be surprised if you get trouble (and a bloody nose). The Assyrian attack was blunted by rumours of Egyptian intervention but in the final instance it was the destruction of the army by the destroyer (angel) that put paid to Assyrian Empirical hubris.

The Assyrian sage Ahikar was adviser to the great Assyrian king Sennacherib (705-681) and Esarhaddon (680-669), warned his nephew: “[The wrath] of a king, if thou be commanded, is a burning fire. Obey [it] at once. Let it not kindled against thee and cover up the word of a king with the veil of the heart. —Why should wood strive with fire, flesh with a knife a man with [a king?]”. ANET pp. 428f. It seems that Sennacherib did not heed the advice of his own wise man Ahikar, nor did he hearken to the words of the prophet:

“And the people shall be as the burnings of lime: as thorns cut up shall they be burned in the fire. Hear, ye that are far off, what I have done; and, ye that are near, acknowledge my might” (Isa 33.12-13).

Conclusion

The words of Agur are both prophetic and historical but they are also “wisdom sayings”. In my view the MT has (in this case) the correct structural arrangement – these words belong together in this order in the same chapter. For some reason the LXX has dislocated them. Finally, these words point beyond any primary fulfilment in Hezekiah - they are a messianic prophecy about Jesus Christ.
Words of Lemuel

Chapter 31
The Law of Kindness: Proverbs 31

Whereas Proverbs 31:10-31 is in the form of an acrostic poem the first nine verses are not. This leads many scholars to regard the poem as an addition to the book rather than an expansion of advice given to Lemuel. The approach that, for example, Yoder presents is a contextual setting within the socioeconomic realities of wealthy Persian-period women. Yoder also understands the acrostic as an addition. He derives his conclusions on the basis of linguistic analysis “Although dating these (and many other) texts is admittedly difficult, (emphasis mine) some interpreters, including myself, place Prov 1–9 and 31:10–31 in the Persian period on linguistic grounds”.... and describes the acrostic as “a series of disjointed descriptions”.

This article proposes a different intertextual approach based on allowing scripture to interpret scripture. Of course, we must first address the linguistics issue, which is indeed problematic and therefore a weak argument for the starting point of any exegesis (although it may be used as supporting evidence).

The position taken in this article is that Proverbs 31 is about Ruth and that the chapter should not be divided into separate units as the first nine verses serves as an introduction (by way of contrast) to the acrostic. The poem is not “disjointed” but perfectly balanced once the correct setting is realized.

Linguistic Analysis

First, however, we must address the question of language and dating. This is always difficult especially for non-experts but also for professionals. Some of the features (words, phrases, syntax) are so rare Young remarks - “....explanations of what amount to, at the end of the day, not very many linguistic features, are perhaps equally possible. Thus Carr raises the question of whether part of the late linguistic profile of books such as...

“Chronicles, Ezra-Nehemiah, Esther, Daniel, Song of Songs, and other relatively marginal books in the Hebrew Bible results from the freer way that they were

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283 Acrostic poems draw attention to the first letter of each line, and in Prov 31:10-31, the first letter of each verse begins with a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet—v. 10 begins with aleph, v. 11 with bet, and so on through the 22 letters to v. 31, which begins with the final letter, tav.

transmitted, while the relative lack of late linguistic isoglosses in the Pentateuch might result from the extra care taken in its textual transmission”.  

Recent stylistic analysis on the OT and Proverbs (not published yet) indicates that the texts are mixed distributions and therefore very difficult to separate into underlying sources. Moreover, the texts are extremely uniform after undergoing centuries of “smoothing”. Even our English Bible has undergone “smoothing” as the language changed - we no longer speak the English of Shakespeare (used only 400-500 years ago) let alone the Masoretic Text with a history reaching back some 3,000 years plus. To even think that some of the words that we read now were probably scratched into clay, then transferred onto leather and papyrus, then onto paper and finally into the ones and zero’s of computer language! And we haven’t even discussed archaisms, dialect, translation etc. Bearing all this in mind it is true that “traces” (features) of the original authors “language” can still be detected. Language can therefore be used to establish relative dates (this book was written before that book) but rarely (if at all) to establish absolute dates (This book was written in 950 BC and that book was written in 500BC).

Ongoing stylometric analysis on Proverbs has proved difficult especially as the intention is to produce an intertextual reading alongside a stylometric analysis. Impressions garnered so far, suggest that much of Proverbs was written during the Hezekiah era (therefore pre-exilic) and that earlier “Solomonic” proverbs were incorporated and adjusted to address current circumstances (making them relevant to the Hezekiah period). The argument is that none of the sayings (proverbs) are just simple “folk sayings” or clever “one liners” because they are all based on Israel’s history. The proverbs are not generic, and if we have difficulty identifying the incident that gave rise to a particular proverb the fault lies with us, not with the originator of the proverb.

The language of Proverbs

After examining the language of Proverbs Davis observes the following; “Verbs describing completed past events in Proverbs chapters 1-9 and 30 reflect Classical rather than Early Biblical Hebrew, with a combination of perfect tense and waw + imperfect tense verbs. Proverbs in chapters 10-29 consist mostly of couplets with no references to completed past events, so they cannot be checked to see if the verb usage matches Classical or Early Biblical

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285 Robert Rezetko, Ian Young, Historical Linguistics and Biblical Hebrew, (SBL Press, Atlanta,2014),114
287 Prov.25:1 mentions a role for the “men of Hezekiah” in collating the book of Proverbs, and it is likely that Isaiah, Hezekiah’s main prophet and most talented writer, played a role in that project. (ca. 716-687 B.C.)
Hebrew”. Davis concludes, “Proverbs was put into final form around the time of Hezekiah or shortly afterward, around 720-680 B.C. The older core of the book, Proverbs 10-29, consists of selected proverbs from Solomon’s time, around 950 B.C. The introduction, Proverbs 1-9, and conclusion, Proverbs 30-31, were added in Hezekiah and Isaiah’s time”. In essence we find agreement with Davis with the caveat that even the older material has been edited to fit the Hezekiah situation.

The language of Ruth

Many modern scholars also regard Ruth as “post-exilic” on linguistic grounds (in fact most of the Bible is regarded as post-exilic), usually due to Aramaisms or LBH (Late Biblical Hebrew) styling. On Ruth, (paraphrasing Davis) - there are a few later Hebrew affinities in Ruth which match post-exilic Aramaic spelling (such as we might find in the Ezra-Nehemiah period) and the word “establish” which occurs in the piel stem in Ruth and also in post-exilic literature. However, this particular word also occurs in the earlier hiphil stem in Ruth.

So, basically we have both the “early” and the “late” verb form in Ruth? On such trivialities hinge conclusions on linguistic dating, in essence this particular verb tells us nothing one way or the other, at best it means that the syntax of Ruth was “updated” (or an attempt was made) in the post-exilic period and the scribe missed some forms.

Davis concludes, “Finally, Ruth has one of the oldest spelling patterns in the Bible outside the Torah, with less than 40% of the Hebrew words with a long ‘o’ sound spelled with a “waw” serving as a vowel letter. David’s name is spelled in the early form dwID' (4:17 and 4:22), instead of the later form dywID', which is used more than 200 times without exception in the post-exilic books of Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah and Zechariah. The linguistic evidence is sufficient for Driver to break from the ranks of the critics and date Ruth before the exile, saying “It seems to the writer that the general beauty and purity of the style of Ruth point more decidedly to the pre-exilic period.”

We might point to the work done by Polak with Noun Verb Ratios (NV) and Nominal-Finite Ratios (NF) placing the average result of Ruth and Proverbs 31(our calculation) alongside the Ezra passage analysed by Polak.

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289 Ibid, Davis, DOT,383-384
290 Ibid, Davis, DOT, 385-388
291 Anderson and Forbes, Spelling in the Hebrew Bible, p. 161
292 Driver, An Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament, p. 455
Polak makes the general observation that, “In postexilic prose the NV ratio typically ranges between 0.71 and 0.76, with an interval of approximately 0.05 (5%), whereas the NF ratio in general ranges from 0.30 to 0.40”. We can see that we have a much lower NV ratio in Ruth - - this could be down to individual writing style but is unlikely as most early books follow the same tendency. Proverbs 31 has a borderline NV ratio and very low NF ratio which we would expect in a transitional text (early to late) but may be attributable to the genre (prose, poetry, narrative), which each have distinctive styling. Even within Proverbs the NF/NV ratios vary considerably (NF scaled by 10):

![Proverbs NV, Ratio (x10), NF Ratio and adjectives](image)

This very brief excurses on linguistics has demonstrated that language alone cannot establish absolute dates. It can provide supporting evidence and can indicate that books are most probably early (like Ruth and Proverbs), however, intertextual evidence must have the first and last word on interpretation and cannot be front-run by linguistics. This means that the ordinary Bible student can still make sense of the text through careful interpretation without succumbing to the tyranny of “expert consensus” (which really doesn’t exist anyway).

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294 *Ibid*, Polak, 70
295 *Ibid*, Polak, 71
296 By early we mean Pre-Exilic
Other Considerations

During the Ezra-Nehemiah period intermarriage occurred between foreigners and elite Jews and this was condemned by Nehemiah. After the exile the viewpoint of Ezra and Nehemiah regarding mixed marriages came to predominate in Israel. Accordingly, it is reasoned that Proverbs 31 must come from this period (and Ruth also) as such marriages were tolerated then. However, as Davis remarks, “the reverse is also true it almost impossible for a mixed marriage book like Ruth to make it into the canon of scripture, unless it had already been well established before Ezra-Nehemiah. On the matter of historical accuracy, David sent his parents to Moab (1 Sam 22:3-4) when Saul was trying to kill him, a decision perhaps influenced by his Moabite roots. Ruth and Orpah are apparently not originally Hebrew names, and 1 Chron 2:11 lists Boaz as an ancestor of David. The author of Ruth does not seem to invent things he does not know; thus he leaves out the city or location within Moab where Naomi lived. These features favour a historical account rather than a historical novel with a message, and are mildly supportive of an early date”.

Introduction to Proverbs 31

The first nine verses of Proverbs 31 are integral to the acrostic. The Hebrew forms in vv.1-3 stresses that the mother repeatedly taught her son Lemuel these instructions. Who then was king Lemuel? According to the Talmud, Lemuel is one of six aliases for Solomon. Although not too much weight should be attributed to Jewish tradition it is known that Solomon was also referred to by a different birth name – Jedidiah. Note the cadences of the first verse that even shines through the English transliteration:

am.u isrth.u- ashr msha mlk lmual dbri
mother- of.him she-"m which load king Lemuel words-of
amunised.him

Some English versions take the Hebrew noun (msha) literally meaning load or burden, usually translated as “oracle” or “prophecy” as a place name specifying the kingdom of King Lemuel; cf. NAB “king of Massa”; CEV “King Lemuel of Massa.” Lemuel means “of God” and is similar to Immanuel “God with” - - might this be poetic licence indicating the transfer of kingly counsel down the generations from Bathsheba via Solomon to Hezekiah? The “of

297 Ibid, Davis, DOT, 385-388. Arguing for a later date is the sandal custom (4:7), which is described as being a custom in “former times” in Israel, implying that Ruth was written so much later that this forgotten custom needed to be explained. However, once again the reverse is probably true – Ruth was written so early that a later editor added an explanatory gloss or perhaps the custom (at that early time) was a local custom unknown in other regions.

298 2 Sam.12:24-25, Jedidiah means “Beloved of Yah” (cf. “beloved” in Ps.127:2)
“God” is easily explained by the implicit promise in 2 Sam 7.14: “He shall be my son” (initially applying to Solomon) and subsequently when the virgin with a name meaning “Yah is Father” (Abijah the mother of Hezekiah) conceived a child named “Immanuel” a partial fulfilment of “I will be his Father”. The instructions are intended for a Davidide, a royal descendant of David, not a “foreign king”, or a “king of Massa”. This is high literary art in poetic form, the instructions are portrayed as passed down from Bathsheba as an oracular warning based on her life experience.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proverbs 31</th>
<th>David’s adultery (2 Sam 11-12)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4. It is not for kings to drink wine; Nor for princes to say, where is strong drink?</td>
<td>And when David called him (Uriah the Hittite the husband of Bathsheba), he did eat and drink before him......</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Lest they drink, and forget the law, and pervert the judgment of any of the afflicted.</td>
<td>...and he (David) made him (Uriah) drunk (2 Sam.11:13).</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine unto those that be of heavy hearts.</td>
<td>And he (David) wrote the letter, saying, set ye Uriah in the forefront of the hottest battle, and retire ye from him, that he may be smitten and die (2 Sam 11:15).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Let him drink, and forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more.</td>
<td>And the Lord sent Nathan unto David, and he said unto him, ‘There were two men in one city; the one rich, and the other poor’ (2 Sam.12:1).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Open thy mouth for the dumb; in the cause of all such as are appointed to destruction.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Open thy mouth, judge righteously, and plead the cause of the poor and needy.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

This is a clear condemnation of the behaviour of King David not a commentary on Bathsheba who had neither blame nor choice in the matter but who nevertheless lost her first child as a consequence of David’s sin. The chapter continues with “Bathsheba” reciting an acrostic A-Z of the “good wife” whose character happens to be based on Solomon’s great-great-grandmother Ruth! A foreign woman!299

299 2 Chron29.1
300 Note that the wife of Hezekiah (Hephzibah) was probably a Phoenician princess.
What is the Law of Kindness?

“She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and the law of kindness is on her tongue” (Prov.31:26)

The “law of kindness” is an idiomatic expression found in Proverbs 31 and is used to describe the process of redemption initiated by the kinsman redeemer or “gō’ēl.” The explanation below presents the following points:

- The terminology of Redemption
- Levirate marriage pre-dates the Sinai covenant
- The “law of kindness” initiated by faithful women.
- The “law of kindness” in action; Proverbs 31 and Ruth.
- The “law of kindness”: the basis for true relationships between Jews and Gentiles.

The terminology of Redemption

The Hebrew gō’ēl and ge’ullā from the root g’l - to redeem or deliver, represents technical legal terminology of Israelite family law – the root only occurs in the Hebrew (has no correspondence in other ANE languages) so it’s meaning must be inferred entirely from that usage. Unlike g’l, pdh is a common root shared by all Semitic languages; pādāh is often used of redeeming through payment of a ransom. However, pdh has a broader meaning than its frequent parallel g’l and lacks the latter roots specifically legal roots. N.T. terms for redemption no longer reflect the OT distinction between pdh and g’l. The NT bypasses lytroomai, their primary equivalent in the LXX, in favour of rhyomai a word rarely used in LXX for g’l and pdh, and sōzō, which LXX never uses for g’l and rarely (2x) for pdh.

Levirate marriage pre-dates the Sinai covenant

Levirate marriage was already a custom and probably a legally binding institution before the Mosaic Law, into which it was incorporated (Deut.25:5-10). Anthropological studies show that a majority of social groups practice levirate marriage (Murdock, 441), and ANE

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302 Rhyomai: to restore, deliver, rescue Strong’s: 4506
303 Sōzō: to save, deliver, protect: Strong’s: 4982
304 NIDOTTE vol.3 page 578-581 article by R. L. Hubbard, Jr.
305 Levirate marriage, from the Latin levir, “brother-in-law” the Hebrew term is yābam, “to perform the duty of a brother in law”
law codes attest to analogous customs among Israel’s neighbours (MAL nos. 30, 33, 43; cf. ANET, 190-91; HittiteHL § 193; cf. ANET, 196; see also Ugar. RS 16.144; Leggett, 9-27).  

The “law of kindness” initiated by faithful women

The first occurrence of the “law of kindness” is the story of Tamar in Genesis 38. In this unusual narrative the law of redemption is perhaps honoured more in the breach than in practice. Tamar had to resort to duplicity in order to redeem her husband’s inheritance, for her father-in-law Judah had neglected his patriarchal duty. Although Genesis 38 is often regarded as an independent literary unit or interpolation, Robert Alter disagrees, and points out the thematic connection with the rest of Genesis:

“The entire book of Genesis is about the reversal of the iron law of primogeniture, about the election through some devious twist of destiny of a younger son to carry on the line.....an inscrutable, unpredictable principle of election other than the “natural” one works itself out.”

Our next encounter with the “law of kindness” is the story of Ruth where, once again, the process is initiated by a woman (Naomi by her proxy Ruth). The transaction between Boaz and Ruth is also not strictly a levirate marriage, for Boaz was not the brother of Ruth’s deceased husband. The unorthodox nature of the unions in Genesis 38 and with Ruth (a Moabite woman) reinforce the essential historicity of the accounts, as such practices would not have been contemplated in post-exilic Israel, at the very least events would have been related with an apology or explanation. The absence of disapprobation is an indication that it was committed to writing before the exile, although the final form has undergone redaction.

The “law of kindness” in action, Prov 31 and Ruth

The “mother” (Bathsheba) has very good reasons to warn “her son” (Solomon) against the perils of drink and giving his “strength unto women.” Whether or not Bathsheba swore a vow to raise him as a Nazarite (in imitation of the high priest) is probably pure speculation on the part of the author of Proverbs 31; it is however curious that Solomon functioned as a priest (a Melchizedek priest?) at the inauguration of the Temple (1 Kgs. 8). He certainly did

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306 NIDOTTE vol.4 page 903 article by F.R. Ames.
not heed the warning about giving his “strength to women!!” (1 Kgs.11:1). Verses 9-31 of Proverbs 31 are all modelled on the example of the gentile woman Ruth, who in contrast with David (in the Bathsheba incident), “pleaded the cause of the poor and needy” (31:9)

“And Boaz answered and said unto her, It hath fully been showed me, all that thou hast done (i.e., all your kindness) unto thy mother in law since the death of thy husband....”(Ruth 2:11)

“Who can find a virtuous woman? For her price is far above rubies” (Ruth 31:10)

Usually the Hebrew chayil (virtuous) is translated as strength or valour in connection with personal bravery, for example, during warfare. It is however translated as virtuous in four passages in the AV (Ruth 3:11; Prov.12:4; 31:10, 29)

“For all the city of my people doth know that thou art a virtuous woman” (Ruth 3:11)

In these passages “virtuous” is a comment on the moral strength of character and integrity of the woman involved.

“The heart of her husband doth trust in her, so that he shall have no lack of gain” (Prov 31:11)

In the story of Ruth the next-of-kin, who was willing to redeem the land refused to continue when it became apparent that he had to marry Ruth and raise children to her in order to perpetuate the family name of Elimelech (through his deceased son Mahlon). This meant that he was required to support Naomi and therefore his own children would suffer economic loss:

“I cannot redee m it for myself lest I mar mine own inheritance” (Ruth 4:6)

308 For a full discussion see R. Wakely, NIDOTTE vol.2 page116-126
309 Mr next-of-kin could have purchased the land from Naomi in the hope that Ruth’s firstborn was a daughter (or that she was barren?). In the event of male offspring the land would be held in trust by Naomi until the child was of age. It is possible that impoverishment would force Naomi to re-sell the land in the meantime, obliging Mr next-of-kin to repurchase the land (Jer. 32) expending more of his resources and virtually acting as a financial guarantor until the birth of a son. Even after the purchase of the land it would return into Naomi’s trust in the Jubilee year (Lev.25) allowing her to re-sell it to other clansmen or possibly to resident aliens (in order to alleviate her poverty) thereby necessitating redemption once again, until there was an heir apparent.
However, Boaz did not have such qualms, he trusted his wife Ruth; moreover he had no other children and the offspring of their union would be both the descendant of Boaz (by a wife that he married for love) and the heir of Elimelech.

“She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life”
(Prov 31:12)

“And he (Boaz) said, Blessed be thou of the LORD, my daughter, for thou has showed more kindness in the latter end than at the beginning, inasmuch as thou followest not young men, whether poor or rich. And now, my daughter, fear not; I will do to thee all thou requirest: for all the city of my people doth know that thou art a virtuous woman”
(Ruth 3:10)

These verses paint a picture of industriousness;

“She seeketh wool, and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands. She is like the merchants’ ships; she bringeth her food from afar”
(Prov 31:13-14)

This woman was not willing to stand by and watch her adopted family suffer. It is notable that both the Tabernacle and the Temple(s) were all constructed using gentile wealth – “the wealth of the Gentiles shall come unto thee” (Isa.60: 5) – this is a gift from the “willing hearted” (cf. Ex.25:1-2; 35:5) [she worketh willingly]. Ruth also brought her “food from afar”:

“So she gleaned in the field until even.....and she took it up and went into the city.....and gave to her (Naomi) until she was sufficed”.
(Ruth 2:17-18)

“She riseth also while it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household; and a portion to her maidens”.
(Prov 31:15)
Ruth went to meet Boaz at night, during the harvest festival; he sent her back to her mother-in-law while it was still dark\textsuperscript{310} - but she did not return empty handed: “Go not empty to thy mother in law” (Ruth 3: 17). She returned with six measures of barley – enough to see Naomi through until the Sabbath rest. (The saying in Mtt.24: 25 may be based on Proverbs – eating and drinking with the drunken is abuse of power [cf. David?] contrasted with the servant who gives them meat in due season [cf. Ruth]).

> “She considereth a field and, buyeth (taketh) it: with the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard” (Prov 31: 16)

The field could only be redeemed by Boaz and this was only possible through clever manoeuvring by Ruth with the advice of Naomi. She advised Ruth to act in a certain way, this put “Mr next-of-kin” (who was a closer relation than Boaz) in an intolerable position (because he was only willing to purchase the field – he was not willing to marry a “gôy”). This left Boaz open to redeem the field on Naomi’s behalf by taking Ruth as his bride.

> “Sit still, my daughter, until thou know how the matter will fall: for the man will not be in rest, until he have finished the thing this day”. (Ruth 3: 18)

(In contrast, the anti-type Jezebel acquired a field by plotting against the rightful owner and having him murdered)

> “She girdeth her loins with strength, and strengtheneth her arms”. (Prov 31:17)

This is a play on the name of Boaz – which probably comes from Ba‘al ʿōz LORD OF STRENGTH and is also one of the names of the two temple pillars, whose names combine to form the phrase “Yah Establishes in Strength.” A similar word-play is to be found in 31:25.

\textsuperscript{310} The ploy arranged by Boaz could only work if their rendezvous at night went unnoticed by the villagers, for, no matter how innocent their assignation appeared, it would cause a scandal, especially if word had leaked out to Mr next-of-kin. Mr next-of-kin would obviously have said that he had been perfectly prepared to marry Ruth (as well as redeem Naomi’s land) until he had heard that she was having secret trysts in the fields at night with Boaz!! He may even have been granted the right to purchase the land without the necessity to marry Ruth.
Ruth’s pillar of strength and her honour are all derivative from her beloved husband. A general description of her industry and care for her household (Proverbs 31: 17-19):

“She stretcheth out her hand to the poor; yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy” (Prov 31:20)

We have already observed that this is an apt description of Ruth who left everything in order to support her destitute mother-in-law. (Ruth 2:11) Another description of her care for her household (Proverbs 31: 21-22):

“She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and the law of kindness is on her tongue” (Prov 31: 26)

Boaz became “famous” for his act of redemption and took his rightful place in the “gates” as one of the city elders and judges of Israel:

“And the women said to Naomi, Blessed be the Lord, which hath not left thee this day without a near kinsman, and let his name (Boaz) be famous in Israel” (Ruth 4:14)

Moreover, Boaz became the progenitor of the royal line of Judah thus ensuring that his name would continue as a memorial alongside his illustrious descendants. Another description of her unceasing industriousness together with a word-play on the name of Naomi, note particularly the following (Proverbs 31: 24-25):

“...and she shall rejoice (laugheth) in time to come”

This refers to Naomi the “bitter one” (Ruth 1:21) who was “afflicted by the Almighty” but now has reason to laugh with joy again (Ruth 4:14, 17).

“Her husband is known in the gates, when he sitteth among the elders of the land” (Prov 31:23)

The “law of kindness” is the law of redemption – God provides a way to raise seed to the dead by providing a redeemer, the “kindness” of Ruth is more than rewarded by the “kindness” of Yahweh:
“Blessed be the Lord who hath not left off his kindness to the living and to the dead” (Ruth 2:20)

We complete the exegesis with a wonderful soliloquy of praise to Ruth:

“Her children rise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her. Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all. Fav’rour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised. Give her of the fruit of her hands; and let her own works praise her in the gates” (Prov 31:28-31)

“And all the people that were in the gate, and the elders, said, we are witnesses. The Lord make the woman that is come into thine house like Rachel and Leah, which two did build the house of Israel: and do thou worthily in Ephrathah and be famous in Beth-lehem. And let thy house be like the house of Pharez, whom Tamar bare unto Judah, of the seed which the Lord shall give thee of this young woman” (Ruth 4:11-12)

The mention of Tamar in this soliloquy of praise to Ruth is not coincidental, for both faithful women applied the “law of kindness” in an unorthodox way in order to redeem their dead husband’s inheritance, and raise “seed to the dead.” As a consequence of their faith they are both the progenitors of the royal line of Judah and ultimately of the messiah.

The “law of kindness”: the basis for true relationships

The basis for true relationships between faithful Jews and faithful Gentiles is the “law of kindness.” Ruth swore allegiance to Naomi and her people in one of the most moving and powerful declarations in scripture:

“And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the LORD do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me” (Ruth 1:16, 17)
This is a not just a statement of personal loyalty to Naomi but also a statement of faith in the God of Israel. It is faith in the “hope” of Israel, a term that is always connected with the expectation of having children, and by extrapolation of bearing the Messiah. Naomi expresses it as follows:

“If I should say, I have hope, if I should have a husband to-night, and should also bear sons; would ye tarry for them till they were grown?” (Ruth 1:12,13a)

Naomi, whose name means “pleasant” went out “full” and returned from her sojourn empty and “bitter” (Ruth 1:20,21), it was only through the intervention of her gentile daughter-in-law with the gō’ēl, that Naomi’s fortunes were restored.

Ruth had come to rely on the God of Israel; “under whose wings thou art come to trust [take refuge]” (Ruth 2:12). The “wings of the cherubim” had been spread over Ruth, this was symbolised by the protection and comfort offered by the gō’ēl: “spread therefore thy skirt over thine handmaid” (Ruth 3:9). It is significant that the book of Ruth is read at the feast of Pentecost, (also called the feast of harvest) traditionally associated with the giving of the Law, 49 days after the presentation of the “wave-sheaf” or first-fruits of the barley harvest on the 16th of Nisan. 111 Pentecost, on the 50th day was celebrated by presenting two (leavened) wave loaves – the first-fruits of the wheat harvest.

Naomi had left Bethlehem (meaning the house of bread) because of famine, but at her return she, along with her daughter-in-law, were redeemed by the gō’ēl. The harvest of Boaz presented two loaves of bread to Yahweh – two faithful women – a Jew and a Gentile who shared the same hope and were redeemed by the same man. It was at Pentecost that the Spirit was poured out on first century Jewish Christians (Acts 2: 1-4), anticipating the outpouring on Gentile Christians (Acts 12:45); pre-figuring the last days Spirit testimony of the two witnesses (Rev.11:3). Pentecost does indeed celebrate the giving of a Law - it is however not a Law written on two tablets of stone, but a Law written by the Spirit on the hearts of two women – it is the “Law of kindness.”

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111 Alfred Edersheim: The Temple, Its ministry & Services as they were at the time of Jesus Christ (A. Wheaton & Co. Ltd., Exeter, 1959) page 249-267.
Conclusion

Within Proverbs, the “virtuous woman” is employed as a symbol for “wisdom”. It is surely significant that the English word Ruthless denotes someone without “Ruth” (pity, kindness). The background to Proverbs 31 is the life-setting of Ruth the great-great-grandmother of Solomon and progenitor of the royal line through Hezekiah culminating in the Messiah. The women alluded to in Proverbs 31 (either directly or indirectly) are mentioned in Matthew’s genealogy of Christ.

These faithful women were accused (or suspected) of sexual impropriety, some were foreign women but they were not Persian and the setting of Ezra-Nehemiah is too late for Proverbs 31. While external scholarship can be useful and is an important tool, it should always be used with caution. Yoder commenced his study with linguistics and proceeded to confirm his bias towards a late post-exilic date by ignoring copious intertextual evidence that contradicts his view. **Scripture is the unequalled interpreter of scripture**, bible students can be confident that an intertextual methodology (if performed correctly), will deliver superior results to that of many a professional, allowing the “lay” student to **understand a proverb, and the interpretation; the words of the wise, and their dark sayings**.
Isaiah

1. Hezekiah as the anointed in Isaiah 45
2. Hezekiah as Immanuel in Isaiah 7
3. Passover Deliverance in Isaiah 26
Hezekiah as the anointed in Isaiah 45: the Cyrus Debate

In the commentary on Proverbs 8 we suggested intertextual connections with Isa.45, a chapter which mentions “Cyrus” as Yahweh’s anointed. For this reason many critical scholars assign the chapter to Deutero-Isaiah and place the writing in the postexilic period. In our Proverbs commentary it was suggested that “Cyrus” was a re-vocalisation of the Hebrew for “craftsman” or “workman” as an allusion to the craftsman (Bezaleel, Exod.31:2), who was endowed with the spirit of wisdom in order to construct the Tabernacle. The “craftsman” of Isa.45:1 was called on to “build my city” (v.13), this “craftsman” is contrasted with the “craftsman” who builds idols (Isa.44:11), who holds a lie (idol) in his right hand (Isa.44:20) in contrast with the “craftsman” whose right hand Yahweh holds (Isa.45:1). The idea that a pagan king who worshiped idols would be addressed in Davidic terms as Yahweh’s anointed runs contrary to the thrust of the text. This digression will address the Cyrus question in light of the suggestions and observations made in Isaiah 40-48 in which Perry observes the following (briefly summarised):

1. The undeniable correspondence between Isaiah 45 and forms of expression found in the Cyrus Cylinder – this suggests some sort of relationship between them.
2. The case for “Cyrus” being a scribal/editorial change is examined and proposals such as “the inheritor”, “the crushed one” or the “craftsman” are explored.
3. The case for “Cyrus” being an interpolation which is suspected because of possible changes in the poetic metre is examined and the possibility of later editorial editions by Jeremiah is explored.

After exploring the alternatives, Perry rejects editorial work or later interpolation as explanations and accepts that “Cyrus” is integral to the text and offers the following arguments:

1. Despite Jerusalem resisting the Assyrian blockade, there is evidence that damage was done to the outer defensive works of the city and damage to the Temple (thus necessitating rebuilding).
2. Sennacherib himself boasts that he took captives during this campaign.
3. Cyrus is identified with Kūrush (Cyrus I?) a possible contemporary of Isaiah and not the king who was still 150 years in the future (Cyrus II of Daniel)
4. The Babylonians sent an envoy to Hezekiah to establish diplomatic and military allegiances and to offer building materials (Perry) for repairing the Assyrian war damage.
5. Cyrus did not know Yahweh indicating that he was a foreign prince

Thus, according to Perry, Isaiah 45 functions as rhetorical irony against Babylon and Hezekiah. The counsel and help of Merodach-Baladan are rejected and at the same time Hezekiah is being castigated. Therefore the oracle is directed towards one of the accompanying princes in the Babylonian delegation, presumably the eighth century Kūrush (Cyrus I?) and at the same time against Babylon/Hezekiah. If this scenario is correct then an Elamite (?) prince is chosen and ironically lauded in Davidic terms in order to teach Merodach-Baladan and Hezekiah a lesson. Moreover, this Cyrus I would act as a template for the future restoration of Jerusalem from Babylonian exile by Cyrus II, who conquered Babylon some 150 years later. The setting of this oracle is therefore around 700 BC (period and aftermath of the Assyrian crisis) and the incident of the Babylonian envoys (2Kgs.20:12-19; 2 Chron.32:31) after which Hezekiah acknowledge his sin, humbled himself and was given a reprieve.

Discussion

Although the background of the oracle is realistic (the Babylonian envoys) the ironic reading suggested by Perry is not. Even if the case for identifying Kūrish (Cyrus I?) with “Cyrus” in Isa.45:1 can be established and even if this Cyrus was an Elamite prince with the Babylonian delegation, no reason is given as to why

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1 This chapter appears as an addendum to the Daniel Commentary, P. Wyns, God is Judge (Biblaridion media 2011) @ http://www.biblaridion.info
2 A. Perry, Isaiah 40-48, (Willow Publications,2010),245-284
3 A marginal note or footnote incorporated into the body of the text
4 Possibly identified on the Nassouhi Prism.
he should receive the privilege of being distinguished from the other delegates. Why Yahweh should choose one pagan idol worshiper above another is not explained. Presumably Merodach-Baladan presented a unified policy position which represented all the princes in his coalition, why then single out a particular prince for unique treatment? It is not apparent from this oracle that “Cyrus” would somehow betray Babylon and pursue a different policy towards Jerusalem. All the envoys had a friendly (but ulterior) motive, namely, they all wanted to increase Babylonian hegemony in the region. They had identified Hezekiah as a useful ally against Assyria and wanted his support. Any pacts or treaties made would be *quid pro quo*; you help me and I will help you. Yahweh’s objection was in turning to the counsel of any foreigners (and their gods). Yahweh had saved Jerusalem *without any help* and did not need either the Babylonians or the Elamites or any other princes from any other nation —nor did he need the assistance of their “gods”. In fact, Yahweh (through the prophet Isaiah) is reminding the Babylonians (and Hezekiah) that he has already raised up (metaphorically from the dead) his own master-craftsman to do the work. The message to the Babylonians is.....we don’t need your help. The message to Hezekiah is that his *pride* and Babylonian *flattery* had seduced him and made him forget that his accomplishments were *not his own.....*Yahweh had chosen him....and Hezekiah’s work as “suffering servant/craftsman” was but a pale reflection of the work of the promised Davidic Messiah not the work of some unknown Elamite prince or even of Cyrus II who failed miserably to restore the postexilic Temple. In essence, Hezekiah had turned away from the voice of wisdom, crying in the wilderness (Prov.8:1; Isa.40:3) and become one of the “simple ones” who listened to the smooth words of the strange woman. It was Yahweh who had counsel and sound wisdom (Prov.8:14) and it was by his forbearance that “princes rule, and nobles, even all the judges of the earth” (Prov.8:16). Hezekiah’s foray into diplomacy was foolish; “he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul: all they that hate me love death” (Prov.8:36). Yahweh knows the “beginning from the end” and these “Babylonian friends” would one day in the not too distant future destroy Jerusalem and exile Judah. And Hezekiah was so foolish that he had allowed them to catalogue all his wealth and note how he organised his kingdom – he had freely offered the intelligence and strategies necessary for the Babylonians to overthrow Judah! Hezekiah (hizqyyāºhû, Yab is my strength. נְפָר) had forgotten the meaning of his own name! Yahweh reminded him of this in Isa.45:1 “whose right band I have holden” (נָפָר; ðäšer-hehêzáqqî, whom-I-hold-fast/strengthen). Yahweh was behind Hezekiah’s success and there was no need to appeal to foreigners and their “dead gods” (cf. Isa.26:14).

The problem of the destruction of the Temple

Perhaps the biggest problem encountered when dating the period is mention of the destruction of the Sanctuary (e.g. Ps 74) which tends to automatically assign a post 586 BC date to the Psalm - as the only recorded destruction of the Sanctuary is by Nebuchadnezzar.² Whittaker and Booker suggest that Ahaz allowed the Assyrian king to garrison troops in the temple precinct and that these troops vandalised the Sanctuary when they were expelled by Hezekiah. They point to 2 Chron. 28:21 where the chronicler records; “Ahaz took away a portion *out of the house of the LORD.....and gave it unto the king of Assyria*, but this means nothing more than that he “gathered riches” (valuable items, NLT/ took part of the treasures, NKJV) in order to curry favour with the Assyrian king. However, a valid point is made on the commentary on Psalm 74:5-7 where the “thick trees” are associated with “the house of the forest of Lebanon” (1 Kings 7:1-5; 10:17, 21; Isa. 22:8) which was built with imported cedar from Lebanon.

> A man was famous according as he had lifted up axes upon the thick trees. But now they break down the carved work thereof at once with axes and hammers. They have cast fire into thy sanctuary, they have defiled by *casting down* the dwelling place of thy name to the ground. (Psalm 74:5-7)

The Psalm is obviously describing an act of vandalism against the royal armoury (house of the forest of Lebanon cf. Isaiah 37:24) and against the Sanctuary. Although the Hezekiah period does not describe such an act, a plausible scenario can be reconstructed when the Assyrian records are taken into consideration. Consider Oppenheim’s translation in ANET, p.288a:

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² Temple desecration occurred under *Antiochus Epiphanes*, which is why it became fashionable in the nineteenth century to assign some of these Psalms to the Maccabean period.
Hezekiah himself, whom the terror-inspiring splendor of my lordship had overwhelmed and whose irregular and elite troops which he had brought to Jerusalem, his royal residence, in order to strengthen (it), had deserted him, did send me later, to Nineveh, my lordly city, together with 30 talents of gold.....

The inscription is extensively discussed by William R. Gallagher who offers an alternative translation that suggests that the mercenaries (Arab troops?) did not desert, but were sent (along with booty) by Hezekiah as tribute after Sennacherib withdrew. The Assyrian account is highly suspicious and sounds like propaganda, trying to turn a defeat into a victory. Gallagher comments; “The claim that Hezekiah sent tribute after Sennacherib is unique in Assyrian inscriptions. Sennacherib had been at Lachish. Why did Hezekiah not come out, present his tribute, kneel down and kiss Sennacherib’s feet like the other kings had done at Ushu? Why did Hezekiah stay in Jerusalem and merely send a messenger to Nineveh to pay Sennacherib homage?”

The account in Kings (2 Kgs.18:16) describes how Hezekiah himself plundered the temple in order to pay tribute to Sennacherib but this is counter intuitive to the portrayal of Hezekiah’s character. Moreover, despite this payment Sennacherib continued to lay siege to Jerusalem. The accounts in 2 Kgs 18 and 19 “seem” contradictory and scholars have detected different sources behind the accounts. Gallagher observes; “Since the article of Stade in 1886 most Bible scholars have believed that several sources were combined to form the account II K. 18:13-19:37. The two main sources are usually labelled A (II K.18:13-16) and B (II K. 18:17-19:37). There have been further divisions.” He continues by remarking that, “When one reads A and B chronologically - and some have done this- Sennacherib becomes a swindler who accepted tribute from Hezekiah and then continued war against him.”

Paul S. Evans observes that, “Many have argued that it is illogical that Assyrian emissaries be sent to Jerusalem after Hezekiah had already capitulated. An appeal to discrete sources is helpful in explaining this apparent illogical inconsistency.” Evans proceeds to delineate the sources using critical methodology and building on the work of Stade and Childs examines the parallel structures and duplications, detecting discrete sources based on the different rendering of Hezekiah’s name and variant spellings of his ambassadors (Eliakim and Shebna) and his differing character portrayal. According to Evans, these sources represent independent traditions concerning the relaying of the message of the Assyrians to Hezekiah; “In P the messengers subvert Hezekiah’s role. The Assyrian messenger calls for Hezekiah (2 Kgs 18:18) but these officials go out to meet him instead. Later in P, these officials attempt to prevent the message of the Assyrian being heard by anyone but themselves (2 Kgs 18:26). Alternatively in D, these officials are portrayed as pious (note their torn garments) and diligent in ensuing the communication of the Assyrian message. The divergent characterizations of these officials confirm our recognition of these discrete sources, it may be that Isa 22:15-25 reflects knowledge of the P source where Shebna is characterized negatively. Since Shebna is referred to as the ‘secretary’ the responsibility of faithfully communicating the message fell to him. This may be why he is singled out as most blameworthy”.

Evans hypothesizes that two of the divergent sources (J and E) were composed during Hezekiah’s reign - J being the account by royal annalists and E the account by temple annalists. The priestly account was concerned with theological matters and the royal account with historical actions. These accounts were later combined. Evans analysis is insightful especially as he is self-aware and points out the flaws in his

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7 Ibid, p.132
8 Ibid, 145
9 Ibid, 148
10 Paul S. Evans, The Invasion of Sennacherib in the Book of Kings: A Source-Critical and Rhetorical Study of 2 Kings 18-19 (Supplements to Vestus Testamentum 125.) Leiden and Boston: E.J. Brill, 2009),59
11 Ibid, 72-73
12 Ibid, 78
own methodologies, concluding by listing a brief consideration of the weakness of some of his arguments.\footnote{Ibid., 81}

Whatever the merits of a source critical reconstruction might be, it is clear that something unusual is being reconstructed by these texts. The divergences in the accounts can be explained by positing that elements within the royal circle took advantage of Hezekiah’s illness and acted on his behalf. These elements could well have instructed the Arab mercenaries to strip the temple and deliver the booty to Sennacherib. The Assyrians were masters at psychological warfare and intelligence gathering\footnote{See; Peter Dubovský, “Hezekiah and the Assyrian Spies: Reconstruction of the Neo-Assyrian Intelligence Services and Its Significance for 2 Kings 18-19”, (Gregorian Biblical BookShop, 2006) and would soon be aware that Hezekiah himself was facing death (my splendour overwhelmed him) and that the offer of tribute was a desperate delaying tactic. Rabshakeh was therefore sent to instigate further instability – to drive a wedge between those who faithfully resisted and those who wished to capitulate.

The “royal steward” (prime minister), Shebna was apparently a Phoenician who somehow worked his way into this very influential position (Avigad 1953: 151-152; His is called a “steward” [NASB] which is a Phoenician loan word for “governor”). In Isaiah’s rebuke, he repeated the word “here” three times, indicating that he is a foreigner and did not belong in the courts of Judah (22:16). There is no mention of his father which, if he was a Judean, would be the case (cf. 2 Kings 18:18). As a foreigner, probably he would not be interested in the spiritual matters of the kingdom or seeking the Lord’s direction in times of trouble. Thus, he did not have a positive influence on the decision-making in the courts of Hezekiah ( Isa. 22:15-19). According to Rabbinic tradition (Sanhedria 26a), the remainder of Isaiah’s prophecy regarding Shebna’s departure from the land of Judah and subsequent death was fulfilled in 701 BC. As scribe, he still had influence in the court of Judah. There he tried to persuade the people of Jerusalem to surrender to the Assyrians. Isaiah admonished Hezekiah to trust the Lord for the deliverance of the city from the hands of the Assyrians. Shebna’s influence, at least with the people, seemed to prevail, and he convinced the people to surrender. As he was leading the Jerusalemites out the city gate, the angel Gabriel (so goes the tradition) shut the city gate behind him. Alone and embarrassed by this turn of events, he told the Assyrians that the rest of the people had deserted him. Not to be taken for fools, they put holes in his feet and dragged him over thorns and thistles, apparently to a far country and his death, thus fulfilling the words of Isaiah the prophet ( Isa. 22:17-18).

It is certainly feasible the vandalism of the sanctuary in Ps 74:5-7 is recounting an event that occurred during the Assyrian crisis rather than the destruction meted out by the Babylonians in BC 586, especially in light of verse 8; “They said in their hearts, ‘Let us destroy them altogether.’ They have burned up all the meeting places of God in the land”. Their intention was complete destruction of the Jerusalem cult, but in reality they could only obliterate outlying meeting places (sometimes translated synagogues). John Day comments; “The old view that Ps. 74.8’s mô`ádê-´el, ‘meeting places of God’, must refer to synagogues, and so presuppose a later date, has been rightly rejected by Gelston (1984)”\footnote{John Day, “How Many Pre-Exilic Psalms Are There?” See, chapter 11 of In Search of Pre-Exilic Israel: Oxford Old Testament Seminar, (ed., John Day, Continuum, 2004), 240. John Day notes; “G. Kwaakel (2002:221-31) in a recent, thorough discussion of the date of Psalm 44 is inclined to place it in the context of Sennacherib’s invasion of Judah in 701 BCE, which is not impossible. As Kwaakel 2002:224, 227 notes, v. 12, ET 11 ‘You...have scattered us among the nations’ need not refer to 586 BCE, since Sennacherib claims to have deported 200,150 people from Judah’(p.237).}.

Even though the city did not fall, it is quite probable that the temple suffered damage and most certainly the outside defensive walls of Jerusalem. It is also undeniable that other cities in Judah were extensively damaged (Micah 1).
Yahweh and the foreign gods

There is a striking parallelism between Isa. 44:28 and the *Cyrus Cylinder* where Cyrus II is described as a shepherd:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cyrus Cylinder</th>
<th>Isaiah</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12 He [Marduk] took the hand of Cyrus, king of the city of Anshan, and called him by his name, proclaiming him aloud for the kingship over all of everything.</td>
<td>45:1 Thus says Yahweh to His anointed, To Cyrus, whose right hand I have held -- To subdue nations before him And loose the armor of kings…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 governors, bowed down before him and kissed his feet…..</td>
<td>45:23 …That to Me every knee shall bow, Every tongue shall take an oath.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 …he [Cyrus] shepherded in justice and righteousness</td>
<td>44:28 Who says of Cyrus, ‘He is My shepherd.…’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31…the sanctuaries across the river Tigris - whose shrines had earlier become dilapidated, 32.the gods who lived therein, and made permanent sanctuaries for them. I collected together all of their people and returned them to their settlements…..</td>
<td>44:28 …saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 …like a friend and companion, he walked at his side</td>
<td>41:8 …The descendants of Abraham My friend.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The similarity in language between the *Cyrus Cylinder* and Isaiah can be partially explained by a shared milieu and shared oriental motifs. For example, many oriental rulers are depicted as shepherds. The royal staff or, sceptre is a common accessory for kings in the Ancient Near East and was itself a form of shepherd’s rod. It became a symbol of protection, power and authority. Even in Egypt, a divine symbol of kingship was the shepherd’s crook.17 The founding legends about Cyrus’ shepherd status are political propaganda and are historically worthless apart from what they tell us about Medo-Persian power relationships.18 Nevertheless, if shared vocabulary and generic motifs are discounted, the resemblance between the *Cyrus Cylinder* and Isaiah is striking. Critical scholars will draw the conclusion that this is proof that Deutero-Isaiah was a contemporary of Cyrus II – but what prevents Cyrus’ record being influenced by Isaiah? Isaiah is a thematically complex literary development, making the direction of influence from Isaiah to the cylinder more likely. One can imagine the Jews showing Cyrus the prophecy written 150-200 years previously and suggesting that he is the “workman” chosen by their God as liberator. The similarity between *db-r-sh* and *K-r-sh* eventually hardened into a direct naming of Cyrus and this in turn influenced the monumental inscribers. It is likely that the Isaiah prophecy was known in Babylonian scribal circles shortly after it was written because soon after his recovery Hezekiah entertained a diplomatic envoy from Babylon and he was so flattered that he showed them everything (Isaiah 39),

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16 Excerpts are from the translation of the text on the Cyrus Cylinder by Irving Finkel (Assistant Keeper, Department of the Middle East, the British Museum) cited August 2010 online@ http://www.britishmuseum.org/explore/highlights/article_index/e/cyrus_cylinder_-_translation.aspx

17 John J. Davis, The Perfect Shepherd; Studies in the 23 Psalm, (Baker House; Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1979),51

18 The founding legends relate the adoption of the new born Persian Cyrus by a shepherd in order to avoid being murdered by his Median grandfather king Astyages; another relates how Cyrus was abandoned and suckled by a she wolf (cf. Romulus and Remus), yet another relates how the young Cyrus who came from humble circumstances and was “given” to the royal cupbearer, managed to reverse his family fortunes. Pierre Briant remarks; “All these tales are intended primarily to exalt the memory of a charismatic founder, marked from his birth by signs of uncommon destiny. For this reason, it was piously passed on to young Persians from generation to generation. Each of these various versions places the origins of Cyrus in the context of relations between the powerful Medes and their Persian vassals” Pierre Briant, From Cyrus to Alexander: A History of the Persian Empire,(Histoire de l'Empire perse (1996) trans. Eisenbrauns:USA,2002),16
which probably included the prophecies concerning himself. Cyrus demonstrated tolerance to many of his conquered people (as indicated by the *Cyrus Cylinder*). Hence, the restoration of the Jewish exiles in whatever limited form under Cyrus was not due to any particular sympathy with monotheism, but was rather the policy of the monarch towards all his conquered subjects.  

Shared A.N.E. motifs probably account for the similarities between Isaiah and the *Cyrus Cylinder* but dependency of the monument on Isaiah cannot be excluded. Isaiah 45 does show awareness of Egyptian gods;

> “Thus saith the LORD, The labour of Egypt, and merchandise of Ethiopia and of the Sabeans, men of stature, shall come over unto thee, and they shall be thine: they shall come after thee; in chains they shall come over, and they shall fall down unto thee, they shall make supplication unto thee, saying, Surely God is in thee; and there is none else, there is no God. **Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour**” (Isa.45:14-15).

This passage about Egypt refers to a *God that hidest thyself*, which is polemic against the Egyptian god Amun who was the “hidden one”. The name “Amun” (*imn*) suggests imperceptibility in and of itself and derives from the verb *inm*, meaning both “to conceal” and “be hidden”. Its vocalization is said to belong to the same noun-class as the name “Atum”. In the New Kingdom, the epithet “he whose name is hidden” (*imn-r, r* or *imn-nr*) was commonly used as an etymology of “Amun”. Several of these New Kingdom “etymologies”, as well as Hymns to Amun from Papyrus Leiden (I 350), speak of Amun as “concealing Himself”. Amun also functioned as a “personal god” and saviour;

> “You are Amun, Lord of the Silent, who answers the cry of the humble. I cry unto You because I am afflicted, and already You come and save me. You who gives breath to he who lacks it! Save me, I, who am in distress. You are Amun-Re, Lord of Thebes, who even saves the one who is in the netherworld.”

The relevance of this text to the life of Hezekiah is apparent. Hezekiah cried to Yahweh and was rescued from death (the netherworld). This is polemic against the “gods” of Egypt – for although Yahweh is hidden and transcendent (like Amun-Re) he chooses to make himself visible and manifests himself to (and through) his “suffering servant” – even the Egyptians would come to “know” Yahweh when he revealed himself in his salvic acts (Isa.19:21-25), he was not hidden to those who faithfully sought him; “I have not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth: I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain: I the LORD speak righteousness, I declare things that are right” (45:19). Moreover, the Hebrew for verily, הָיְה (‘aken) is probably a parody on Aken, who in ancient Egyptian mythology was the patron and custodian of the boat named “Meseket” that carried the souls of the dead into the underworld. Apparently he remained in a deep sleep when he was not needed, and had to be woken by the Ferryman, Mahaf, when the dead required his services. He was generally depicted as a sailor standing in the stern of a papyrus boat. He was not the focus of worship, and had no cult centre but is referred to a number of times in the Book of the Dead. The twin themes of concealment and death are appropriate to the larger narrative of Isaiah 45 and the mortal illness of Hezekiah.

It is also possible that Isa.45:7 addresses the dualism found in Zoroastrianism; “I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these things”. There are therefore no deities of good and evil, no dualities, only the one God in control of everything. This (possible) allusion to Zoroastrianism, the ancient religion of Persia has some scholars argue for a postexilic date of Deutero-Isaiah (during the reign of Cyrus II), however the majority of scholars seem to favour dates around 1000

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19 Thirtle, *OT Problems*, 247-8
21 Prayer of Nebre, Stela 23.077 of the Berlin Museum, XIXth Dynasty; the Pharaohs of the 19th dynasty ruled for approximately one hundred and ten years: from BC 1292 to 1187. Ramesses I was the first Pharaoh of this dynasty and possibly the Pharaoh of the Exodus.
BC for Zoroaster, which would place him as a contemporary, at least, of the later Vedic poets. It is therefore not unreasonable to assume that dualistic religion from Media (not Persia) had already penetrated the A.N.E. long before the exile. If that is the case then Isaiah 45 presents polemic against Babylon, Egypt and Media. It is not necessary to present polemic against Assyria because the Assyrian “gods” have already been defeated!

There were therefore, “no gods” beside Yahweh (Isa.45:5, 6, 21); only “wisdom resided” with Yahweh (Prov.8:30) and Yahweh is able to pour the spirit of wisdom upon his servants who then remain hidden (protected) by him (Bezalel=hidden with God). Therefore, this chapter and the previous one speak strongly of the incomparability of Yahweh – the counsel, wisdom and help of foreign princes (and their gods) is rejected. Their “gods” are vanity, nothing, lumps of wood and molten metal fashioned by pagan craftsmen.

**Knowing Yahweh**

“...though thou hast not known me” (Isa.45:4)
“...though thou hast not known me” (Isa.45:5)

The question of “knowing” or “not knowing” Yahweh has nothing to do with awareness of Yahweh as the God of Israel. There were many Israelites who did not “know” Yahweh and Hezekiah *should* have “known” Yahweh but his behaviour with the Babylonian envoys demonstrated that he had forgotten the important lessons that he had learned. The question of “knowing Yahweh” is directly linked with Exodus 6:3;

“And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty, (El Shaddai) but by my name Yahweh was I not known to them.

The context is the covenant with the patriarchs and the promise to Moses to deliver Israel from Egyptian bondage. The sad fact is that throughout Israel’s long prophetic history the name of Yahweh was unknown (cf. Isa. 52:6; Jer. 16:21; Ezek. 39:7) in the sense that the Jews were ignorant to the inherent purpose and character revealed in the Yahweh name.

Therefore my people shall know my name; therefore they shall know in that day that I am he that doth speak: behold, it is I. How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth! (Isa.52:6-7)

The “name” is linked with God manifestation and salvation. Therefore knowing Yahweh is concerned with intimately experiencing the self-revelatory salvic acts of Yahweh. Hezekiah had experienced the self-revelatory manifestation of Yahweh in the role of the “suffering servant” pointing forward to the time when Yahweh would reveal himself in the Messiah. And yet, despite this encounter, despite “knowing Yahweh” Hezekiah still acted as one of the ignorant “simple ones” in the incident of the Babylonian envoys. The language employed in Isa.45:8 is the language of resurrection and this is applicable only to Hezekiah and the Davidic Messiah who he prefigured;

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“Drop down, ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness: let the earth open, and let them bring forth salvation, and let righteousness spring up together; I the LORD have created it” (Isa.45:8).

This is linked with the sign that Ahaz refused, a sign concerning the establishment of the Davidic dynasty;

Ask thee a sign of the LORD thy God; ask it either in the depth, or in the height above. (Isa.7:14)

This “messianic sign” was referred to by Jesus during his discourse about being “born again” (born from above); “If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?” (John 3:12). The Jews (like Ahaz) refused to believe the sign concerning Jesus’ origins and his destiny (resurrection from the depths = new birth). It is impossible that this language would be applied (even as ironic rhetoric) to a pagan idol worshiper. This language could only be applied to a Davidide – only a descendant of David could typify the Messiah – especially one who had taken on the role of the suffering servant and who nearly died and was raised on the third day (2 Kgs.20:5).

Psalm 107 and Isaiah

Perry notes that Psalm 107: 16 is quoted in Isa.45:2 and he relates this to the release of captives. Yahweh will “open the double doors” for the anointed, “so that the gates will not be shut”....and will “break in pieces the gates of bronze and cut the bars of iron.” (Isa.45:1b, 2b) The phrase occurs only in Psalm 107, a Psalm that is intertextually linked with First Isaiah (1-39) and with Deutero-Isaiah (40-55) because the Sitz im Leben is the reign of Hezekiah: 25

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Isaiah 38</th>
<th>Psalm 107</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10. In the prime of my life I shall go to the gates of Sheol</td>
<td>18. Their soul abhorred all manner of food, and they drew near to the gates of death.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Hezekiah prayed unto the Lord</td>
<td>13. Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble.....</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. And Hezekiah wept bitterly</td>
<td>20. He sent His word and healed them, And delivered them from their destructions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-5. And the word of the LORD came to Isaiah, saying, Go and tell Hezekiah, 'Thus says the LORD, the God of David your father: I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears; surely I will add to your days fifteen years'.</td>
<td>16. For He has broken the gates of bronze, and cut the bars of iron in two.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. ...You have lovingly delivered my soul from the pit of corruption, For You have cast all my sins behind Your back.</td>
<td>15. Oh, that men would give thanks to the LORD for His goodness, And for His wonderful works to the children of men!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. The LORD was ready to save me; Therefore we will sing my songs with stringed instruments All the days of our life, in the house of the LORD.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The individual suffering of Hezekiah has a collective dimension (They cried out....Ps.107:10) as the king (the Suffering Servant) lay on his deathbed the faithful remnant in the city fasted (Their soul abhorred all manner of food and they drew near to the gates of death, Ps.107:18); God heard the nation’s distress caused by the Assyrian siege which coincidentally (sic) coincided with the mortal illness of their king. The “breaking in pieces the gates of bronze and the cutting of the bars of iron” is a metaphor for the bonds 24 cited August 2010] 25 For inter-textual links between Psalm 107/Isaiah and Psalm 107/Job, see G. Booker, Psalm Studies (Austin, Texas: Booker Publications, 1988) available online @ http://www.christadelphianbooks.org/booker/psalms5/psabke01.html A. Perry presents a parabolic reading of Job which he regards as a dramatization of Hezekiah’s situation. A. Perry, Job, (Willow Publications, 2009).
of death. Hezekiah is resurrected from his death bed and is called into the presence of the high priest “call my servant to Eliakim the son of Hilkiah” were he is clothed with priestly garments and receives a prophetic pronouncement about his descendant, the Messiah, who will possess the “key of the house of David” and is able to open the doors of death and “none shall shut” (Isa.22:22 cf. Rev.3:7). Peripeteia is the motif of the chapter - a sudden reversal of fortunes. Shebna had been planning to replace the Davidic dynasty and had used the illness of Hezekiah and his childlessness as an opportunity to curry favour with the Assyrians. Shebna had established himself as a “nail in a sure place” but his nail would be removed in that day (Isa. 22:25) and replaced with Hezekiah’s nail. Shebna built himself an ornate tomb amongst the kings of Judah (1 Kings 2:10; 2 Chr.32:33) betraying his dynastic aspirations. Instead Shebna would suffer an ignominious death and Hezekiah who was at death’s door (with him died the Davidic dynasty) would be raised. In that day, one “nail” would be hammered home and another “nail” would be removed – a complete reversal of fortunes. These prophecies have nothing to do with Cyrus and the “gates” that Yahweh will break open have nothing to do with the gates of Babylon, “...on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it” (Matt.16:18).

Treasures of Darkness

The treasures of darkness (Isa.45:3) are related by Perry to Hezekiah’s “treasures” which he displayed to the Babylonian envoys. They are “dark” because they are Assyrian plunder and therefore contaminated with false thinking etc and the fate of this treasure was the darkness of Babylonian captivity. Accordingly, the use of “dark treasure” is ironic. However, these treasures are not necessarily plunder they are more likely tribute but even this can be discounted as these treasures are not accumulated by Hezekiah or even given to Yahweh (by the nations)......they are treasures given by Yahweh to Hezekiah......to demonstrate that Yahweh is the God of Israel. Therefore the “treasures” are linked with revelation. A literal reading of this verse (3a) is:

The main idea behind the verse is concealment – something hidden, buried covered etc by darkness – something secret is about to be revealed. The word darkness (הַשָּׁכֶק) first occurs in the creation narrative in Genesis 1 and then reappears in the Exodus account of the plagues when the nation is saved;

Harry Whittaker (Isaiah, Biblia,1988, 249) notes the similarity between the Hebrew phrasing in Isaiah 22:20; waqarràti la’ābdî la’elyāqîm ben-hilqiyyāhû (call my servant Eliakim the son of Hilkiah) and 1 Kings 1:32 (qir’ō-lî lašädq), where the prepositional prefix l’ is also repeated; “call to me Zadok the priest.” Whittaker proposes that Isaiah 22:20 should be understood in the same manner: “call my servant to Eliakim the son of Hilkiah.”

This is royal language not priestly terminology, moreover the phrases in Isaiah 22:21-23 are inter-textually linked with the Messianic Emmanuel (God with us) prophecy in 7:14 and 9:6-7 “government”/ “father” etc regarding the throne of David. Hezekiah acts as a proto-type of the Messiah and in Isaiah 22 he is clad in priestly garments and functions as a priest-king (Melchizedek) like his ancestor David.

The rock is a reference to Peter’s Messianic statement (You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.) and not to Peter himself (a small stone or pebble) and is therefore not a pronouncement on Apostolic succession. Shebna built a “habitation for himself in a rock” (Isa 22:16) but unlike Peter, Shebna refused to accept Yahweh’s anointed as his rock.

“And many brought gifts unto the LORD to Jerusalem, and presents to Hezekiah king of Judah: so that he was magnified in the sight of all nations from thenceforth ” (2 Chron.32:23).

“The things hidden are to Jehovah our God, and the things revealed are to us and to our sons – to the age, to do all the words of this law” (Deut.29:29 YLT).
“darkness which may be felt” (Exod. 10:21) and in the account of the theophanic revelation at Sinai; “thick darkness” (Deut. 4:11). In these texts supernatural darkness is associated with the salvation and creation of the nation. Darkness is used 26x in Job, almost exclusively in association with death, 4x darkness is used in combination with the phrase “the shadow of death” (Job 3:5; 10:21; 12:22; 34:22). Perry noted that Isa.45:1b, 2b cites Ps.107:16; “For He has broken the gates of bronze, and cut the bars of iron in two” but verse 10 of the Psalm adds; “Such as sit in darkness (Höºšek) and in the shadow of death, being bound in affliction and iron”. Metaphorically northern Israel was the “land of the shadow of death” under the shadow of the Assyrian winged sphinx until Hezekiah appeared on the scene as a light (Isa.9:2). However, “He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty” (Ps.91:1). This is similar to dwelling under the “wings” of the cherubim the “hidden ones” (Ps.83:1) and alludes to Bezaleel (God hides). Ultimately, Isa.45:3a is about being concealed (hidden) in the darkness of death – like buried treasure. The argument is that God is not only associated with light but also with darkness– Yahweh controls darkness as well as light (45:7) but he does not speak in dark hidden places when he deals with Israel (45:19), unlike Amun, Yahweh was not hidden (even though Israel thought he was); Yahweh revealed himself in salvic acts – opening the earth (45:8) and resurrecting his “buried treasure”. In the first instance this text is concerned with Hezekiah;

“Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead” (Isa.26:19)

The “resurrection” of Hezekiah heralded the resurrection of the nation from the yoke of Assyrian tyranny and the prison house of captivity. However, Isa.45:3 promised more than this because its ultimate focus is messianic- Yahweh would give the Messiah authority over death; the Davidic Messiah would have authority over his dead saints (buried treasure).

Psalm 2 and Isaiah 45

Psalm 2 is in the first instance a Davidic Psalm - the key to is 2 Samuel 8, for as soon as David was established in Jerusalem, the kings of all the surrounding nations rose up against him as one man: Philistines, Moab, Zobah, Syria, Ammon, Amalek, Edom. But David defeated all of these, and found himself with an empire acquired virtually overnight. This Psalm serves as a co-text for Isaiah 45 and was probably edited by Hezekiah’s men when the Psalms were collected. Thirtle ascribes the Psalm to Hezekiah; “Some verses (1,2) of the second part have been attributed to David-Acts 4.25,26. To question this relation would be to ignore the great extent to which Hezekiah’s men availed themselves of Davidic material in the making of their own psalms. Yet it is possible that the name ‘David’ in the passage in question means no more than ‘the Psalmist’, as the well-known quotation in Heb.4.7, introduced by the words ‘saying in David’ –that is, in the Psalter. However, if not by actual writing, at least by adaptation, this psalm delineates incidents which arose in the time of Hezekiah.”

Thirtle summarises Psalm 1 and 2 as follows: “Pss.1,2 Prefixed to the oldest Davidic collection in the reign of Hezekiah. The division known as Ps.1 was addressed to the people of Jerusalem while the Assyrians were at the city walls, and Rabshakeh the scorner was tempting the unwary to make peace with him (2 Kings 18.31,32). The first part of Ps.2 (vv.1-6) applies to the invaders; the second part (vv.7-9) is the king’s rehearsal of the Divine decree in raising him from mortal sickness to a life of prosperity and victory; the third (vv.10-12) is an appeal to the rulers of the city and the land to leave their evil ways (Isa.28.14, 15; and see treatment of both psalms, pp.140-5 ante”).

Modern scholarship associates Psalm 2 with enthronement festivals held at the New Year and it is quite possible that it was employed in such a liturgical setting or perhaps as a parody of the Babylonian festivals, where the “hand of the god” (idol) was held. The use of Psalm 2 as a co-text in Isaiah 45

32 Ibid, 311 (Appendix)
suggested such a possibility (ironic polemical usage). Further, the NT citation of Ps.2 is against a background of human resistance (the trial and crucifixion of the Messiah=anointed) and the subsequent resurrection of the Messiah (this day I have begotten thee), which approximate the Hezekiah situation. In the final instance it does not matter whether it was authored by David or, written by Hezekiah, or authored by David and then adapted by Hezekiah. It is a Messianic psalm about a Davidide and the fact that it was chosen by Isaiah and forms the woof and weave of Isaiah 45 demonstrates its relevance (if not authorship) to the Hezekiah period.

It seems highly unlikely that a Messianic Psalm about a Davidide, one that functions as a co-text for Isaiah 45, would in any way be related to a pagan king; especially when the psalm is cited by the Apostles and applied to Christ.

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**Isaiah 45**

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Psalm 2

...all that are incensed against him (45:24)  Why do the heathen rage (2:1)

Thus saith the LORD to his anointed (45:1) ...against the LORD, and against his anointed (2:2)

...to subdue nations before him (45:1) Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron (2:9)

Tell ye, and bring them near; yea, let them take counsel together... (45:21) ....the rulers take counsel together (2:2)

I will loose the loins of kings (45:1) O ye kings: be instructed.... Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling (2:10-11).

Ask me of things to come concerning my sons....45:11) Thou art my Son... (v.7)

What begettest thou? (45:10) .... this day have I begotten thee.(2:7)

Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth. ......dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel (2:9)

(45:9) ...

...be ye saved, all the ends of the earth.... (45:22) .... the heathen....and the uttermost parts of the earth (2:8)

That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear.(45:23) Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way (2:12)

In the LORD shall all the seed of Israel be justified Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.(2:12)

(45:25)

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**The Abrahamic Covenant**

“Woe unto him that saith unto his father, What begettest thou? or to the woman, What hast thou brought forth?” (Isa.45:10)

The father and the woman (mother/wife depending on the translation) are Abraham and Sarah; “Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you: for I called him alone, and blessed him, and increased him” (Isa 51:5). Isaac was the first to be born into the Abrahamic covenant and his “unblocking” of Abraham’s wells parallel the “wells of salvation” (Isa.12) of Hezekiah’s era. It reflects the reestablishment of covenantal relationships with northern Israel (and the literal building of the water tunnel). The reaction to Hezekiah’s reformation is mirrored by the reaction of Ishmael to Isaac, namely,
questioning his legitimacy as the true heir of the Abrahamic covenants. Some of the northern tribes responded with mocking and scorn (like Ishmael, 2 Chron.30:10 cf. Gen.21:9) at Hezekiah’s attempt at reformation. Moreover, Hezekiah was not “desired” (Isa.53:2) he was “despised and rejected” (Isa.53:3) – who was this “great king”? He was brought low with a mortal illness and his city was besieged. So much for his reformation and acting as Yahweh’s legitimate spokesman; what had Abraham and Sarah brought forth….what had they given birth to?

Cyrus in Isaiah 44:28

The other mention of Cyrus is in Isaiah 44:28:

That saith of Cyrus, He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure: even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid.

A straightforward reading seems to undeniably point forward to Cyrus II as temple builder and shepherd of Israel. However, this rendering of the Hebrew is tendentious and a slightly different emphasis points to Hezekiah rather than Cyrus. Moreover, the inconvenient fact (often ignored) is that Cyrus did not lay the foundation of the temple (more on this anon). On these grounds alone the naming of Cyrus should be rejected. The verse reads literally as follows:

Firstly, we note the play on the word Jerusalem; yašlim..... lîrûšälaºim and the word for “desire” which is the name of the wife of Hezekiah (Hephzibah) which was also the “nick-name” given to Jerusalem; “Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken; neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate: but thou shalt be called Hephzibah, and thy land Beulah: for the LORD delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married” (Isa.62:4). Secondly, the word for foundation does not necessarily mean the laying of a foundation it can simply mean “established” or “founded” as in the YLT translation; “Thou art founded”. This is a statement: “So as to say of Jerusalem, Thou art built, And of the temple, Thou art founded” (YLT), now contrast the NIB: “Let it be rebuilt,” and of the temple, “Let its foundations be laid.”

Reinoud Oosting observes; “The exegetical literature on Isa 44:24-28 shows that the syntactic structure of v. 28 requires particular attention. In current studies, notice is frequently taken of two syntactic difficulties that are found in this verse. The first problem concerns the relation between the imperfect רָאָה and the noun (רָאָה) at the end of the verse. The form of the verb (ni.) רָאָה (‘to be founded’) is either a second person singular masculine or a third person singular feminine, whereas the gender of the noun is masculine (cf. BDB 228). The second syntactic difficulty concerns the question of how to link the expression יָשִּׁים (‘and to say’) in v. 28d to one of the previous clauses. The connection of the infinitive to
the preceding clauses is not only interesting at the level of syntax; it also touches on the question at
 discourse level of who is speaking in the second part of Isa 44:28.33

After analysis of various alternative proposals and after noting that the Hebrew employs either the Pual or
Hophal stem when speaking of the foundation of the temple (p.84) Oosting concludes with his own
emendation; “The syntactic structure of the last clause of Isa 51:12 provides a foundation for arguing that
the noun (ךָּרִי) in Isa 44:28 does not function as subject but as adjunct. The subject of the last clause
should be the proper noun Jerusalem taken from the previous clause. The gender of the proper noun
Jerusalem agrees with the third person feminine verbal form in the last clause. As a result, the latter part
of Isa 44:28 reads:

Isa 44:28 and to say of Jerusalem “She will be rebuilt
and she will be founded as a temple”.34

This is the preferred rendering in the context of Hezekiah and the aftermath of the Assyrian invasion.
Yahweh would “delight” in Jerusalem like Hezekiah in his new bride (Hephzibah) –the whole city would
be holy- established as a temple – and Yahweh is speaking these words to his “shepherd” (the Davidide)
his “master-craftsman” - השנה (ch-r-sh) instead of המה (k-r-sh).

Cyrus not the temple builder

None of the court tales in the book of Daniel is set during the reign of Cyrus and although he is
mentioned three times in Daniel (Dan.1:21; 6:28; 10:1) his name only functions as a chronological marker.
Darius the Međe is often proposed as the missing Cyrus but why would Daniel (who was obviously
familiar with Cyrus and with the Cyrus prophecy of Isa.45:1 and 44:28) refer to him as ‘Darius the Međe’
instead of ‘Cyrus king of Persia’ (cf. Dan.10:1)? Darius the Međe is depicted as the ‘King’ able to approve
and enact the ‘law of the Medes and Persians’ (Dan. 6:8,12,15) which then becomes statutorily binding for
everyone in the realm (including the king himself). A subordinate (governor) might well propose a new
law but only a monarch with absolute power could approve such a draconian decree. Any proposal that
regards ‘Darius the Međe’ as an agent, or substitute for Cyrus fails to meet the criteria that the story
requires (regardless whether the story is historical or not), namely that the monarch who has absolute
power is powerless to alter his own words!

In Dan. 10:1 the name of Cyrus functions as an introduction to a 21 day delay (Dan. 10:13). It is
proposed that this equates to the 21 year delay in the release of the captives – the difference between the
conquest of Babylon by Cyrus and the conquest of Babylon and commencement of temple building
under Darius Hystaspis, which occurred 21 years later.

Daniel’s retirement in the first year of Cyrus (Dan. 1:21) proved to be premature because the temple was
not built under Cyrus. Instead Daniel receives a vision in the third year of Cyrus about a twenty one year
delay (Dan. 10:1) that serves to introduce an even longer period of desolation (Daniel 11). Daniel
prospered in the reign of Darius and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian (Dan. 6:28) but it is only in the
reign of Darius that Daniel is metaphorically “resurrected” from the Lion’s den. The fate of Daniel in the
Lion’s den mirrors the fate of the exiles (also facing envy and opposition) who find their hope of
restoration frustrated under Cyrus but revived under Darius. The name of Cyrus is therefore strategically
positioned by the redactor to emphasise frustrated hope.

The discrepancy between what Cyrus was supposed to do and what he actually accomplished is noted by
the Jewish historian Flavius Josephus who attempts to harmonise the accounts. According to Josephus it

33 Reinoud Oosting, The Role of Zion/Jerusalem in Isaiah 40-55: A Corpus-Linguistic Approach, (Brill, 2012), 82-83
34 Ibid,84
was Darius Hystaspis who returned the temple vessels and did “all that Cyrus intended to do before him, relating to the restoration of the temple” \(\text{\textit{Antiq.11.3.8; \cite{Josephus1993}}}\) thus contradicting his earlier statement that “Cyrus also sent back to them the vessels of God which king Nebuchadnezzar had pillaged out of the temple, and carried to Babylon.” \(\text{\textit{Antiq.11.1.2.}}}\) Cyrus’s restoration did not apparently amount to anything more than a decree that got “lost” \(\text{\cite{AnttiLaato1988}}\) in the Persian archives \(\text{(Ezra 5:17; Ezra 6:1-3)}\) and a return of some of the vessels with nowhere to house them. Surely the temple would be constructed before the vessels were returned?

The \textit{cricut interpretum} is of course the prophecy in Isaiah 45:1 and 44:28 which depicts Cyrus as Yahweh’s “anointed” a term reserved for the Davidide and employed in typological fashion for the messiah;

“To begin, the discrepancy between Cyrus’ pronouncements on the one hand and his failure to implement them on the other stands out starkly. The king’s pious pronouncements about building the Temple, exhorting subjects to supply the means for construction, and restoring the sacred objects once pilfered by Nebuchadnezzar proved to be quite empty. When Darius came to the throne nearly two decades later, no Temple existed.” \(\text{\cite{JohnGoldingay2006}}\) Torrey goes so far as to argue that all references to Cyrus in Isaiah should be removed as they are later additions. \(\text{\cite{ChristopherTorrey1991}}\) Although other scholars accept the name of Cyrus as original to Isaiah, the title “anointed” is interpreted as a simple commissioning to perform the office of a king and does not confer messianic status. \(\text{\cite{AnttiLaato1988}}\) Exegetical conclusions are influenced by the assignment of

35 Erich Gruen states; “The very fact that the decree (albeit in much altered form) had to be read out once more, thirty years after its issue, only reminded the audience how valueless it had been”. Erich Gruen, Persia through the Jewish Looking-Glass, Jewish Perspectives on Hellenistic Rulers, (eds. T. Rajak, S. Pearce, J. Aitken and J. Dines, University of California Press,2007,53-75),61

36 Goldingay and Payne find the substitution of Cyrus with Darius in Isaiah 45:1 (suggested by Kratz) as “...inherently implausible... Kratz believes that the specific references to Cyrus belong to a late layer of the material and constitute a coded reference to Darius. It is easier to believe that a prophet who said Cyrus would mean Cyrus and that a prophet who meant Darius would say Darius.” John Goldingay, David Payne, Isaiah 40-55 Volume I: A Critical and Exegetical Commentary, (T&T Clark International London: New York, 2006), 7 commenting on R. G. Kratz, \textit{Kyros im Deuterojesaja Buch}, FAT I, Tübingen 1991. Of course it is a \textit{Reductio ad absurdum} to suggest that Darius is really meant………but that is what accurate fulfilment of the prophecy would require in the unlikely event that a Persian ruler is intended.

37 \textit{Ibid}, Gruen,60-61


Isaiah 40-55 to Deutero-Isaiah, a prophet who supposedly wrote during the Babylonian captivity. For this reason many exegetes assert that references to Cyrus are central to the theory of history presented in the Book of Isaiah. Even for exegetes that accept the centrality of Cyrus to Deutero-Isaiah as the promised “redeemer” it is thought necessary to qualify the “anointing” as a temporary office because it is unacceptable that an unconverted pagan king is understood as the “Messiah”. Thus the name of Cyrus creates a hermeneutical circle—the prophecies are late because they name Cyrus as the “anointed” and because Cyrus is the “anointed” Deutero-Isaiah is differentiated from earlier material. Others regard the anointing of Cyrus as the end of the Davidic monarchy—Cyrus acts as a kind of proxy for the Davidides.

It might be objected that Cyrus is referred to in sympathetic terms by Ezra: “Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the Lord by the mouth of the prophet Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying, Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, the Lord God of heaven hath given me all the kings of the earth; and he hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah.” (Ezra 1:1-2)

Gruen comments; “It is not easy to accept this text as the genuine article. The composition in Hebrew immediately makes it suspect. The language of the Persian Empire was Aramaic. And an open proclamation to the entire realm that the Jewish god had vouched safe Cyrus all the kingdoms of the world can hardly be imagined”. It is however, not necessary to regard the proclamation as inauthentic, but simply as a paraphrase of the sort of policy that is already found on the Cyrus Cylinder. This was Cyrus’ general policy and he did allow some of the Jews to return—the problem is that neither the temple nor the city was rebuilt!

Thirtle says very little about this passage but remarks: “Meantime, it is necessary to observe that no such language as is found in Isa.44.28, 45.1-4 is used in any other of the Hebrew writings in regard to Cyrus. We meet the name in 2 Chronicles, Ezra, and Daniel, and the style is sometimes ‘the king of Persia’, at another time ‘the king of Babylon,’ yet again, baldly, ‘Cyrus the Persian’ or ‘the king.’ Ezra does not apply any of the magnificent epithets found in Isa.44-45 to Cyrus (‘the Lord’s anointed’ ‘His shepherd’, the one ‘strengthened’, ‘called by name’ etc). But more importantly the prophecy of Jeremiah is referred to and not the prophecy of Isaiah. If Isaiah speaks so powerfully (in messianic terms) of the divine purpose embodied in Cyrus, then why does Ezra (or anyone else) neglect to mention it? It is conspicuous by its absence. The Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus is hardly the equivalent of ‘I have called thee by thy name...’ Although this is an argument by omission (argumentum ex silento) it provides circumstantial evidence that Cyrus was not in the original text of Isaiah. This supports Thirtle’s suggestion that the word


43 Gruen, Ibid, 56

44 Thirtle, OT Problems, 247 footnote reference to Cyrus: 2 Chron.36.22,23;Ezra1.1-8;3.7;4.3-5;5.13-17;6.3-14;Dan 1.21;6.28;10.1.

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Cyrus in Isaiah 45:1 was originally an alternative reading that was adopted for political reasons and that it slowly hardened into a textual variant that was uniformly accepted and incorporated. It is obvious that although a reading of Isaiah 45:1 may have been presented to Cyrus as corroborative evidence that he was the king chosen to release the Jews after seventy years exile (as spoken by Jeremiah the prophet); even at the later period of Ezra it had not yet solidified into the textual form that we now have. Cyrus was known for his religious tolerance towards all his conquered peoples and his treatment of the Jews was not exceptional. Cyrus claimed to be the agent of Marduk, the god who had been shamefully wronged by Nabonidus, when he conquered Babylon (this was an attempt to ingratiate himself with the local population for Nabonidus had been absent in Arabia for much of his reign and had neglected his religious duties, including the New Year Festival in Babylon). John Curtis comments; “In matters of religion Cyrus does seem to have been remarkably tolerant. About his own beliefs we can say little: he may have been an early follower of the prophet Zoroaster, or he may have supported the ‘daivas’, the old Iranian gods of war and strife rejected by Zoroaster. The evidence is inconclusive. In any event, he does not seem to have forced his own views on any of his subject peoples, but of course this religious tolerance may well have been dictated by political expediency. For it seems to have been the hallmark of Cyrus’s rule to observe local customs wherever he went, to preserve local institutions if possible and in general to avoid creating disruption.”

Moreover, the prediction of the return of the exiles under Cyrus is again conspicuous by its absence in Isaiah’s reprimand to Hezekiah: “Of thy sons that shall issue from thee, which thou shalt beget, shall they (the Babylonians) take away; and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon” (2 Chron.33:11-13). He did not, however, add that they would be released by ‘the Lord’s anointed Cyrus.’ Even Jeremiah (Jer.26:18), when reminding the people of the destruction of Zion prophesied by Micah the Morashite (a contemporary of Isaiah) does not mention Cyrus.

Perhaps the strongest argument against reading Cyrus in Isaiah 45 is the “Suffering Servant” prophecy of Isaiah 53 that finds its original fulfilment in the life of Hezekiah. It is the New Testament hymn in Philippians that connects the motif of the “Suffering Servant” of Isaiah 53 with the Cyrus prophecy of Isaiah 45, by citing Isaiah 45:23; “That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” (Philip.2:10, 11) We might well ask who it was that functioned as a messianic prototype. Was it Cyrus the pagan king and idol worshipper, or, Hezekiah the faithful descendant of David – the man who embodied the covenant promises and rose from his sickbed on the third day – the man who carried the burden of the nation that he attempted to reform – the man who was delivered at Passover (together with the nation) –the man whose birth was prophesied by Isaiah –the man whose name was Immanuel? Hezekiah was the mediator; the “Suffering Servant” who acted on behalf of the faithful remnant (Jacob who was also Yahweh’s servant....Israel whom I have chosen: 44:1) and who also acted as God’s agent (Immanuel –God with us –named by God 45:4 cf. 7:14) to the faithful remnant. Thus Hezekiah represented both parties –Yahweh to the people and the people to Yahweh. Thirtle comments: “The New Testament application of these great words is by no means called in question by the immediate (or initial) interpretation. Holy Scripture continually shows its distinctive vitality and inspiration in the fact that its statements are capable of applications that are far-reaching beyond anything suggested by their primary purpose. All the same, it is important to observe the immediate reference, even in forms which are of the deepest significance when viewed in their relation to the larger unfolding of the Divine plan.”

Who then functioned in an archetypal messianic role – Hezekiah or Cyrus?

Political expediency

Gruen asks and answers the question, “How did Cyrus hit upon the idea of liberating the Israelites and ordering the reconstruction of the Temple?...He got it from reading the book of Isaiah (Josephus.AJ11.1-
7). A strikingly similar idea may be found in the famous fiction of Alexander the Great at the gates of Jerusalem”.

Thirtle also relates historical examples where prophetic writings were used to influence Gentile authorities. The high-priest Jaddua won favour for the Jewish people by meeting Alexander the Great as he approached Jerusalem and showing him the Daniel prophecies.

Similarly, Onias IV, the high-priest (ca.150 B.C.) acquired permission from King Ptolemy and his Queen Cleopatra to build a temple at Leontopolis in Egypt by referring to Isa.19:19. In more recent times we might think of political-Zionism whose justification for the possession of the land and return of the Jews is often supported (by both Jews and Christians) by prophetic passages. The British Diplomat Sir Charles Webster who knew Chaim Weizman (the second great leader of the Zionist movement) described his diplomacy in promoting the Zionist programme as follows: “With unerring skill he adapted his arguments to the special circumstances of each statesman. To the British and Americans he could use biblical language and awake a deep emotional undertone; to other nationalities he more often talked in terms of interest. Mr Lloyd George was told that Palestine was a little mountainous country not unlike Wales…”

We can therefore concur with Thirtle’s statement: “That the Jews should have sought a political favour by calling the attention of Gentile authorities to the things written by the prophets of their nation, need not surprise us.”

Conclusion
The anointed of Isaiah 44-45 is none other than Hezekiah the “suffering servant”. Cyrus should be excised from this account. Only a Davidade could represent the Messiah and ironic rhetoric does not offer an explanation of this phenomenon. The modern translations of 44:28 and 45:1 are tendentious and have been influenced by reading “Cyrus” into the text in the same way that the ancient versions read “Cyrus” into the text for reasons of political expediency. There was only one “craftsman” and like Bazaleel he was “hidden by God” and given the spirit to build a holy habitation – in this he typified the carpenter from Nazareth.

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47 Ibid, Gruen,55
48 Ant.11.8.4,5 –Ibid, Thirtle, OT Problems 256
49 Sir Charles Webster, ‘The Art and Practice of Diplomacy’, The Listener, 28 February 1952
50 Thirtle, OT Problems, 255-6
Hezekiah as Immanuel in Isaiah 7

The identity of Immanuel is disputed and different solutions have been proposed. This article will argue the case that Immanuel is Hezekiah. The problem with identifying Hezekiah as Immanuel are two-fold; (1) It is disallowed by the chronology of Hezekiah (2) Even with an “adjusted” chronology it is ruled out by the Syro-Ephraimite war.

The Chronology of Hezekiah

Proponents of Hezekiah as Immanuel have offered the solution that Hezekiah was 15 instead of 25 when he began to reign and conjectured a textual corruption¹ in the MT where either the numerals² or the numeral-words were misread.³ Even in Aramaic script transmission errors can occur, Allrick traces this numbering system back to the eighth century⁴ - Wenham adds, “It is easy to see how such a system, whether through defects of writing or of the material used or through scribal carelessness, would lead to the misreading of a number—usually making it one too big or one too small”.⁵

Nevertheless, it is always preferable to assume that there is no transmission error involved and that problems exist because the data is misunderstood and therefore incorrectly synchronised. The era from Uzziah to Hezekiah is notoriously difficult as overlapping co-regencies existed and synchronizing Judean kings with northern Israelite monarchs is further hampered by rival regencies and retroactive regnal counts. Scholars have recognised this problem as the following survey⁶ demonstrates; “Since Albright and Friedman, several scholars have explained these dating problems on the basis of a co-regency between Hezekiah and his father Ahaz between 729 and 716/715 BC. Assyriologists and Egyptologists recognize

¹ Textual degradation is caused by transmission errors and does not reflect on the inspiration of the original text. The sections we are dealing with are concerned with historical reportage and probably rely on royal annals as source documents. For example, G. R. Driver explains the unusual MT construct in 1 Sam.13:1 as a misreading of alphabetic values 2 (20) as 2 (2). G. R. Driver, ‘Abbreviations in the Massoretic Text’ Textus 1 (1960)126ff.; 4 (1964) 83.
³ This is the approach taken by Edmund in his dissertation. He argues that Hezekiah is Immanuel and proposes the emendation of the numeral-word form from 25 to 15. Joel Edmund, Identity and Function within the Bookend Structure of Proto-Isaiah, (Anderson University of Pretoria, 2008), 138. See also, John McHugh, “The Date of Hezekiah’s Birth, Vetus Testamentum 14:4 (October 1964): 446-453. The Encyclopædia Judaica entry states; “Nor is it definitely known how old Hezekiah was when called to the throne. II Kings xviii. 2 makes him twenty-five years of age. It is most probable that “twenty-five” is an error for “fifteen.” His father (II Kings xvi. 2) died at the age of thirty-six, or of forty, according to Kamphausen (in Stade’s “Zeitschrift,” iii. 200, and “Chronologie der Königsbücher,” p. 20.). For a discussion of the chronological problems see Gershon Galil “The Chronology of the Kings of Judah from Hezekiah to Josiah” in idem Gershon Galil, The chronology of the kings of Israel and Judah, (Brill,1996), 98-107 See also p.101; “Alternatively, it has been proposed that Hezekiah was 15 and not 25 at his investiture, or that Ahaz was 25 years old and not 20 when he began to rule (as is asserted by the Septuagint for II Chronicles 25:1).”
⁴ H. L. Allrick in his article in the Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research, 136 (1954) 21ff, refers to the fact that in ancient Aramaic documents vertical strokes are used for units and horizontal strokes for tens. The vertical digit strokes were generally grouped in threes. For the hundreds a stylized mem was used, plus vertical strokes to indicate how many hundred; for the thousands an abbreviation of the word was used, together with strokes to indicate how many thousand. ‘As for the Hebrews themselves’, he says (p. 24), ‘there is no doubt they too employed the same principles of numerical notation.’
⁵ J.W. Wenham, Large Numbers in the Old Testament, (Tyndale Bulletin [18],1967),6
⁶ Reproduced from Wikipedia Hezekiah entry (with footnotes)
that co-regency was a practice both in Assyria and Egypt. After noting that co-regencies were only used sporadically in the northern kingdom (Israel), Nadav Na’anaman writes; “In the kingdom of Judah, on the other hand, the nomination of a co-regent was the common procedure, beginning from David who, before his death, elevated his son Solomon to the throne...When taking into account the permanent nature of the co-regency in Judah from the time of Joash, one may dare to conclude that dating the co-regencies accurately is indeed the key for solving the problems of biblical chronology in the eighth century B.C.” Among the numerous scholars who have recognized the co-regency between Ahaz and Hezekiah are; Kenneth Kitchen in his various writings, Leslie McFall, and Jack Finegan. McFall, in his 1991 article, argues that if 729 BC (that is, the Judean regnal year beginning in Tishri of 729) is taken as the start of the Ahaz/Hezekiah coregency, and 716/715 BC as the date of the death of Ahaz, then all the extensive chronological data for Hezekiah and his contemporaries in the late eighth century BC are in harmony. Further, McFall found that no textual emendations are required among the numerous dates, reign lengths, and synchronisms given in the Hebrew Testament for this period.

Essentially, Andrew Perry adopts the same synchronism in his Kings Chronology and this dates the birth of Hezekiah to 740. Surprisingly, other scholars achieve approximately the same birth year (e.g. Edmund, 742) by emending the age of Hezekiah. This article will therefore employ Kings Chronology by Perry for the biblical chronology as it provides a more elegant solution than textual emendation. This removes the chronological difficulty surrounding Hezekiah’s birth. However, as Perry points out, the Immanuel prophecy is dated to the Syro-Ephraimitic Crisis of 735/734 and this is determined by Assyrian chronological records. This would mean that Hezekiah was born 5-6 years before the prophecy was given rather than less than a year after the prophecy. This is a seemingly insurmountable problem but only if the eponym chronicles and biblical records have been correctly aligned. When we examine the primary records it becomes apparent that certain assumptions are made, particularly with regards to the Biblical records, where certain accounts are deemed to be parallel reports when they are clearly not.

The Primary Biblical Records

The primary Biblical records are 2 Kings 15 and 16, 2 Chronicles 28, Isaiah 7 and Hosea 5 and 6. Many scholars posit contradictions in the OT account of the Syro-Ephraimitic war and attempt either to harmonise or dismiss the differences. Is the account contradictory or just poorly understood? The most glaring contradiction is the appeal by Ahaz for Assyrian assistance against Rezin and Pekah. In both Kings and Chronicles, either tribute or inducements (garnered from the temple) are sent to Tiglath-pileser III (henceforth Pul), with an urgent request for help. In 2 Chron. 28:20 no help is offered, in fact the opposite is the case, as Pul “distresses” Ahaz (LXX lit., “struck him a blow”). As a consequence Ahaz turns to the “gods of Damascus” (Baal) because they were effective in helping his enemy Rezin. In contrast, the account in 2 Kings 16:7-13 has Pul respond positively to an appeal for assistance against Rezin and Pekah. Assyria defeats the confederation; as a consequence Ahaz turns to the Assyrian god (Asshur) and has a copy made of the Assyrian altar. Whereas one account has Rezin capturing Elath (2 Kgs.16), the other account describes an Edomite and Philistine invasion (2 Chron.28). Rather than harmonizing the account or dismissing the differences as ideologically motivated (to suit the theological motif of the author) it is entirely possible that we are dealing with two different invasions by Syria and

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9 See Kitchen’s chronology in New Bible Dictionary p. 220.
10 Leslie McFall, “Translation Guide”, 42
12 Leslie McFall, “Translation Guide”, 4-45
13 Available as a spreadsheet download from www.christadelphian-ejbi.org/presentations/Kings_Cronology.xlsx
14 Andrew Perry, “Who is Immanuel?”, CEJBI, (Vol. 5 No. 2 Apr 2011),62-68:64
15 When Ahaz submitted to Pul in Damascus he paid obeisance to the Assyrian gods as proof of his subjection. It is obvious that Pul had an Assyrian altar installed in Damascus as attestation to the supremacy of Assur over Baal. It was this altar that Ahaz copied.
Ephraim. The invasion in 2 Chronicles 28 (which is parallel with Isaiah 7) is different to the invasion described in 2 Kings 16.

2 Chronicles 28 parallel with Isaiah 7

This account states the following;

“Wherefore the LORD his God delivered him into the hand of the king of Syria; and they smote him, and carried away a great multitude of them captives, and brought them to Damascus. And he was also delivered into the hand of the king of Israel, who smote him with a great slaughter” (v.5).

Chronicles differentiates the attacks by Israel and Syria – Ahaz was delivered to Syria and also to Israel – it seems that at this stage Syria and Ephraim operated independently; they were as yet not confederated. Neither Syria nor Ephraim could capture Jerusalem (Isa.7:1) but they wreaked havoc in the countryside of Judea; captives and spoil were transported to Damascus; Ephraim also took captives and plunder. However, at the conclusion of these invasions Syria and Ephraim determined to coordinate their next efforts and plotted that any future invasion would result in replacing Ahaz with a lackey of the confederation; the “son of Tabeal” (Isa.7:6). This new intelligence (provided by Isaiah) came as shock to the house of David especially as they had to deal with the loss of much of the royal cabinet and the king’s son Maaseiah during the conflict (2 Chron.28:7) and now they were facing the possibility of the end of the Davidic dynasty. Cazelles offers an intriguing suggestion in his support of equating Ben Tabeal with a son of Tubail. He thinks that Tabe’al is an Aramaic form of Phoenician ‘Ittoba’l. Furthermore, he proposes that the announcement of a ‘dynastic heir’, named Immanuel (= ‘God with us’) in 7:14 is Isaiah’s use of a ‘parallel name’ in response to the attempt by Rezin and Pekah to place ‘Ittoba’l (‘Ba’al with him’) on the throne in Jerusalem.

It is at this point that Isaiah enters the scene accompanied by his son Shear-jashub (a remnant returns) in anticipation of the captives that would be sent home at the urging of the prophet Oded (2 Chron. 28:8-15). It is notable that the prophet Oded appealed to the “chiefs of Ephraim” and not to Pekah and this may indicate that there were still internal tensions regarding the manner of his rise to power or his legitimacy. After giving the Immanuel prophecy Isaiah issues the following warning;

“The LORD shall bring upon thee, and upon thy people, and upon thy father’s house, days that have not come, from the day that Ephraim departed from Judah; even the king of Assyria. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the LORD shall hiss for the fly that is in the uttermost part of the rivers of Egypt, and for the bee that is in the land of Assyria” (Isa. 7:17-18).

The “uttermost part of the rivers of Egypt” is the brook of Egypt, which formed the border between Philistia and Egypt (2Chron 9:26). Paul S. Evans observes that, “One of the most famous gods of Philistia is Baal-zebub “Master of the flies,” known as the god of Ekron (2 Kgs 1:2, 3, 16). In fact, in the entire HB/OT the word בֶּןlosure occurs in reference to the god of Ekron, Isa 7:18 and Qoh 10:1”.

Ahaz is being warned about the Philistines and the Assyrians. Isaiah 7:17-18 is prophesying about the still future invasion that is reported in 2 Chron.28:16-20. The warning about Assyria is further elaborated in

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16 Although 2 Chronicles 28 does not mention Jerusalem as the objective, Isa 7:1 adds a preposition (with a feminine personal pronoun), indicating that the object of the attack was Jerusalem herself. The context of 2 Chronicles 28 shows Ahaz shut up in the city while the land is raided and ravished by Syrians, Israelites, Philistines and Edomites. 17 Maaseiah was probably the son of Jotham and brother to Ahaz. Maaseiah may have been heir to the throne. 18 Henri Cazelles, “Problèmes de la guerre Syro-Ephraimitique”, Eretz-Israel 14 (1978),42 19 Shear-jashub appears to be an integral part of the message since Isaiah is commanded to bring him (H. Wildberger, Jesaja 1.277.79; R. E. Clements, Isaiah 1-39, 83; O. Kaiser, Isaiah 1-1, 140) 20 Paul S. Evans - “Dialogism in the Chronicler’s Ahaz narrative” Draft for discussion at the 2008 Bakhtin and the Biblical Imagination Seminar, p.20. Evans understands Isaiah 7 as conducting a “dialogue” with 2 Chronicles 28.
Isaiah 8 with the naming of Maher-shalal-hash-baz (Isa.8:1) which means “quick to spoil speedy to prey”. The second half of Chronicles 28 describes an attack by Philistia (and Edom) and Assyrian refusal to help Ahaz (v.16) instead Pul “distresses” him (v.20). The translations offer the alternatives; oppress/troubled/afflict etc and report that he (Tiglath-pileser) “came unto him”.

2 Kings 15
The account in 2 Chronicles 28 narrates events from the perspective of Judah. It commences with the invasion(s) of Pekah and Rezin and concludes with Philistia, Edom and Assyria troubling Judah. In contrast, the account in 2 Kings 15 provides a summary of events for the whole period from a northern Israelite perspective. The history it presents is compressed; it mentions the tribute payment made by Menahem (v.19-20) and the northern Assyrian campaign in 733 (v.29) and concludes with the assassination and replacement of Pekah with Hosea (v.30) and with the general statement; “In those days (the days of Jotham) the LORD began to send against Judah Rezin the king of Syria, and Pekah the son of Remaliah”. (v.37)

2 Kings 16
The account in 2 Kings 16 compliments the previous chapter and provides more details about the events that resulted in the demise of northern Israel. This account describes the confederated invasion of Pekah and Rezin in 736-735 (known as the Syro-Ephraimite war) and the attempt to replace Ahaz with a puppet king (as predicted by Isaiah) thereby creating an anti-Assyrian block. The attack was deliberately timed to coincide with Tiglath-pileser’s absence in the region, as during this period he was campaigning in the east fighting among the Urartians and Medians. Once again Jerusalem was besieged (v.5) and Rezin captured Elath (v.6) but this time Pul responded positively to the appeal by Ahaz, this resulted in the northern campaigns in Israel and Aram-Damascus of 732 and 733 which resulted in downfall of Pekah and Rezin and which are summarily referred to in 2 Kings 15. The two sections of 2 Kings 16 use differing ways of referring to Ahaz (“Ahaz in 16:5-9; “King Ahaz” or “the king” in 16:10-18) and different spellings of the name “Tiglath-pileser” (רלת-גלש in 16:7; רלת-גלש in 16:10). It seems that two different sources where used and that they were “joined” by a section (vv.10-18) that describe Ahaz’s apostasy.

Hosea 5:8-6:6
In 1919 Alt argued that this text reports on a Judean counterattack against Israel immediately following the end of the siege of Jerusalem. However, Arnold has recently offered a detailed refutation of Alt’s theory while maintaining the connection of this text with the general background of the Syro-Ephraimitic war. He examines the geographical detail and suggests that the oracle describes the initial Israelite march against Jerusalem.

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22 Several versions read the “Edomites” as “Arameans” and suggest that Damascus had previously held the Judean city of Elath and Rezin recaptured it. The MT ketib and some manuscripts of the Syriac, Targum, and Vulgate presuppose the Hebrew לעב (“Arameans”). By contrast, the MT qere, LXX, and other manuscripts of the Targum and Vulgate presuppose לעב (“Edomites”). Some scholars (J. Gray and G. H. Jones) remove Rezin as a gloss and read Edom” (“Aram”) throughout the verse. Irvine, (Isaiah, 84-85) however, argues on the basis of the historical evidence for Syria’s prominence at this time that Rezin may he original and that he may have aided the Edomites in taking Elath at this time.
23 Alt, “Hosea 5, 8–6, 6,” 537-68. One of the main reasons for this view is that the order of the cities listed appears to form a line moving northward toward Samaria from the area of Jerusalem. So also Mays, Hosea, 85-89; Jeremias, Der Prophet, 80-82; Wolff, Hosea, 103-30.
The Primary Assyrian Chronicles

The Assyrian Chronicles summarised below (with footnotes) is derived from Brad E. Kelle, *Hosea 2: Metaphor and Rhetoric in Historical Perspective*, (Society of Biblical Lit, 2005), 183-185:

1. Layard 45b+III R 9, 1 (Tadmor Ann. 2 1): This text is the earliest relevant text of Tiglath-pileser III and dates to around 743-740 B.C.E. The inscription details the tribute paid by Rezin of Damascus and other neighbouring states but does not mention Samaria. Nonetheless, some scholars maintain that the inscription has lost the phrase “Menahem of the land of Samaria” and it should be restored in the available space.

2. Iran Stela: This text is a fragmentary summary inscription found in western Iran. Columns II, lines 1-23 preserve a list of Anatolian and Syro-Palestinian rulers on whom Tiglath-pileser III imposed tribute. This list includes “Menahem of the land of Samaria.” The inscription seems to date to the time of Tiglath-pileser’s Ulluba campaign in 739-738 because it presupposes a period when the Assyrian army was in Iran and names Tubail as the king of Tyre rather than Hiram, who was involved in the 734-732 campaign.

3. Layard 50a+50b+67a: This inscription is a fragmentary annals test that consists of twenty-four lines recording Tiglath-pileser’s military achievements in his eighth and ninth pale (738-737 and 737-736). The discussion of these achievements includes the receipt of tribute from western states in Syria-Palestine and mentions “Menahem of the city of Samaria.” The text is nearly identical to the Iran Stela and scholars are virtually unanimous in dating the tribute list to 738-737 because of the text’s later reference to the ninth pâlu.

4. II R 67: This text is a fragment of a long summary inscription of Tiglath-pileser that summarizes the achievements in his first seventeen pale. Line 11 of the reverse contains a tribute list that mentions “Jehoahaz of the land of Judah.” The tribute list should be dated prior to 733 because it refers to “Mitini of the land of Ashkelon” who was deposed by 733-732. This text is the only reference to Judah in the Assyrian inscriptions prior to 720 B.C.E.

5. Layard 29b: There is much debate about whether to reconstruct this text to include a reference to the northern kingdom. The inscription describes Tiglath-pileser’s campaign against Syro-Ephraimitic states after he left Philistia in 733. The relevant portion of the text is broken but refers to Assyria’s capture of a certain district’s territories in the Galilee region (11. 230ff). The text may be reconstructed to indicate that these territories belonged either to “Bit-[Hazael]” or “Bit-[Humri].” The reconstruction has implications concerning the size and status of the northern kingdom in the waning years of the conflict.

25 There is no consensus regarding the date of this text, but it appears to predate the Iran Stela, which is more securely dated to 739-738 (for full discussion on dating see Kuan, *Neo-Assyrian Historical Inscriptions*, 141).
26 See Tadmor, Hayim *The Inscriptions of Tiglath-Pileser III, King of Assyria*, (Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1994),276
27 For the original publication, see T. Levine, *Two Neo-Assyrian Stelae from Iran* (Toronto: Royal Ontario Museum, 1972). For a complete reading of the stela, see Tadmor, *Inscriptions*, 91-110.
28 The text must precede Layard 50a+50b+67a because that text names Hiram as the king of Tyre. See also the Mila Mergi Rock Relief and the Eponym Chronicle, Kuan dates the text to 739 -738 (*Neo-Assyrian Historical Inscriptions*, 151) while Levine dates it to the 737 campaign to Media (*Two Neo-Assyrian Stelae*, 14).
30 For discussion of dating, see Irvine, Stuart A. *Isaiah, Ahaz, and the Syro-Ephraimitic Crisis*, (SBLDS 123; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990), 40-44.
31 For example, Tadmor reconstructs “Bit-[Humri]” but allows that “Bit-[Hazael]” is possible (*Inscriptions*, 80-81).
6. Layard 66: This text describes events at the end of the Syro-Ephraimitic War. The inscription is a fragmentary annals text that records Assyrian campaigns in the west from 732 to 731, including the subjugation of Queen Shamshi of Arabia. The description in line 228 refers to Tiglath-pileser’s treatment of “the city of Samaria.”

7. III R 10, 2: This summary inscription from Nimrud also relates to the close of the Syro-Ephraimitic war. However, the text is not chronologically but geographically arranged and comes not from the time of the events themselves but from the period after Tiglath-pileser had settled affairs in Syria-Palestine. At this stage in the course of events, the Assyrian scribes refer to the land of “Bit-Humri.”

8. ND 4301+4305: This final relevant text consists of two fragments of a clay tablet and essentially parallels III R 10, 2. Since this text mentions payment of tribute to Tiglath-pileser at Sarrabanu in Babylon (1. 10), it seems to come from the time after Tiglath-pileser had settled affairs in Syria-Palestine and left the region. As with III R 10, 2, this inscription refers to the border of the land of “Bit-Humri” (11. 3-4).

The build up to war

The build up to the war should be sought during the reign of Uzziah and his co-regent Jotham rather than in the days of Ahaz. Uzziah rebuilt Elath (2 Chron.26:2) and subjected the Philistines, Arabians, Meunims and the Ammonites (vv.6-8) and built many fortifications. Jotham also built fortifications (2 Chron.27:4) and subjected the Ammonites to tribute for three years (v.5). Both Uzziah and Jotham followed the same policy and one suspects that although the successes are attributed to Uzziah, that it was actually his son and co-regent Jotham who implemented the strategies. It was obviously the intention of Uzziah/Jotham to control the major traffic routes — the sea route (coastal route via Philistia), the hill route (route through the Judaean hills), and the king’s route (Transjordanian route via Elath through Ammon). The suggestion is that Judean expansion, the capture of Elath and the three year vassalage of Ammon occurred in the years 747-745 of the Uzziah/Jotham co-regency (year 746/747 was the first year of Jotham and the forty first year of Uzziah). Year 746/7 was concurrent with the second year of Menahem and the fifth year of Pekah.

Northern Israel had two rival kings for a period with Menahem situated in Samaria and Pekah across the Jordan in Gilead. Gershon Galil observes that the Gilead is a flexible territorial term, mentioned in the Bible more than 150 times. It often refers to small- and large-scale territories between the Arnon River in the south and the Yarmuk River in the north, and often even represents the Bashan. Determining the extent of the area ruled by Pekah is difficult, but this passage indicates that territories located in Transjordan were included within his kingdom. It is possible then, that Pekah was in charge of an administrative district, which included regions in the Bashan and in the Gilead,

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32 See ibid, 202-3.
34 For the original publication, see D.J. Wiseman, “A Fragmentary Inscription of Tiglath-pileser III from Nimrud,” Iraq 18(1956): 117-29.
35 A. Perry, Kings Chronology is used for dating the Israelite and Judahite kings.
37 Pekah’s coup against Menahem’s successor was supported by Gileadites (2 Kgs.15:25).
much like the son of Geber in the time of Solomon. In light of this proposal the passage in 1 Kgs 15,25 may be reconstructed thus: But Pekah the son of Remaliah, his officer in [the region of] Argob and [in the towns of] Jair, conspired against him. The fact that a company of fifty Gileadite warriors participated in the revolt supports this assumption. Apparently it was an élite unit at the disposal of Pekah, and was presumably used as his personal guard on account of his position as head of a district whose security was highly sensitive, especially around the Israel-Aram border. In light of the tight and unique bonds between Pekah and Rezin (which probably began prior to Pekah’s coronation: see 2 Kgs 15,37), it is unreasonable to conclude that the Gilead was torn away from Israel and annexed to Damascus, in the time of Pekah. Moreover, if the above reconstruction is correct it is safe to assume that the Argob region was also included within the kingdom of Pekah (and not only the Gilead).”

Judean control of the Transjordanian trade route and the port of Elath would be perceived as a threat to Pekah and Rezin as would the subjection of Ammon (Gilead’s neighbour) because control of the trade routes would severely impact revenues for both Pekah and Rezin. This would suggest a natural alliance between Rezin and Pekah to wrest control of the trade routes from Judah. Initially, resentment against Judah may have had little to do with forcing Judah to join an anti-Assyrian coalition but that changed after Pul ascended the Assyrian throne (745) and aggressively pushed the borders of the Assyrian empire outwards; over the next 14 years the Assyrian empire expanded from the region between the Euphrates and Tigris rivers to reach almost to the Black Sea and the river Araxes in the north, and the Persian Gulf and northern Israel in the south. After Assyria subjected Pekah and Rezin to tribute payments it would become even more urgent to capture the trade routes. Menahaem raised his tribute in 740 by taxing his nobles but that was obviously and unpopular move. As yet Judah was not an Assyrian vassal and Assyria allowed Pekah and Rezin to operate an independent foreign policy until they grew too powerful. Galll concludes that; “Practically, the Assyrians had no fixed policy towards conflicts between their vassals; they rather employed a flexible policy, dealing with each conflict on its own. The reaction was always motivated by the Assyrian interests, depending on circumstances...”

Scholars such as Begrich believe that the purpose of the Israel-Aram confederation was to force Judah to join an anti-Assyrian coalition: such a war would expose their northern flank to the Assyrians, weakening the coalition. Oded, however, picked up the older view of Meissner and maintained that the Syro-Ephraimitic war was strictly an inner-Palestinian conflict that had no relation to Assyria. In his view, the conflict was the result of a battle among Syria, Israel, and Judah for control of territories in the Transjordan. previous anti-Assyrian coalitions, such as that formed by Ahab and Ben-Hadad, had not waged war against states that refused to join them; and that Begrich was wrong to dismiss 2 Kgs 15:37, which shows that the Syro-Ephraimitic war against Judah began in Jotham’s reign.

Instead, Oded argues that an earlier longstanding Israel-Judah alliance against Syria that resulted in joint control over large parts of the Transjordan unravelled when Israel’s power declined during the series of revolutions and assassinations following the reign of Jeroboam II. This situation in turn enabled Uzziah of Judah to exert sole control over these areas, a situation which enabled Rezin of Syria to persuade Israel

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43 Oded, *Historical Background*, 155-61
44 Obed, *Historical Background*, 151-154
to ally with them and wrest control of the Transjordan back from Judah, with a second aim of installing Ben-Tabeel on the throne in Jerusalem. This war began during Jotham’s reign and ended when Assyria attacked the Syro-Ephraimite coalition. Tomes has recently revitalized Oded’s position and argued that no Assyrian text indicates the reason for the Syro-Ephraimite attack on Jerusalem and the reason must he surmised from the biblical texts.45

Synchronizing the accounts

Oded remarked that it was wrong to dismiss 2 Kgs 15:37, which shows that the Syro-Ephraimite war against Judah began in Jotham’s reign. Edmund also observes that, “Rezin and Pekah had been harassing Judah ever since the later years of Ahaz’s father, king Jotham. This would date the beginning of their harassment some time shortly before 742 BCE, before Jotham died, and before Ahaz became king. Therefore, according to the biblical texts, the Syro-Ephraimite Crisis must have been an ongoing crisis for at least ten years or so”.46

A. K. Laina observes that, “....the account of Isaiah supplements valuable information in understanding some of the details on the event. Notice the break between verse 1 and 2. After stating that “The king Rezin of Aram and Pekah son of Remaliah king of Israel marched up to fight against Jerusalem, but they could not overpower it,” verse 2 begins afresh “Now the house of David was told, ‘Aram has allied itself with Ephraim’, so the hearts of Ahaz and his people were shaken”. This construction highlights the severity of the new situation and explains why king Ahaz and his people were now in terror. First, the break affirms the circumstances of king Ahaz emphasised in 2 Cron:28:16. Second, the failure of their first individual invasion gives a logical reason for the formation of their alliance. Third, since king Ahaz and his people had already experienced the terror of their first attack, their united attack must have appeared to them invincible. Fourth, the alliances were so sure of their victory that they had designated their puppet king Tabeel to replace Ahaz (v.6) and thus it was a serious situation for Judah”.47

Moreover, we have recorded in 2 Kgs.15:19 that Pul “came against the land” of Israel during Menahem’s reign and in 2 Chron.28:20 Pul “came against” Ahaz to distress (strike a blow), yet no record of these incursions is found in the Assyrian Chronicles. Gershon Galil observes; “The passage 2 Kgs 15, 19-20, which depicts the arrival of the Assyrian king in Israel and the offerings of Menahem, apparently refers to the subjection of Menahem in 740. It appears that Menahem’s reign was unpopular and a bond with Assyria was meant to strengthen the new dynasty in Israel. Indeed, the money owed to Assyria was not paid out of the kingdom’s treasury but collected from the Israelite nobles who probably resisted Menahem. The Assyrian sources do not relate any arrival of Tiglath-pileser III in Israel in the time of Menahem. Yet it is possible that Tiglath-pileser III’s inscriptions do not have details of the events of 742-740; consequently, the biblical testimony should not be rejected”.48 Elsewhere, when commenting on the problematic order of Tiglath-pileser III’s campaigns in 734-732, Galil offers the following three reasons for the difficulties; (1) the majority of the Assyrian inscriptions are of a summary nature, and the few surviving annalist fragments provide only minor help in determining the order of the campaigns; (2) the Assyrian inscriptions are contradictory; (3) the Biblical testimony is insufficiently clear, and cannot be employed in deciding among the various reconstruction possibilities.49 The difficulties that Galil recognizes for 734-732 is valid for the whole period from 745 onwards and 2 Kgs.15:19 together with 2 Chron.28:20 probably describe the same incident from Israelite and Judean perspectives. It is therefore methodologically preferable to reconstruct an independent biblical account and only once this is complete to attempt synchronization with Assyrian Chronicles. The dates in the dating column of the table below are taken from Perry’s Kings Chronology and dates with an asterisk (*) are the dates that scholars have determined from the Assyrian records (refer to the maps at the end of the article):

46 Edmund, ibid,140
47 A. K. Laina, The Use of Biblical and Extra-Biblical Texts in Historiography: An Analysis of the Syro-Ephraimitic Crisis (Course submission to DOT, Younger, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 2003),9
49 Galil, Chronology,68
750
Assyria

Pekah was contemporary with Jotham (vv.20-27) and from 743 onwards with Jotham's co-regent Ahaz

2 Kings 15
2 Kings 16
2 Chronicles 28
Isaiah 7

14-145
Pul ascends throne (43)
In these days (Jotham) the LORD began to send against Judah Rezin the king of Syria, and Pekah the son of Remaliah (v.17)

Joshua subjugates Transjordan (Ammonites) pay tribute 3 years (v.5)

2 Chronicles 28

744/745
Assyrian coalition formed under the leadership of Urartu, Arpad, and Cilician states, a coalition that included Rezin of Damascus and Hiram of Tyre. Siege of Arpad begins.

Ahaz becomes co-regent (v.1); (734/3, Poriy)

2 Chronicles 28

742-739
The Assyro-Hebrew coalition commences no evidence of Tiglath-pileser's arrival in the land of Israel in the time of Menahem, but the inscriptions of Tiglath-pileser are silent regarding events during the years 742-746, and therefore the Biblical testimony is not to be rejected out of hand. Arpad conquered and annexed as first full province of Syria (740)

Judah delivered to Syria AND ALSO to Pekah (v.5)

Invasion (v.3) by Pekah and by Rezin; Jerusalem not conquered (v.3)

Remnant Returns = Shoaat- judah (v.3)

740/739
Israelite armies against Assyrian coalition: Immundatio (739-Hezekiah born)

Ahaz sends for help to Pekah and Rezin to stop Assyrian help, pays tribute (vv.17-18)

Prophetic warning: Philistia = Fly and Assyria = bee (v.18)

759
Tiglath-pileser leaves the region: north by Armenian states again rebelled against Assyria, this time under the leadership of Tamanne, the king of Urartu, whose capital was Kullani.

Menahem pays tribute (vv.18-20) and dies in this year (Poriy)

758
Israel Stale, as Assyrian army returns to suppress the coalition, and receives tribute from the rulers as far south as Rezin of Damascus, Hiram of Tyre, Menahem of Israel, and Zabibe the queen of Arpad

Ahaz requested Assyrian help, pays tribute(v.7)

736-735
SYRO-EPHRAIMITIC WAR

An alliance of Hiram, ruler of Tyre and Rezin of Damascus. Also, one known as Mitiimi of Ashkelon broke his oath of allegiance to Assyria. Tiglath-pileser moves against Philistia to stem the rebellion then returns home, Eponym Chronicle: According to the timing of the chronicle there ended up being a series of campaigns that began in Philistia and subsequently continued through to Damascus in the years 733-732. This would show that the conquering of Damascus was completed in 732/3 for the Chronicle has Tiglath-pileser in Syria in southern Babylon in 732/731 (v.5)

Philistines invade (vv.17-18), Damascus and Edomities and Philistines invade (vv.17-18), Menahem pays tribute (vv.19-20) and dies in this year (Poriy)

In those days (Jotham) the LORD began to send against Judah Rezin the king of Syria, and Pekah the son of Remaliah (v.17)

In days of Ahaz (v.1)

727/728
In the inscriptions of Tiglath-pileser, Ahaz is mentioned by name only in a day inscription from Calah (K.3751, Tigl. 1PP. Summ. 7, rev., 11'1", in which "Jehoshaphat of Judah" is listed among those presenting tribute to Assyria, along with other kings, including those of Ammon, Moab, and Edom, and the Philistine kings: Mitinda of Ashkelon and [Ha]min of Gaza. This summary inscription was composed after the seventeenth year of Tiglath-pileser III (729/8)

Ahaz requests Assyrian help, pays tribute(v.7)

723-721
The Eponym chronicle highlights Tiglath-pileser's campaigns into the Damascus. The first conquest relates to that of Damascus. Tiglath-pileser spends much time in his summary inscription to his defeat of Rezin. Assyrian king, decides to shorten his time in Urartu, lift the siege on Tushpa, and direct his forces to the west in order to halt the crisis of the Assyrian position and prevent the expansion of the Aramaeans into Israel. Ahaz (25) Rezin ultimately falls after a prolonged siege into the regnal year 752/751 and is killed.

In the days of Pekah king of Israel came Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria, and took Ijon, and Abilim, and Ahabibmahach, and Jamma, and Kittim, and Hazor, and Gilead, and Galilee, all the land of Naphtali, and carried them captive to Assyria (v.29)

Pul assists and destroys coalition (v.3)

Ahaz sends Pul in Damascus and copies Assyrian inscriptions (v.30); Isaiah now an Assyrian vassal

Isaiah 7
There are four possibilities for the name Shear-yashub (excluding emending the text) of translating the name: a remnant indeed shall repent (turn to YHWH); a remnant indeed shall return (survive); only a remnant shall repent or turn to YHWH; and only a remnant shall return or survive. It has been suggested in this article that this “remnant” are the Judean captives sent back at the urging of the prophet Oded, however, J. Day and R. Clements apply the name to the Syrian and Ephraimite survivors of the Assyrian invasion. This seems unlikely as the Immanuel prophecy was directed at the house of David and one assumes that the presence of Shear-yashub had immediate relevance to Ahaz. The prophetic name Shear-yashub is not explained in Isaiah 7 and probably had more than one application as Isaiah 10:20-23 speaks of an Isrealite remnant turning to the “mighty God” (el gibbôr); this is the title employed for the “child” in Isa.9:6 who will sit on the Davidic throne (v.7). These were the faithful remnant who responded to the “great light” (v.2) of the Hezekiah reformation. There is possibly a further application to Sennacherib, as he boasted of taking more than 200,000 captives and no doubt a remnant was released and returned to the land when the Assyrian army was defeated outside of Jerusalem during Hezekiah’s reign. The chiastic structure of Isaiah 7-9 climaxes with revealing Immanuel as the royal Son, who shines light into the shadow of death:

A Historical prologue (7:1-2)
B In the presence of Shear-jashub (7:3)
C Judgment on Aram and Israel (7:4-9)
D The sign of Immanuel (7:10-16)
E In the shadow of Assyria (7:20-25)

A Historical prologue (8:1-2)
B The sign of Maher-shalal-hash-baz (8:3-4)
C Judgment on Judah (8:5-8)
D Lament of Immanuel (8:8-10)
E In the shadow of Yahweh (8:11-15)

A A call to repentance (8:16-17)
B The sign of Isaiah’s children (8:18)
C In the shadow of judgment (8:19-22)
D Out of the shadow of death and into the light (9:1-5)
E The Royal Son (9:6-7)

The sign offered to Ahaz is regarded by many scholars as a merismus – “in the depth or the height above” (v.11), in other words the two contrasting extremes are made to stand for the whole – ask for anything in heaven and earth. However, in Gen.49:22-26 blessings of the deep and of the heavens, is messianically associated with fecundity and progeny. In Isaiah 45:8 a similar idiom is employed with the heavens

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59 This scheme of four possibilities is laid out by S. Irvine in Isaiah’s She’ar-Yashub and the Davidic House, BZ 37(1993): 79.
The birth of Immanuel was not a miraculous “virgin birth,” it was however, a supernatural messianic sign. Much debate has raged around the Hebrew נַחֲלָה (`almâh); 1) virgin, young woman 1a) of marriageable age 1b) maid or newly married. In the original prophetic context the solution must be sought in one of Ahaz’s wives or concubines, a newly married young virgin who was not even aware that she was pregnant⁶⁰ This new mother would name her child Immanuel ⁶¹ and presumably the news of the unexpected birth reached Ahaz shortly after the prophecy was issued.

The “miracle” of the “virgin birth” in Isaiah’s time was the completely unexpected nature of the birth and the fact that divine foreknowledge predicted in advance what was about to happen (Ahaz had no knowledge of the pregnancy and neither did the mother until the delivery); “Thus saith the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker, Ask me of things to come concerning my sons, and concerning the work of my hands command ye me” (45:11).

The mother of Hezekiah was Abijah (2 Chron.29:1), which means Yah is my Father and is an obvious reference to the messianic promise of 2 Sam.7:14 “I will be his father, and he shall be my son”. Hezekiah became the ‘son’ of Yahweh and the (suffering) “servant” of Yahweh in contrast with Ahaz who appealed to Tiglath-pileser III with the words; “I am thy servant and thy son: come up, and save me” (2 Kgs.16:7). Ahaz was wont to “pass his sons through the fire” (2 Kings 16:3 – Yah strengthens) and by the words of Hezekiah – “with him shall we fight our battles.” And the prophecy stood as a warning (not to touch the child) and a promise (that the Davidic dynasty would be established through Immanuel).

The name Immanuel should be understood as an epithet or cognomen (cf. Isa.45:5; “surname”) the name Hezekiah means Yah strengthens. Both of his names are played on in 2 Chron.32:8; “With him is an arm of flesh; but with us is the LORD our God (= Immanuel), to help us and to fight our battles.” And the people were strengthened by the words of Hezekiah (= Yah strengthens) king of Judah.” This in itself indicates that Hezekiah and Immanuel is the same person.⁶²

Before this Immanuel child was old enough to chose between right or wrong⁶³ the land would be desolate and both Syria and Ephraim defeated by Assyria. Cultivated land would be overtaken by wild growth and

⁶⁰ A recent study has shown that 1 in 600 women is unaware of pregnancy until the birth; bleeding during pregnancy is quite common, especially during the first few months when the baby is beding in, so women can think they are still menstruating. Some women gain little weight and have no symptoms of morning sickness.

⁶¹ In contrast with the MT variants the LXX has Ahaz being instructed to name the child, this is highly unlikely considering his unfaithfulness.


⁶³ This probably refers to becoming a “son of the law” (Bar Mitzvah) when the child, aged 12, became legally responsible.
cattle would graze freely in the bush. People would need to take a bow and arrow with them when they went out in the field (for the wild animals) but the wild vegetation would provide fodder for cattle, with the wild flowers producing abundant pollen for the honey bees. As a consequence the child would eat plenty of butter, yoghurt and honey, usually luxury items.

Within sixty-five years Ephraim would be too shattered to be a people (Isa.7:8). Most scholars believe that the prophecy was given during the Syro-Ephramitic war (735/736) with Samaria destroyed some 12 or 13 years after this oracle (721/722) rather than 65 years later. The most common interpretation of this text is that the phrase in v. 8b was a marginal note merged with the text or a gloss (65 years may refer to the deportations brought about by Esarhaddon and Ashurbanipal in about 670/69 BCE). Various other suggestions have been made to resolve this problem: H.A. Whittaker follows a reading similar to that suggested by the Jerusalem Bible which translates this phrase as “Six or five years more”, but this sequence of numbers would be unique and the manuscripts of the MT do not reveal any variations of the sequence. E. J. Kissane suggests, “Yet six, nay, five years more ...” (Isaiah 1:78f., 82). However, this article argues that the prophecy was given earlier (circa 740), even so, it does not compute to a 65 year period. It is suggested that the solution should be sought by reckoning retroactively from the beginning of Uzziah’s monarchy. Uzziah was the stabilising feature during this whole period of overlapping co-regencies, and Isaiah commenced his ministry during his reign. From the beginning of Uzziah’s monarchy until the fall of Samaria is 65 years and this is essentially the position that Lightfoot holds.

Isaiah’s son is not Immanuel

It is often suggested that Immanuel is one of Isaiah’s sons, possibly even Maher-shalal-hash-baz. This actually raises more problems than it solves; If, (a) אלמה (‘almah) refers to a young woman up to the birth of her first child the she could not be Shear-yashub’s mother; one must assume instead that through death or some other circumstance Isaiah was about to marry another woman: and (b) none of the traditions suggest that Isaiah names this child, whereas he had given the sign-names of his other children. Some scholars suggest that Maher-shalal-hash-baz and Immanuel are the same person but in 8:3 she is called the “prophetess” not the אלמה, furthermore, Maher-shalal-hash-baz would have two prophetic names.

Isaiah’s second son, Maher-shalal-hash-baz (8:3), is introduced without preamble in 8:1 and this is understood as implying that “he was retrospectively known to be a fulfilment of the Immanuel prophecy”. However, this is overstating the case as the conception notice in 8:3 is prescient and somewhat parenthetical; it is written from the point of view of an omniscient narrator. The conclusion of the matter is given first (the birth of a son) but this is (obviously) after the matter is recorded and witnessed. Therefore the order of events is: (1) Isaiah, write concerning swift is booty, speedy is prey. [8.1] then, (2) Isaiah gathers witnesses [8:2] then, (3) Isaiah writes verses 4-22 concerning Assyrian destruction, then; (4) Isaiah has relations with his wife (the prophetess not the virgin) and she conceives another son (besides Shear-yashub) who is called Maher-shalal-hash-baz.

This is the only possible order, as it was important to record and witness the “sign” in advance of his wife conceiving in order to establish both the time-frame and the prophetic credentials of the sign. Perry notes that Isaiah mentions Immanuel (God with us) in 8:8 and deconstructs his name in 8:10 and therefore

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65 Whittaker follows the suggestion by W.A. Wordsworth (“within six, even five years”) in *Isaiah*(Biblia,1988),146


associates Immanuel with his disciples in 8:16 who probably took Immanuel to the royal court to demonstrate the fulfilment of the “sign”. Firstly, the mention of Immanuel in the “spoil” prophecy is not unusual as he was introduced in the previous chapter. Secondly, an association with Isaiah’s disciples is not unusual as one of the “witnesses” to the prophecy was Hezekiah’s maternal grandfather (Zechariah, 2 Chron. 29:1 and Isa.8:2). Thirdly, it would be unnecessary to take him into the royal presence, as the young child Hezekiah would already reside at the royal court with his mother as a permanent reminder and “sign”.

Summary

This article has prosecuted the case that Hezekiah is Immanuel. The chronological problem surrounding his birth has been resolved, with the year 740 suggested as his birth year. The period 742-740 is proposed as the time when the incursions of 2 Chron. 28 (by Ephraim and Aram) against Judea occurred; this was a continuation of hostilities that commenced in the days of Jotham. This was a period of rebellion against Assyria and an opportunity for Pekah and Rezin to recapture the trade routes. During this period Judea’s neighbours, Philistia and Edom, took advantage of Ahaz’s weakened state and also launched raiding parties. The Assyrian records are silent on the events at this point but the Biblical record does suggest a visit by Assyria to the land. When Tiglath-pileser III sent a delegation into the region Pekah and Rezin submitted to Assyria (together with Menahem) and they resolved to pay tribute. It is at this point that Isaiah delivers the Immanuel prophecy with the child born almost immediately after his words were spoken (ca. 740) as a sign, with an implicit warning that Assyria cannot be relied on. It seems that Pekah and Rezin (and probably Menahem) made the case before Tiglath-pileser III that they could not raise enough revenue until the trade routes were liberated from Judean control. Despite the warning from Isaiah a “bribe” was offered by Ahaz, however, Assyria decided that it was commercially more advantageous to support its vassal states against Judea (he struck Ahaz a blow). As yet, Ahaz was still “neutral” and had not become a vassal state and Assyrian self-interest determined to resolve the dispute in favour of its (unruly) vassals. After the Assyrians left the region, Ephraim and Aram decided to formalise their coalition and drive their advantage home by replacing Ahaz with a puppet king who would do their bidding. Whether or not this was an anti-Assyrian move or not is debatable but it was perceived as unacceptable by Assyria as it would grant Israel and Aram too much regional power. Thus, when the Syro-Ephraimitic war was launched in a coordinated fashion in 735/6, Assyria decided to break the regional coalition and accepted the appeal by Ahaz to become a vassal (Judea became a buffer state on the Egyptian border). Hezekiah would have been about 5-6 years old at the commencement of renewed hostilities (735/6) and about 9-10 years old by the time the coalition was defeated (731/2), thus fulfilling the terms of the Immanuel prophecy. Of course, much of this scenario is of necessity speculative but any reconstruction must address the lacunae in both the biblical and the Assyrian eponym chronicles. Historically speaking, both sets of records should be given equal weight and the biblical records should not be dismissed as theologically motivated in contrast with the unbiased (sic) Assyrian accounts. Moreover, whereas the Biblical records are interested in events in Judea, the Assyrian records only mention Ahaz incidentally as a vassal, probably as late as 729. This text is the only reference to Judah in the Assyrian inscriptions prior to 720. Judah was therefore relatively unimportant in the larger scheme of Assyrian politics.

Conclusion

Immanuel is Hezekiah, the wonderful counsellor, prince of peace and mighty God, but also the suffering servant – the one called by name from the womb – the one who foreshadowed the Messiah.

Maps

The maps are below: Map (1) Jeroboam II and Uzziah: background 2 Chronicles 26&27 produced from the Atlas of Jewish History, (Dan Cohn-Sherbok, 1994), 26

68 Zechariah was possibly the deputy high priest; Isaiah was probably also a priest. Zechariah (Yah has remembered his covenant) was faithful as was his daughter Abijah (Yah is Father).
Map (2) is the Syro-Ephramitite war 735/736 (not to scale) background 2 Kings 16

Map (3) Assyrian campaigns of Tiglath-pileser III (not to scale) for the period 744-732, background 2 Kings 15&16; 2 Chronicles 28 and Isaiah 7, is an amalgam from The Times Concise Atlas of the Bible (Haper Collins, 1991), and the inset (not to scale) is produced with help from Nelson's Complete Book of Bible Maps & Charts, (Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville. TN); Holman QuickSource Bible Atlas, (Holman Bible Publishers, Nashville, TN)
Passover Deliverance in Isaiah 26 (701 BC)

The deliverance of Jerusalem from the hand of Assyria and the recovery of Hezekiah coincided with the feast of Passover. This possibility is not considered in scholarly circles because it is regarded as too specific. E. T. Mullen describes the chapters recounting Sennacherib’s campaign against Hezekiah as “one of the most complex and confusing narrations of events contained in the Hebrew Bible.” The extra-biblical evidence for this campaign, mainly from Assyrian sources, is inconclusive, and this is compounded by the fact that the Assyrian accounts are not always arranged chronologically. Although Assyrian annalistic history records the campaign in the Levant, there is not enough data to describe (except in the broadest terms) when the last phase (invasion of Judah) commenced, or the duration of this stage of the campaign, or when it concluded. The intention of this article is to put forward the biblical evidence for a winter campaign that ended in Passover deliverance.

Biblical Records

The vagueness of the time frame in the biblical narratives leads to confusion between sequential and synchronic events:

“In those days Hezekiah was sick and near death” (Isa.38:1).
“I will deliver you and this city from the hand of the king of Assyria, and I will defend this city” (Isa.38:6).

This indicates that Hezekiah’s illness coincided with the Assyrian crisis. It is suggested that Hezekiah’s incapacity offered opportunity for ambitious functionaries (like Shebna) to pursue a duplicitous policy ostensibly on Hezekiah’s behalf (Isa. 28:14-15; cf. the ‘treacherous dealers’ Isa.24:16; 33:1) – paying tribute to Sennacherib and at the same time appealing to Egypto-Nubian diplomats for help.

It would be completely out of character for Hezekiah to pay tribute. Hezekiah made hasty preparations for a long siege and fortified the city (2 Chron. 32:2-8). Hezekiah was probably the leader of the revolt against Sennacherib as the nobles and peoples of Ekron delivered up their own king, named...

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2 B. S. Childs remarks that, “In terms of the specific historical problem of 701, it seems unlikely that a satisfactory historical solution will be forthcoming without fresh extra-biblical evidence” Brevard S. Childs, Isaiah and the Assyrian Crisis (SBT 2/3; London: SCM, 1967), 120, and L. L. Honor, asserts, “none of the hypotheses is so strongly substantiated by the facts available in the sources, that it may claim greater credence than the others” L. L. Honor, Sennacherib’s Invasion of Palestine: A Critical Source Study (COHP 12; New York: Columbia,1926), xiv-xv.
3 For example, W. R. Gallagher admits that the Assyrian annals are not always arranged chronologically but sometimes thematically in Sennacherib’s Campaign to Judah. New Studies (Leiden: E J Brill, 1999), 123-125.
4 There is consensus on this phase of the campaign occurring in 701-700 BC (the fourteenth year of Hezekiah).
5 The expression “in those days” refers to an unspecified point and length of time when a certain event or chain of events was happening, and although it can denote an extended period (cf. Judg.18:1; Gen.6:4; Exod 2:11), it is qualified by the statement in Isa.38:6 indicating that the illness and the Assyrian crisis are parallel events.
6 Isaiah 22:15-19 condemns the behaviour of Shebna; note the mention of Hezekiah’s fortifications vv.9-11 and the attitude of some of the people (drunken celebration v.2, v.13).
Padi, an Assyrian loyalist, in iron fetters to Hezekiah to keep in confinement. Moreover, it is inconceivable that Hezekiah would deface the Temple (2 Kgs. 18:16) that he had so recently restored (2 Chon. 29:3). Sennacherib obviously had resource to good counter-intelligence and realised that Hezekiah was ill and that the payment of tribute was a stalling tactic. He sent his generals to Jerusalem with a warning and disengaged from the siege at Libnah to confront the rumoured Egypto-Nubian threat which he neutralized. A chronology of the events might look something like this (2 Kgs18-19):

1. Sennacherib besieges Lachish
2. Rab-shakeh sent to Jerusalem from Lachish with an army (18:17)
3. Rab-shakeh negotiates with Shebna and delegation (18:18)
4. Sennacherib proceeds to Libnah
5. Jerusalem is now isolated
6. Rab-shakeh’s offer of peace in exchange for tribute (18:31)
7. Hezekiah enters Temple receives reassurance from Yahweh (19:7)
8. Rumour of Egypto-Nubian intervention (19:9)
9. Rab-shakeh’s host withdraws from Jerusalem and head to Libnah
10. Reunited Assyrian army prepares for Egypto-Nubian threat
11. Warning letter sent to Jerusalem
12. Hezekiah presents letter in the Temple and receives reassurance
13. Hezekiah becomes ill
14. Tribute paid to Assyria (messengers sent to Egypto-Nubian diplomats)
15. No Egypto-Nubian support forthcoming
16. Sennacherib learns of double-cross
17. Sennacherib prepares to besiege Jerusalem
18. Hezekiah’s condition deteriorates – near death he cries to Yahweh
19. Hezekiah delivered at Passover – Assyrian camp destroyed by angel

The above incidents/events cover a period of three to four months.

Add year to year; let feasts come around

In Isa 29:1 we have a prediction of impending doom with words that note the passing of the Jerusalem feasts:

“Woe to Ariel, to Ariel, the city where David dwelt! Add year to year; Let feasts come around” (Isa 29:1).

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7 This is only obliquely referred to in 2 Kgs. 18:8 the details are given in Sennacherib’s report of the rebellion.
8 Rab-shakeh’s propaganda makes use of the Isaiah prophecy and demonstrates awareness of Hezekiah’s policy of cult centralization. This indicates organized intelligence gathering.
The mention of the anticipated Assyrian siege (v.3) suggests that v.1 should be understood as a chronological marker rather than a proverbial saying. The phrase “add year to year” speaks of the cyclical year change, but is this from Nisan to Nisan or from Tishri to Tishri?

The mention of feasts would seem to indicate the festal calendar which begins in Nisan, but this is not decisive as the agricultural and civil year, including the announcement of the Jubilee year, occurred in Tishri. It was in the autumn (cf. Isa 33:9) when Isaiah gave the prophecy of “adding year to year”, and the current civil year was reckoned from one autumnal equinox to the other, as, for example, in Exod 23:16, where the feast of tabernacles or harvest festival is said to fall at the close of the year. The later New Year began with trumpet blowing followed ten days later by the Day of Atonement. Moreover, the Jubilee year was announced by blowing the ram’s horn on the Day of Atonement (Lev 25:9). The Jubilee year was the year of release and features as a sign of the impending release of the prisoners of war:

“So it shall be in that day: The great trumpet will be blown; they will come, who are about to perish in the land of Assyria, and they who are outcasts in the land of Egypt, And shall worship the Lord in the holy mount at Jerusalem” (Isa 27:3).

The prophecy of Isa 37:30 anticipates this release:

“This shall be a sign to you: You shall eat this year such as grows of itself, And the second year what springs from the same; Also in the third year sow and reap, Plant vineyards and eat the fruit of them”.

It follows then that Isa 29:1 is counting the years from the Day of Atonement as this marked the start of the Jubilee year and the commencement of the agricultural year. There is, however, something unusual about the mention of two consecutive Sabbatical years. Sabbatical years occurred every seventh year and the Jubilee every forty ninth year. There is no other occasion in the Hebrew calendar when two years of scheduled non-planting occur back-to-back. If the Assyrian campaign lasted until after planting time in the autumn of 701 BC, and they had consumed/destroyed the yearly harvest only “such as grows of itself” would remain to be gleaned from the fields.

In the next year, the people were to eat “what springs from the same”. Since this phrase occurs only in Isaiah and in the parallel passage in 2 Kgs 19:29, there is some uncertainty about its exact

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9 This month shall be your beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year to you. (Exod 12:2)
meaning. If it is the same as the “sabbath produce of the land” that was permitted to be eaten in a Sabbatical year in Lev 25:6, then there is a ready explanation why there was no harvest: the second year, i.e. the year starting in the autumn of 701 BC was a Sabbatical year, after which normal sowing and reaping resumed in the third year, as stated in the text.

The “sign” or token that is given to Hezekiah in Isa 37:30 is by way of reassurance that the slaughter of the Assyrians would be the end of the matter. Yahweh would cause Sennacherib to be dragged back to Assyria “with a hook in his nose” (v. 30). There would be no further reprisals from Assyria. Assyria would never again mount a campaign against Jerusalem. Yahweh would ensure the continuity of the nation – spontaneous growth years would compensate for the year of Assyrian destruction and for the fallow Jubilee year. Yahweh would also release the captives in a second Exodus (Isa 52:11-12; 63:15) – the “zeal” of Yahweh would perform this (Isa 51:5 – “on my arm shall they trust” Isa 42:13 – “The Lord shall go forth as a mighty man”) not the strength of man.

The returning Jubilee captives would plant crops and receive an abundant blessing to make up for the lost years. The people would be permitted to live in peace; it would be a sign to them that the Assyrian was finally and entirely withdrawn, and that they might return in the third year to the cultivation of their land with the assurance that this much-dreaded invasion was not again to be feared. It required an act of faith on the behalf of the remnant not to immediately replant the ravaged land but to allow it to remain fallow during the Jubilee. As a consequence they would be abundantly blessed:

“But also in the third year sow and reap, plant vineyards and eat the fruit of them.” (Isa 37:30)

Even though vineyards take years to cultivate, the Judahites would be able to enjoy the fruit of their labour almost immediately in direct contrast to the taunts of Rab-shakeh:

“But do not listen to Hezekiah; for thus says the king of Assyria: ‘Make peace with me by a present and come out to me; and every one of you eat from his own vine and everyone from his own fig tree, and every one of you drink the waters of his own cistern.’” (Isa.36:16)

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10 Isa 52:11-12 is based on the Exodus from Egypt (pillar of cloud and fire protecting and leading them i.e. the captives from Egypt/Assyria) Isa 63:15 is again in the context of the Exodus (v. 12, Moses dividing the water (v. 13) and then leading through the wilderness).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Season</th>
<th>Feast</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>702</td>
<td>Nisan</td>
<td>Spring</td>
<td></td>
<td>Assyrian campaign in the Levant - Phoenicia, Philistia and a battle with Egypt on the coast</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Tammuz</td>
<td>Summer</td>
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<td>701</td>
<td>Tishri</td>
<td>Autumn</td>
<td>Atonement</td>
<td><strong>Add year to year</strong> – Isaiah delivers prophecy of 29:1</td>
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<td>(barley and wheat planted)</td>
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<td>Tebeth</td>
<td>Winter</td>
<td>Invasion of Judea</td>
<td>Final phase –</td>
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<td>Judah attacked….winter siege in Palestine cities of Judah destroyed, prisoners deported siege established at Lachish and the blockade of Jerusalem in anticipation of spring offensive - <strong>No crops planted</strong> - Jerusalem completely isolated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14th year of Hezekiah</td>
<td>Nissan</td>
<td>Spring (harvesting)</td>
<td>Passover Deliverance</td>
<td><strong>Sign of Isaiah 37:30</strong> given marking <strong>Tishri 702 as Year One</strong> (&quot;This Year&quot;) of the three year prophecy.</td>
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<td>Tammuz</td>
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<td>700</td>
<td>Tishri</td>
<td>Autumn</td>
<td>Atonement</td>
<td><strong>Year Two</strong>… No planting of crops in the Jubilee year but captives released (Isa 27:3)</td>
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<td>(barley and wheat planted)</td>
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The agricultural blessing was therefore a “sign” or token of the absolute defeat of the enemy and just as the fields would enjoy the blessing of “fruit” (cf. the desert blooming in Isa 35) so also the remnant would “take root downward, And bear fruit upward” (Isa.37:31). The Lord would preserve a people for Himself from among the Jerusalemites. This would include the Davidic line of kings, as He had promised (2 Sam 7:16; cf. Isa 9:6). His own zeal to remain true to His word and to bless His people would perform this (cf. 9:7; 59:17). It would not depend on the faithfulness of His people (Isa 37:32).

### Assyrian Records

A **Passover deliverance in 701** fits the historical data in the Assyrian annals as far as this can be ascertained. The Assyriologist L. D. Levine has analysed the Assyrian records and concluded that Sennacherib’s campaigning in Mesopotamia (known as his first and second campaigns) ended at the latest around August 702. This means the campaign in the Levant could in theory have started around September/October (Tishri) 702 after a month or two of rest. Most probably the campaign began in the October of 702 (autumn) with the “final phase” (invasion of Judah) occurring in the winter (thus giving a 8-9 month campaign).

Sennacherib’s records show that he was an all-year campaigner in his early years and did not respect the usual “fighting season of the kings”. The final phase of the Levant campaign happened in Judah in the autumn/winter of **702-701** and ended in the early spring of **701**. Strategically this makes sense because the battle with Egypt at El-Tekeh would have employed chariots which are difficult to operate in the winter months. The establishment of siege works

<table>
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<tr>
<td>Nissan</td>
<td>Spring (harvesting)</td>
<td>Passover</td>
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<td>Tammuz</td>
<td>Summer</td>
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<td>Tammuz</td>
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- **Nissan**: Spring (harvesting) - Passover - No harvest
- **Tammuz**: Summer
- **Tishri**: Autumn (barley and wheat planted) - Atonement - Year Three Plant and sow
- **Tebeth (January)**: Winter
- **Nissan (January)**: Spring (harvesting) - Passover
- **Tammuz**: Summer - Huge harvest
does not necessitate the same manoeuvrability as cavalry engagements and this could be done in autumn or in winter. Assyrian camps outside of garrison cities would ensure restriction of movement in the countryside and the destruction/requisition of the harvest coupled with the prevention of sowing winter crops would effectively isolate the city of Jerusalem.

Sennacherib has “form” for employing the unorthodox strategy of conducting campaigns in winter rather than in the spring. In his first campaign against Babylonia he committed his troops in Jan/Feb on 20 Shebatu (expeditions at this time of year are unknown). The first campaign of Sennacherib is recorded in fullest detail on BM 113203 and its duplicates. L.D. Levine notes the fact that Sennacherib commenced his campaign on 20 Shebatu (Jan/Feb). During his campaign of 694-693 Sennacherib attempted to attack Madaktu in the month of Tebet (Dec/Jan), Levine notes that, “unusually severe weather forced him to retreat. The campaign of 694-693 ended as it had begun, with the weather playing a critical role”. It is therefore not out of character to propose the placement of winter siege camps in the Levant as it seems to have formed part of Sennacherib’s overall military strategy to deny his opponents time to regroup (during the winter) and the disruption of the agricultural cycle probably also factored in this strategy. It is unlikely that besieged cities could survive for more than six months on their reserves, especially if the next harvest was non-existent. The Assyrians would either burn (or eat) the standing crops (in spring) and prevent the sowing of the winter crop. Even if reserve stores allowed for a six month siege, the besieged would emerge into a countryside that was devoid of food, depopulated and unproductive for at least another six months – this would ensure that a city like Jerusalem would not survive a second spring offensive.

The Passover Deliverance in Isaiah 26

The background to Isaiah 26 is the Passover deliverance during the Assyrian crisis. The reference in the opening verses of the chapter is to a “song that will be sung in the land of Judah (praise)” and v.2 is virtually a quote of Ps 118:19-20:

“Open to me the gates of righteousness; I will go through them, and I will praise the Lord. This is the gate of the Lord, through which the righteous shall enter” (Ps118:19-20).

“Open the gates, that the righteous nation which keeps the truth may enter in” (Isa.26:2).

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12 Ibid, Levine, 32-34
Psalms 113-118 constitute the Hallel (Psalms of Praise) sung at the Jewish Passover. The Psalm celebrates the fact of Hezekiah’s reprieve “I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord” (v.17), and that he (together with the faithful) would enter into the gates of the temple and “sing my songs (i.e. Psalm 118) with stringed instruments all the days of our life, in the house of the Lord” (Isa 38:20). On the third day (2 Kgs 20:5, 8) Hezekiah arose from his sickbed and entered the Temple through the doors that he had unsealed at the beginning of his reformation (2 Chron 29:3).

Hezekiah had been vindicated because he trusted in Yahweh in contrast to the lofty city (Nineveh) that had been “brought low” by the defeat of her armies (Isa 26:3-4) trodden down under the feet of the “poor and needy” (v. 5) the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53 and another reference from the Passover Hallel Psalms:

“He raises the poor out of the dust, and lifts the needy out of the ash heap” (Ps 113:7)

Hezekiah was the Passover victim brought, “as a lamb to the slaughter” (Isa 53:7), but his hope was focused on Passover deliverance:

“Yes, in the way of your judgments, O Lord, we have waited for You; The desire of our soul is for your name And for the remembrance (םֶזֶכֶר) of You” (Isa 26:8).

The last phrase is a reference to the burning bush revelation in Exod 3:15;

“This is my name forever, and this is my memorial (םֶזֶכֶר) to all generations” (Exod 3:15).

The revelation given to Moses concerned the Passover deliverance from Egypt (v. 7). The Hebrew הָבֹא (וֹא) refers either to remembrance when it is associated with death (the fate of not being remembered, e.g. Isa 26:14), or as a parallel or synonym of “name” or “fame” particularly when used of God (Exod 3:15; Isa 26:8) in Ps 111:4 the הָבֹא that God established for his wonders denotes proclamation of the Exodus. Interestingly, both uses of הָבֹא are found in Isaiah 26, probably by way of contrast;

14 It appears that during the Jewish Passover meal of the first century, Psalms 113-114 were sung before the final meal blessing and Psalms 115-118 were sung after the final blessing. These were most probably the hymns that Jesus and his disciples sang in the context of their Passover (cf. Matt 26:30; Mark 14:26).
15 B. S. Childs, Memory and Tradition in Israel (SBT; London: SCM Press, 1962), 22.
“O Lord our God, masters besides You Have had dominion over us; 
But by you only we make mention of your name. They are dead, 
they will not live; they are deceased, they will not rise. Therefore you have 
punished and destroyed them, and made all their memory to perish” (Isa 26:13-14).

The contrast is between the memorial of Yahweh which lives on in the resurrected Hezekiah and the memory of Ashur who is destroyed together with his worshippers. The nominative form of zêker is zîkkârôn (זִכָּרוֹן) and is translated as “memorial” in Exodus 12 in reference to the Passover:

“So this day shall be to you a memorial; and you shall keep it as a feast to the Lord throughout your generations” (Exod 12:14).

Just as the name was a memorial “to all generations” so also this day (Passover) was a memorial “throughout your generations”, thereby linking the name of Yahweh indelibly with the Passover feast. Hezekiah was waiting (hoping) for Yahweh’s “judgements” against Assyria just as Yahweh had wrought “great judgements” (Exod 6:6) against Egypt.16

The children of Israel were instructed to keep the Passover memorial and instruct their children as to its significance (2 Cor.11:24). The desire of Hezekiah’s soul (life) was to the Yahweh name and the keeping of the memorial. As the Hezekiah Psalm declares;

“Shall your lovingkindness be declared in the grave? Or your faithfulness in the place of destruction?” (Ps 88:11)

In the same manner it was Jesus’ desire to praise the name and keep the memorial:

“With fervent desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer” (Luke 22:15).

“With my soul I have desired You in the night. Yes, by my spirit within me I will seek You early; For when Your judgments are in the earth, The inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness” (Isa 26:9).

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16 The Hebrew employs different terms for “judgement” in Isa 26:8 and Exod 6:6 and so the connection is conceptual.
This is the Passover night; God’s judgements against the enemy become apparent early in the morning (Hezekiah raised/the Assyrians destroyed):

“And it came to pass on a certain night that the angel of the Lord went out, and killed in the camp of the Assyrians one hundred and eighty-five thousand; and when people arose early in the morning, there were the corpses -- all dead” (2 Kgs.19:35).

“Now on the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they, and certain other women with them, came to the tomb bringing the spices which they had prepared. But they found the stone rolled away from the tomb” (Luke 24:1-2).

“As a woman with child Is in pain and cries out in her pangs, When she draws near the time of her delivery, So have we been in Your sight, O Lord. We have been with child, we have been in pain; We have, as it were, brought forth wind; We have not accomplished any deliverance in the earth, Nor have the inhabitants of the world autumnen. Your dead shall live; Together with my dead body they shall arise. Awake and sing, you who dwell in dust; For your dew is like the dew of herbs, And the earth shall cast out the dead. Come, my people, enter your chambers, And shut your doors behind you; Hide yourself, as it were, for a little moment, Until the indignation is past” (Isa 26:18-20).

The woman who died in childbirth is Rachel giving birth to the son-of-sorrow renamed the son-of-the-right-hand. The delivery of the “child” happened despite (not because of) the nation’s best efforts.

“Thus says Hezekiah: ‘This day is a day of trouble and rebuke and blasphemy; for the children have come to birth, but there is no strength to bring them forth’” (Isa.37:3).

The “resurrection” of Hezekiah (my dead body) heralded the resurrection of the faithful remnant (your dead shall live). The inhabitants of Jerusalem “hid in their chambers” (And none of you shall go out of the door of his house until morning; cf. Exod 12:22) “until the indignation is over past”(KJV) – denoting the angel of death – the “destroyer” who acted as the avenger of blood on behalf of the slain (Isa 26:21).

“For the Lord will pass through to strike the Egyptians; and when He sees the blood on the lintel and on the two doorposts, the Lord will pass over the door and not allow the destroyer to come into your houses to strike you.” (Exod 12:23)
Conclusion

Isaiah 26 is not the only chapter that has the Passover as backdrop to Hezekiah’s deliverance. Rabbinical tradition dates Hezekiah’s deliverance to the Passover, “When Rab-shakeh heard the singing of the Hallel he counselled Sennacherib to withdraw from Jerusalem, as on this night—the first night of Passover—many miracles were wrought for Israel”. Although the tradition is undoubtedly late and legendary it supports the biblical evidence that deliverance actually occurred on the Passover night. The biblical data supports Passover deliverance and this does not contradict Assyrian sources or the modus operandi of Sennacherib. At the commencement of his reign Hezekiah had re-instituted the feast of Passover and invited the northern tribes to celebrate the feast in Jerusalem. It is fitting that Hezekiah, together with the faithful who responded to his call, had been delivered on Passover.

17 See the chapters, “Israel’s ancient Passover experience” and “Jerusalem delivered at Passover” in H.A. Whittaker, Isaiah (Cannock: Biblia, 1988), 50-53.
Canticles
Canticles (Song of Solomon)

Canticles (or Song of Solomon) is a collection of passionate, sometimes erotic love poems, ostensibly celebrating the love between a man and a woman. Over the centuries, Canticles has been treated with various hermeneutical approaches—allegorical, dramatic, literal-historical, cultic or ritualistic, dream view, typological etc. The lack of consensus on authorship and the large number of interpretive approaches are evidence that Songs is not understood very well.¹ These two articles will adopt an intertextual approach and attempt to contextualize Songs within its historical setting.

This section examines the question of authorship and what the superscription tells us, and it considers whether the Hebrew of the book indicates a date of composition. The following section will aim to demonstrate that that Canticles belongs to the reign of Hezekiah and that “Northern Israelite” linguistic features are a consequence of Hezekiah’s courtship of the northern tribes. Comparisons will also be made with Psalm 45 (‘Song of Loves’) identified by Rendsburg as ‘Israeli Hebrew’ (northern origin). The fact that Ecclesiastes shares many of the same linguistic features suggests a similar provenance (i.e. an era of Uzziah-Hezekiah) but that will be left for a future article.

What is the historical setting of Canticles?

Many would answer that it was written by Solomon and comes from the period of the early Monarchy (ca. 900 BCE)—however, numerous scholars (based on linguistic evidence) opt for a much later date, even as late the Persian period (Achaemenid rule) 539-323 BCE.² This would seem (to me) to be far too late, but how do we account for the unusual linguistic features? Moreover, what do we make of the superscription ascribing Solomonic authorship to Songs? Is there perhaps evidence that points to a different period of composition, somewhere between early monarchy (i.e. Solomon) and late post-exilic (i.e. Ezra/Nehemiah)? Solomonic authorship is not an intractable problem but the linguistic question is far more difficult to resolve, as we are of necessity reliant on conclusions reached by specialists in ancient near eastern linguistics.

Superscription

Our first subject for analysis is the *superscription*. J. Reese asserts that,

…the attribution ‘to Solomon’ affixed to the Song is an editorial superscription that links this poetry to Israel’s famous poet and sage rather than a declaration of authorship. No hint of actual author or authors appears in the text.³

However, scholars such as Delitzsch, Raven, Steimmueller, and Young have all held to Solomonic authorship;⁴ others (Smith, Driver)⁵ date it to the late Monarchic period (pre-exilic, before 600 BCE); and T. Longman believes that the superscription should read “which concerns Solomon” rather than “by Solomon”. He makes the following points about the superscription:⁶

1. The relative pronoun ‘ašer occurs only Song 1:1; elsewhere in the book we have the relative particle še (e.g. Song 3:7). This supports the idea that the superscription was a later addition to the book.

2. The preposition l used with Solomon’s name does not necessarily indicate authorship.⁷ The semantic range of the preposition is wide, and it theoretically could be translated “of”, “to,” or “concerning”.

P. Hunt offers the interesting observation,

The use of ’ašer only in the opening verse might suggest an archaizing *post facto* pseudepigraphic device for the book’s title, perhaps in order to render a paronomasic construct on Solomon thus: ašer lî- and šelomoh: š-l-š-l-m [this also appears in the opening of Proverbs [1:1]: mishlé šelomoh: m-lš-k š-l-m], a possible poetic opening gambit.⁸

But even if the superscription is artistic, as Hunt suggests, this does not in itself give us sufficient grounds for pseudepigraphy—we need to analyze the whole book to support that conclusion.

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The scholarly discussion is inconclusive. The Targum understands the superscription as authorial but the Vulgate omits it altogether. The superscription could be editorial, but this does not mean the editor is not a contemporary of Solomon, perhaps an amanuensis. The relative pronoun is unique to the superscription but then this could be nothing more than a reflection of the fact that it is a superscription and not part of the poetry; the relative particle could be used for poetic reasons. However, Hunt’s suggestion of a paronomasmic construct in v.1 is suggestive of artistry in the superscription over and beyond a pedestrian editorial superscription. The LXX translation \(\delta \varepsilon \sigma \tau \iota \nu \tau \rho \alpha \lambda \alpha \mu \omega \omega \) does not support ‘concerning’ as the earliest interpretation of the Hebrew that we have; were this correct, we would have had the preposition \(\pi \varepsilon \rho \kappa\); \(^9\) but, as it stands, the Hebrew preposition could be taken as an indication of authorship or simply that the Song concerns Solomon.

The Language Problem

All languages develop over time; the English language developed from Anglo-Frisian dialects and Anglo-Norman and picked up French, Latin and Greek at a later stage. Writing can be dated if the history of the language is understood. Such things as syntax, vocabulary, phonetics and morphology require analysis and this is a rather specialized field. Scholars have identified several strands:

- **ABH** (Archaic Biblical Hebrew) sometimes called “Old Hebrew” or “Paleo Hebrew”—examples are the Song of Moses (Exodus 15) and the Song of Deborah (Judges 5).

- **SBH** (Standard Biblical Hebrew) sometimes called BH (Biblical Hebrew) or EBH (Early Biblical Hebrew) 8th to 6th centuries BCE; this forms the bulk of the Hebrew Bible.

- **LBH** (Late Biblical Hebrew) from the 5th to the 3rd centuries BCE corresponding to the Persian Period (*post-exilic*)—examples are Ezra and Nehemiah.

- **DSS Hebrew**, (Dead Sea Scrolls Hebrew) sometimes called Qumran Hebrew from the 3rd century BCE to the 1st century CE corresponding to the Hellenistic and Roman Periods *before* the destruction of the Temple.

- **MH** (Mishnaic Hebrew) from the 1st to the 3rd or 4th century CE, corresponding to the Roman Period, from example, the Talmud.

F. W. Dobbs-Allsopp is one of a group of scholars, who after careful analysis of word-order, syntax, Aramaisms and loan-words (mainly Persian) assigns Songs of Songs to post-exilic

\(^9\) [Ed AP]: *Testament of Solomon* 3:5 and 22:1 do not help fix the Song as part of a Solomonic canon.
LBH, nevertheless even Dobbs-Allsopp concludes his monograph with a remark from Pope (Pope 1977:27):

“This position is not incontrovertible, of course, as Pope rightly observes, 10 'The dating game as played with biblical books like Job and Canticles, as well as many of the psalms, remains imprecise and the score is difficult to compute’ ”

Adding to the complex mix of linguistic identifiers is the recently proposed Israeli Hebrew (or IH), a proposed northern dialect of biblical Hebrew (BH). It is offered as an alternative explanation for various irregular linguistic features of the Masoretic Text (MT) of the Hebrew Bible. It competes with the suggestion that such features are Aramaisms, indicative either of late dates of composition, or of editorial emendations. Although IH is not a new proposal,11 it only started gaining ground as a challenge to older arguments for late dates for some biblical texts since about a decade before the turn of the 21st century: linguistic variation in the Hebrew Bible might be better explained in synchronic rather than diachronic terms, meaning that various biblical texts could be significantly older than many 20th century scholars supposed. The work done by Rendsburg is particularly interesting, C. L. Seow offers the following review:

“Gary Rendsburg has recently distinguished himself as a Hebrew dialectologist. In this new monograph, he proposes a set of linguistic criteria by which one may identify psalms that are written in the northern Hebrew dialect, which he calls ‘Israeli Hebrew’ (IH). By these criteria he concludes that Psalms 9–10, 16, 29, 36, 45, 53, 58, 74, 116, 132, 133, 140, and 141 are all of northern origin, and as a by-product of his investigation, he isolates a list of linguistic features of IH, representing by far the boldest attempt yet to define such a dialect”.

Rendsburg begins by identifying the sources for reconstructing IH. These include not only texts that are universally accepted as originating in the north (e.g., Hosea), but also accounts which concern northern figures (various narratives, tribal blessings, Balaam’s Oracles), various passages that scholars have from time to time attributed to northern sources or are said to manifest an abundance of northern linguistic features (Nehemiah 9, Deuteronomy 32, Proverbs, Job, Ecclesiastes, and Canticles). Texts that have linguistic or poetic affinities with Phoenician, Aramaic, or the Transjordanian dialects are all said to

10 Ibid, 71.
reflect IH….By identifying clusters of “IH features,” then, Rendsburg concludes that the psalms in question are all of northern provenance….

Rendsburg’s contribution cannot be gainsaid. Some linguistic features that have hereinto been regarded too conveniently as archaisms, or as late and foreign intrusions into Hebrew, must now be reevaluated as such. More importantly one is reminded not to harmonize or standardize Biblical Hebrew too readily.12

The following summary of the language of Canticles is offered by J. A. Cook:

“The language of Canticles is striking in several ways. Most notable is its use of the relative conjugation še to the almost complete exclusion of āšer (which occurs only in Song 1:1). Only the book of Ecclesiastes has more occurrences of še; however it employs āšer with almost equal frequency. This feature has been taken to be indicative of Aramaic influence or late date, especially in light of the similar, almost exclusive use of še in Mishnaic Hebrew. However, such conclusions are problematic in light of the appearance of še in archaic Hebrew poetry (Judg 5:7), and the judgement that še alternatively may be indicative of a Northern Hebrew dialect”.

Evidence of foreign influence in Canticles (Song) is found in its occasional Aramaic spellings and foreign loanwords. The Aramaic spelling of ntr (“keep guard”), verses Hebrew ngr, is found in several places in the book (Song 1:6; 8:11, 12), and in one passage the Aramaic spelling bērōt (“juniper”), versus Hebrew bērōš (Song 1:17), is used. The word pardēs (Song 4:13), often translated “park” or “enclosures,” is a Persian loanword; appiryōn (Song 3:9), variously translated “palanquin” (NSRV) or “chariot” (NIV), is possibly a Greek loanword.

The other striking linguistic feature is the number of hapax legomena, thirty-seven in all. Given the size of the book, it contains the highest proportion of such terms of any book in the OT. In addition, F. E. Greenspahn…classifies fourteen of these as “absolute hapax legomena” – that is, forms built on roots that are not used anywhere else in the Bible…13

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Cook’s conclusion is especially enlightening:

“Alternative explanations must take into account variation arising from possible diglossia (i.e., the coexistence of a literary language and a colloquial language) and other differences in registry, the affect of genre and subject matter on language, and the difficulty of distinguishing between archaic language (i.e., the use of older forms of language) and archaisms (i.e., the intentional use of older forms of language in mimicry of earlier compositions). Similarly, judgements on “loanwords” are notoriously difficult to make, in terms of what sort of influence one language might have had on another and in terms of dating”.

These questions are often driven by ideological concerns, such as what are acceptable and unacceptable dates for biblical compositions, an undue pessimism about finding answers to these questions, or an a priori commitment to the lateness of all biblical culture and writings.14

R. Alter also expresses reservations about late dating based on language:

“When it was more the scholarly fashion to date the book late, either in the Persian period (W. F. Albright) or well into the Hellenistic period (H. L. Ginsberg), these differences might have been attributed to changing poetic practices in the last centuries of biblical literary activity. Several recent analyses, however, have persuasively argued that all the supposed stylistic and lexical evidence for a late date is ambiguous, and it is quite possible, though not demonstrable, that these poems originated, whatever subsequent modifications they may have undergone, early in the First Commonwealth period”.15

I. Young contends that Persian loanwords employed in Qoheleth (Ecclesiastes) cannot be used to date the book to the Persian period, as “Persianisms” also occur in pre-exilic books.16 Young suggests that a probable route for such words was Assyrian deportations of Iranians to the vicinity of Judah in the late eighth century BCE. Young concludes his paper with the words;

14 Ibid.
15 R. Alter, The Art of Biblical Poetry (San Francisco: Harper-Collins, 1985), 185; also see Pope, Canticles, 22-34.
16 Young gives כַּסְפָּה “steel” (Nah 2:4) and תֶרֶךְ (“precincts” 2 Kgs 23:11) as examples of Persianisms in pre-exilic books.
“Let me sum up the argument of this paper. Linguistic evidence is just that: evidence. It is permissible to use it as one of a series of arguments in attempting to date biblical texts. However, linguistic evidence cannot be decisive”. 17

Interim Conclusion

(1) The superscription could just be an indication of the subject of the poem (Solomon) and not an ascription of authorship.

(2) Hebrew lexicography and syntax alone cannot determine the dating of a book; alternative hypotheses are possible. It needs to be supported by other evidence—socio-historical and intertextual.

Geography

The previous section concluded that language alone cannot establish the date of a particular book—linguistic evidence needs to be supported by intertextual and socio-historical proofs. Our hypothesis is that Songs belongs to the Hezekiah period and this is supported by linguistics, geography, socio-historic context and inter-textuality. The most intriguing geographical mention in Songs is the city of Tirzah particularly because she is transposed with Jerusalem. Archer writes;

“The author mentions quite indiscriminately localities to be found in both the Northern and Southern Kingdoms: Engedi, Hermon, Carmel, Lebanon, Heshbon, and Jerusalem. These are spoken of as if they all belonged to the same political realm. Note that Tirzah is mentioned as a city of particular glory and beauty, and that too in the same breath with Jerusalem itself (6:4). If this had been written after the time when Tirzah was chosen as the earliest capital of the Northern Kingdom in rejection of the authority of the dynasty of David, it is scarcely conceivable that it would have been referred to in such favorable terms. On the other hand, it is highly significant that Samaria, the city founded by Omri sometime between 885 and 874, is never mentioned in the Song of Solomon”18

The mention of Tirzah (“she is pleasant or fair”) implies that Songs was written sometime before 874 when Omri moved the capital to Samaria (1 Kgs.16:23, 24). However, after Omri, Tirzah remained an important provincial city and under Jeroboam II the city enjoyed renewed prosperity19 until the time of the Assyrian conquest in 722 BCE when Tirzah, along with other Northern Kingdom cities like Shechem and Samaria, was destroyed. The northern Israelite king Jeroboam II (ca.785-745) was a contemporary of the Judean king Uzziah (Azariah) and this takes us into the period of co-regencies from Uzziah to Hezekiah and corresponding prophets (particularly Isaiah in the south and Amos, Jonah and Hosea in the north). Jeroboam II captured Damascus and Hamath and restored to Israel the country from the entrance of Hamath to the Dead Sea. The recovered territory included all of Transjordan as far south as the river Arnon (the border of Moab) capturing important trade routes. Some think Moab itself may be included in this general description. Friendly relations with the Phoenicians, who were the greatest merchants and seafaring people of those days, brought rare things of beauty and luxury into Israel.

Apart from Engedi and Jerusalem all the localities in Songs are in the north20, Hezekiah’s goal was to re-establish centralised worship in Jerusalem and therefore Songs idealizes pre-apostate Solomon who presided over a theocratic hegemony. Solomon was called Jedidiah (beloved ofYahweh)21 by the prophet Nathan (2 Sam.12:25) and this resonates with the “beloved” (dôd) of Songs (“David” in 4:4) which is found in the same form in Hosea 3:5 and Amos 6:5 (also translated as “David”) both northern prophets being contemporary with Hezekiah’s reign. The Shulamite (“the peaceful”) mentioned in Songs (cf. 6:13) is most likely the feminized form of Solomon (“peace”).22 Both the male and female counterparts of our poetic drama are based on the word for “peace” (cf. “shalom”) an appropriate sentiment in the troubled times of Assyrian aggression:

“I am a wall, And my breasts like towers; Then I became in his eyes As one who found peace” (Song 8:7).

“So Hezekiah said to Isaiah, “The word of the LORD which you have spoken is good!” For he said, “At least there will be peace and truth in my days.” (Isa.39:7)

19 K. A. Kitchen, On The Reliability Of The Old Testament, (William B Eerdmans: USA), 56
20 Sharon (2:1), Lebanon (3:9, 4:8,11,15; 5:15; 7:4), Gilead (4:1; 6:5), Amana (4:8), Sheneir (4:8), Hermon (4:8), Mahanaim (6:13), Heshbon (7:4), Bath-Rabbiim (7:4), Carmel (7:5), Baal-hamon(8:11), Kedar (1:5).
21 From yâdîd (beloved), and dôd (beloved, father’s brother, love) See NIDOTTE (ed., W.A VanGemeren, Paternoster Press: U.K.,1997), entry 3351 vol.2; 1856 vol.1
22 For alternative explanations of Shulamite see the NetBible footnote Songs 6:13.
“But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed”. (Isa.53:5).

“Indeed it was for my own peace that I had great bitterness; But You have lovingly delivered my soul from the pit of corruption, For You have cast all my sins behind Your back”. (Isa.38:17)

Peace and security were found in Jerusalem (Dwelling of Peace) during the Assyrian onslaught; “Rejoice with Jerusalem, And be glad with her, all you who love her; Rejoice for joy with her, all you who mourn for her.... Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river, And the glory of the Gentiles like a flowing stream....” (Isa.62:10-12).

The favorable mention of Tirzah after the succession of the ten tribes (and the fact that Samaria is ignored) can be accounted for by the focus of Hezekiah’s “courtship” and the poetic- historical resonance of Tirzah (“beautiful or fair”). Many from the tribe of Manasseh (“causing to forget”) responded positively to Hezekiah’s overtures (2 Chron 30: 1, 11) and Tirzah was situated in the territory of Manasseh. The city was named after one of the daughters of Zelophehad (from tribe of Manasseh) who had five daughters and therefore special arrangements were required, otherwise the inheritance and name of Zelophehad would perish because he “had no sons” (Num.27:4). This bears striking similarities to Hezekiah situation who nearly died without an heir, and when after his recovery, he was blessed with progeny he named his son Manasseh! Tirzah is the “little sister” (cf. Song 8:8) and companion of “big sister” Jerusalem, Tirzah was beautiful but immature in faith (no breasts) and in danger (like the daughters of Zelophehad) of losing her inheritance in the “day that she is spoken for” (i.e., in de day that Hezekiah is courting her which was also the day of rising Assyrian power and the imminent destruction of Tirzah).

Hephzibah (“my delight is in her”) is the wife of Hezekiah and mother of Manasseh (2 Kings 21:1) the name Hephzibah is also figuratively used to describe Jerusalem (Isaiah 62:4). The name is formed from the verb “desire/delight” (עֵרֵסָה) [hps] with the pronominal suffix third person feminine singular, and is used as a proper name (noun); הֵפְצוֹס-בָּהָה [hephzí-bah].

If Canticles and Psalm 45 (Song of Loves) are linked (more on this anon) then Hephzibah is perhaps of Phoenician ancestry (Ps.45:12 a Tyrian Princess) as the northern Kingdom

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23 The root hps is attested in Phoenician mhps, desireable and shpqd (K–Aℓ, 12) The Israelite king Omri had allied himself with the Phoenician cities of the coast, and his son Ahab was married to the infamous Jezebel, daughter of Ethbaal, king of Tyre and Sidon. King Hiram (reigned 969-936 BCE), appears in the Bible as an ally of the Israelite kings David and Solomon. So from very early on there was contact (and royal marriages) between Judah, Israel and Phoenicia.
intermarried with Phoenician royalty. The reference in the Psalm to “forget also thine own people” (45:10) is a play on the meaning of Manasseh, possibly indicating the foreign origins of Hezekiah’s wife.\textsuperscript{24} 

The verb form at the root of Hephzibah (“desire/delight” יְהֵפִיזָב) is employed \textit{three times} in Canticles (2:7; 3:5; 8:4) in the refrain – “nor awake my love, till he please (יְהֵפִיזו) [desires NIV/NIB]”. The case can be made that the “suffering servant” of Isaiah 53 is Hezekiah; the context of the chapter reflects his near death experience and the Assyrian invasion. Hezekiah’s imminent death (without an heir) and the capture of Jerusalem would have effectively annulled the Davidic covenant. David Talley observes an interesting antonymic use of יָפָש (desire); “However, Isa 53:10 uses the verb יָפָש paradoxically. The sufferings of the servant are graphically described (53:1–9). Strangely, “It was the Lord’s will (יָפָש, lit., his desire) to crush him”(v.10). The paradox is that it is the Lord who crushes the innocent servant, the one for whom he should have acted favourably (i.e., rescued). Even more striking is the play on words within the verse. After the Lord crushes with pleasure (יָפָש) this innocent one, the pleasure (בּוֹפִּס) of the Lord prospers in his (the one who is crushed) hand. An act apparently unjust becomes in the end a delight for the one treated unjustly.”\textsuperscript{25} 

**Covenant Love**

Canticles is read during the Passover week. In Jewish tradition Passover marks the time when God’s “romance” with the Jewish people officially began, the sages chose this song to celebrate God’s love for his people.

“And Hezekiah sent to all Israel and Judah, and wrote letters also to Ephraim and Manasseh, that they should come to the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, to keep the Passover unto the LORD God of Israel”. (2 Chron 30:1)

The Passover feast had been largely neglected until Hezekiah’s reformation and his “courtship” of the northern tribes. Although the Passover had to be rescheduled to the following month it proved enormously successful (2 Chron.30:26) and the holiday was in fact extended a further seven days. It seems that Passover celebration became a regular occurrence during his reign, necessitating a yearly pilgrimage from northern Israel to Jerusalem. The case can be made that the final Assyrian onslaught against Jerusalem occurred during the Passover, when the city would have swelled with pilgrims (and refugees). The language of Isaiah certainly suggests Passover deliverance\textsuperscript{26} and Songs commences with “Passover language” –

\textsuperscript{24} Originally Manasseh was the name given by Joseph to his son by his Egyptian wife Asenath


“Draw (דָּשַׁנְתָּנִי) me, we will run after thee: the king hath brought me into his chambers (חֵרְנוֹת): we will be glad and rejoice in thee, we will remember (חֲנוֹנַת) thy love more than wine: the upright love thee”. (Song 1:4)

“And this day shall be unto you for a memorial: (a day of remembrance אָרְקָד) and ye shall keep it a feast to the LORD throughout your generations; ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance for ever”. (Ex.12:14)

“Yea, in the way of thy judgments, O LORD, have we waited for thee; the desire of our soul is to thy name, and to the remembrance (נִנְה) of thee”. (Isa.26:8)

“Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers (חֵרְנוֹת) and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast”. (Isa.26:20)

It is quite clear then that inter-textual links exist between the first Passover in Exodus, the opening verses of Songs and the book of Isaiah27 the common thread being the re-establishment of Passover to commemorate Yahweh’s deliverance of his people – a theme close to Hezekiah’s heart in the light of Assyrian expansionism. Passover reminded the people of Yahweh’s covenant love and the King, as Yahweh’s representative, attempted to court the nation and bring them back into the protective embrace of a loving relationship.

Military Language

It is unusual for a “love poem” to contain so many military metaphors; “terrible as an army with banners (6:4, 10) ..... chariots (1:9; 6:12) ..... the tower of David builded for an armoury....a thousand bucklers, all shields of mighty men, valiant men, the valiant of Israel (4:4).... They all hold swords, being expert in war: every man hath his sword upon his thigh

27 See, Ibid, “Passover Deliverance in 701” pp.58-61 where in Isaiah 26 the themes of Passover and resurrection occur against the background of Assyrian aggression.
because of fear in the night” (3:8). The other love song (Psalm 45) which has “northern” characteristics also employs military imagery; “Gird thy sword upon thy thigh (45:3).... Thine arrows are sharp (45:5) etc.....”

C. Schroeder highlights the mixing of military and marital language in Psalm 45 and C. Meyers also recognizes the military imagery throughout the Psalm as applied to the woman and concludes;

“Its use in the Song in reference to the woman constitutes an unexpected reversal of conventional imagery or of stereotypical gender association”. 30

Of course, the martial overtones are readily explained by Assyrian war mongering and the subsequent defeat of Assyria outside the walls of Jerusalem. After this great victory, King Hezekiah (as Yahweh’s agent), “sits on the throne of God” and as the divine proxy accepts the acclaim, tribute and praise due to Yahweh as he weds his bride. If Hephzibah is indeed a northern Israelite Princess with Phoenician ancestry then the marriage allegory evokes Yahweh bringing both Israel and the gentiles into the Davidic “Love Covenant”.

Inter-textuality

In his column on inter-textuality R. Dargie recognizes parallels between Isaiah 5 (the parable of the vineyard) and Songs of Songs. 31 This is what we would expect if Songs belonged to the Hezekiah/Isaiah period, indeed a number of contrasts and parallels can be recognized:

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28 Compare “fear (נָדָר) in the night” (Song 3:8) with “terror (יַרְעָה) by night....pestilence that walketh in darkness” (Ps.91:5, 6). This is a reference to the destroying angel: “And it came to pass that night, that the angel of the LORD went out, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians an hundred fourscore and five thousand: and when they arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses”. (2 Kgs.19:35)
29 C. Schroeder, “‘A Love Song: Psalm 45 in the Light of Ancient Near Eastern Marriage Texts”, 
CBQ 58 (1996):417-32
30 C. Meyers, “Gender Imagery in the Canticles,” H-4R 10 [1986]:215
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Song 8</th>
<th>Isaiah (Hezekiah)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[1] O that thou wert as my brother.....yea, I should not be despised.</td>
<td>Contrast: He was despised and we esteemed him not (Isa.53:3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[2] I would lead thee, and bring thee into my mother's house</td>
<td>As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you; and ye shall be comforted in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[3] His left hand should be under my head, and his right hand should embrace me.</td>
<td>For I the LORD thy God will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not; I will help thee. (Isa.66:13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[4] I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love, until he please.</td>
<td>Contrast: It pleased the Lord to crush him.... the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand (Isa.53:10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[6] Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm: for love is strong as death....</td>
<td>Set thine house in order: for thou shalt die, and not live....(Isa.38:1)... I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears: behold, I will add unto thy days fifteen years. And I will deliver thee and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria: and I will defend this city. (Isa.38:5-6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[7] Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it......</td>
<td>Now therefore, behold, the Lord bringeth up upon them the waters of the river, strong and many, even the king of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[11] Solomon had a vineyard at Baal-hamon; he let out the vineyard unto keepers; every one for the fruit thereof was to bring a thousand pieces of silver.</td>
<td>My well-beloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill (Isa.5:1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[12] My vineyard, which is mine, is before me: thou, O Solomon, must have a thousand, and those that keep the fruit thereof two hundred.</td>
<td>And it shall come to pass in that day, that every</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[13] Thou that dwellest in the gardens, the companions hearken to thy voice: cause me to hear it.</td>
<td>Contrast: ye shall be confounded for the gardens that ye have chosen (Isa.1:29)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[14] Make haste, my beloved....</td>
<td>Now will I sing to my well-beloved a song of</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Sister-Wife**

Canticles employs the sister-wife motif that is found in the patriarchal narratives. The sister-wife narratives in Genesis typify the outworking of covenant love at different stages of the nation’s history. Although allusions to all three sister-wife (A, B, C) narratives\(^{32}\) are interwoven throughout the Canticles, the allusions to (C) are particularly relevant, for Isaac, similar to Hezekiah, functions as a Messianic type. Isaac’s open display of affection towards his wife is a metaphor for “covenant love in action” and is paradigmatic for Yahweh’s love for Israel expressed through his Messiah.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Song</th>
<th>Sister-wife (Genesis 26)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[8:1] O that thou wert as my brother,</td>
<td>She is my sister (26:7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[3:4] I held him, and would not let him go, until I had brought him into my mother’s house, and into the</td>
<td>Isaac brought her into the tent of his mother Sarah, and he married Rebekah. (24:67)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[4:1] Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair;</td>
<td>Because she (Rebekah) was fair to look upon (26:7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[2:9] He looketh forth at the</td>
<td>Contrast: Abimelech ...looked out at</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[4:9] Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse</td>
<td>.... and he (Isaac) said, She is my sister (26:7)…. Isaac was sporting (fondling)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[4:12] A garden inclosed is my sister, my spouse; a spring shut up, a</td>
<td>All Abraham’s wells blocked but unsealed by Isaac (26:15-18)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Canticles also echo’s account (A) with reference to Solomon’s vineyard (8:11) at Baalhamon (Husband of a multitude cf. Abraham; Father of a multitude) the thousand pieces of silver (8:12) is equivalent to the restitution paid to Abraham (Gen.20:6). Moreover, Abraham and the nation that he fathered came out of Egypt with “great substance (שָׂדֵה)” (Gen.15:14, cf.12:16) “And Hezekiah had exceeding much riches and honour... for God had given him substance (שָׂדֵה) very much”. (2 Chron.32:27-29). However, Hezekiah was warned that his substance would be acquired by Babylon (Isa.39:1-8) – covenant love could not be drowned by worldly aggression (Assyria) and neither could it be valued in worldly substance because

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\(^{32}\) For ease of reference, K. Koch’s annotation will be followed, so that the three accounts (Genesis 12, 20, 26) will be A, B, and C, referring to the first, second, and third, respectively. See P. Wyns, “Sister-Wife” in *The Christadelphian ejournal of Biblical Interpretation*, (eds. D. Burke, T. Gaston, A. Perry, P. Wyns, Vol. 6, No. 2, Apr 2012),3-15
although both would vanish love would remain:

“Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it: if a man would give all the substance (יווח) of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned”. (Song 8:7)

Canticles Conclusion

Canticles and Psalm 45 were made to be performed, probably at the wedding of Hezekiah and northern idiosyncrasies in these and other books from the period can be explained by the influx of northern refugees, by cultural exchanges between the royal courts of Judah and Israel and by Hezekiah’s reformation. This period saw a flowering of literary art with a large portion of the Bible either written or edited/arranged by “Hezekiah’s men” (cf. Prov.25:1) and it is highly likely that the small scribal class was highly in demand and northern scribes open to recruitment.

Under the reading offered here Canticles is placed in the context of Hezekiah’s reign. The Shepherd is Hezekiah and the Shulamite is the faithful element in the northern kingdom. Hezekiah’s wooing campaign is the reformation early in his reign and the “betrothal” is the great Passover that he organised. The Shepherds disappearance coincides with Hezekiah’s illness and the Assyrian invasion, which causes the maiden’s dreams and nightmares. The story concludes with “Solomon” (Hezekiah) coming to claim his bride – no longer depicted as a shepherd but as a victorious and splendid King.

It was Hezekiah’s desire to reinvigorate worship and centralise the cult in Jerusalem and the “beloved” is described in high priestly terms (cf. 5:10-16) the “mountains of spices” (8:14) referring to the sacred perfumed priestly anointing oil (cf. Psalm 133) that would bring unity to the “mountains of division” (2:17) the northern kingdom had “put of my coat” (priestly garment) and many had ceased worshiping Yahweh...“how shall I put it on?” (5:3). But Yahweh had sent them a Messiah in the form of the “suffering servant” and this servant would not die childless (without an heir);

“Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children, whom thou mayest make princes in all the earth. I will make thy name to be remembered in all generations...”(Ps 45:16-17)

No longer would they need to look backwards to the “fathers” (Abraham, Isaac and Jacob) to see the outworking of “covenant love”, for Yahweh would not annul the Davidic covenant but would provide Hezekiah (and the nation) with offspring;

“Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.” (Isa.53:10)
Psalms of Degrees

120-134
The Psalms of Degrees

The “Psalms of Degrees”, or the “Songs of Ascent” or otherwise the “Songs of Steps” 1 is a title given to fifteen short Psalms (120–134) characterized by use of a key-word, or by epanaphora (i.e., repetition), and by their epigrammatic style. More than half of the fifteen Psalms are joyful, and all of them hopeful. Four of them (122, 124, 131 and 133) are linked in their ascriptions to David, and one (127) to Solomon. They were well suited for being sung, by their poetic form and the sentiments they express. These fifteen Psalms stand together as a short collection – the question is why? Why were they written and who wrote them? Are they post-exilic or from the early or late monarchical period? What were they used for? To answer the latter question first, we can safely assume that they were composed for liturgical purposes. They were used for temple worship.

Liturgical setting

During the time of Christ these psalms were connected with the Feast of Tabernacles (Sukkoth) in Jerusalem. 2 At the water-drawing ceremony (cf. John 7:37) there, the Levites stood “upon the fifteen steps leading down from the court of the Israelites to the Women’s Court, corresponding to the fifteen Songs of Ascent in the Psalms; upon them the Levites used to stand with musical instruments and sing hymns” (Mishnah, Sukkah 5.4). At some stage these fifteen Psalms were associated with “fifteen steps” that linked the temple courts, but does this traditional ascription reflect their original usage?

Rabbi Akiva asserted that the water libation was based on the famous verse from Isaiah 12:3. On the morning of the first day of the feast, after the daily sacrifice and daily libation of wine, a procession went from the Temple mount to the spring of Shiloah (Siloam). A priest drew the water and returned to the Temple through the Water Gate that led to the inner court. There he chanted the words of Isaiah: “With joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation” (Is 12:3), and poured out the water on the altar as a libation. 3 A text from the Talmud states: “He who has not witnessed the joy of the water drawing has never in his life experienced real joy.” 4

The Feast of Tabernacles (Booths or Sukkoth) is associated with Israel’s deliverance from Egypt but it is also an agricultural feast specifically allied with rainfall and water. Arthur Schaeffer points out that all four of the plant species (Lev. 23:40) used at Tabernacles are

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1 Another way of interpreting the superscription translates נלעפ as “steps” instead of as “ascents”; See, for example, 2 Kgs 20. Loren D Crow, The Songs of Ascents (Psalms 120-134): Their Place in Israelite History and Religion, (SBLDS 148. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996), 14.
2 Zenger wonders “whether the sequence Psalms 113-118, 119 and 120-36 is indeed not inspired by the succession of the three great feasts of the Jewish calendar, Pesach (Pss 113-18), Shabuoth (Ps 119) and Sukkoth (Pss120-36); Zenger, “The Composition and Theology of the Fifth Book of Psalms, Psalms 107-145,” JSOT
4 17 Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Sukkah 5:1–3
symbols of water. Sukkoth was then an appeal to God to bless the land with the former rain without which the earth could not be prepared for crops.

The Pharisees claimed that the water libation was a tradition handed down orally from Moses, but this is obviously a ploy to give the practice Mosaic legitimacy. The practice was of much later origins than Moses. This custom became a controversial issue between the Sadducees and the Pharisees. When Alexander Jannai, who was both king and high priest and a follower of the Sadducees, publicly refused to pour the water on the altar, the congregation became so enraged that it pelted him with etrogim (fruit) (Sukkah 48b, Antiquities 13.13) In the aftermath of this incident, he is said to have massacred more than 6,000 of his fellow Jews. This occurred approximately 95 BC. Therefore, the water libation was definitely established at least a century before Christ but do its origins lay further in antiquity?

This article argues that the water libation was added to Sukkoth (including the singing of the fifteen Psalms) during the reign of Hezekiah. It is important to know something about this water. It was taken from a spring just east of Jerusalem called the Spring of Gihon. This spring may have been used to anoint David’s son, Solomon, King of Israel (1 Kings 1:45) and that anointing was symbolic of the Holy Spirit coming upon an individual (1 Sam. 16:13), the living waters of Siloam became associated with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. It was probably during this feast that the Solomon’s temple was dedicated and the Shekinah descended (1 Kgs.8:2, 10). What the author may have meant is that celebration of ‘the Feast’ during the last seven days of ‘Ethanim continued into a celebration of the temple’s inauguration during the first seven days of Bul.

The waters of Siloam (Shiloah) feature in the Immanuel prophecy given to Hezekiah’s father Ahaz. Isaiah found Ahaz standing by “the end of the conduit of the upper pool” (7:3) and the prophet offered a sign concerning the establishment of the Davidic dynasty (which Ahaz refused); “Forasmuch as this people refuseth the waters of Shiloah that go softly....... Now therefore, behold, the Lord bringeth up upon them the waters of the river, strong and many, even the king of Assyria..........” (Isa. 8:6-7).

King Hezekiah later redirected the water of this spring into the city of Jerusalem through a long underground conduit known as Hezekiah’s Tunnel. Within the walls of Jerusalem, the waters of Gihon ran into a pool named the Pool of Siloam.

The waters of Siloam were therefore connected (both literally and figuratively) with the survival of the Davidic dynasty. Figuratively by God (through the prophet Isaiah) and literally when Hezekiah hid the source of Siloam by digging a tunnel to ensure the survival of

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6 On this see; Håkan Ulfgard, “The Story of Sukkot: The Setting, Shaping, and Sequel of the Biblical Feast of Tabernacles”, Volume 8; Volume 34 [Volume 34 of Beiträge zur Geschichte der biblischen Exegese], (Mohr Siebeck, 1998), 102 and footnote 101: “Thus according to Burrows 1974, 47. This calendric aspect is seldom acknowledged (c.f. the ignorance about calendric conditions in Kalimi 1995, 134), even among those who respect the integrity of the text in 1 Kgs 8:65; see e.g. Keil-Delitzsch (repr.), 138, and the detailed in Barthélémy 1982, 354f.”
his dynasty; “So there was gathered much people together, who stopped all the fountains, and the brook that ran through the midst of the land, saying, Why should the kings of Assyria come, and find much water?” (2 Chron 32:4)

It is then highly likely that the water drawing ceremony celebrated in Isaiah 12:3 was added to Sukkoth during the reign of Hezekiah and that the Psalms of Degrees (steps/ascents) were composed/redacted to be sung on this festal occasion. The Hebrew intensive plural is used in Isaiah (wells of salvation). There was only one well 7 and it had been detoured by Hezekiah’s tunnel inside the cities defences. It seems then that the traditional rabbinical memory that associates the water libation with Isaiah 12:3 is correct. Hezekiah instituted this addendum to Sukkoth to celebrate the deliverance from Assyrian aggression and to pray for the blessing of water (rainfall) on the devastated and burnt land:

“A fire devours before them, And behind them a flame burns; The land is like the Garden of Eden before them, And behind them a desolate wilderness; Surely nothing shall escape them”. (Joel 2:3)

“Be glad then, you children of Zion, And rejoice in the LORD your God; For He has given you the former rain faithfully, And He will cause the rain to come down for you -- The former rain, And the latter rain in the first month”. (Joel 2:23)

“For the LORD will comfort Zion, He will comfort all her waste places; He will make her wilderness like Eden, And her desert like the garden of the LORD; Joy and gladness will be found in it, Thanksgiving and the voice of melody”. (Isa.51:3)

Joy and thanksgiving was found again....and the voice of melody;

“The LORD was ready to save me; Therefore we will sing my songs (Hezekiah’s songs) with stringed instruments All the days of our life, in the house of the LORD”. (Isa 38:20)

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7 The source of the pool of Siloam (inside the city) was the Gihon spring (outside of the city). The Gihon spring later became known as the “Virgin Spring” through a legendary association with the Virgin Mary. Surely it is the height of irony and coincidence (sic) that the Immanuel prophecy was given here!
The Fifteen Steps

James W. Thirtle\(^8\) proposed that the fifteen *Psalms of Degrees* come from the Hezekiah period and are written to celebrate the fifteen years of extension granted to him. On this occasion the sign given was the reversal of the shadow on the “sundial” by ten *degrees* (2 Kgs.20:8-11);

“And Hezekiah said unto Isaiah, What shall be the sign that the LORD will heal me, and that I shall go up into the house of the LORD the third day? And Isaiah said, This sign shall thou have of the LORD, that the LORD will do the thing that he hath spoken: shall the shadow go forward ten degrees, or go back ten degrees? And Hezekiah answered, It is a light thing for the shadow to go down ten degrees: nay, but let the shadow return backward ten degrees. And Isaiah the prophet cried unto the LORD: and he brought the shadow ten degrees backward, by which it had gone down in the dial of Ahaz.”

The same Hebrew word is employed in the Psalm title “Song of Degrees”; also for “degrees” \(^9\) in 2 Kgs.20:8-11 and the same word is employed for *sundial*. When he died, Hezekiah was buried in “the upper (same word) tombs” (2 Chron.32:33/NKJ), thus, even in death, associating Hezekiah with his miraculous sign. The sense of the word is “to go up” or “ascend” in a literal sense by using steps (i.e., by increments) or by “degrees” as in the old English of the KJV. The “sundial” of Ahaz was therefore a staircase leading up to the temple and the hour of worship would probably have been determined by the interplay of shadows cast on the steps by adjacent walls etc. For example, we might expect that a certain act of worship might be scheduled to take place when the shadow was on the fifth step (degree).

Objections considered

Some commentators presume that the interpretation of “Songs of Ascent (Degrees)” indicate a pilgrimage upwards (to Jerusalem) and therefore paraphrase the Hebrew as “A Pilgrimage Song.”\(^10\) Another common interpretation is that, since these psalms are likely post-exilic, they may come from the time of Nehemiah, and thus the *tAl\[šî* refer to those in exile returning, that is, going back up to Jerusalem. As Goulder says, “The word *tAl* is common for a step; but it is also used at Ezra 7.9 for an expedition of exiles returning to Palestine.”\(^11\) The songs, according to this view, are meant to accompany pilgrims as they approach and eventually

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\(^9\) Literally “in the steps”; *tAl* (בָּמהַעַלְוֹת) and “A Song of Ascents”; *šî tAl* (שִׁר tAl) from *tAl* (עֶלְוֹת) ; ascend/steps/degrees etc.


stand inside the city (cf. Ps 122:1-2). Apart from the superscriptions, though, the theme of pilgrimage is simply not part of many of these psalms.

The Hebrew of the Songs of Ascents is thought to display late (post-exilic) features (šē instead of ʾāšer and other Aramaisms)\(^\text{12}\) and because of this the collection is given a late date. Goulder, for example, endeavours to link them directly to the first person narrative from the book of Nehemiah. His four (characteristically bold) propositions are worth quoting in full, (1) The Songs of Ascents are a unity, coming from the hand of a single author. (2) The author of the Songs composed them to celebrate the achievement of Nehemiah. (3) Psalms 120-27 follow the stories in the original, first-person, so-called Nehemiah memoir, Neh. 1.1-7.5a, in sequence, as do 133-34 its continuation in Neh. 12.27-43; 128-32 follow that part of the original Nehemiah ‘memoir’ for which Neh. 7.5b-12.26 has been substituted—principally Neh. 13.4-31, which has been displaced. (4) Nehemiah’s ‘memoir’ was in fact his testimony, proclaimed to the people evening and morning through the feast of Tabernacles in 445; and the Songs of Ascents were responses to those testimonies, sung at the fifteen services through the week.\(^\text{13}\)

Zenger does not find his evidence compelling and remarks that Goulder’s proposals (along with others) suffer from two fundamental methodological deficits: (1) They do not reconstruct the history of the psalms’ origins from the psalms themselves but import them into the text from outside. That, of course, is the general problem involved in the historical dating of texts when there is no existing external evidence. (2) They extract individual aspects of the psalms and use them as the basis for a general hypothesis.

Day employs the same linguistic argument to determine a late date for many of the Songs of Ascent, “An interesting example concerns the use of the Hebrew relative particle šē instead of the normal classical Hebrew form ʾāšer. Whilst this can be early, as its presence in Judges 5 suggests (cf. v.7), the fact that it became the regular relative particle in Mishnaic Hebrew proves that it could also be a late form, and such it surely is when it occurs in the Psalter. It appears there in some of the Psalms of ascent or steps (Pss 122.3;123.2;124.1-2,6;129.6,7;133.2,3), as well as in Pss 135.2,8,10,136.23, 137.8,9 and 144.15. Of these Psalms 124, 133 and 144.12-15 already appear in Hurvitz’s list of indubitably late psalms and Psalm 135 has been adjudged post-exilic above on the basis of its reference to the ‘house of Aaron’ in v.19 (cf. Ps.133.2), whilst Psalm 137 clearly reflects the experience of exile. Add to this the observation that all the instances of še in Psalms occur in the last third of the Psalter, where cumulative evidence indicates that a large number of late psalms are concentrated, and the case becomes overwhelming that all psalms containing še are no earlier than the exile, and apart from Psalm 137 \(^\text{14}\) are very likely post-exilic”.\(^\text{15}\)


\(^{13}\) Goulder, “Songs of Ascents and Nehemiah,” 43.

\(^{14}\) Day considers that Psalm 137 was written during the exile not afterwards.

The same linguistic argument is used to accord a late (post-exilic) date to Song of Songs and Ecclesiastes, however, we noted in an earlier article that linguistic evidence alone cannot be decisive for late dating, especially since scholars such as Rendsburg has identified northern linguistic Hebrew features in some of these Psalms (e.g. Pss 132,133). In that article it was proposed that the influx of northern refugees and pilgrims during the reign of Hezekiah could explain the inclusion of northern Israeli linguistic characteristics.\(^\text{16}\)

Leon Liebreich believes that these Psalms are related, directly or indirectly, to four key words of the Priestly Blessing \(^\text{17}\) but Zenger remarks; “Liebreich’s observation that Psalms 120-134 are related to the Aaronic blessing is correct in principle, but it by no means explains the overall program of their composition. Above all, the close linking of the collection to the course of the Temple liturgy posited by Liebreich is rather implausible. In contrast to Num 6:24-26, Psalms 120-134 also lack the theologoumenon of “YHWH’s countenance,” which speaks against a direct correlation of the two texts.”\(^\text{18}\)

**Composition**

The fact that four of these psalms (122, 124, 131 and 133) are linked in their ascriptions to David, and one (127) to Solomon would seem to weigh against common authorship – either by a single person or a “school” of inspired composers.\(^\text{19}\) However, the number of unifying features in this small collection leads Haley to remark that, “The links between these psalms are so pervasive that if these do not come from the pen of a single author, or perhaps school, then they certainly have a common redactor”.\(^\text{20}\)

Haley reproduces Hendrik Viviers diagram (Figure 1, below) \(^\text{21}\) and summarizes; “In his article “The Coherence of the Ma’alot Psalms,” Hendrik Viviers has done a great service by distilling enormous amounts of research, including much of Seybold’s monograph, into a single article. He notes several of these other unifying factors including the noticeably shorter length of these psalms, a network of word repetitions, similar figures of speech, and the pervasive theme of trust in YHWH”.\(^\text{22}\)

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\(^{19}\) The “men of Hezekiah” (Prov.25:1); these were scribes from Judah and Northern Israel


\(^{22}\) Ibid, 95
Figure 1: Thematic and Verbal Connections in the Collection

Whether or not some of these fifteen Psalms were originally composed by David, or whether they were dedicated to him,23 the inter-textual connections between these Psalms point to intensive redaction to adapt them as a collection suitable to the reign of Hezekiah.

Conclusion

The ascription “Songs of Ascent” (Degrees/Steps) points to the reign of Hezekiah and the singing of Psalms on the Temple court steps leading up from Siloam during the feast of Sukkoth. Linguistic evidence is not decisive for dating these Psalms to a later period. The “Songs of Ascent” present themselves as an integrated collection. Part two in this series will continue the investigation.

Analyzing the Songs of Degrees

The table below presents a summary analysis of the Psalms of Degree (Ascent). Of course, one cannot hope to do justice to the psalms in such a short piece but the objective is not an in-depth exegesis but, rather, a consideration of the main arguments for and against the late dating of these psalms. This article (and the previous article) places the Psalms of Degrees in the reign of Hezekiah with the Assyrian crisis forming the background to the Psalms.

Dating the Old Testament

Many arguments for a late date (postexilic) are based on linguistic grounds and the table column (see the next page) with the heading ‘Davis’ comments found in Dating the Old

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23 The meaning of the Hebrew phrase “ledavid” (for/of David) has been much discussed. Traditionally, it was taken to denote Davidic authorship. In modern scholarship, it has often been taken to mean “belonging to the Davidic collection,” while a third view is that the phrase was meant by those who added it to denote authorship, but that these editors were not guided by any reliable tradition. There is probably some truth in all three of these views. See, W. McKay and J. W. Rogerson, Psalms 1-50, (London: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 4.
Testament, (New York: RJ Communications, 2007) pages 355-360. Davis summarizes the most important scholarly arguments regarding the date of the psalms.

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<tr>
<th>Ps.</th>
<th>Davis</th>
<th>The Reign of Hezekiah</th>
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<tr>
<td>120</td>
<td>The author speaks with the voice of a Jew in the Diaspora, away from Jerusalem. This first Psalm of Ascents sets the stage for a pilgrimage to Jerusalem described in the subsequent Psalms. This suggests a post-exilic date.</td>
<td>This is thought to be a pilgrimage psalm because it mentions “dwelling in Meshech and the tents of Kedar” (120:5). This assumes that the Psalm is concerned with deportees to regions beyond Babylon but apart from the fact that this also occurred during the Hezekiah’s period, most commentators ignore the poetic intent of “Meshech”, which means “drawing out”; the same root is used to describe the drawing out of the Passover Lamb (Exod. 12:21) and for “drawing out seed” (Ps 126:6). Kedar is associated with “darkness” and “mourning” (tents of darkness). The picture emerges of being drawn out for death like the Passover Lamb and the suffering servant of Isaiah 53. The situation describes an individual (Hezekiah) advocating peace (120:7) while his opponent (Sennacherib) wants war (2 Kgs. 18:14, 19; 2 Chron. 32:1-3; Isa. 36:3, 5; 38:17). The Psalmist is in distress and facing illness, blasphemy, deceit and internal betrayal. The context of the Psalm is war not pilgrimage. Nothing in the Psalm suggests a post-exilic date.</td>
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<tr>
<td>121</td>
<td>There is no setting for this Psalm, except that it is a Psalm of Ascents looking forward to a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. The phrase, “Maker of heaven and earth” (v. 2) ties this Psalm in with other Book 5 Psalms (115:15, 124:8,134:3 and 146:6)</td>
<td>Psalm 121 is thematically similar to Isaiah 40; Lift up your eyes (40:26; 120:1); comfort (40:1); help (Ps. 121:2); creator (40:28), maker of heaven and earth (121:2); faint and weary (40:28), sleep and slumber (121:4); a shepherd (40:11), thy keeper (121:5). The switch between first (‘I’ and ‘my’ vv. 1, 2) and third person singular (‘thee’ and ‘thy’ vv.3-8) pronouns in psalm 121 makes it probable that Isaiah himself is speaking in 121:3-8. Thematic Isaiah connections point to the Hezekiah period.</td>
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24 J. Day notes; “G. Kwaakel (2002:221-31) in a recent, thorough discussion of the date of Psalm 44 is inclined to place it in the context of Sennacherib’s invasion of Judah in 701 BCE, which is not impossible. As Kwaakel 2002: 224, 227 notes, v. 12, ET 11 ‘You...have scattered us among the nations’ need not refer to 586 BCE, since Sennacherib claims to have deported 200,150 people from Judah” (p. 237). J. Day, “How Many Pre-Exilic Psalms Are There?” in In Search of Pre-Exilic Israel (ed., John Day, London: Continuum, 2004).
Some Septuagint mss. do not assign Psalm 122 to David. The phrase “house of David” in v. 5 sounds like a pre-exilic but post-David phrase. Thrones and palaces in Jerusalem sound pre-exilic, and the idea of multiple tribes going up to Jerusalem (v.4) does seem to fit with the united monarchy period more than any other. In v. 4 we have the first appearance in Psalms of an attached Hebrew “shin” particle (ש) used as a relative pronoun. The early spelling of ‘David’ (דוד) is used in the attribution, but the later spelling is used in v. 5. The evidence on this Psalm is mixed, so we date it tentatively to the latter part of David’s reign, based on the attribution and the mention of multiple tribes, with a later rework in the post-exilic period.

The phrase “house of David” could well have originated with David (cf. 2 Sam. 7:26, “house of thy servant David”) and the phrase “house of the Lord” could refer either to the Tabernacle (David’s era) or the Temple (Hezekiah’s era). The plural “thrones of the house of David” (122:5) probably refers to priestly judgment thrones established by the Davidic dynasty to administer justice (Deut. 17:8-9; cf. 2 Chron. 19:8). Isaiah associates Jerusalem with the teaching of the law and justice (Isa. 2:3-4). The Hebrew “šin” particle (ש) is not necessarily an indicator of “lateness” but of northern Israelite origins, similarly the alternative spelling of ‘David’ indicates a northern Israelite dialect. It seems then that we have a Davidic psalm that has been reworked by Hezekiah’s men (Prov. 25:1), who included northern Israelite scribes from “agrarian” and “border areas” such as Galilee of the nations (Isa. 9:1) and Ephraim and Manasseh (2 Chron. 30:1). Hezekiah themes include cult centralization and tribal unity and Isaiah’s prayer for the peace of Jerusalem (Isa. 62:6-7) which echoes Ps. 122:6. Hephzibah in Isa. 62:4 is the name of Hezekiah’s bride in 2 Kgs. 21:1.

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25 The tradition continued into the days of Josephus. In Ant. 4.218, Josephus represents Deut. 17:8-9 as follows: “But if the judges do not understand how they should give judgement about the things that have been laid before them-let them send the case up untouched to the holy city, and when the chief priests and the prophet and the senate have come together, let them give judgement as to what seems fit” (translated by Sarah Pearce, “Josephus as Interpreter of Biblical Law: The representation of the Jewish High Court of Deut. 17:8-12 according to Jewish Antiquities 4.218” JJS 46 (1995): 30-42 (32). Although the precise identity of the high court and its relation to the Mosaic model of justice is a matter of debate, it is significant that Josephus’s model assumes that Jerusalem was still the centre of justice.

26 G. A. Rendsburg suggests northern origins for some of these Psalms; “There are 36 poems in the Book of Psalms wherein linguistic evidence points very clearly too northern provenance” (G. A. Rendsburg, Linguistic Evidence for the Northern Origin of Selected Psalms (SBL Monograph, no. 43; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990), 104). K. Seybold notes that, “The linguistic evidence, including dialectical elements and a colloquial Hebrew, points to an origin in border areas and in the Diaspora, sociologically in the lower strata.” (K. Seybold, Die Wallfahrtspsalmen (Neukirchener Verlag, 1978), p. 41). L. D. Crow proposes that the Songs consist of two redactional layers: a nucleus that comes from a north-Israelite, agrarian provenance, and a Jerusalemite redactional layer that deliberately gives the ‘nuclear’ songs a new purpose, namely, to persuade northern Israelites of the Persian period to make pilgrimage to the Jerusalem temple. Among other contributions, the work adds to the corpus of psalms identified as northern and engages several methodological issues associated with the identification of a psalm’s provenance (L. D. Crow, The Songs of Ascents (Psalms 120-134): Their Place in Israelite History and Religion (SBL. Dissertation Series 148; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996), pp. xiii, 226).

27 David is found in the same early form (דוד) in Hos. 3:5 and Amos 6:5 both northern prophets being contemporary with Hezekiah’s reign, so this may indicate northern origins.
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<tr>
<td>123</td>
<td>Psalm 123 is dated to the exile due to God being enthroned in heaven (v. 1–but not Zion), and because the Psalmist sees the community as being “greatly filled with contempt” (v. 3). An attached “shin” particle is in v. 2. The argument by omission is weak as enthronement of God in heaven does not exclude enthronement in Zion, Solomon understands that the shekinah is present in both places simultaneously as the earthly cherubim is a symbolic depiction of the heavenly throne and even the “heaven of heavens” could not contain God (1 Kgs. 8:27, 30). Therefore reference to “enthronement in heaven” does not imply that the Temple has already been destroyed. When Hezekiah received the letter from Sennacherib’s messengers he went to the house of the Lord (the throne in Zion) and prayed; “O Lord of hosts, God of Israel, who art enthroned above the Cherubim. Thou art the God, thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth. Thou hast made heaven and earth...” (Isa. 37:16). Compare Ps. 123:1; “...to thee I lift up my eyes, O thou who art enthroned in the heavens”. The contempt in this Psalm refers to the ridicule and blasphemy perpetrated by Rabshakeh, “Against whom hast thou exalted thy voice, and lifted up thine eyes on high? Even against the Holy One of Israel? (2 Kgs. 19:22; Isa. 37:23).</td>
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<tr>
<td>124</td>
<td>Psalm 124 is attributed to David and has no significant evidence for dating. The existence of three “shin” particles implies that this Psalm was reworked in the post-exilic period into its current form. VV. 3-5 and 7 have 7 perfect tense verbs and no imperfects, a ratio representative of Classical rather than Early Biblical Hebrew. The phrase, “maker of heaven and earth” (v. 8) ties this Psalm in with other Book 5 Psalms (115:15, 121:2, 134:3 and 146:6). The attribution may possibly be generic (i.e. for the Davidide). The existence of “shin” particles indicates northern influence and the verb ratio is inconclusive for dating purposes. The phrases are descriptive of the Assyrian crisis: “The Lord... was on our side” (124:1); “Immanuel” (Isa. 7:14; 8:8, 10) –“God is with us” (124:2); “men rose up against us” (124:3); “their wrath was kindled against us” (124:5); “the proud waters” (cf. Assyrian ‘flood waters’ in Isa. 8:7, 8) and (124:7); “Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers: the snare is broken, and we are escaped”. The cylinder, or prism, of Sennacherib has the following statement: “Hezekiah himself like a caged bird, within Jerusalem, his royal city, I shut in.”</td>
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</table>
This Psalm’s perspective on the immovability of Mt Zion and God’s protection of his people there could fit with a pre-exilic time, perhaps after the failed Assyrian invasion. However, it is assigned to Haggai in the Peshitta, an early Aramaic translation, and it is unlikely (though not impossible) that a tradition of later authorship would develop over an earlier text. The Hebrew for “upright in heart” in v.4 (לבו יבשא) is not an expected form and probably late, as the earlier Psalms which have the same meaning use a construct form (7:10 [Heb 7:11], 11:2, 32:11, 36:10 [Heb 36:11] and 94:15). Earlier passages that say “cannot be moved” (v.1) use “bal” (בל) instead of “lo” (לא) as a negation (Ps 10:6, 46:5[Heb 46:6], 93:1, 96:10, Prov 12:3).

The Reign of Hezekiah

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ps.</th>
<th>Davis</th>
<th>The Reign of Hezekiah</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>125</td>
<td>This Psalm’s perspective on the immovability of Mt Zion and God’s protection of his people there could fit with a pre-exilic time, perhaps after the failed Assyrian invasion. However, it is assigned to Haggai in the Peshitta, an early Aramaic translation, and it is unlikely (though not impossible) that a tradition of later authorship would develop over an earlier text. The Hebrew for “upright in heart” in v.4 (לבו יבשא) is not an expected form and probably late, as the earlier Psalms which have the same meaning use a construct form (7:10 [Heb 7:11], 11:2, 32:11, 36:10 [Heb 36:11] and 94:15). Earlier passages that say “cannot be moved” (v.1) use “bal” (בל) instead of “lo” (לא) as a negation (Ps 10:6, 46:5[Heb 46:6], 93:1, 96:10, Prov 12:3).</td>
<td>The argument by omission is weak as enthronement of God in heaven does not exclude enthronement in Zion. Solomon understands that the shekinah is present in both places simultaneously as the earthly cherubim is a symbolic depiction of the heavenly throne and even the “heaven of heavens” could not contain God (1 Kgs. 8:27, 30). Therefore reference to “enthronement in heaven” does not imply that the Temple has already been destroyed. When Hezekiah received the letter from Sennacherib’s messengers he went to the house of the Lord (the throne in Zion) and prayed; “O Lord of hosts, God of Israel, who art enthroned above the Cherubim. Thou art the God, thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth. Thou hast made heaven and earth...” (Isa. 37:16). Compare Ps. 123:1; “...to thee I lift up my eyes, O thou who art enthroned in the heavens”. The contempt in this Psalm refers to the ridicule and blasphemy perpetrated by Rabshakeh, “Against whom hast thou exalted thy voice, and lifted up thine eyes on high? Even against the Holy One of Israel? (2 Kgs. 19:22; Isa. 37:23). Zion emerged inviolable from the Assyrian crisis but was destroyed by Babylon therefore this Psalm cannot be post exilic. The “rod of the wicked” (125:3) is the Assyrian rod mentioned by Isaiah; “O my people that dwell in Zion, be not afraid of the Assyrian: he shall smite thee with a rod...for yet a very little while, and the indignation shall cease” (Isa. 10:24, 25). Those who turn aside (125:3), refers to the supporters of Shebna (a Phoenician). In Isaiah’s rebuke, he repeated the word “here” three times, indicating that Shebna was a foreigner and did not belong in the courts of Judah (Isa. 22:16). According to Rabbinic tradition (Sanhedrin 26a), Shebna the scribe, influenced the royal court and attempted to persuade the people of Jerusalem to surrender to the Assyrians. Whatever the validity of the tradition, there were elements in the royal court who took advantage of Hezekiah’s illness. Peace (125:5) shall be upon Israel fits the Hezekiah’s time period (see; 2 Kgs 20:19; Isa. 39:8). The idiom “in (the) heart” appears 114x in the OT, 24x in the Psalms alone. The phrase “upright in heart” is found 9x in the Psalms (out of 14 occurrences in the OT) but the form for “upright in their hearts” is only found in Ps. 125:4. It may be an example of northern usage rather than an indication of lateness:</td>
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<td>Ps.</td>
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<tr>
<td>125</td>
<td>“To negate nouns and verbs, Phoenician /Punic used א יי/ and ה בל (along with the compound א יי בלursive lŏbal), as opposed to Hebrew א ל. For a Hebrew example from a prophet active in the north, see יי לבלד בכתמ (and they do not say in 25:10) but restoration of fortunes was particularly relevant to Hezekiah who nearly died without an heir to the throne which would have invalidated the Davidic covenant; “Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand” (Isa. 53:10). The returnees had ‘songs of joy’ (126:2 NIB/NIV) on their tongues; “The Lord was ready to save me: therefore we will sing my songs (Hezekiah’s) to the stringed instruments all the days of our life in the house of the Lord” (Isa. 38:20).</td>
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<td>continued</td>
<td>This short Psalm can be dated with high confidence. The reference to a return from captivity (v. 1) while knowing that the exile is still a reality for many (v. 4) places this Psalm in the early post-exilic period. This Psalm is also assigned to Haggai in the Peshitta.</td>
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<tr>
<td>126</td>
<td>The “returned captives” may refer to the release of the 200,150 deportees with the defeat of Assyria, but more probably the phrase “turn again our captivity” (126:1, 4) is intended figuratively as the RSV/NIV/NRS/NIB versions render the Hebrew dynamically as “restore our fortunes”. Those who were held “captive” during the siege of Jerusalem or held “captive” by death (Hezekiah) had their fortunes restored.³ The reference to sowing, reaping and precious seed (126:6) was literally applicable to the devastated land (2 Kgs. 19:29; Isa. 37:30; v. 31 a Jubilee? cf. Lev. 25:10) but restoration of fortunes was particularly relevant to Hezekiah who nearly died without an heir to the throne which would have invalidated the Davidic covenant; “Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand” (Isa. 53:10). The returnees had ‘songs of joy’ (126:2 NIB/NIV) on their tongues; “The Lord was ready to save me: therefore we will sing my songs (Hezekiah’s) to the stringed instruments all the days of our life in the house of the Lord” (Isa. 38:20).</td>
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<td>127</td>
<td>This Psalm is attributed to Solomon and leaves virtually no additional evidence for dating.</td>
<td>The prepositional prefix <em>l</em> is the same as the ascription of David in the title of Psalm 124. The ascription indicates the content (concerning Solomon) and not necessarily the authorship of the Psalm. The phrase “so he giveth his beloved sleep” (127:2) echoes Solomon’s throne name (2 Sam. 12:25) Jedidiah (‘beloved of Yahweh’) and 127:1 is stylistically similar to Proverbs (cf. Prov. 8:15; 16:9; 21:30, 31), but that is not unexpected, as Proverbs was edited by ‘Hezekiah’s men’ (Prov. 25:1). Psalm 127 is a reflection on 2 Samuel 7, where David’s desire to build a “house” for God was countered by Yahweh establishing a covenant concerning “David’s house”. Although the initial outworking of the covenant was satisfied by Solomon the promise presaged far reaching dynastic (and messianic) outcomes: “thou hast spoken also of thy servant’s house for a great while to come” (2 Sam. 7:19) and, “bless the house of thy servant that it may continue forever before thee” (v. 29). However, the reign of Hezekiah almost saw the end of the dynasty and the annulment of Davidic hope. This Psalm speaks in dynastic terms of (127:1); building the house (127:4); the heritage of children and of children supporting their father when he speaks in the gate with his enemies (127:5); a luxury denied Hezekiah when he was childless and dying (cf. “answer him not” in 2 Kings 18:36; Isa. 36:21).</td>
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<tr>
<td>128</td>
<td>This Psalm looks to be connected to Psalm 125 due to the repeated blessing, “Peace be upon Israel” (125:5 and 128:6) and the use of Zion and Jerusalem together (125:12 and 128:5)</td>
<td>Psalm 128 sets a scene of tranquility, prosperity and peace in the aftermath of the Assyrian crisis. Despite the prediction that his children would serve as eunuchs in Babylon, Hezekiah believed that Yahweh would suspend his sentence (Isa. 39:7-8) and he expresses the desire to live long enough to see his descendants prospering (128:6): “Yes, may you see your children’s children” (NKJV) and, “may you live to see your children’s children” (NIB). Hezekiah saw the birth of a son (Manasseh) but not his grandchildren. The idiomatic “eating the labour of thine hands” (128:2) refers to Jacob’s trials: “God hath seen mine affliction and the labour of my hands, and rebuked thee yesternight” (Gen. 31:42). Unlike Laban the Syrian, who was warned not to speak either ‘good or bad’ to Jacob (Gen. 31:29), Assyrian propaganda threatened Jerusalem with both eating faeces and drinking urine during the siege (2 Kgs. 18:27), or surrendering and eating figs and drinking clean water (v. 31). Yahweh “saw their affliction’ (like he did with Jacob) and rebuked the Assyrian overnight (2 Kgs. 19:35), instead of defeat, the people of Jerusalem would eat the labour of their hands.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ps.</td>
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<tr>
<td>129</td>
<td>This Psalm gives few clues as to its date. Psalms 129–131 seem to be connected, as they all contain exhortations directed to Israel. “Shin” relative pronouns appear in vv. 6 and 7.</td>
<td>A comparison with Isaiah establishes the Assyrian crisis as the context of Psalm 129: “Let all those who hate Zion be put to shame and turned back. Let them be as the grass on the housetops, which withers before it grows up, with which the reaper does not fill his hand, nor he who binds sheaves, his arms” (Ps. 129:5–7). Compare: “Therefore their inhabitants were of small power, they were dismayed and confounded: they were as the grass of the field, and as the green herb, as the grass on the housetops, and as corn blasted before it be grown up. But I know thy abode, and thy going out, and thy coming in, and thy rage against me” (Isa. 37:27–28). The Assyrians had “ploughed” the land with their burnt earth policy (cf. Joel 2:3) and sown a harvest of devastation, Hezekiah empathised with the plight of his people and lying on his death bed it felt like the Assyrian “plough” had cut furrows down his very back (129:3). However, it is poignant that the Psalm ends (129:8) with the harvest blessing pronounced by Hezekiah’s ancestor Boaz (Ruth 2:4) demonstrating that Yahweh is able to raise seed, even to the dead.</td>
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<tr>
<td>130</td>
<td>This Psalm gives few clues as to its date. The address to “Israel” alone (not Judah) in v. 7 argues against a divided kingdom or a Judah-alone pre-exilic date.</td>
<td>Hezekiah’s reformation sought a united Israel with the cult centralised in Jerusalem, so this Psalm fits the time period. Moreover, the Psalm could almost be a summary of Hezekiah’s crisis: 1. Hezekiah’s sore weeping (Isa. 38:3; 2 Kgs. 20:3), as from out of a grave or pit (Isa. 38:18). 2. “Remember now, O Lord...” (Isa. 38:3; 2 Kgs. 20:3). “Bow down thine ear and hear” (2 Kgs. 19:16). 3-4. “For thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back” (Isa. 38:17). 5-6. The certainty in Hezekiah’s mind that, unless God intervene, his life will end by the morning (Isa. 38:12–13, RSV). 7. Hezekiah’s personal hope is the nation’s hope as well. “Deliver thou us out of his hand” (2 Kgs. 19:19). 8. “The Lord was ready to save me” (Isa. 38:20) and “the remnant that are left” (2 Kings 19:4).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ps.</td>
<td>Davis</td>
<td>The Reign of Hezekiah</td>
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<td>131</td>
<td>This short Psalm is dated to the time of David based solely on the attribution. We are also assigning this Psalm to the collection of reworked Psalms due to this Psalm’s association with Psalms 129 and 130. Notice the phrase “O Israel hope in the Lord” in 131:3 and 130:7.</td>
<td>The association of this Psalm with 129 and 130 would place it in the same context as those Psalms (Hezekiah). The psalm also seems to correspond with the historical situation of David related in 1 Samuel 16-18, but the sentiments are also wholly appropriate to Hezekiah. We are most certainly dealing with original Davidic material that has been reworked to fit the circumstances of Hezekiah.</td>
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<td>132</td>
<td>This Psalm is clearly post Davidic, due to the prayer asking the Lord to remember David (v. 1 and following). It is also clearly pre-exilic, with the emphasis on the Davidic covenant and the mention of the Ark of the Covenant in v. 8 (the ark disappears during the exile). The older short spelling of David’s name is used throughout the Psalm. The early relative pronoun “zō” (זֹּ) appears in v. 12. The phrase “Mighty One of Jacob” from vv. 2 and 5 is also in Isa. 49:26 and 60:16 (and Gen. 49:24).</td>
<td>The context clearly demands a time somewhere between David and the exile (as suggested by Davis). The appeal to “remember David” employs the same Hebrew l’ prefix as the attribution of David suggesting reference to the content (not the authorship) of the psalm. Psalm 132 is a remembrance by Hezekiah of past Davidic glory under a united kingdom, a lament for present distress, and a prophecy of future blessing. The early relative pronoun “zō” (זֹּ) confirms the early origins of the psalm and possible northern influence.28 The phrase “Mighty One of Jacob” employed by Isaiah confirms the time period (Hezekiah) as does the tribal affiliation of the original blessing.29</td>
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28 “The next relevant item is the fs demonstrative pronoun כ/ כ, which appears in the following northern texts (Rendsburg 2003a:13): 2 Kgs. 6:19 כ; Hos. 7:16 כ; Ps. 132:12 כ; Qoheleth (6×) כ. Once more, the attestations span centuries, in this case, from the early-monarchic-period Elisha narrative until the Persian-period book of Qoheleth, with two instances in the interval”. G. A. Rendsburg, “Northern Hebrew through Time: From the Song of Deborah to the Mishnah” in Dictionary in Biblical Hebrew, (eds. C. L. Miller-Naude and Z. Zevit; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2012), 339-359 (345). However, for a qualification of Rendsburg’s view, D. K. Wilson Jr. says, “With the evidence at hand, has an unquestionable answer been given to the demonstrative כ (and כ)? Surely, it must be late and based on Aramaic כ. No, it is a northerness based on Phoenician כ. Or is it a colloquialism, since כ is the prevalent form in Mishnaic Hebrew? Are all northernisms colloquial, or all colloquialisms norther? The verdict is still out”. Douglas Keyes Wilson, Jr., An Investigation into the Linguistic Evidence and Classification of Dialect Variation in Biblical Hebrew (Dissertation Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary, 1996), 140. From the authors point of view the most relevant usage of “zō” (זֹּ) is in Exod. 15:13 which we definitely class as early (if not northern).

29 The phrase occurs in the blessing of Joseph, who did not form a tribe, but whose sons (Ephraim and Manasseh) formed the northern tribes. Those tribes were targeted by Hezekiah’s reformation: “And Hezekiah sent to all Israel and Judah, and wrote letters also to Ephraim and Manasseh, that they should come to the house of the Lord at Jerusalem, to keep the Passover unto the Lord God of Israel”(2 Chron. 30:1). The title “Mighty One of Jacob”, first found in the Pentateuch (Gen 49:24) probably reflects northern tribal usage. Rendsburg observes, “Some poems within the prose text reflect an older stratum of Hebrew and may hark back to a poetic epic tradition. And a few passages, especially those concerning the northern tribes, contain elements of Israelian Hebrew. Most importantly, there are no indications of Late Biblical Hebrew in the Pentateuch”. G. A. Rendsburg, “Pentateuch, Linguistic Layers” in The Encyclopaedia of Hebrew Language and Linguistics, 3:60-63 (63).
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Ps.</th>
<th>Davis</th>
<th>The Reign of Hezekiah</th>
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<tr>
<td>133</td>
<td>This is one of the Psalms that we put in the category of Davidic/reworked. The reference to Mount Hermon in v. 3 supports the idea that the Psalm originated with David, since Hermon was lost to the Davidic monarchy as early as the time of Rehoboam (931 BCE). The two “shin” relative pronouns in vv. 2 and 3 are evidence of later language.</td>
<td>This is probably a “Davidic/reworked” psalm but the reference to Hermon is not necessarily an anachronism as it is intended as a northern counterweight to the southern Zion. The Psalm encompasses the land from north to south with the Hezekiah theme of unity and brotherhood of worship (at Zion). The original Davidic setting seems to be a year of Jubilee blessing and the anointing of a new high priest (Zadok?) which corresponds with the Jubilee sign accorded Hezekiah.</td>
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| 134 | This short Psalm gives few clues as to its date of writing. The phrase, “Maker of heaven and earth” (v. 3) ties this Psalm in with other Book 5 Psalms (115:15, 121:2, 124:8 and 146:6) | The phrase “Maker of heaven and earth” (v. 3) reflects Hezekiah’s response to Rabshakeh’s blasphemy (2 Kgs 19:12): “Thou art the God, even thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth; thou hast made heaven and earth” (2 Kgs 19:15; 2 Chron. 32:19; Isa. 37:36). This, the concluding psalm of the fifteen Songs of Degrees, deals with a night of service by the priests in the Temple. Note the progression, |
|     |       | Psalm 132: Blessing for Zion  |
|     |       | Psalm 133: Blessing in Zion   |
|     |       | Psalm 134: Blessing from Zion  |

J. W. Thirtle proposed that the Psalms of Degrees all belonged to the Hezekiah era and that many of the Korah Psalms also belonged within the same time frame. His work has more recently been progressed by G. Booker and H. A. Whittaker in their commentary on the Psalms. The contextual arguments for dating these psalms to Hezekiah are powerful, whereas the linguistic arguments for dating these psalms long after Hezekiah are unconvincing. On contextual evidence alone we can safely date these psalms to Hezekiah. The linguistic evidence is at best open to interpretation and even if linguistic forms can sometimes be proven to be of later origin that does not exclude updating as no language is static, and despite the sanctity of the copyists’ remit for a literal transcription, the clarification of archaic language or syntax by copyists or updating for liturgical purposes (think here of updating hymn books) cannot be discounted.

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30 Compare Lev 25:21, “command the blessing” commencing a Jubilee year on the Day of Atonement (the “full year” of Lev 25:29) with 133:3 “command the blessing”.
The book of Job
Book review of Job by Andrew Perry

The Summary on the back of the book (first edition) offers the following description of the contents: “This book (412 pages) offers a chapter by chapter commentary on the Book of Job using the KJV, RSV and NASB versions of the Bible. It compares Job with the Book of Isaiah and argues that Job, in addition to being a story about a patriarch, is also a prophetic and political commentary about Hezekiah and Judah during the days of the Assyrian Crisis. This prophetic and political discourse is set within the parabolic framework of the prologue and epilogue, in which the details of the patriarch Job’s experience have been chosen in such a way so as to represent Hezekiah and Judah.”

Hezekiah and Job

Andrew Perry believes that Job is a political dialogue set in a parabolic fashion as a patriarchal story. In essence Job is an apologetic treatise defending Hezekiah’s attitudes and opposing the policies of internal opponents. In addition, the book explains the reasons why Hezekiah suffered – he suffered because God sought to demonstrate Hezekiah’s disinterested righteousness.

Particular attention is devoted to the prologue (Job 1 and 2) and the introduction of the “Sons of God” usually attributed by scholars to Canaanite mytho-poetic descriptions of the heavenly council, but understood by Perry as a reference to the people of Israel. These “Sons of God”, viewed from a heavenly perspective are the same as the “sons of Job” when viewed from an earthly perspective. Hezekiah was concerned with reinstituting temple worship – his overtures to the northern tribes and his emphasis on cult centralization are reflected in “Job’s sons” meeting on feast days, in their “own houses” and Job’s (sic) concern for their conduct. Their sudden destruction equates to the Assyrian invasion and Hezekiah’s unmerited suffering is mirrored by the suffering of Job. The opinions of Job’s “friends” are based on the theological and political positions held inside Hezekiah’s Jerusalem.

In order to establish this parabolic reading of Job, Andrew Perry subjects Job to intertextual analysis. Lexical and syntactic coincidence between Job and other texts does not of itself establish an allusion – particularly as similar themes are bound to use similar language. However, although intertextual links can sometimes be tenuous and often can (individually) easily be explained away, the cumulative weight of evidence makes the case overwhelming – especially when placed within a larger contextual framework.

There is a political and military dimension to the suffering of Job suggested by the inter-textuality of Job with the Hebrew prophets. For example, the “Sons of God” in Job finds its scriptural source in the Genesis flood narrative (Gen. 6:1-4). The description of waters, overflowing inundation and flooding is employed throughout Job and also by the prophet Isaiah as a metaphor for the Assyrian invasion.

Particularly relevant is that Job’s wealth and his subsequent calamities are described echoing Deuteronomy 28 (Job 1:2-3=Deut 28:11, Job 1:14-19=Deut 28:31-32). “The echo interprets the parable by matching the story of Job to a literal set of national curses, and it directs the reader to read the story of Job symbolically – to see in the dialogue a discussion of Yahweh’s providential dealings with the nation.” [p.53]
First Day - Speeches

The individual speeches of Job, Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar and Elihu are all analysed in depth using the same intertextual technique – the cumulative evidence resulting in a strong case for a parabolic reading. The main themes of the speeches on the first day are summarised by Perry as follows [p.205-207]:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job (3)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Claims to be a Davidic King because of the “Night of Conception Prophecy”. Expresses fear and dread of “the Oppressor”. Describes “the internal opponents”.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Eliphaz (4-5)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Job has been a good Davidic King. “The Oppressor” is as good as broken; do not rely on Egypt. “Internal opponents” will be consumed like a garment by “a Moth”. If Job turns to God, he will be restored.</td>
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<th>Job (6-7)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Explains the scale of his calamity—it is out of proportion to anything he has done. The “internal opponents” offer dead ends. Explains why the friends are failing him; appeals to God.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Bildad (8)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Job is too pre-occupied with Assyria. “The Hypocrite”, one of Job’s “internal opponents”, will come to nothing, Seek God, confess your sin, and he will not cast you away.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Job (9-10)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Recognizes God’s control over affairs; Agrees Egyptian help is futile. But God’s action against him is unjust. “The internal opponents” control the government; they have God’s favour.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Zophar (11)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Job has “lied” to the people with his policy of appeasement. Job is to blame for the crisis as well as “the internal opponents”. Job is not righteous and should repent of his sin.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Job 12-14</th>
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<tr>
<td>The political situation is bad and unjust towards me. Friends should not impugn his integrity. Friends are as much a victim of the crisis.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Eliphaz (15)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Scandal of Job’s defence; he has sinned and he has meddled in diplomatic talks. Invader has come despite Assyrian treaties; Egyptian treaties are futile. “The Wicked One” i.e. “the Hypocrite”, will come to nothing.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Job (16-17)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I have always advocated sole reliance on God. I have not supported “the internal opponents”.</td>
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</table>
God has brought about this calamity and it is unjust.

**Bildad (18)**

The land will not be forsaken by God. “The internal opponents” their temples, prophets will be vanquished. The “light” of “the Wicked Ones” will be quenched.

**Job (19)**

But God has “overthrown” me and taken away the crown. And many groups have deserted me. Still, I know that my redeemer lives and he will rise upon “the dust”.

**Zophar (20)**

The ultimate fate of “the Hypocrite” is to flee. Before his final end, the Egyptian policy of “the Hypocrite” will fail. “The Hypocrite” will try to patch-up his Egyptian policy. The Assyrian siege will seal his fate.

**Eliphaz (22)**

Look, the plight of the nation is your fault. The plight of the nation is the result of failures of kingship. If you repent, you can have hope, even if you have not sought Egyptian help.

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**Second Day - Speeches**

Andrew Perry offers the following conclusion [pp.283-285] at the end of the second day of speeches (Job 23-Job 31).....The question arises as to the role and function of this continued avowal of innocence. Obviously, it is important for the author of Job to present Job as innocent; this is an important idea that he shares with Isaiah’s picture of the Suffering Servant. But the prologue proposes that the issue of the book is whether Job serves God for nothing, that is, whether there is such a thing as disinterested righteousness in this life. The book is not about whether or not Job *is* innocent, but whether he will *remain* innocent under trial. His continued avowal of innocence is therefore a puzzle given the explicitly stated purpose of the book.

Expressing this problem differently, disinterested righteousness is *not* a topic of discussion between the dialogue participants. Instead, the discussion has concerned whether Job is innocent and suffering undeservedly. The presupposition of this discussion is that suffering as such is not undeserved and that there must be a reason for Job’s suffering, i.e. his sin. The whole dialogue revolves around his crux, and Job and the friends share its implied doctrine of retribution.

This problem can be resolved in the following way: the author is presenting the whole dialogue as an example of disinterested service. The content of the dialogue shows that Job continues to serve God with nothing as a reward. He continues to serve God because he passionately discusses God; he wants to know the reason for his suffering; he wants to meet God and hear his answer. Job does not curse God, nor does he renounce his beliefs concerning God. Job and the friends believe the doctrine of retribution (the good receive rewards, the wicked are punished), but the book tests this doctrine in the person of Job: does he behave only in accordance with this doctrine. The friends try to get him to behave in accordance with this doctrine by getting to repent of some sin and receiving God’s favour in return. In response, Job maintains his innocence.
Accordingly, the dialogue illustrates disinterested service, because Job sits on an ash-heap – he has nothing and yet he continues to defend God. Job defends God by insisting that he will save Judah and Jerusalem, even though he does not understand precisely how this can be done as things stand, or why he and the nation have been afflicted. By contrast, the friends do not defend God; they contradict God by insisting Job has sinned and as a consequence he and the nation are being punished.

In parabolic terms, Job is a righteous Davidic king in Jerusalem, suffering as such, and with nothing in return for that suffering, facing a hopeless situation. The “nothing” offered by Satan is the absence of any hope in respect of the promises that God has made to the fathers of the nation. This demonstration of “nothing” is complete, because Hezekiah faces the dissolution of his kingdom and captivity. While he might have accepted the captivity of the Northern Kingdom, the end of Judah represents a more devastating event. It means that the promises to Abraham, to Moses and to David are empty. In order to demonstrate this emptiness, Satan devastates the land with overwhelming force and eliminates all hope of deliverance.

In the face of this catastrophe, Hezekiah could have allied with Assyria or Egypt and chosen vassal status (following Ahaz’s policies), but this would have rejected God. These are the policies of the “wicked ones.” It would have shown that in the absence of hope, there is no point serving the God of Israel. The fact that Job struggles to understand his affliction and the wisdom of God shows a continued disinterested service on his part.

The implication of Satan’s challenge is that innocence is a function of self-interest. The compliment to this supposition is illustrated by the friends who link repentance to a restoration of favour; atoning for guilt therefore is as much an act of self-interest as seeking to avoid guilt. The challenge of the narrative is therefore carried forward into the dialogue: Job can ameliorate his circumstances with confession, but only at the price of displaying self-interest; no other possibility is presented. The deity can be vindicated only if Job maintains his innocence in the face of destitution i.e. with no rewards in this life and no hope for the future.

The prologue offers closure to the dynamic set up by the challenge of Satan, insofar as Job affirms that “good and evil” alike come from God (Job 2:10). However, the dialogue is not inconsistent with this closure because it illustrates the challenge worked out in a mental conflict experienced by Job. The dialogue extends the test placed upon Job beyond that of his “boil”, and his wife’s advice, to a persistent offer of self-interest by the friends. The expectation engendered in the reader by the prologue and the dialogue is either that Job will admit some infraction and be restored to favour and thus vindicate Satan, or he will maintain his innocence in a state of continuing destitution, and thus vindicate the deity.

The book of Job therefore is not about the problem of innocent suffering, and no answer is needed from God to explain Job’s suffering; no justification is needed. The prologue has set up the question of disinterested service, and the book needs to demonstrate this, and it does so insofar as it records no fall from service on the part of Job.

What is required to complete the book is an explanation of why God has brought the Assyrian into the land – to shake the wicked out of the land (Job 38:13), and how God will miraculously deliver Job from the calamity that has come upon him.
God’s Speeches

Andrew Perry understands Job 38 symbolically—not as a description of the Genesis creation—but of the “creation of Israel”—in particular referring to the Passover deliverance of Israel from Egypt at the Red Sea, which in turn becomes paradigmatic for the Passover deliverance under Hezekiah. Job had darkened counsel “without knowledge” this resonates intertextually with Isaiah’s warning: “therefore my people are gone into captivity, because they have no knowledge” (Isa 5.13). The “earth” in this “creation” account is employed metonymically for Israel (cf. Jer 4:23-26) and the motif of the laying of the foundational cornerstone (of the earth) is also a reference to the divine purpose for Israel (Isa 28:16).

The creatures in Job 39 are symbolically employed for nations (i.e. the lioness is typical of Assyria) or individuals (the raven typical for God’s prophet). The “behemoth” (beast) of the last speech is a reference to a singular beast called “Leviathan” — “this creature is first and foremost a political animal” [389]. Perry understands this as a further reference to Assyria, as suggested by Shalmaneser III himself:

“(I am) Shalmaneser, the legitimate king, the king of the world, the king without rival, the "Great Dragon", the only power within the (four) rims (of the earth)”

Conclusion

The importance attached to the axial age for the composition of Scripture cannot be understated. In a previous review of Old Testament problems we observed that Hezekiah does not receive sufficient recognition for his contribution to the Old Testament cannon, a deficiency that Thirtle corrects:

“He received letters from Sennacherib (2 Kings 19.14; “Chron.32.17; Isa.37.14). Did he write nothing? Assuredly he was a mighty patron of letters. At his right hand was Isaiah, whom we must regard as a great author, and he had court officers that were equal to all demands of a strenuous time (2 Kings 18.18; 19.2). Moreover, in a book wherein we should hardly expect to trace his influence, we read that certain Proverbs of Solomon were ‘copied out’ by ‘the men of Hezekiah’ (Prov.25.1). Even though there is no reason to believe that Jewish tradition hands on much that is reliable from so remote a period, yet we may recall for what it is worth that the Talmudists attribute to Hezekiah the redaction of Isaiah, Proverbs, the Song of Solomon, and Ecclesiastes. Certainly it is but reasonable to suppose that the king who ‘commanded the Levites to praise Jehovah in the words of David, and of ‘Asaph the seer’ (2 Chron.29.30) would have literary resources commensurate with such an undertaking—involving selection and ‘copying out’ as well as original composition.”

According to Thirtle the 15 Songs of Degrees (Ps.120-134) relate to the 15-year life extension granted to Hezekiah—when the sundial regressed 10 degrees. Our own investigation has demonstrated that even if Canticles (Song of Songs) is not directly attributable to Hezekiah, it at least employs him as the subject matter. Moreover, in agreement with the Talmudists internal evidence suggests that Ecclesiastes was also

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1 James William Thirtle, Old Testament Problems; Critical Studies in the Psalms and Isaiah (1907) p.25-26 Talmudic source quoted as Baba Bathra, 15a
edited by Hezekiah’s scribes. Ecclesiastes is essentially based on the life of king Uzziah — Hezekiah’s great grandfather. It comes as no surprise then to find that the book of Job (like Canticles) is a dramatization of the Hezekiah crisis. We can even hypothesize that it was publicly performed (like Canticles?) as a play or a recitation.

Our review cannot hope to do justice to the intertextual analysis that is presented in the book – Bibliardion highly recommends the book as a valuable contribution to our understanding of a crucial period of Israelite history. Andrew Perry has added another dimension to the reading of Job – it is no longer abstract wisdom literature, but providential wisdom based on a very real political crisis. With this prophetic reading Perry manages to reconfigure the conventional approach.
Qoheleth

(Ecclesiastes)
Qohelet

The book of Ecclesiastes takes its name from the Greek Septuagint (LXX) word ἐκκλησία or assembly which became Ecclesiastes in the Latin Vulgate and in English. ἐκκλησία is related to the Hebrew verb qahal, —to assemble. It is both the title of the book in Hebrews and the name of the chief speaker of the book.¹ The Hebrew is the word Qohelet (also spelled Qohelet, Qohelet, Koheleth) and it is usually referred to as Qohelet in scholarly articles. Qohelet can be used as a name or a title. As a title it seems to mean a —caller of assemblies, that is, one who calls the assembly together for teaching—teacher, —speaker, or —Preacher, are all dynamic renderings. Although the word “Qoheleth” is understood as masculine, its form is Qal, feminine participle. Elsewhere the root qhl is always Hip-il or Nip-al (causative or reflexive/passive). Perhaps the feminine ending denotes the personification of wisdom.

What is the message of Qohelet?

The ancient Rabbis taught that Qohelet was “joyous” (most) modern scholars understand it as cynical and pessimistic and view the epilogue (often attributed to a different author) as a sort of “corrective” on the overall message of the book.² However, before the book can be properly interpreted we must understand why it was written and when it was written. The available options are that it was either written by Solomon in the early monarchy (ca. 970 BC) or by an “unknown Jew” in the late post-exilic era (ca.300 BC).³ La Sor holds that “The serious questioning of beliefs and values of ancient Israel points to a time where prophetic activist had crested and vital hope in God’s active presence and power had waned... both vocabulary and sentence structure are post-exilic, more closely akin to Mishnaic style than any other Old Testament book.”⁴ The oldest texts of Qohelet are two Dead Sea Scrolls: 4Q109 and 4Q110. Portions of four chapters are represented. Scroll 4Q109 has been dated to 175-150 B.C., ruling out any possibility of an exceptionally late date for Qohelet.⁵ The late post-exilic date is justified on the hand of Late Hebrew (LH) linguistic features and the early date is justified because Solomon is the champion of “wisdom literature” and Ecclesiastes seems to demonstrate many affinities with the reign of Solomon

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¹ ἐκκλησία/ qahal (Eccl:1 in LXX and MT)
² Craig Bartholomew, sums up the situation as follows; “A certain consensus has emerged out of a historical critical interpretation of Ecclesiastes. Very few scholars defend Solomon’s authorship nowadays: most regard Ecclesiastes as written by an unknown Jew around the late third century BC. Most scholars regard the book as a basic unity with the exception of the epilogue. However, as regards Ecclesiastes’ structure, message, relationship to OT traditions and to international wisdom there is no consensus”. Craig Bartholomew, “Qoheleth in the Canon? Current Trends in the Interpretation of Ecclesiastes,” Themelios 24.3 (May 1999): 4-20, p.6
³ Brevard Childs says, “Indeed Koheleth’s sayings do not have an independent status, but function as a critical corrective, much as the book of James serves in the New Testament as an essential corrective to misunderstanding the Pauline letters” (Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979], 588). Walther Zimmerli argues that Qohelet’s value is in its assessment of the wisdom tradition as incomplete and insufficient (“The Place and Limit of the [sic] Wisdom in the Framework of the Old Testament Theology,” SJT 17 [1964]: 157–58)
⁵ Choon-Leong Seow, Ecclesiastes: Volume 18 of Anchor Yale Bible, (Yale University Press, 1997), 6. La Sor states that, “a date later than 200 is ruled out, both by Ecclesiastes… and by fragments of Qohelet among Qumran scrolls” (Ibid, 499).
(although he is never mentioned by name). Hill and Walton argue that if, indeed, it was Solomon writing to identify himself he would do so boldly rather than by using evasive techniques. The message of Qohelet will remain elusive unless we can sort out the problem of dating and authorship.

**Dating and authorship**

Critical to the question of dating is the question of language. However, previously a twofold conclusion was drawn – (1) Linguistic features by themselves are insufficient for dating texts as they require supporting inter-textual evidence – (2) Linguistic anomalies can be accounted for by the sudden introduction of dialect or colloquialisms (such as northern Israelite Hebrew) rather than by gradual dispersion and replacement. The language of Qohelet will be examined anon but for now we must suffice with presenting an a priori conclusion – (3) Language, syntax and orthography are not static it is quite possible for older language to be revised and updated.

**Who wrote Qohelet?**

The following “working hypothesis” will be presented in this series of articles; (1) Qohelet is based on the memoirs of a king (2) Those memoirs were revised in the post-exilic period as Qohelet demonstrates awareness of post-exilic books and some of the language of the original memoir was updated then. Ecclesiastes is philosophical “wisdom literature” and although Qohelet is the author his tract is based on memoirs and reminiscences of a historical king that were diligently preserved. (3) Qohelet functions as both the “frame-narrator” and also speaks for the “king” (whose sources he had access to).

**Which king did Qohelet speak for?**

Traditionalist will answer that the “king” in Qohelet is Solomon. Archer boldly states that he is prepared “to demonstrate that the incidental allusions to the contemporary scene reflect

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8 We might think here of the book of Job which A. Perry (in my view) has successfully demonstrated as a parabolic dramatization of the philosophical question facing king Hezekiah (the question of disinterested service i.e., service without immediate reward in the face of suffering). A. Perry, Job, (Willow Publications, 2009).

9 Longman observes; “Furthermore, the Teacher, even if he was Solomon, is clearly not the author of the book of Ecclesiastes, in spite of some popularly held interpretations that insist on this view. There is a second voice in the book—that of an unnamed wise man who uses the Teacher’s words and life story to teach the dangers of embracing “under the sun” perspectives (12:12). This unnamed wise man talks about the Teacher in 1:1-11 and 12:8-14. By contrast, the Teacher’s distinct voice can be recognized by the fact that he speaks in the first person in 1:12–12:7. The second wise man, whose words frame the Teacher’s speech, could be called the “frame narrator” (Fox 1977)”. Tremper Longman III, “Ecclesiastes Song of Songs” in the *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary, Volume 6*, (Ed., P.W. Comfort, Tyndale House: Carol Stream, Illinois, 2006), 254
conditions known to obtain only during the reign of Solomon and at no other time". This is an exaggeration especially as Solomon’s “idealized” reign ended in apostasy resulting in a divided monarchy. Even many conservative scholars (Luther, Moses Stuart, Delitzsch, Young, and Kidder - to name a few) reject Solomonic authorship. Intertextual evidence (to be examined anon) weighs heavily against Solomon but perhaps the greatest objection against Solomonic authorship is his lack of repentance. It is often stated that Ecclesiastes itself is evidence of his repentance but that is circular reasoning. Another enormously successful royal will be proposed as the king of Qohelet.

Solomon as king?

Longman and Dillard state that, “A careful reading of the book will take note of other indications that Qohelet is not Solomon. For instance, Qohelet’s statement in 1:16, “I have grown and increased in wisdom more than anyone who has ruled over Jerusalem before me,” is strange to imagine in the mouth of Solomon. After all, there was only one other Israelite king, his father David, who ruled in Jerusalem before him. It is inconceivable that he would be thinking of the Jebusite rulers who preceded David (Young, IOT, 348). Young also points out that the use of the past tense in 1:12, “I . . . was king over Israel in Jerusalem,” is unlikely for Solomon, since there was never a time when he was older but not ruling as king (348). Also: The background of the book does not fit the age of Solomon. It was a time of misery and vanity (1:2–11); the splendor of Solomon’s age was gone (1:12–2:26); a time of death had begun for Israel (3:1–15); injustice and violence were present (4:1–3); there was heathen tyranny (5:8–19); death was preferred to life (7:1); “one man ruled over other men to their hurt” (8:9). (Young, IOT, 348, based on Hengstenberg)’

Elsewhere the author writes from the perspective of a subject powerless to redress the injustices and oppression perpetrated by higher officials. This seems strange when we consider that it was Solomon who introduced forced labor. The mention of horses as commonplace (10:7) is unusual as they were introduced by Solomon and the reference to dreams as vanities (5:7) is contradictory in the light of Solomon’s dream-vision. In places, he speaks about kings as if he were no longer one of them (4:13 and 8:2-4, 10:20). The only evidence pro Solomon is to him being “king over Israel” (1:12) which points to the united monarchy, but this seems incongruous and superfluous when placed against the prior introduction;

11 On Solomon’s apostasy and lack of repentance see Solomonic and the Sons of God chapter; also produced as an article in P. Wyns, “Solomon and the Sons of God” in The Christadelphian Journal of Biblical Interpretation, [JETS],(eds., A. Perry, T. Gaston, P. Wyns, Willow Publications: Vol.3. No.4. Oct 2009). There was a Jewish legend that Solomon left his throne, which was then inhabited by the demon Ashmodai, wandered about as a madman, and then repented of his apostasy before he returned to the throne. There is no biblical warrant for this story. Solomon slept with his fathers, and was buried (1 Kgs.11:41) this does not imply that Solomon repented, as a similar phrase is employed throughout 1 and 2 Kings (25 times) also for wicked kings such as Ahab (1 Kings 22:40). Furthermore 1 Chron.28:9 warns that those who forsake God will be cast of forever this despite the promise to lengthen his days (1 Kgs.3:14) if he walked in God’s ways (Solomon did not live to a great age).
12 Cook recognizes it as a notorious crux and translates it as a present-perfect ‘I, Qoheleth have been king over Israel in Jerusalem’ rather than a present state, ‘I am king’ or a past-stative interpretation (‘I was king’) as adopted by many translations (e.g., ASV, NIV, NJPS). John A. Cook, The Verb in Qoheleth (corrected draft); Ashbury Theological Seminary, 19-20
The words of Qoheleth, son of David, King of Jerusalem (1:1).

I Qoheleth was king over Israel in Jerusalem (1:12).

Delitzsch remarks on the peculiarity of the expression as Solomon is called “king of Israel” (2Kgs. 23:13 cf. Neh. 13:26) but never “king in Jerusalem”. Delitzsch concludes; “We think that in this expression, “king in Jerusalem,” there is revealed a time in which Israel had ceased to be an independent kingdom, in which Jerusalem was no more a royal city”. Solomon’s greatest achievement was the building of the temple yet although Qoheleth asserts his wisdom he neglects to mention his temple building or other public works. This has been noted by Stuart Weeks - Russell L. Meek summarizes as follows; “Weeks argues forcefully that, whatever the relationship between Qohelet and the author of Ecclesiastes, it is certain that Solomon is not the author. In fact, Weeks goes a step further by arguing that Qohelet does not even intend to relate himself to Solomon—save for Eccl 1:1 and 1:12—contra most modern interpretations, even those that oppose Solomonic authorship. While this claim is somewhat extraordinary, Weeks defends it well, pointing out that Qohelet “notably does not boast about great public works or achievements—the meat and drink of royal inscriptions: the things which he creates are repeatedly and specifically ‘for me’ . . . and they include nothing which serves any obvious public function” (p. 26). Furthermore, Weeks points out that Solomon’s luxury, described in 1 Kings, “finds little echo in Qohelet’s story, and the sources of Solomon’s wealth are quite different from Qohelet’s” (p. 28). This is important for Weeks’s argument because he rightly points out that the reader must be aware of who Qohelet is in order to interpret the book appropriately”.15

In contrast Qohelet builds and plants for his own pleasure (I made me....I was great...etc).

The Talmud is ambivalent and attributes Qohelet to Solomon (Megilla 7a, Shabbat 30) or Hezekiah (BabaBathra15a). The attribution to Solomon can be explained by Eccl:1:12 but the reference to “Hezekiah and his colleagues” in BabaBathra15a has the scribes not only writing (i.e., editing) Qohelet, but Isaiah, Proverbs and the Song of Songs as well. It is very possible that a first edition of memoirs was edited during Hezekiah’s reign, particularly as we have good reason to associate his era (cf. Prov. 25:1) with those other works. Jed Wyrick cites H.M.I. Gevaryahu whose theory is that the baraita contains elements that resemble Akkadian colophons and is thus “based on an earlier catalogue that detailed the names, chronology and authorship of the books of the Bible”.16

Ecclesiastes was accepted rapidly into the Jewish canon, but not universally, there was a communal recognition that the book preserved an authentic wisdom voice in the Solomonic tradition. Authorship for the ancients had more to do with authoritative tradition than literary origins. Meade argues that the canonical decision to recognize Ecclesiastes as an authoritative wisdom voice in the tradition of Solomon is different than the literary question

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14 Franz Delitzsch, Commentary on the Song of Songs and Ecclesiastes (1891), translated from the German by M. G. Easton, Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark,14 available@ www.wls.wels.net/sites/default/files/KD_Ecclesiastes.docx
of actual authorship. Thus, “with the book of Qoheleth we can see the full birth of the genre of canonical pseudepigrapha”.  

According to Morris Jastrow liberal additions were made to Ecclesiastes; “For the express purpose of counteracting the effect of Koheleth’s unconventional views and to give a more orthodox turn to his thought.” He adds; “The circumstance that the-authorship was attributed to Solomon was a vital factor in leading to its inclusion in the Canon, but even this would not have secured its admission without the additions which constitute such a considerable part of the work in its present form, and which made it practically a different kind of a book. The question arises, how were these additions made, or, rather, first of all, how was it possible for anyone to conceive of making them?”  

However, Qoheleth is not necessarily pseudepigraphic if the case can be made that it is based on the actual royal memoirs of a king transcribed (for example) during the reign of Hezekiah. We can rationalize the post-exilic addition of Jerusalem (e.g. king in Jerusalem) as clarification of the past royal status accorded to Jerusalem, but the words “over Israel” suggest an even later gloss to guarantee canonical inclusion in the guise of Solomonic wisdom literature tradition (similar to Songs, also from the Hezekiah era). However, it is more likely that a Judean king living some time after Solomon (at the stage when the memoirs were catalogued) saw himself and his descendants as the rightful claimants of the Israelite throne, (“over Israel”) particular during a period of northern instability caused by coup d’etat and external aggression. Such a king, who was partial to boasting of his own grandeur (more wise and wealthy than anyone before him), would not hesitate to claim that he was actually “king over Israel” particularly in light of chaos in the northern kingdom.  

Most modern biblical scholars would argue against Solomonic authorship. La Sor sums the argument up by writing “It is far easier to say that Solomon did not write Ecclesiastes than to say who did.” This raises the question - who did write Qoheleth? Clarifying evidence seems evasive, and scholars have made no positive conclusions regarding authorship. They have, however, decisively ruled out several suggestions of authorship. “Despite superficial resemblances to Aristotle, Theogonis… and stoics, Qohelet was a Semitic wise man, not a Greek philosopher, and his mood and approach reflect a very different world”  

Craig G. Bartholomew sums up as follows; “We can conclude that Ecclesiastes is not written by Solomon, nor should Qohelet be literally equated with Solomon. But if not Solomon, then who did write it? It might seem a waste of time even to pursue this, but Weinberg asserts that we should not quickly dispense with this issue. He notes that in the Near East of the Axial Age (the end of the second millennium and start of the first millennium BC) consciousness of authorship became a real issue and the authority of a teaching was connected with its authorship”.  

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17 David G Meade, Pseudonymity and canon, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986):44-72,59  
20 La Sor, Ibid,500  
21 La Sor, Ibid, 499  
22 Craig G. Bartholomew, Ecclesiastes, (Baker Academic, 2009),53
Who was the king of Qoheleth?

The following article will propose that the life of king Uzziah of Judah provided the memoirs on which Qoheleth is based. The initial collection of these memoirs occurred during the Hezekiah era, a period of great social upheaval, northern instability and Assyrian aggression. At some time after the exile these memoirs achieved their final form as the book that we know as Ecclesiastes. Qoheleth acts as the “frame- narrator” but is also able to place himself in the position of the king and speak for the king because he possessed the original memoirs.

The king of Qoheleth

The king of Qoheleth is king Uzziah (otherwise known as Azariah) and his history is recorded in 1 Kgs.15:1-8 and 2 Chronicles 26.23 The prophet Isaiah (1:1) was his contemporary as were the northern prophets Amos and Hosea. A great earthquake occurred during Uzziah’s reign (Zech.14:5) and Isaiah was commissioned in the year that king Uzziah died (Isa 6:1). Amos commenced his career two years before the earthquake (Amos 1:1).24 Josephus has the great earthquake occurring when Uzziah forcefully entered the temple (Antiq. 9:225; LCL 6:119)25 and according to Austin (et al) the earthquake occurred in 750 BC26 with Uzziah dying 15 years later (735 BC see Perry).27 Outline of the Life and Times of

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23 Uzziah is also mentioned in 2 Kgs 15; 30-34 , the northern prophet Hosea was also his contemporary (1:1) and he is called Azariah in 2 Kgs 14;21; 15:1-8, 17-27; 1 Chron. 3:12.
24 See also Isa.2:10-22 and Amos 9:1 for earthquake language.
25 This information is not supplied in the Biblical account (perhaps Josephus had access to other sources); according to Josephus this occurred on the Day of Atonement.
26 Evidence for this earthquake has been uncovered by the archaeologists spade throughout Israel and Jordan.
27 Thiele proposes; Coregent (with Amaziah of Israel): 791 – 768 BC; Sole reign: 767 – 751 BC; Leprous and coregent: 751 – 740 BC. [The above dates are those of Thiele, except the starting date for the Amaziah/Uzziah co-regency, which is taken as one year later than that given by Thiele, following Leslie McFall. (Edwin R. Thiele, The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings (3rd ed.; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan/Kregel, 1983) 217, and Leslie McFall, “A Translation Guide to the Chronological Data in Kings and Chronicles,” Bibliotheca Sacra 148 (1991), 42]. However, the Dating schemas of W. F. Albright, E. R. Thiele and R. H. Pfeiffer are not entirely convincing. This article employs the dating schema proposed by Perry, See; “Kings Chronology” an Excel download with notes @ [http://www.christadelphian-eji.org/downloads.htm](http://www.christadelphian-eji.org/downloads.htm) [cited May 2014] Perry has Coregent(with Amaziah of Israel):787- 765BC; Sole reign: 764-746; Leprous and coregent 750-735 BC. Perry has overlapping co-
King Uzziah (2 Chron. 26) is as follows:

A. Introduction. 26:1-5.
B. The prosperity of King Uzziah. 26:6-15.
   1. Material possessions. 26:6-10.
C. The pride of King Uzziah. 26:16-19; cf. Deut. 8:6-18; Prov. 16:18.
D. The punishment of King Uzziah. 26:20-23.

**Profiling Uzziah**

From the accounts of his reign we can develop a “psychological profile” of king Uzziah and deduce that he wanted to rival his progenitor Solomon for wisdom and glory, and also wanted to equal David, who acted as a Melchizedek king-priest and sat before the Lord (2 Sam.7:18). However, unlike David, who was invited into the divine presence (fully aware of his non-Levite status), Uzziah attempted to force his way and was struck down with leprosy for his hubris. Henceforth Uzziah was quarantined and separated from his subjects and excluded from attending the temple services (2 Chron. 26:21). This would allow Uzziah ample time for reflection and to record his memoirs. Uzziah, the longest reigning king of Judah, reigned for 52 years but for much of the latter part of his reign he was only the titular head of state as his son Jotham (2 Kings 15:5) and subsequently his grandson Ahaz were co-regents. At the commencement of his reign Uzziah feared God (2 Chron. 26:16a); he observed the statues (26:16b); his heart was not lifted up (26:16b); nor did not turn away from the LORD (26:18), thus his days were prolonged (26:21). However, after he conquered Eilat, he expanded his military and cavalry (multiplying horses for his army). This allowed him to control the trade routes and receive tribute; he multiplied gold and silver to himself. The Prophet Isaiah acknowledged this state of affairs. “Their land (Judah) is also full of silver and gold, and there is no end to their treasures; their land is also full of horses, and there is no end to their chariots” (Isa. 2:7). Compare, “I gathered me also silver and gold...” (Ecc.2:8), but in the end silver was “vanity” (Ecc.5:10). It is obvious that Uzziah attempted to imitate Solomon particularly with regards to possession of Eilat which was an important sea port adjacent to the place where Solomon launched his fleet and in his penchant for the multiplication of horses.

Whatever the composition history of Chronicles might be, it seems that the chronicler(s) regencies with Jotham/Ahaz in the period 750-735. Note that Isaiah 6:1 does not say, “in the first year of king Jotham...” but in the year king Uzziah died (even though Jotham and Ahaz were coregents whilst Uzziah was alive) – Ahaz is called king when he is the sole ruler– “…in the year that king Ahaz died” (Isa.14:28).

28 This is probably why Uzziah built “towers in the desert” i.e., along the trade routes in order to extract a toll (2 Chron.26:10).

29 Gold was so plentiful during the reign of Solomon that it made silver seem worthless (1 Kgs10:21). Uzziah wanted to achieve the same prosperity as Solomon.

30 And King Solomon made a navy of ships in Eziongeber, which is beside Elath (Eilat), on the shore of the Red sea, in the land of Edom (1 Kgs.9:26). Some 70-80 years after Solomon (and 70-80 years before Uzziah), Jehoshaphat of Judah attempted a similar excursion but his fleet was destroyed (1 Kgs.22:48). Whether or not Uzziah launched a fleet, possession of Eilat alongside Eziongeber would ensure that he had a monopoly on southern ports and important trade routes and taxing these routes would increase his wealth exponentially. Note that Isaiah chapter 2 condemns the ships of Tarshish (v.16) and the proud and lofty (v.12 i.e., Uzziah) in the context of “earthquake language” – And they shall go into the holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth, for fear of the LORD, and for the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth (v.19).
had access to Isaiah’s records of Uzziah’s reign and it is relevant to note that whatever linguistic developments lie behind Qoheleth the only places that הֲשָׁכְבֹּן (hiškēbōn) occurs is in Chron 26:15 (engines KJV) and Ecc.7:25 (inventions KJV). In Chronicles it stands for a brilliant military invention such as depicted in artwork from Lachish – a defensive structure to protect archers. The accomplishments of Qoheleth were all done for his own benefit (I made myself, I acquired, I gathered...) not out of public largess but for almost for narcissistic pleasure (I said in my heart 2:1). The list of his accomplishments matches the summary of Uzziah’s reign in 2 Chron 26:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ecclesiastes 2</th>
<th>2 Chronicles 26</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I made me great works</td>
<td>And he made in Jerusalem engines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I planted vineyards</td>
<td>husbandmen also, and vine dressers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>in the mountains, and in Carmel; for he</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I made me pools of water</td>
<td>.....and digged many wells</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I had great possessions of great and</td>
<td>for he had much cattle, both in the low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>small cattle above all that were in</td>
<td>country, and in the plains</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jerusalem before</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I gathered me also silver and gold,</td>
<td>And the Ammonites gave gifts to Uzziah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the peculiar treasure of kings and of</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the provinces</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Qoheleth’s love of husbandry extended beyond viticulture to general horticulture; “gardens and orchards” (Ecc 2:5), his own assessment is - “So I was great, and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem: also my wisdom remained with me” (Ecc 2:9). Qoheleth did not want to rival Solomon; he wanted to surpass Solomon’s wealth, wisdom and prestige. Similar to Solomon, he installed a “harem” and like David, showed an interest in music (Ecc.2:8 NIV). He withheld nothing in his attempt to rival his ancestors and he was willing to test every extreme (wisdom and folly) in this pursuit.

Uzziah reigned during a “golden period” as Aramaean dominance came to an end with the resurgence of Assyria under Adad-nirari III. This inaugurated a period of national restoration and prosperity in Israel and Judah that lasted nearly fifty years. As long as Assyria maintained a strong presence in the west, its loyal vassals reaped the benefits of renewed stabilization. However, Assyria went into decline during the reigns of the three subsequent rulers and once again Aram-Damascus began to reassert its influence. The ascension of

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31 “Now the rest of the acts of Uzziah, first and last, did Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz, write” (2 Chron. 26:22).
33 See Y. Sukenik (BJPE 13, 1946/47, 19-24) and Yadin (The Art of Warfare, 1963, 325-28). However, Chronicles says that these devices were able "to shoot arrows and great stones withal" which seems to discount defensive devices (2 Chron.26:15).
34 The "great works" of Ecc 2:4 are the "inventions" of Ecc 7:29 and the "engines" of 2 Chron 26:15.
35 The Hebrew for orchard is parkē (LXX paradise), probably from the Persian parkūdāde (cf. paradise), it describes royal gardens or parks (NIDOTTE; vol., 3#7236). Uzziah “loved husbandry” (Hebrew, 'adamah) the theology of 2 Chron.26 presents Uzziah as a type of Adam in Paradise who committed an act of hubris. On the use of Persian words in Qoheleth see Part 3 (The language of Qoheleth).
36 The biblical picture accords well with the broader political context in the Assyrian Empire at this time (see J. Bright, A history of Israel (4th ed., Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 2000)
Tiglath-pileser to the Assyrian throne and his campaigns of consolidation brought further instability and in the years following 750 BC (about the time of the major earthquake), 37 Israel and Judah were once again caught up in a maelstrom of opposing forces from Assyria, Egypt and Damascus. Israel (Samaria) had to choose which state to align with and a period of instability, intrigue and turmoil ensued with four kings ruling in quick succession (three of the four were assassinated after only brief reigns). However, for a large portion of this period Judah was peaceful and prosperous and functioned as a regional (or at least a local) power. Uzziah organized the army, improved their weaponry, refortified Jerusalem and built war engines. He gained important victories over the Philistines and the Arabs, razed the walls of Gath, Jabneh, and Ashdod, and received tribute from the Ammonites and other foes. Uzziah lived to see the decline of Israel and the title “king over Israel” (Ecc.1:12) may have been due to self-aggrandizement (or, possibly a gloss), however, his deteriorating health ended his hubris and saw his sons become co-regents.

The reign of Jotham was contemporaneous with his father Uzziah as was that of his grandson Ahaz. 38 Jotham became coregent (four years after the major earthquake) in the forty-first year of Uzziah (Perry); power sharing was necessary because Uzziah was too ill to meet with new challenges (the ascension of Jeroboam II). The earthquake language of Amos 9:1 occurred two years before the 750 BC earthquake and is similar to that found at the death of Uzziah (Isa.6:4), which occurred fifteen years later in 735 BC. Similar to Amos, Isaiah also describes the “posts (of the temple) door moving”, but unlike Amos, Isaiah places the event at the death of Uzziah. However, the movement of the posts in Isaiah is theophanic (caused by the voice). The time line is; (752): Amos commissioned; (750): Earthquake –Uzziah quarantined for leprosy; (746): Jotham co-regency at death of Jeroboam of Israel; (735): Theophany – death of Uzziah –Isaiah commissioned. This means that the major earthquake occurred in the year that Uzziah sinned and became leprous and that Uzziah was quarantined for 15 years. Uzziah lived to see the reigns of Jotham and Ahaz and the birth of Hezekiah.

Ahaz was particularly syncretistic and fawning towards the Assyrians and even installed an Assyrian altar in the temple. Ahaz was an idolator, causing his son to pass through the fire, and sacrificing and burning incense on high places and under green trees (2 Kgs.16: 3, 4). 39 He was unsuccessfully besieged in Jerusalem by the army of Rezin, king of Syria, and Pekah, king of Israel (2 Kgs.16:5; Isa.7: 1). In connection with this crisis, before the invading force arrived, Isaiah was sent to exhort Ahaz to rely upon Yabweb and not to appeal for foreign support. Thereupon the prophet uttered the celebrated prophecy relative to the birth of Immanuel (Isa.7: 1-16). Despite the admonition, Ahaz turned to Tiglath-pileser, king of Assyria, and purchased his aid with the treasures of the temple and the palace (2 Kgs.16: 2; Chron.

28). Ahaz travelled to Damascus to pay homage to Tiglath-pileser and while he was there he had a copy made of a heathen altar that he admired, and then subsequently installed in the Temple at Jerusalem. He reigned 16 years and was succeeded by Hezekiah who was probably born in the forty-seventh year of Uzziah’s reign. 40 In this case Uzziah lived to see

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37 Perry’s chronology makes 750 BC the thirty-eighth year of Uzziah
38 Ahaz becomes joint coregent with his father Jotham in Uzziah’s forty-fourth year (Perry)
39 Despite his sin Uzziah is recorded as “doing that which was right in the eyes of the Lord” (2 Chron. 26:4), as was his son Jotham (2 Chron. 27:2), but a negative assessment is recorded for his grandson, Ahaz (2 Chron. 28:1).
40 Ibid, Perry
the birth of his great grandson.

“...for what can the man do that cometh after the king?” (2:12) “...the fool walketh in darkness.” (2:13)

“Yea, I hated all my labour which I had taken under the sun: because I should leave it unto the man that shall be after me. And who knoweth whether he shall be a wise man or a fool? Yet shall he have rule over all my labour wherein I have laboured, and wherein I havelaboured under the sun. This is also vanity. Therefore I went about to cause my heart to despair of all the labour which I took under the sun.” (2:18-20)

“And moreover I saw under the sun the place of judgment, that wickedness was there.” (3:16)

“A man to whom God hath given riches, wealth, and honour, so that he wanteth nothing for his soul of all that he desireth, yet God giveth him not power to eat thereof, but a stranger eateth it (tribute to Assyria paid by Ahaz): this is vanity, and it is an evil disease.” (6:2)

Qoheleth does not promote a cynical view; it records the struggle of a troubled mind coming to terms not only with disease, but also with his impotence to prevent his legacy being eroded and ultimately destroyed (It is surely the final irony that he is not even acknowledged as the author of Ecclesiastes). From his position in the Lazar house Uzziah watched with dismay as his grandson Ahaz slowly undermined his labours. Even his great defensive reinforcements and building work would have been damaged by the great earthquake -- it was all meaningless......his life's work was “vanity”.

Moreover, the “theophanic earthquake” at the death of Uzziah (described in Isa.6:1) acts as a divine obituary, censuring Uzziah for his earlier sin (which caused the major earthquake in 750BC) but it was also a reproach on the “leprous” nation. Uzziah attempted to force his way into the holy place to burn incense but was prevented by the priests, this made him furious and while he was still angry leprosy broke out on his forehead. Uzziah was full of pride, (“his heart was lifted up”; 2 Chron. 26:16) but now Isaiah saw “Yahweh... high and lifted up” (6:1), Isaiah is called a “man of unclean lips” (6:5), language suggestive of leprosy (cf. Lev 13:45) and Isaiah is cleansed with a coal from the altar of incense (v.6) as the temple is filled with smoke (incense); Uzziah attempted to defile the altar of incense. Uzziah typified the state of the diseased nation (similarly a faithful remnant was represented by the suffering servant Hezekiah). The prophet Isaiah declared the whole nation leprous, like its king:

“...the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and festering sores...” (Isa.2:7)
Ecclesiastes is not an abstract discourse on wisdom, or an amorphous theological or philosophical tract; rather it is based on concrete reflections drawn from real life experiences. As he sat in the isolation of quarantine, king Uziah was able to dispassionately review his life in an attempt to draw conclusions on the meaning of life;

“Better is a poor and wise child than an old and foolish king, who will no more be admonished” (Ecc.4: 13)

“Then said I in my heart, as it happeneth to the fool, so it happeneth even to me; and why was I then more wise?” (Ecc.1: 15)

The rise and fall of a king

The major theme in Qoheleth, largely unrecognised by scholarship, is the humbling and humiliation of a king – this within the context of covenant breaking and rebellion. It is linked to the adamic sin of hubris and self-divinization. Qoheleth demonstrates knowledge of Persian era writings and the framework of the intertextual connections suggests that the direction of dependency is from Qoheleth to the Persian era. In other words Qoheleth is alluding to Persian era books (and not the other way around). The ramifications that this has for the composition and redaction of Qoheleth will be discussed in the article on *The language of Qoheleth* but for now we simply state that later redaction does not detract from the original sentiments expressed in Uzziah’s memoirs. Qoheleth is theological wisdom literature based on real events and the inspired author has the literary and theological freedom to interpret and present those memoirs in such a way that they are integrated within the wider cannon.

Who *is* as the wise man? and who knoweth the interpretation of a thing? a man’s wisdom maketh his face to shine, and the boldness of his face shall be changed. I counsel thee to keep the king’s commandment, and that in regard of the oath of God. Be not hasty to go out of his sight: stand not in an evil thing; for he doeth whatsoever pleaseth him. Where the word of a king is, there is power: and who may say unto him, *What dost thou?* (Ecc.8:1-4)

We argue that “the king” in the above verses is Yahweh and that the references are all intertextually linked with either the theme of coming into the presence of God, or to the theme of the humbling of human pride. The main links are as follows:

1. Humbling of pride = king Nebuchadnezzar
2. Face to shine = Moses in the divine presence
3. Commandment of the king = Esther enters into the presence of the king
The wise man is Daniel who was also the interpreter of the dream that preceded the humbling of Nebuchadnezzar’s pride (Daniel chapter 4). Upon his recovery Nebuchadnezzar uses the following words in his doxology; “And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?” (Dan.4:35). When Moses had been in the presence of Yahweh, his face shined (Ex 34:29-35) in contrast Uzziah’s face became leprous.

The phrase “commandment of the king” occurs repeatedly in Esther but the English translations often do not differentiate between the various nuances in the original language (speech, word, statute, law, decree, command, order, etc) nevertheless, many of the terms are virtually synonymous. Esther relates how queen Vashti refused the commandment of the king to enter into his presence (Est.1:15), in contrast Esther risked her life by entering into the presence of the king in order to save her people (Est.4:11). In this story the motive is all important – acting out of pride or out of love – all connected with the presence. Ecclesiastes does not employ “command” in Ecc.8:2 - but literally “mouth” נֶפֶל (nehfel) as in “keeping the kings mouth” (i.e., his word/command) the same expression is encountered in Est.7:8; “As the word went out of the king’s mouth (nehfel), they covered Haman’s face”. It is difficult to make sense of this phrase (covered his face) the LXX has διατέμνῃ τῷ προσώπῳ (he changed countenance) which is probably a paraphrase as the Hebrew is doubtless meant to convey the covering of the upper lip proscribed for the leprous (Lev.13:45). The word mouth (nehfel) is also used by Solomon at the inauguration of the temple; Who hast kept with thy servant David my father that thou promisedst him: thou spakest also with thy mouth (nehfel), and hast fulfilled it with thine hand, as it is this day (1 Kgs.8:24).

The promise that Solomon refers to is a reference to 2 Sam.7 regarding the Davidic dynasty on the occasion when David entered the divine presence. Psalm 110:4 describes the vision that David saw; “The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek”. The swearing refers to an oath used for affirming a priest (Heb.7:20). Therefore, Ecclesiastes 8:2 has a multivalent matrix of thematic and intertextual connections.

The advice of Ecc.8:3; “Be not hasty to go out of his sight: stand not in an evil thing; for he doeth whatsoever pleaseth him” (KJV) should rather read (as in the NRS) as; “Do not

41 The noun נֶפֶל common masculine singular occurs only in the grammatical construct, suffix 3rd person masculine singular, in Ecc.8:1 and Dan.4:6. It is the Aramaic word נ越大 (peshar) for interpretation. It occurs extensively in other forms, totalling thirteen times in Dan.2 and eight times in Dan.4. The word for wise in Ecc.8:1 is the Hebrew חָקִּים (chakkiym) synonymous with the Aramaic term חַקִּים (chakhkim), which is employed extensively in Dan. 2(9x) and in Dan. 4(4x).

42 The Hebrew in Exodus is הס (qarun) in the sense of radiating (i.e., rays), Ecclesiastes uses the Hebrew תָּוָר (tor) suggesting light or shining, the same word is used in Dan.9:17 in an appeal for God to cause his face to shine on his sanctuary. The leprosy “rose up” תָּוָר (torah) in Uzziah’s forehead; the same word is used for the rising or shining of the sun (cf.Ecc.1:5). Moses’ face reflected divine glory that of Uzziah human sinfulness.

43 The Hebrew for covering in Lev.13:45 is צָע (atah) in Est.7:8 the word צָע (chaphalu) is used, but the same word is applied in 2 Sam. 15:30, when David fled Jerusalem weeping “and had his head covered (chaphalu)”. David’s condition is depicted as leprosy (the sin disease) and he is sent away from the sanctuary (cf. Ps.51:11; “Cast me not away from thy presence”).
be **terrified**; 44 go from his presence, do not delay when the matter is unpleasant, for he does whatever he pleases”. This is a better fit for Uzziah’s situation – he is so paralysed with fear that he cannot even move to leave the presence of the king!

44 The Hebrew בָּהַל (baḥal) carries the idea of “terror”. First used in Gen.45:3; “And Joseph said unto his brethren, I am Joseph; doth my father yet live? And his brethren could not answer him; for they were troubled (baḥal) at his presence”. It carries the idea of being awe-struck or paralysed by fear – they couldn’t even speak!
The epilogue is often thought to be by a different hand – a “corrective” on Qoheleth’s philosophy, however, careful examination demonstrates that it is a continuation of the theme of the “king’s commandment” of Ecc.8:1-4:

“And moreover, because the preacher was wise, he still taught the people knowledge; yea, he gave good heed, and sought out, and set in order many proverbs. The preacher sought to find out acceptable words: and that which was written was upright, even words of truth. The words of the wise are as goads, and as nails fastened by the masters of assemblies, which are given from one shepherd. And further, by these, my son, be admonished: of making many books there is no end; and much study is a weariness of the flesh. Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil (Ecc.12:9-14)”

The duty of man is to “keep his commandments” and to “fear God” these are the very matters that Uzziah neglected. Qoheleth will “teach” the people “truth”. Intertextual links direct us to the speech given by Samuel when the first king was anointed:

“14 If ye will fear the LORD, and serve him, and obey his voice, and not rebel against the commandment of the LORD, then shall both ye and also the king that reigneth over you continue following the LORD your God..........but I will teach you the good and the right way: 24 Only fear the Lord, and serve him in truth with all your heart: for consider how great things he hath done for you. 25 But if ye shall still do wickedly, ye shall be consumed, both ye and your king” (1 Sam.12:14; 23b-25).

In the days of Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah (Micah 1:1) “truth” became a technical term for the covenant promises (cf. Micah 7:20). The “truth” delivered to Abraham concerned a particular “seed” and the hope for that seed was further concentrated in the Davidic line. Qoheleth would teach words of truth – the truth that he had learned concerning the covenant was that man cannot grasp at divinity as if by right – even a Davidic king could not presume to crown himself a Melchizedek priest – a messianic role sworn by a divine oath and promised to a “son of David”. His pride and sense of entitlement had led him to disrespect God and love self more than God (The commandment....Love the Lord thy God). Uzziah’s service was driven by self-interest (I built...I made etc) unlike the “suffering servant” of Isaiah 53 (despised and rejected of men) who acted as a type of the true messianic priest; “For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones”(Isa.57:6). After his humiliation Uzziah used his fall from grace to teach the people knowledge and show them truth, as instructed by Samuel.

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45 The “suffering servant” was king Hezekiah; he represented the faithful remnant and typified the Messiah
Priestly Sin

The priests were guardians of God’s holiness. There are two incidents that reflected badly on the priesthood and they are alluded to in Ecclesiastes. One might inquire why this subject was of interest to Qoheleth. In the case of Uzziah the priests acted entirely correctly and manhandled the king in order to prevent his folly. However, in the past the priests themselves had to be taught lessons concerning the holiness of God and the sanctity of his covenants.

“Dead flies cause the ointment of the apothecary to send forth a stinking savour: so doth a little folly him that is in reputation for wisdom and honour” (Ecc.10:1).

“A good name is better than precious ointment; and the day of death than the day of one’s birth” (Ecc.7:1).

The “ointment of the apothecary” was the perfumed holy anointing oil used to consecrate priests and the perfumed incense was burned every morning; the manufacture of the anointing oil was closely guarded, it was strictly kept for holy purposes and not for personal use. Also, the priests were forbidden to burn any perfumed incense (strange incense) other than the proscribed recipe (Ex.30:25-35; 37:29). When the priests Nadab and Abihu burnt “strange incense” they were consumed and the people were instructed to mourn their deaths – it is this very incident that necessitated the introduction of the Day of Atonement – the sanctuary had been defiled by the actions of the priests and made unclean by their dead bodies. From henceforth the Jews would commemorate a Day of Atonement for national transgression because the priests (the representatives of the people) did not fear God. The high priest would enter the inner sanctum once a year surrounded by incense clouds to make atonement for the nation. There is a matrix of intertextual connections between Ecc.10:1 and Ecc.7:1 and bad priestly behaviour. The progenitor of the priestly tribe, Levi, was reprimanded by his father Jacob for abusing the covenant (of circumcision) in order to murder a young prince;

“Let not my soul enter their council; Let not my honour be united to their assembly: For in their anger they slew a man, And in their self-will they hamstrung an ox” (Gen.49:6 NKJ).

The latter part of the verse is dynamically rendered by the YLT; “Into their secret, come not, O my soul! Unto their assembly be not united, O mine honour; for in their anger they slew a man, and in their self- will eradicated a prince” (i.e., circumcising the prince so as to make him immobile, he was like a hamstrung ox; cutting the beasts tendons to immobilize it). This incident had caused Jacob’s name “to sink among the inhabitants of

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46 שֶּֽם (shemen): Hebrew for oil; olive oil; perfumed and used as anointing oil same word used in Ecc.7:1
the land” (Gen.34:30). Jacob did not want his honour (glory) associated with their assembly (49:6). The same Hebrew words are employed in Ecc.10:1 (stink/honour). Moreover, the Hebrew word for assembly ḥălāḵ (qōhelet) in Ex. 1:1f, 12; 7:27; 12:8ff. Similarly, in Ecc.7:1 a “good name” (contrast a stinking name) is worth more than pleasantly perfumed priestly anointing oil.

Qoheleth is interested in the covenant-breaking of the priestly tribe of Levi because Qoheleth himself had attempted to usurp the priestly function. He had made his good name to stink (literally with leprosy) by “anointing himself with the precious priestly oil” (making himself a priest) – he had joined his “honour” and good reputation to the assembly of the covenant-breakers......Levi! The priests warned Uzziah not to proceed with the following words:

“Neither shall it be to thine honour” (2 Chron.26: 18)

“Unto their assembly mine honour be thou not united” (Gen.49: 6)

The Genesis reprimand was delivered to Levi and Simeon, the patriarchs of the priestly and scribal tribes, for violating the covenant – it is fitting then that it is referred to by the descendents of Levi as a reminder to Uzziah not to unite his honour with the assembly of the wicked (like the Korahites did in Num.16). Uzziah was engaged in an act of rebellion, possibly self-divinisation, but instead of acquiring the priestly crown (worn on the forehead Ex.28: 38) he was struck with a leprous forehead. Qoheleth declares that the “day of death is better than the day of one’s birth” (7:1) and his obsession with death (3:2; 7:1, 26; 8:8; 9:5) is easily explained by leprosy, which was a living death. When Miriam was struck with leprosy as punishment for her rebellion against God (i.e., against the authority of Moses as God’s representative) Aaron pleaded; “Let her not be as one dead, of whom the flesh is half consumed when he cometh out of his mother’s womb” (Num.12:12). Qoheleth’s rebellious challenge to divine authority was similar to that of Korah, Dathan and Abiram in Numbers 16. These Levites also challenged Moses’ and Aaron’s authority and declared that they were also holy (and therefore should be accorded the same rights of access); they were instructed to fill their censers and assemble at the tabernacle. God consumed them and swallowed them up with an earthquake. Their censers were beaten flat and used as a covering for the altar (of incense); “To be a memorial unto the children of Israel, that no stranger, which is not of the seed of Aaron, come near to offer incense before the LORD; that he be not as Korah, and as his company” (Num.16:30). Surely, Uzziah would have seen this covering? One suspects that his censer (2 Chron.26:19) was also beaten flat and added to the memorial covering.

Uzziah’s sin also has intertextual links with the sin of Cain, who like Uzziah is described as a “tiller of the ground” (Gen.4:2 cf. Uzziah loved husbandry) and who was “very wroth” (Gen.4:5 cf. 2 Chron.26:19) when his sacrifice was rejected, like Cain he received a “mark” (cf. leprosy) and was sent away from the sanctuary (Gen.4:15-16). The story of Cain and Abel (cf. Hebel; “vanity” is a metaphor for the two atonement goats – one slaughtered and the other sent away as the scapegoat (bearing sin). It is highly probable that Uzziah attempted his foray into the inner sanctuary on the Day of Atonement.

47 Assembler of wisdom?; Caller of assemblies?; Hence, Ekklesia/Ecclesiastes – dynamically-Preacher/teacher
Under the Sun

One of the favourite catch phrases of Qoheleth is “under the sun” employed some twenty seven times in Ecclesiastes. It is only encountered in relation to David’s sin with Bathsheba. David sin was hidden from public sight but his punishment would be publicly exposed and traumatic – literally, “in sight of this sun” and “before this sun” (2 Samuel 12:11-15). This is the only occasion that a similar phrase is employed; in the case of hidden sin and public humiliation. In contrast, Uzziah sin was public (under the sun) but his punishment was hidden. He had conducted all his experiments “under the sun” and explored all that wisdom and folly had to offer “under the sun” his rebellion had occurred “under the sun” but the remainder of his life was spent in darkness- not allowing the light of the sun to touch his ravaged skin. Henceforth he would be in the “house of mourning”; “It is better to go to the house of mourning, than to go to the house of feasting: for that is the end of all men; and the living will lay it to his heart” (Ecc.7:2, 4)

He spent the last fifteen years of his life in quarantine (in the “lazar” house) contemplating his misspent youth; “Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them”(Ecc.12:1).

Difficult texts

Some texts are difficult to understand but once they are placed in the context of Uzziah and given wider intertextual treatment suggestions can be made as to how they should be interpreted. It is sometimes stated that Qoheleth was a misogynist as he supposedly had a low opinion of women. For example (Ecc.7:25-28);

“25 I applied mine heart to know, and to search, and to seek out wisdom, and the reason of things, and to know the wickedness of folly, even of foolishness and madness: 26 And I find more bitter than death the woman, whose heart is snares and nets, and her hands as bands: whoso pleaseth God shall escape from her; but the sinner shall be taken by her. 27 Behold, this have I found, saith the preacher, counting one by one, to find out the account: 28 Which yet my soul seeketh, but I find not: one man among a thousand have I found; but a woman among all those have I not found”.

irstly, in wisdom literature the “woman” is employed as a metaphoric personification for either wisdom or folly, particular in Proverbs. In Proverbs 5:1-23 the “strange woman” is a personification of the seduction of folly; “Lest thou give thine honour unto others, and thy years unto the cruel 48 - “Lest strangers be filled with thy wealth; and thy labours be in

48 Of Levi and Simeon it is said; “instruments of cruelty are in their habitations” (Gen.49:5); another connection with the theme of the “bad priest”. Taken together with the key word “honour” (from Gen.49:6), mourning (Ecc.7:2), consumption of the flesh (leprosy) and “assembly” this can be none other than Uzziah.
the house of a stranger; And thou **mourn at the last, when thy flesh and thy body are consumed**” (vv.10-11). This could stand as a summary of Uzziah’s life and was probably composed by Hezekiah’s scribes (Prov.25:1). Note, Prov.5:14, another allusion to Qoheleth; “I was almost in all evil in the midst of the congregation and assembly”. Furthermore, the idea of “counting” and finding “one righteous man” in a thousand, and not one woman, is an allusion to the Sodom incident in Genesis 18-19, where after “counting” (and bargaining) only Lot was found righteous, but both his wife and two daughters proved to be lacking. Why did Uzziah refer to this incident? Probably because he had conquered the Ammonites (2 Chron.26:18; Gen.19:38), who were the product of an incestuous union between Lot and one of his daughters; the “strange woman” (folly) is then represented by the folly of Lot’s daughter, moreover, the incident at Sodom represented a boundary which should not be crossed – a boundary between the holy (the angels) and the profane (the men of Sodom), who wanted to forcefully establish their dominance by abusing divinity and this act of presumption would have spoken powerfully to Uzziah. Moreover, towards the end of Uzziah’s reign, when Ahaz was co-regent, the temple service deteriorated into an erotic beauty pageant (Isaiah 3). The “daughters of Zion” are compared with the leprous condition of Uzziah (The Lord will strike with a scab the crown of the head…Instead of a sweet smell there will be a stench) and of the nation it is said that “they declare their sin as Sodom” (Isa.3:9) - - their pride and hubris. Isaiah says; “they which lead thee cause thee to err” (Isa.3:12) which may be a reference to the asherah cult of temple prostitution. Another difficult text is Ecc.10:9;

> “Whoso removeth stones shall be hurt therewith; and he that cleaveth wood shall be endangered thereby”.

The suggestion is that Uzziah is referring to the stones of the pagan Assyrian altar that Ahaz had his priests copy from an example in Damascus. He rearranged the temple layout in order to install it in the temple court. The wood is a reference to the fuel needed for the sacrifices (2 Kings 16; 2 Chron.28). Although Uzziah sinned when he acted presumptuously, he was a faithful king; Ahaz, on the other hand, chose a path of defiance and unfaithfulness – he purged his court by promoting undesirable cronies: “Folly is set in great dignity, and the rich sit in low place” (Ecc.10:6).

Ahaz eventually abandoned the temple to neglect; “By much slothfulness the building (i.e., the temple) decayeth; and through idleness of the hands the house dropeth through” (Ecc.10:18) and it required the reformation of Hezekiah to repair the damage. Instead of relying on God he strengthened the defences of Jerusalem and appealed to Assyria for deliverance. It was during such an inspection tour of the backbreaking labour needed to protect the city that he encountered the prophet Isaiah: “And he said, Hear ye now, O house of David; Is it a small thing for you to weary men, but will ye weary my God also?” (Isa.7: 16). This agrees with the sentiments of the Preacher: “The labour of the foolish wearieith every one of them, because he knoweth not how to lead the city” (Ecc.10:15).50 The syncretism of Ahaz was foolish; chopping wood for an Assyrian altar was dangerous as the “axe” of Assyria (cf. Isa.10:15) could easily rebound to their injury.

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49 The Hebrew is צָבוֹת (**’asharot**) the son of Hezekiah (Manasseh) placed an עֵשֶׂרֶה (**’asherah**) in the temple. She was a Canaanite goddess (of fortune and happiness), the supposed consort of Baal. The LXX has here; “that pronounce you blesses” (makes happy). It seems that temple prostitution was rife in the time of Ahaz.

50 Nearly all translations have “go to the city” but surely the Hiphil (cause to go i.e., to lead) is more appropriate?
Isaiah and Qoheleth

The prophet Isaiah, who recorded Uzziah’s reign (2 Chron.26:22), seems to continue a dialogue with Qoheleth. We can hypothesise that a first draft of Qoheleth’s memoirs would have existed then and that aspects of the “preachers” life would have been employed to illustrate the “health” of the nation;

Qoheleth: “What profit has the worker from that in which he labors? I have seen the God-given task with which the sons of men are to be occupied” (Ecc.3: 9-10).
Isaiah: “Then I said, ‘I have labored in vain, I have spent my strength for nothing and in vain; Yet surely my just reward is with the LORD, And my work with my God” (Isa. 49:4).

Qoheleth: “He has made everything beautiful in its time....” (Ecc. 3:11).
Isaiah: “...There is no beauty that we should desire Him (Hezekiah)” (Isa.53: 2).51

Qoheleth: “......every man should eat and drink and enjoy the good of all his labor -- it is the gift of God”52 (Ecc. 3:12-13).
Isaiah: “He (Hezekiah) shall see the labor of His soul, and be satisfied.” (Isa 53:11).

The conclusion of the whole matter

Three phrases reoccur in Qoheleth: “vanity of vanities! All is vanity”, “…under the sun” “…striving after wind”. These phrases emphasize the meaningless and emptiness of life in the temporal realm (under the sun). This prompts the introduction to The Anchor edition of the book to comment: “Ecclesiastes is the strangest book in the Bible... in place of religion of faith and hope and obedience, this writer expresses a mood of disillusionment and proffers a philosophy of resignation. His ethic has no relationship to divine commandments, for there are none. . . .The author is a rationalist, an agnostic, a skeptic, a pessimist, and a fatalist.”53 However, this article does not share that view, for Ecclesiastes is a penetratingly honest account of a troubled mind coming to terms with the meaning of life. The Preacher does not, for example, reject wisdom –he merely recognises the limitations of human wisdom. The Preacher does not advocate a hedonistic lifestyle, but rather a life of moderation – in which one enjoys the fruits of labours.

Although he has not identified Qoheleth, John H. Choi has correctly understood the theology of Qoheleth. Choi believes that Ecc.7: 15-18 (in which a course of moderation is prescribed as the ideal) is the key to the Preachers theology; “A pursuit of hyper-righteousness, then, is the ultimate act of “presumption”, and “hubris”, because it is more than an effort to please the divine. It is an endeavour to span the great divide between humanity and divinity. The

51 On his death bed Hezekiah resembled Uzziah and was despised...yet his faith saved the nation.
52 The only way to profit from personal “works” is through the messiah (the gift of God cf. John 4:10). Hezekiah typified the messiah. Uzziah typifies fallen human nature.
warning is a reminder that one must live life happy in the lot that God has given, and not strive for what lies beyond the mortal’s grasp.\textsuperscript{54}\n
King Uzziah, in his leprous state, was not even accorded a royal burial: “If a man beget an hundred children, and live many years, so that the days of his years be many, and his soul be not filled with good, and also that he have no burial; I say, that an untimely birth is better than he” (Ecc.6:3). He was buried in a separate grave “in the field of the burial which belonged to the kings” (2 Kings 15:7; 2 Chron 26:23). “That lonely grave in the royal necropolis would eloquently testify to coming generations that all earthly monarchy must bow before the inviolable order of the divine will, and that no interference could be tolerated with that unfolding of the purposes of God, which, in the fullness of time, would reveal the Christ, the true High Priest and King for evermore”\textsuperscript{55}

The language of Qoheleth

This article will examine the language and composition history of Qoheleth. The conservative scholar, Franz Delitzsch stated; “If Koheleth was written in Solomon’s day, a history of the Hebrew language is impossible.”\textsuperscript{56} Robert Gordis goes so far as to declare: “The view that Solomon is the author has been universally abandoned today, with the growth of a truer recognition of the style, vocabulary and world- outlook of Koheleth”.\textsuperscript{57} Very few modern scholars would argue for authorship in the time of Solomon\textsuperscript{58} as not only the language but the syntax is from a later era. In his study of The Verb in Qoheleth, John A. Cook states; “The longstanding view of a majority of scholars is that Qoheleth represents some of the latest biblical Hebrew.”\textsuperscript{59} Several conclusions of this study uphold this judgment on the basis that the verbal system in Qoheleth exhibits not simply dialectical differences but evidence of diachronic change away from the pattern of earlier Biblical Hebrew towards the grammar of post-biblical Hebrew (e.g., Qumran and/or Rabbinic Hebrew)”\textsuperscript{60}

\textsuperscript{55} Samuel G. Green, The Kingdom of Israel and Judah After the Disruption, vol. 2, (Publisher: Sunday School Union,1876)
\textsuperscript{56} Franz Delitzsch, Commentary on the Song of Songs and Ecclesiastes (1891), translated from the German by M. G. Easton, Edinburgh : T. & T. Clark,14 available@ \url{www.wls.wels.net/sites/default/files/KD_Ecclesiastes.docx}
\textsuperscript{57} Robert Gordis, “Koheleth, the Man and His World”\textsuperscript{5},(Schocken, 1951, 1955, 1968).
\textsuperscript{58} Archer is a notable exception, he places Qoheleth in the time of Solomon based on the Phoenician forms noted by Dahood and links this to Solomon’s association with Hiram of Tyre from his temple building period. However, other explanations are available to account for Phoenicianisms and this theory does not explain the proliferation of later dialectical and diachronic features, especially developments in syntax. Gleason L. Archer, “The Linguistic Evidence for the Date of Ecclesiastes,” Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society 12 (1969).
\textsuperscript{60} John A. Cook, The Verb in Qoheleth (corrected draft), Asbury Theological Seminary 19, p.46, (with footnote see above)
The complexity of the debate

The debate has followed scholarly understanding of the development of the Hebrew language. All languages develop over time; Anglo-Saxons no longer speak the English of Shakespeare (the English of the KJV) and over time the English language has incorporated many loan words from other languages. Theoretically it is possible to date a piece of writing from the language, however, difficulties exists when we introduce the concept of colloquialisms, dialect and style. For example, a Yorkshire man of the older generation might still use “thee” and “thou” in everyday speech. A poet could chose to use archaisms to make his writing look “old” - that is a question of style. Certain scholars believe that the Hebrew of Qoheleth is not late, but is simply due to a northern Israelite dialect or for reasons of style. The debate is not just about the use of different words or the introduction of loanwords, but about the actual construction of the language (syntax), which looks different from earlier periods. It is difficult for non linguists to assess such arguments. One of the problems is that we do not know the composition history of Qoheleth — is it possible that Qoheleth is both early and late? This might explain why we have evidence that points in both directions.

Before we can explore the possibility that Qoheleth is both early and late, it is important to understand the evidence and examine the “twists and turns” of the debate. This work has already been done by others; an excellent summary of the linguistic features is provided in layman’s terms by Craig Davis and a brief summary of the recent historical debate is offered by Douglas Keyes Wilson. Both sections are reproduced here so that the reader can familiarise themselves with the issues.

Craig Davis, Dating the Old Testament, (RJ Communications, 2007), Ecclesiastes, pages 392-398, sections 5.6.1 and 5.6.2 including footnotes (my numbering)

5.6.1 External Dependencies

There are connections between Proverbs and Ecclesiastes. A “fool” is mentioned 23 times in Ecclesiastes, 76 times in Proverbs, and 46 times elsewhere in the Bible — clearly a disproportionate percentage in these two books by Solomon. Things are compared with one “better” than the other 21 times in Proverbs, 21 times in Ecclesiastes, 2 times in Song of Solomon and 31 times in the rest of the Old Testament. This is also a prominent feature of Solomon’s style. Most of the connections between Ecclesiastes and Proverbs are not linguistic, but connections in thought. Some of these are shown below.

1. “Eye satisfied” (Ecc 1:8, 4:8 and Prov 27:20)
2. Laughter and joy (אנה והפת) come to a bad end (Ecc 2:2 and Prov 14:13)
3. Inheritance concerns (Ecc 2:26 and Prov 13:22)
4. Hate as a virtue (Ecc 3:8 and Prov 13:5)
5. Sacrifice of wicked/fools (Ecc 5:1 and Prov 15:8)
6. Hasty before good (Ecc 5:2 and Prov 20:25)
7. Virtue of few words (Ecc 5:2 and Prov 10:19)

I have taken the liberty to reproduce the Hebrew as my version of the PDF did not reproduce the Hebrew fonts correctly. Any mistakes are therefore my own and not attributable to Davis.
8. Many words of a fool (Ecc 5:3 and Prov 15:2)
9. Hasty vows (Ecc 5:5 and Prov 20:25)
10. Working for appetite (Ecc 6:7 and Prov 16:26)
11. Value of a “good name” (Ecc 7:1 and Prov 22:1)
12. Rebuke of the wise (Ecc 7:5, Prov 15:31-32 and 25:12)
13. Bribes (Ecc 7:7, Prov 17:8 and 17:23)
14. Be slow to anger (Ecc 7:9, Prov 14:29 and 16:32)
15. Moderation in good things (Ecc 7:16 and Prov 25:16)
16. Bitterness of being ensnared by an evil woman (Ecc 7:26 and Prov 22:14)
17. Wisdom better than strength (Ecc 9:16, 9:18 and Prov 21:22)
18. Persuading a ruler (Ecc 10:4 and Prov 25:15)
19. Slaves over princes (Ecc 10:7 and Prov 19:10)
20. He who digs a pit may fall into it (Ecc 10:8 and Prov 26:27)

Overall, Ecclesiastes shows no major connection with Old Testament books other than Proverbs, and none show dependencies on it. Ecc 9:14-15, about a great king laying siege to a small city, may be an allusion to 2 Sam 20:16-22. However, the Samuel account, set in David's time, mentions a wise woman, while the Ecclesiastes reference is to a poor wise man. Likewise, Ecc 4:13-16 is reminiscent of the story of Joseph, but the details do not match. The phrase “under the sun,” which occurs 27 times in Ecclesiastes only appears elsewhere in 2 Sam 12:12.

5.6.2 Linguistic Analysis

The linguistic characteristics of Ecclesiastes are quite different from Classical Biblical Hebrew. Some scholars suggest that the linguistics of Ecclesiastes are not necessarily late, but instead are just different from the rest of the Old Testament. Archer states, “The text of Ecclesiastes fits into no known period in the history of the Hebrew language.” Most writers, however, understand the linguistics of Ecclesiastes to support a late date of writing.

Ecclesiastes shares the two striking linguistic features of Song of Solomon: the non-use of waw + imperfect verbs and the frequent use of “shin” as a relative pronoun. In Ecclesiastes, there are only three occurrences of waw + imperfect verbs (1:17, 4:1 and 4:7). Instead, Ecclesiastes uses waw + perfect verbs repeatedly to indicate past tense (1:13, 2:5, 2:9, 2:11, 2:12, etc.). This practice matches the later Talmud. Ecclesiastes uses “asher” 67 times and “shin” 51 times, so the replacement of “asher” with “shin” is only partial, unlike Song of Solomon. The name YHWH does not appear in Ecclesiastes.

There are no Greek words in Ecclesiastes. There are two Persian words: Pardes (סַדֶּשׁ) in 2:5 for “park” or “orchard,” and pitgam (פִּיטָגָם) in 8:11 for “sentence” in a legal sense. This argues for a date of writing in the Persian period (538-333 B.C.).

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The older pronoun “anoki” is not used, while its companion “ani” appears 28 times. This may hint at a late date. However, the use of “ani” in Ecclesiastes is mostly unique, in that it is used repeatedly in places where it seems unnecessary. In Hebrew, the form of the verb can indicate a first person subject, so using a pronoun with a verb is usually only done for emphasis. Ecc 2:1, for instance, uses “ani” to say “I said...” (אני himself). This use of “ani” would normally indicate that the subject is emphatic (“I myself said...”), but this does not seem to be the intent in Ecclesiastes. The later word for kingdom, “malkut,” is used once, in 4:14. Additional linguistic features exist in Ecclesiastes which are unusual, but do not necessarily have anything to say about its date of writing. These include “zoh” (זול) used as a feminine demonstrative pronoun rather than “zot” (זה) in 2:2, 2:24, 5:15, 5:18, 7:23 and 9:13. Also, masculine plural pronominal suffixes used for feminine nouns occasionally appear, as in 2:6 and 2:10.64

Ecclesiastes has many connections to late or post-biblical Hebrew. “Shel” (של), in 8:17 meaning “of the,” appears elsewhere in the Bible only in Song of Solomon, but is common in post-biblical Hebrew. Expressions which are in the Bible only in Ecclesiastes, but are present in Aramaic or the Mishna include:

1. “yy” (יה) meaning “alas” in 10:16
2. “Batal” (בטל) meaning “stand idle” in 12:3
3. “Gumats” (גמות) meaning “pit” in 10:8
4. “Benkhorim” (בנקרים) meaning “of nobility” in 10:17
5. “Khush” (خش) meaning “enjoy” in 2:25
6. “Khesron” (خاصרון) meaning “what is lacking” in 1:15
7. “Yithron” (יתרון) meaning “advantage” or “profit” in 1:3, 2:11, 2:13, 3:9, 5:8, 5:15, 7:12 and 10:10-11
8. “Cavar” (כבר) meaning “already” in 1:10, 2:12, 2:16, 3:15, 4:2, 6:10 and 9:6-7
9. “Milah” (מילות) meaning “pregnant” in 11:5
10. “Mashak” (מ申し込み) meaning “indulge” in 2:3
11. “Nisken” (נשק) meaning “be endangered” in 10:9
12. “Ahdenah” (הנוה) meaning “still” in 4:2-3
13. “Ahnin” (סין) meaning “task” in 2:23, 2:26, 3:10, 4:8, 5:2, 5:13 and 8:16

63 However, see Rendsburg, who notes the following early northern occurrences; “The 2fs independent pronoun yta appears as the Kethiv in the following IH [Israelian Hebrew] passages (Rendsburg 2003a: 11-12), with the speaker indicated in parentheses: Judg 17:2K (Micah of Ephraim), 1 Kgs 14:2K (Jeroboam I), 2 Kgs 4:16K, 8:1K (Elisha), and 2 Kgs 4:23K (husband of the Shunammite woman). The presumed pronunciation of this form is תן, which corresponds well with the Samaritan pronunciation of the 2fs independent pronoun תן (written thus, with yad ditti (Ben-Hayyim 2000: 226). So, while we lack an explicit attestation of this form in an IH composition from the postmonarchic or Persian period, the tradition maintained by the Samaritans confirms the continuation of this feature into the fifth century B.C.E. (and beyond) in the territory that was once the heart of the Northern Kingdom of Israel”. Gary A. Rendsburg, “Northern Hebrew through Time: From the Song of Deborah to the Mishnah” in Diebrauch in Biblical Hebrew, (eds., Miller-Naudé and Zevit, Eisenbrooks, 2012), 345.

64 Rendsburg (Ibid) argues for early northern provenance; “The next relevant item is the 6 demonstrative pronoun לך/לך, which appears in the following northern texts (Rendsburg 2003a:13): 2 Kgs 6:19_HISTORY; Hos 7:16 HISTORY; Ps 132:12 HISTORY; Qoheleth (6K) HISTORY. Once more, the attestations span centuries, in this case, from the early-monarchic-period Elisha narrative until the Persian-period book of Qoheleth, with two instances in the interval".
14. “Pesher” (pesher) meaning “interpretation” in 8:1 (pesher is used in older Hebrew, as in Gen 40:5)
15. “Teqeph” (teqeph) meaning “the one stronger” in 6:10
16. “Taqan” (qan) meaning “be straightened” in 1:15, 7:13 and 12:9

Additional expressions in Ecclesiastes matching Late Biblical Hebrew include:

1. “Illu” (ילע) meaning “if even” in 6:6 and Esth 7:4
2. “Bihal” (בֵּיהל) meaning “be hasty” in 5:2, 7:9, Esth 2:9 and 2 Chron 35:21
3. “Biken” (בני) meaning “so then” or “in this” in 8:10 and Esth 4:16
5. “Shalat” (שלא) meaning “exercised authority over” or “empower” in 2:19, 5:18, 6:2, 8:9, Ezra 4:20 (Aramaic), 7:24 (Aramaic), Neh 5:15, Esth 9:1 and Ps 119:133 (although Psalm 119 may not be especially late). This word is linked with Aramaic legal documents of the Persian era.
6. “Shavakh” (שָׁבָח), meaning “laud” or “praise” is in 4:2, 8:15 and a number of later Psalms.
7. Usage of the qal stem of “ka’as” (כָּאֶס) meaning “be angry” in 5:16, 7:9, 2 Chron 16:10, Neh 3:33 and Ezek 16:42.
8. “Natan Lev” (נתן לֶב) in 7:2, 8:16 and 9:1 is a Late Biblical Hebrew expression for the way a person sets his own heart (1 Chron 22:19, 2 Chron 11:16 and Dan 10:12).

The spelling in Ecclesiastes is, along with Song of Solomon and Esther, among the most modern in the Bible, though not as modern as the Hebrew of the Dead Sea Scrolls.65 Going against the trend, Ecc 1:1 spells David’s name in the older form used primarily in pre-exilic texts. Also, the dual form noun for “two times” is used in 6:6. These are perhaps vestiges of an earlier text of Ecclesiastes (my emphasis).

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65 Anderson and Forbes, Spelling in the Hebrew Bible, p. 316
Relating the issues of dialect and foreign loan words to his overall theme, his intent was to date the book by linguistic evidence. Gleason Archer used a similar, albeit more brief, approach. Other scholars whose Qoheleth research relates to dialect studies are Robert Gordis and James Davila.

**Dialectal Features**

Three significant dialect variations found in Qoheleth are the relative pronoun יְאָז, contracted diphthongs, and the feminine demonstrative כְּ. Since the first two have been discussed earlier, attention will be given to the demonstrative pronoun כְּ. Scholars often assume that this form is based on the Aramaic demonstrative pronoun כְּ. Epigraphic evidence indicates that forms of the demonstrative כ were prevalent in Phoenician inscriptions. The Azitawaddu inscriptions at Karatepe, for example, are replete with usages of כ.

Evidence from the Hebrew text shows that the feminine form כְּ was employed occasionally in the Hebrew Bible. In contrast, the form כְּ is relatively rare. This fact has convinced some that כְּ is a North Israelite dialectal form. Fredericks disagreed. The כְּ demonstrative is notably absent from all extant Hebrew inscriptions from the northern regions. Though employed six times in Qoheleth and other suggested Israelite passages, the form is not exclusive to northern biblical texts:

The demonstrative pronoun כְּ is a common entry in many lists of North Israelite forms.... But what of three idiomatic instances in Judges 18:4; 2 Samuel 11:25; and 1 Kings 14:5? These uses show that כְּ was equally available for use in the vocabulary of the southern sections of Judges and Kings as it was in the alleged northern sections of Judges and Kings.

This challenge from Fredericks has yet to be answered in published form.

**Dialectal Framework**

Both Davila and Fredericks discussed the older theories regarding the outside linguistic influence which flavored Qoheleth’s dialect: Phoenician influence, Aramaic origin, and Mishnaic influence. Contrary to Davila’s account, Cyrus Gordon, not Dahood, was the first to suggest that Qoheleth was influenced by Phoenician. Dahood was, however, the scholar to suggest that Qoheleth “employs Phoenician orthography and betrays strong Canaanite-Phoenician literary

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70 Burney, 2: 208.
73 Fredericks, Panel Discussion.
influence and that he was a resident of a Phoenician city.” Robert Gordis concurred with Davila on at least two points. First, they agreed that the Aramaic translation theory was untenable. This theory, proposed by Frank Zimmerman, suggested that Qoheleth was originally composed in Aramaic and then, sometime later, was translated into Hebrew. As a translation, any Aramaic influences could be explained as carryover from the original writing. The other point of agreement between Davila and Gordis was that Qoheleth was the late composition of the book. Both seem to point to a form of Hebrew similar to Mishnaic. Gordis unashamedly suggested the writing to have taken place in the early third century. Davila explained that,

“the close relationship between Qoheleth and Mishnaic Hebrew is certainly due to the fact that they are both late .... We have evidence for a great mixture of dialects in the post-exilic period in the environs of Jerusalem (Neh 13:23-27). There are good indications that the dialect of Qoheleth was influenced by northern Hebrew, and we can only hope that further discoveries will give more information in this regard.”

Unfortunately, Davila was not clear whether the book was written in or influenced by a northern dialect, or a postexilic southern dialect, for that matter. Only recently has he clarified his position, stating that “Qoheleth may have been a postexilic native speaker of a late North Hebrew dialect,” but even then he could make a conclusive statement on the matter.

Although there are parallels in Phoenician, Aramaic, and Mishnaic literature with forms in Qoheleth, Davila has presented a convincing argument for the dialectal explanation. He is less convincing, however, in his dating of the book to the fifth century. After a lengthy discussion of Dahood’s work, Archer concluded that the data,

“...shows a close relationship to the Ugaritic literature of Moses’ time, and so there is every reason to deduce from this the suitability of the language of Ecclesiastes to a genre cultivated among the Phoenician-speaking peoples and adopted from them by a gifted tenth century Hebrew author”.

Rather than arguing for a postexilic composition, he simply suggested that the traditional position of Solomonic author cannot be excluded for linguistic reasons.

74 Robert Gordis, “Was Koheleth a Phoenician?” Journal of Biblical Literature 74 (1955): 105. This article was in response to Dahood’s initial article (cited above).
77 Davila, “Qoheleth,” 87.
79 Davila, Panel Discussion.
Discussion

Archer’s position regarding a Solomonic date deviates from the consensus which regards Qoheleth as post-exilic. The problem is not only different kinds of words (Phoenician/Aramaicisms etc) but different types of sentence construction (different grammar/syntax); a style found in later Hebrew. A Solomonic date can be ruled out on those grounds. At this point we refer to Young’s dictum 83 (and our own conclusion) that language alone is not sufficient to establish dating, it must be supported by intertextual evidence. In a previous article we noted that Qoheleth was aware of Daniel and Esther and this would naturally point to a late date of composition – but that is not the whole story as Qoheleth also demonstrates a biographic awareness of Uzziah’s reign that can only be attributed to a first-hand account; memoirs recorded by the royal scribes.

Rendsburg has proposed that the northern anomalies noted by other scholars are due to a distinct northern dialect (Israelian Hebrew) and are therefore not “Late Hebrew” as they are also found in early Hebrew texts identified as originating from northern Israel. The many thematic connections with Proverbs indicate that both Qoheleth and Proverbs originated from the same scribal provenance (the Hezekiah period cf. Prov 25:1). Elsewhere we presented the argument that these scribes were refugees from northern Israel, recruited during the last decades of instability before Israel disintegrated.

“As is well known, major social and political upheavals (such as the events of 745–721 b.c.e.) typically cause major changes in language, so it is only natural to expect IH [Israelian Hebrew]84 to have undergone certain transformations during this period. Changes of this sort may have included the end of the literary standard and the adaptation of a formerly colloquial register for literary purposes. This would explain, for example, the language of Qoheleth, a book that is both late and northern (for the former, see Seow 1996; for the latter, see Davila 1990), and the eventual emergence of MH, [Mishnaic Hebrew]85 even if our evidence for MH derives from centuries later”. 86

This may also account for the Persian loanwords. Ian Young contends that Persian loanwords employed in Qoheleth cannot be used to date the book to the Persian period, as “Persianisms” also occur in pre-exilic books. 87 Young suggests that a probable route for such words was Assyrian deportations of Iranians to the vicinity of Judah in the late eighth century BCE. Moreover, it is certainly not coincidence that the Persian word Pardes (падرس) in Ecc. 2:5

84 IH [Israelian Hebrew] is a northern Hebrew dialect [PW]
85 MH [Mishnaic Hebrew] is Hebrew from the 1st to the 3rd or 4th century CE, corresponding to the Roman Period -example Talmud[PW]
86 Ibid, 342
87 Young gives מָרָדֵס (“steel” (Nah 2:4) and תַּקְנוּתם מִלְחָם (“precincts” 2 Kgs 23:11) as examples of Persianisms in pre-exilic books.
for “park” also occurs in Song of Songs 4:13 (which we have placed in the Hezekiah era). It may well be an “update” from the Persian era (cf. Neh 2:8 for the keeper of the king’s park) but it is more likely that the concept of botanical parks and royal gardens was copied from Persian royalty and that the idea (along with the word) was transmitted either via trade routes or by returning deportees. In any case it seems that Solomon imported exotic flora and fauna for just such a purpose and his trading may have extended as far as the rich Mogul kingdoms of India and Persia but the fact that the same word is used (along with common dialectical features) in both Qoheleth and Songs suggests related scribal practices from approximately the same era (Uzziah /Hezekiah). However, when we place this against the thematic connections between Qoheleth and Persian era books (Daniel, Esther) the option still remains open for a Persian era revision. Nevertheless, it seems more likely (to me) that in the case of Pardes (םדרס) we are dealing with a word that was already absorbed into Hebrew around the eighth century – the foreign word was necessary because it described an imported foreign practice – the creation of a “paradise” for royal enjoyment.

Qoheleth shares other linguistic features with Song of Songs (and with the Songs of Degrees). Predominantly this is the substitution of 'âšer (הָשֶׁר) with še (שֶׁ); of which 68 replacements are found in Qoheleth, and 32 in Song of Songs. The problem of linguistic dating has been examined in previous articles\(^8\) in which we concluded that linguistic anomalies can be accounted for by the sudden introduction (as Rendsburg has noted) of dialect or colloquialisms (such as northern Israelite Hebrew) rather than by gradual dispersion and replacement.

Young (et al) argue in Linguistic Dating of Biblical Texts (LDBT) that only a very small number of well-attested LBH\(^9\) features are not also found in EBH\(^10\) books. Thus it is a reasonable suggestion that even in the preexilic period LBH could have been a co-existing style of Hebrew with EBH. Rather than a model suggesting that EBH and LBH are successive chronological phases of the language, which is incompatible with the evidence, a better model sees LBH as merely one style of Hebrew in the Second Temple period and quite possibly First Temple period. They produce a comparison table of LBH features and find that every sample includes LBH features (even EBH texts); “One fact that is evident from the table is that Hurvitz and other proponents of the chronological approach have underestimated the amount of LBH features in EBH texts. His argument for linguistically dating texts like the Prose Tale of Job to a late period leads, in fact, to the conclusion that all the biblical texts are postexilic”\(^11\).

However, recently Dresher has offered a critique of the methodology employed in LDBT using the example of word variation between several forms for ‘kingdom’, in particular mamlâkâ

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\(^9\) LBH is Late Biblical Hebrew

\(^10\) EBH is Early Biblical Hebrew

and *malkūt* (in his summary, Davis also noted the later word for kingdom, *malkūt* in Qoheleth). Dresher believes that LDBT ignores differences in proportions, and considers only presence versus absence of forms, so for example, if variations are present in both early and late texts it is argued that it cannot be used for dating purposes (Young et al) – but what if we only have a few variations in the early texts and an increasing number in late texts? In that case the increasing trend can be used to chronologically date texts – unless, of course we have a reason to suspect that the trend has been accelerated by a war or by adoption of a new style or due to different standards. Young (et al) draw on the example of two co-existing styles of Aramaic; one more conservative (for legal documents etc) and the other more innovative and both dialects separated geographically. However, Dresher adds the caveat; “......without history or geography, or even a clear idea of who the two groups were, we have none of the elements that make the Elephantine\(^2\) analysis so compelling”\(^3\)

### Towards a solution

The debate is complex and requires specialist linguistic knowledge, no doubt, as better methodologies are developed the dating of texts using language will become more accurate but perhaps it will never be able to tell us the full story; certainly not without supporting intertextual and socio-historical evidence. This much we can say about the language of Qoheleth with some confidence; (1) It contains northern dialectical forms many of them early (2) It contains words found nowhere else \(^4\) (3) It has the odd Persian loanword (4) It has the sentence structure and syntax of later Hebrew \(^5\) (4) It contains later Hebrew forms perhaps transitional to MH

The results of linguistic analysis point to both early and late provenance. Our intertextual evidence also points to both early and late provenance. What can we do with this evidence? The only solution is to propose a composition history that begins with the actual memoirs of Uzziah and were finalised in the Persian era. We propose the following developments;

1. Uzziah has his memoirs recorded by the royal scribes. This “school” of scribes had a particular remit to collect and arrange wisdom literature, sometimes this literature was dramatized, at other times parabolaric, but it was always based on Israel’s covenant history.\(^6\)

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\(^2\) Of the different Aramaic styles [PW], so we cannot take the case of co-existing Aramaic styles and suppose that Hebrew also had co-existing “styles” unless we have more socio-historic evidence.

\(^3\) This article presents a good overview of the issues involved; B. Elan Dresher, Dating the Hebrew Bible: Can Linguistics Help? Paper from the flaut and Spring Reunion (2010),15

\(^4\) *Hapax legomena*

\(^5\) On this see John A. Cook.

\(^6\) The Proverbs are often thought of as pithy “maxims” – instructions, sayings and advice on how to live life – however all of these sayings are intertextually linked to past events in Israel’s covenant history. For example Proverbs 31 is based on Ruth (the virtuous woman). The argument can be made that all the Proverbs have a similar basis but are poorly understood (this requires further research).
2. The royal scribes who recorded Uzziah’s memoirs had been infused with a contingent of scribes from northern Israel. The assassinations, instability and looming Assyrian threat in the north of Israel towards the end of Uzziah’s reign saw many of these scribes move to the royal court of Judah.

3. These same scribes were still employed some 25-30 years later; they were instructed by Hezekiah to collect and arrange the Proverbs (25:1) and their numbers were further swelled with more northern scribes caused by the reformations and centralization initiated by Hezekiah and by northern refugees when Samaria fell (721/722). This period became a “golden age” for the flowering of the literary arts with the (draft) formation of Qoheleth (proto- Qoheleth), the writing of Songs of Songs⁹⁷, the arrangement of Proverbs and Psalms⁹⁸, the production of Job⁹⁹ not to mention the prolific compilation of prophetic literature (both in Israel and Judah). Hezekiah should receive due recognition for being a significant patron of Biblical literature.

4. Proto-Qoheleth is finalised in the Persian era around about the same time as proto-Daniel and Esther appear. It is possible that the same school of scribes (their descendants) are involved as they would have been exiled along with the royal princes.

5. Possible pre-canonization revision of morphology/syntax but no change to the content this occurred before the translation of the LXX

6. Canonization; no more changes (with the exception of the Masoretic vowel pointing)

It is possible that the final shape of the book was the work of the same ‘wise’ who worked on proto-Daniel (Dan. 12:3, 10...“they that understand”; Dan. 11:33, 35), who were the natural heirs and guardians of earlier Danielic traditions and who were also the descendants of Hezekiah’s guild of scribes.¹⁰⁰ Similar to Daniel the “wise” (maskilim) did not believe in active resistance (unlike the Maccabees) but in passive resistance and endurance, if necessary, to the point of martyrdom—knowing that ultimate vindication would come from God. Scholarship

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⁹⁷ Canticles (Song of Songs) is a dramatization of Hezekiah’s courtship of northern Israel and the absence of the “beloved” is his sickness but “many waters” (the Assyrian flood) could not drown covenant love. See, P. Wyns, “Song of Songs” (Part 1-2), CEJBI, July & Oct 2014

⁹⁸ See, P. Wyns, “Songs of Degrees” (Part 1-3), CEJBI

⁹⁹ A. Perry demonstrates convincingly that Job is a dramatization of Hezekiah’s reign (the suffering servant of Isaiah). This book offers a chapter by chapter commentary on the Book of Job using the KJV, RSV and NASB versions of the Bible. It compares Job with the Book of Isaiah and argues that Job, in addition to being a story about a patriarch, is also a prophetic and political commentary about Hezekiah and Judah during the days of the Assyrian Crisis. This prophetic and political discourse is set within the parabolic framework of the prologue and epilogue, in which the details of the patriarch Job’s experience have been chosen in such a way so as to represent Hezekiah and Judah. A. Perry, Job,(Willow Publications, 2009)

¹⁰⁰ Perhaps this has analogies with the Apostles being the natural heirs of ‘Jesus traditions’ which they employed freely under guidance of the Spirit to produce the four Gospels. The Gospels all draw on a common pool of traditions that are employed differently for theological/didactic/polemical purposes in order to address the concerns of specific communities. The Gospels differ not only in the traditions they select but in the traditions that they deliberately omit – and also in their structuring of those traditions (i.e., chronologically, thematically...etc).
generally recognises a connection between the “wise” (maskilim) and the suffering servant (Hezekiah) of Isaiah 53:11 (cf. Dan. 12:3). The fact that Daniel chs.7-12 is not partisan to the Hasmonean cause speaks of the independence of the revelation. The term maskil is also employed in the para-biblical Daniel material. Koch argues persuasively that the way in which the term Maskil is used in Daniel 11-12 gives the impression that the term was “an established term for the authors of Daniel [...] not their invention.” Charlotte Hempel notes... “Both groups, though they emerged sometime in the second century BCE, lay claim to having ideological or historical (or conceivably both) roots in the exile...”

Conclusion

Qoheleth was Uzziah’s biographer who under inspiration faithfully crafted the draft version of his memoirs. These memoirs were transported to Babylon along with the royal scribes where they were preserved along with other writings until proto-Qoheleth was finalised in the Persian era by the same “school” of scribes who drafted proto-Daniel (based on Daniel’s experiences). Qoheleth possibly underwent a pre-canonization “refreshing” and updating of the language before the translation of the LXX. All these factors taken together would account for both the early and late linguistic features and ensure the relevance, historicity and authority of Qoheleth when relaying the thoughts of Uzziah.

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103 On these “groups” (the writers of Daniel and the Qumran covenanters) Hempel concludes (2006:156); “Whereas Matthias Henze has stated rather eloquently that “The covenanters have made Daniel’s language their own”, [Henze, Madness of King Nebuchadnezzar, p. 242] I have tried to suggest that, to some extent, it was their own. In other words the overlap can just as well be accounted for by the shared roots of these movements than by the influence of Daniel upon Qumran. Charlotte Hempel, Maskil(im) and Rabbim: from Daniel to Qumran. In: Biblical traditions in transmission,[Brill, Leiden ; Boston, 133- 156, 2006],133 online: http://eprints.bham.ac.uk/291/ [cited July 2010] See there for further references on the social setting of the Book of Daniel
Messianic types

Isaac-Hezekiah-Christ

1. The sister-wife doublets
2. The Wells of Salvation
3. Solomon son of God?
Genesis

The sister-wife doublets
The sister-wife motif in the patriarchal narratives

Genesis contains three patriarchal narratives with a similar sister-wife motif (Gen.12:10-20; 20:1-18; and 26:1-11). In each account the patriarch passes off his wife as his sister out of fear for his own life. The parallels between the accounts are attributed by the source critics to multiple versions of the same original story supposedly demonstrating a multiplicity of underlying sources.

On the other hand, the three accounts are also fertile ground for the hypotheses of the form critics, who trace units of tradition according to the ‘form’ or ‘shape’ (i.e. a saga or legend) that they have assumed during their oral, pre-literary development. Lastly, the three accounts exercise the redaction critics, who are interested in the final editorial work and how the accounts function as they now stand, not as variants of the same event, but as independent episodes in the lives of the patriarchs. This article will examine the typology of the narratives and present a holistic approach by demonstrating that they are all inter-dependent.

The First Account (A)

The three narratives are very similar; indeed they presuppose knowledge of each other and would be unintelligible without this mutual dependence. It is however, the divergences in the different narratives that signal the true intention of the author. The following table compares the three narratives:

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1 “The episodes in chaps.20 and 26 presuppose that the reader is already familiar with the account in chap. 12. This also points to a process of literary composition in, at least, the later stages of development of accounts B and C.” T. Desmond Alexander, *Abraham in the Negev: A source-critical investigation of Genesis 20:1-11:19*, (pateronster press, 1997), p.51; “Thus, for example, the account of Sarah’s abduction by Abimelech in Genesis 20 presupposes that the reader is already familiar with a similar incident that occurred previously. Without a prior knowledge of the events described in Genesis 12:11-15, it is impossible to make sense of Genesis 21:2. This strongly suggests that the account in Genesis 20 was composed as part of a document that already contained material in Genesis 12:10-20 (or something very similar). This observation argues against a documentary solution to the presence of these two incidents in Genesis; possibly Genesis 20 was composed as a supplement to an already existing document. When, however, all the source-analysis criteria are considered in Genesis 12:10-20 and 20:1-18, it is highly unlikely that the same writer composed both episodes.” T. Desmond Alexander, *From Paradise to the Promised Land*, (Baker Academic, Pateronster Press, 2002), 22-23. John Ronning presents a brilliant essay that is highly recommended and will be referred to later in this article, he comments: “But as we saw, a key to understanding the relationship between chaps. 12 and 20 is that one left out what is found in the other.” Ronning, John, *The Naming of Isaac: The Role of the Wife/Sister Episodes in the Redaction of Genesis*, Westminster Theological Journal 53 (1991) 1-27, 26
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Passage</th>
<th>12:10-20</th>
<th>20:1-18</th>
<th>26:7-11</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Account</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chronology</td>
<td>Sarah 65 years old</td>
<td>24 years later</td>
<td>76 years later</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couple</td>
<td>Abraham, Sarah</td>
<td>Abraham, Sarah</td>
<td>Isaac, Rebekah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Locality</td>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>Gerar</td>
<td>Gerar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reason for stay</td>
<td>Famine</td>
<td>No reason given</td>
<td>Famine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>King</td>
<td>Pharaoh</td>
<td>Abimelech</td>
<td>Abimelech</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>[Phichol v.22]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offence</td>
<td>Sarah taken as wife.</td>
<td>Sarah entered harem but kept from adultery.</td>
<td>Potential only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>King becomes aware</td>
<td>Not said</td>
<td>Warning dream</td>
<td>Sees Isaac caressing Rebekah.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excuse</td>
<td>None given</td>
<td>&quot;No fear of God in this place... When God had me wander...&quot; asked favor of Sarah.</td>
<td>&quot;Because I thought I might lose my life on account of her.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Penalty on King</td>
<td>Serious diseases on Pharaoh and his household.</td>
<td>Abimelech, his wives and concubines could not beget or bear children.</td>
<td>None. Orders people not to molest either Isaac or Rebekah.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gifts because of Sarah</td>
<td>Pharaoh treats Abraham well -- sheep, cattle, donkeys, slaves, and camels.</td>
<td>None reported</td>
<td>Not applicable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expiation</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>1,000 shekels of silver, plus sheep, cattle, and slaves</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expulsion</td>
<td>Sent away with wife and possessions.</td>
<td>None. &quot;Live wherever you like.&quot;</td>
<td>Not immediately, but finally because of Isaac's wealth only.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Before we investigate the theological implications of the challenging chronology of the accounts it is important to set them in a wider traditio-historic setting by means of their typological significance. The first account (A) has long been recognized by scholars, including (among others) Wenham, Peterson and Ronning as typical. Peterson remarks: “The analogy with the sojourn of Israel in Egypt is too obvious to require explication. Hence the setting in Egypt interjects an ambiguous tone to the story.” 2 Although the analogy is “too obvious to require explication”, Peterson, and the scholarly community, have done little to realize the wider implications of this observation; not only in the specific case of the patriarchal narratives, but also more generally for critical interpretive methods, whether, source, tradition-history, form or redaction criticism. 3 It is perhaps necessary to tabulate these ‘obvious’ connections:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Genesis 12</th>
<th>Israel in Egypt</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>And there was a famine in the land: and Abram went down into Egypt to sojourn there; for the famine was grievous in the land. (v.10)</td>
<td>And the famine was sore in the land. (Gen 43:1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And the LORD plagued Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai Abram’s wife. (v.17)</td>
<td>I will at this time send all my plagues upon thine heart, and upon thy servants, and upon thy people; that thou mayest know that there is none like me in all the earth. (Ex. 9:14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hagar the Egyptian bondservant (16:1) probably obtained while in Egypt.</td>
<td>And a mixed multitude went up also with them; and flocks, and herds, even very much cattle. (Ex. 12:38)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And he entreated Abram well for her sake: and he had sheep, and oxen, and he asses, and menservants, and maidservants, and she asses, and camels. (v.16)</td>
<td>And the LORD gave the people favour in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they lent unto them such things as they required. And they spoiled the Egyptians. (Ex. 12:35, 36) And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance. (Gen. 15:14)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The parallels between Genesis 12 and the Egyptian Exodus are indeed remarkable, with one notable exception – the use of deception. The Pharaoh of the Exodus was not deceived as to the true nature of Israel’s calling, rather he is portrayed as wilfully ignorant “Now there arose a new king over Egypt which knew not Joseph” (Ex. 1: 8). If anything, it was Joseph (acting as a previous Pharaoh’s agent) that perpetrated a ruse

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Notes: [http://personal.centenary.edu/~sbrayfor/petersennotes.htm](http://personal.centenary.edu/~sbrayfor/petersennotes.htm)

3 Ibid, Ronning, 29: “It was well known to the ancients that Gen. 12:10-20 is typologically related to the account of the Exodus, a fact that has not been dealt with by most moderns.”
against his brethren and hid his true identity from them. Surprisingly, the Joseph narrative represents a reversal of the sister-wife motif. Joseph's brethren migrate to Egypt because of famine, (43:1) they fear for their lives (50:19-21) and are themselves deceived by the one whom they sold into the slavery of another man’s house.

**The Second Account (B)**

If the first account (A) presents such a clear analogy with Israel’s redemptive history can the second account (B) receive the same treatment? The following tabulation demonstrates that it can:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Genesis 20</strong></th>
<th><strong>1 Samuel</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abimelech king of Gerar sent, and took Sarah, (v.2)⁴</td>
<td>And the Philistines took the ark of God …they brought it into the house of Dagon (5:1, 2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The [Philistine] men were sore afraid (v.8)</td>
<td>And the Philistines were afraid, for they said, God is come into the camp (4:7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And the LORD plagued Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai Abram’s wife. (Gen. 12:17)</td>
<td>These are the Gods that smote the Egyptians with all the plagues in the wilderness. (4:8) Wherefore then do ye harden your hearts, as the Egyptians and Pharaoh hardened their hearts? (6:6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For the LORD had fast closed up all the wombs of the house of Abimelech, because of Sarah Abraham’s wife. (v.18)</td>
<td>But the hand of the LORD was heavy upon them…. his hand is sore upon us (5:6, 7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And Abimelech took sheep, and oxen, and menservants, and womenservants, and gave them unto Abraham, and restored him Sarah his wife (v.14)</td>
<td>Send away the ark of the God of Israel, and let it go again to his own place (5:11) Return him a trespass offering: then ye shall be healed (6:3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Now therefore restore the man his wife; for he is a prophet, and he shall pray for thee, and thou shalt live (v.7) So Abraham prayed unto God: and God healed Abimelech, and his wife, and his maidservants; and they bare children. (v.17)</td>
<td>And Samuel said, Gather all Israel to Mizpeh, and I will pray for you unto the LORD. (7:5)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

⁴ The ark was in Philistine hands for seven months - - is it possible to equate this with the time that Sarah spent in Abimelech’s harem?
In contrast with the Exodus account, the Deuteronomistic emphasis is on the appropriation of the cultic object and setting it in the ‘house’ of the Philistines. Peterson identifies the “fear of Elohim” as one of the major themes in account (B): “The primary theme, I would call “the fear of Elohim.” This theme is, as Wolff has most recently shown, a keystone to the entire Elohist enterprise. In our text, the theme receives two unusual twists. The patriarch is depicted as one who does not believe that there is fear of Elohim outside the Israelite community, while it is the king, the foreigner, who matter-of-factly acknowledges Elohim’s authority.” 5 In Samuel the Philistines accord the ark more respect and demonstrate more ‘fear of Elohim’ than the Israelites. Indeed the ark had been captured in the first place because of its use as a talisman in battle (4:3) - - the sons of Eli were renowned for their corruption and cultic disrespect (2:12) - - and even when the ark was returned the Israelites could not resist the temptation to look inside it (6:19). The Philistines act with more restraint and respect than the Israelites; they are even aware of the reputation of the Israelite God6 and when they return the ark they make restitution. 7

Significantly, the Deuteronomist has the prophet Samuel praying for the Israelites – in contrast with the prophet Abraham 8 praying for the Philistines in the Genesis account (B). The second important theme in (B) highlighted by Peterson is what he terms the “dialectic of sin”; “No one could be singled out as guilty, and yet it is quite clear that Elohim had been seriously affronted.” 9 However, is this analysis correct? Surely Abimelech (like the Philistines in Samuel) was aware of the plagues that Elohim brought against Pharaoh for possessing Sarah? Surely Abraham is also partly culpable (willing to sacrifice his wife) and did not need to manipulate the situation (as the Israelites did when they used the ark) for his own protection? It was not necessary for Abraham (or the Israelites) to force God’s hand as he would have delivered them, if only their faith had been sufficient. In contrast the Philistines demonstrated more integrity and courage (in Genesis and Samuel) than the Israelites. John Ronning remarks; “The interpretation of these accounts as showing that Abraham and Isaac were really like the first Adam, though spoken of as the new Adam, is corroborated by W. Berg, who calls (A) “The Fall of Abraham,” pointing back to Genesis 3. Among other clues is the recurrent question, “What is this you have done?” in 3:13 (God to Eve), 12:18 (Pharaoh to Abraham), and 26: 10 (Abimelech to Isaac). Berg’s essay on (A) followed an earlier analysis of Genesis 16 with similar conclusions. In both cases, Abraham’s lapse is a violation of the Edenic ordinance of

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5 Ibid, Peterson
6 The Philistines use ‘elohim in polytheistic fashion as a plural: “These are the gods that smote the Egyptians with all the plagues in the wilderness” (1 Sam.4:8). A probable explanation is the form of the two cherubs on the top of the ark, perceived by the Philistines as ‘gods.’ Interestingly, the account has points of contact with the cherubim apostasy, when there was also noise in the camp at the appearance of the cherubim (1 Sam.4:6cf.Ex.32:17). For the Deuteronomist the use of the cultic object as a talisman parallels the inappropriate worship of the cherubim in the wilderness.
7 Alter observes that the Hebrew verb meshalim, (1 Sam.6:3) used for sending back the ark is repeatedly used for Pharaoh’s sending Israel out of Egypt and thus sustains the network of allusions to the Exodus story. In Exodus the Israelites, too, were told that they would not leave Egypt “empty handed” but would take with them golden ornaments despoiled from the Egyptians. There will be atonement for you is rendered in the Masoretic Text as “it will become known to you” (wenu'da lakahm), but the reading of the Qumran Samuel scroll and the Septuagint, wenikaper lakhem, “and it will be atoned for you” makes far better sense. R. Alter, The David Story, A Translation with Commentary of 1 and 2 Samuel (W.W. Norton & Company, New York London, 1999), 30
8 The prophet Abraham obviously anticipates the monarchial period with the parallel development of the prophets, of whom Samuel was the first. It may well be an editorial gloss, but against this is the reference in Psalm 105: “When they went from one nation to another, from one kingdom to another people; He suffered no man to do them wrong yea, he reproved kings for their sakes; Saying, Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm.” (Ps.105:13-15) The LXX has the singular: “my Christ” (anointed); but most versions give the plural: “my anointed ones”. If the word prophet is a gloss, one could reasonably expect reference to “my anointed” in the Genesis account. It is perhaps best to understand Abraham’s life as prophetic and the promised seed, foreshadowed by Sarah’s child, then Rebecca etc as the “anointed.”
9 Ibid, Peterson
marriage. Such an analogy with the fall of Adam in Genesis 3 would make the lapse in (B) even more significant, since in that case Abraham and Sarah had been restored to “Eden” (Isa. 51:3), yet fell again.”

That this analysis is correct can be demonstrated by the use of ‘Edenic language’ in the Patriarchal accounts: “Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch (naga’) it, lest ye die” (Gen.3:3) the same word is used in 12:17, “The Lord plagued (naga’) Pharaoh because of Sarah”, and in the divine warning to Abimelech (20:6), “I also withheld thee from sinning against me: therefore suffered I thee not to touch (naga’) her”, and is mirrored by Abimelech’s warning to his people (26:11), “He that toucheth (naga’) this man or his wife shall surely be put to death (this echo’s the Edenic language of 3:3)”, and finally the appeal to Isaac in 26:29; “That thou wilt do us no hurt, as we have not touched (naga’) thee.”

Abimelech’s accusatory question to Abraham confirms that we are dealing with a lack of covenant faithfulness on Abrahams part; “What sawest (ra’ah) thou, that thou hast done this thing?” The r-h (ra’ah) combination is integral to the Abraham narrative – always in a positive sense (including renaming Abraham and Sarah) the sacrifice on Moriah [m-r-h] and Yahweh-Yireh [y-r-h]; “Then on the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw (ra’ali) the place afar off” (Gen.22:4). Now, however, it is used in a negative, accusatory sense; “What sawest (ra’ah) thou?” The Deuteronomists answer is that they had “looked (ra’ali) into the ark of the Lord” (1 Sam.6:19). Ronning relates this to the wider thematic of Messianic expectation and disappointment in Genesis. The “new Adam” whether it is Noah, Abraham, Isaac or Jacob constantly fails to achieve the Messianic ideal, he observes that;

“It is also noteworthy that the “Fall of David” (perhaps another “new Adam,” for the promise of fruitfulness and dominion given to Abraham are also found in 2 Samuel 7) is ironically reminiscent of B (as P. Miscall has noted), since king David did to the foreigner Uriah what Abraham was afraid the foreign king Abimelech would do to him (2 Samuel 11). The irony is not only in the role reversal, but that Abraham’s fears were unfounded. Abimelech the pagan protested his innocence and rebuked Abraham for exposing him to God’s wrath by his subterfuge; Abraham responded that he did it because he was sure there was no fear of God in that (pagan) place (20:9-11). What does that say when such a thing actually did happen in Israel, under its greatest king, the one after God’s own heart, the one who did more to fulfill the Adamic commission than Abraham or Isaac?”

This is perhaps particularly relevant as 1 Sam 21:10-15 describes how David feigned madness in the court of Achish, an event that is commemorated in the title of Psalm 34: “A Psalm of David, when he changed his behaviour before Abimelech: who drove him away, and he departed.” This follows a now familiar pattern (a) David in a ‘foreign’ land (b) He fears for his life (c) He uses deception to save himself. (d) He is sent away. This narrative does not have the normal positive resolution and restitution – David is sent away in

10 Ibid, Ronning, 22

11 The same word is also used in 1 Sam.6:9; “And sec, if it goeth up by the way of his own coast to Bethshemesh, then he hath done us this great evil: but if not, then we shall know that it is not his hand that smote (naga’) us: it was a chance that happened to us.”
disgust by the king, who states with revulsion that he has enough idiots in his realm without adding to the number. This throws a negative light on David’s actions, and is used (along with Abraham/Sarah) in the NT as an example to avoid. The irony of the situation is not lost on Alter, for while David feigns madness when he is recognized as ‘king of the land’, Saul, who is ‘king over Israel’ is actually quite mad. To summarize so far; account (B) parallels the early monarchial and prophetic period – from the exile of the ark in the time of the first prophet Saul to its return and proper restoration under David (the ‘anointed’). The Messianic ideal is however ruined when David, the recipient of a further outworking of the covenant is discovered to have committed the sin that Abimelech did not; namely, acquiring another man’s wife and murdering her husband.

The Third Account (C)

According to Peterson, the theme of the third account is “patriarchal success in a foreign context.” he concludes this, “on the basis of the consistent emphasis on Isaac’s existence on foreign soil.” This is partially correct as the narrative, if one includes the incidents with the wells, stresses the relationship that Isaac develops with foreigners (strangers), which of course contributes to his success. The unusual twist in this account is the way in which the deception is discovered, Peterson comments: “After a long time,” the ruse is whimsically revealed. Abimelech happens to look out of a window and to see Isaac fondling his wife. The word play, v. 8, yishiq msgahog (Issac was “playing with/fondling”) suggests the fortuitous character of the revelation.

The word play on Isaac’s name is a key to understanding the narrative, as the naming of Isaac is associated with the fulfilment of the covenant promise to Abraham. Isaac and Rebekah are the first couple ‘born into the Abrahamic covenant’, when Abimelech, like a peeping tom, observes a display of affection between husband and wife. The Hebrew msgahog carries sexual connotations and can be used in a positive sense – laugh, play, fondle, caress - - and negatively as mocked or scorned. It is used in a

12 Peter cites Psalm 34:12-16a in 1 Pet.3:10-12. The epistle concerns the Nero persecution; “Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you (4:12)… Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.” The Christians faced the choice of either denying Christ (by using deception or guile) or death by wild beasts in the coliseum. It is fitting then, that Peter refers to Psalm 34, as it is associated with David’s use of guile when in fear for his life. An earlier allusion also makes attractive use of Psalm 34:8 (= 1 Pet. 2:3): “If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious”; the LXX, used by Peter, has “the Lord is chrestos (a pun on christos!)”. And this follows immediately on another exhortation to avoid “all guile and hypocrisies” (2:1). Further, when exhorting Christian wives on respecting their husbands, he uses the example of Sarah; “Even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement” (5:6). Peter was not encouraging mindless submission by Christian wives to their husbands. The sub-text is that Abraham had lied about his marital status in order to protect himself, thereby endangering Sarah. Yet, despite this, Sarah called him “lord”, even though she probably argued against his deception she still complied with his wishes. Yahwah rescued the couple, and no doubt Sarah’s faithfulness and her respect towards her husband played a large role in this. Sarah was “not afraid with any amazement” (but Abraham was) – what an excellent example for Christian wives facing persecution! In contrast, Christians had a faithful husband (Christ) who was willing to die for his wife. Finally, Peter urges that when the Christian faces life threatening trials, he should act in the same manner as Christ: “For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth” (2:21-22). It is particularly fitting that Peter should give his brethren this exhortation – for Peter was talking from experience as he had used deception and denied his Lord in a time of stress.

13 Ibid., R. Alter, The David Story, 133
14 Ibid., Peterson
15 Peterson admits that it is difficult to designate where the sister- wife narrative ends; “I am unable to designate a clear terminus to the tale which begins in 26:1. The wife-sister motif has been assimilated into a series of incidents concerning Isaac’s sojourn in Gerar - a series which continues through Gen. 26:16 when Isaac moves to the valley of Gerar.” However, the narrative concerning the wells forms an integral part of the proceeding tale, without which it cannot be properly understood.

16 Ibid., Peterson
negative sense (in connection with the covenant) when Ishmael mocks Isaac in Genesis 21:9. It is also used negatively in the ‘golden calf apostasy’, at the reception of the Sinaitic covenant, when, “They rose up early on the morrow, and offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play” (Ex.32:6). This is particularly relevant as the Sinaitic covenant was a marriage covenant, where Yahweh took the nation as his bride – yet, instead of taking her vows, the bride is busy committing adultery (idolatry) on her wedding day! Yahweh had been a faithful husband, “For thy Maker is thine husband; the LORD of hosts is his name” (Isa.54:5) but the nation had been a slut from her youth onwards: “They committed harlotry in Egypt, they committed harlotry in their youths; their breasts were there embraced, their virgin bosom was there pressed.” (Ezek.23:3).

At its very inception the nation had apostatized by worshiping a replica of the cultic image - the winged calf cherubim later in its history Israel had abused the cultic object by carrying it into battle; when the ark was finally restored and brought to Jerusalem we are informed that; “And it came to pass, as the ark of the covenant of the LORD came to the city of David, that Michal the daughter of Saul looking out at a window saw king David dancing and playing: and she despised him in her heart” (1 Chron.15:29). For this act she was excluded from the Abrahamic covenant. This mirrors Abimelechs’ behavior in looking out a window in order to observe the covenant affection displayed by God towards his people through the agency of the Messiah. In other words, this literary convention allows the reader (like Abimelech) a view into an intimate relationship involving God’s loving-kindness. How the reader reacts determines whether they are included or excluded from that Messianic covenant. Our investigation so far has led us to the conclusion that Account (A) relates to the Egyptian bondage and account (B) to the early monarchial-prophetic period. What then can be said of account (C)? It obviously has correspondences with a period of Israelite history where covenant love for a faithful remnant is openly displayed.

The LORD hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God. (Isa.52:10)

This article suggests that (C) is analogous with the reign of Hezekiah, who was contemporary with Isaiah, and who experienced both a personal and national deliverance from death at the time of the Assyrian invasion. They only had to look at Yahweh’s faithfulness towards their ancestors:

Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you: for I called him alone, and blessed him, and increased him. For the LORD shall comfort Zion: he will comfort all her waste places; and he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the

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17 The question of the legitimacy of Isaac is the sub-text of Genesis 21; Ronning (p.18fn.46) also notes that the same question regarding Abrahamic descent features in John 8:41
18 The nation faced the punishment for an unfaithful wife – compare Exodus 32:20 with Numbers 5:27.
19 The ark was often carried into battle at the prosecution of ‘Yahweh war’, for example when Jericho was destroyed. The formula that was pronounced when the ark was moved witnesses to this; “Rise up, Lord, and let thine enemies be scattered; and let them that hate thee flee before thee” (Num.10:35). Tremper Longman III observes, “A second example surrounds the defeat of the Israelites at the hand of the Philistines at the end of the reign of Eli (1 Sam.4-6). The text describes Eli as good-hearted but incompetent. He was particularly incompetent as a father, and his two sons, Hophni and Phinehas then realized that their mistake was in forgetting to bring the ark onto the battlefield. From their actions as well as the consequences, it appears that this realization came about not because of any deeply held faith in God but rather from the misconception that the ark was like a magical box by which God’s presence and power could be manipulated.” Tremper Longman III, Show Them No Mercy: 4 Views on God and Canaanite Genocide, (C.S. Cowles, Eugene H. Merrill, Daniel L. Gard, Tremper Longman, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003),176
20 This article presupposes the unity and pre-exilic nature of the Isaiah prophecies and that Hezekiah is the Suffering Servant – as such he represents the faithful remnant and typifies the Messiah.
LORD; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody. (Isa. 51:2-3)

As observed by Ronning and others, Eden is a play on Sarah’s words: “After I have become old, shall I have pleasure ['ahare belot hayeta li 'edna], my lord being old also?” (Gen 18: 12)? The Assyrians, similar to Saul’s daughter Michal, had looked out the window and despised and laughed at the reciprocal covenant affection between Yahweh and his people, but now:

“This is the word that the LORD hath spoken concerning him; the virgin the daughter of Zion hath despised thee, and laughed thee to scorn; the daughter of Jerusalem hath shaken her head at thee.” (2 Kgs 19:21)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Genesis 26</th>
<th>Isaiah 53</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>v.8) When he (Isaac) had been there a long time ['aruk]</td>
<td>v.10) He (Hezekiah) shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days (v.10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v.7) Because she (Rebekah) was fair to look upon [mar'eb]</td>
<td>v.2) There is no beauty [mar'eb] that we should desire him (v.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v.9) Lest I die [muwth] for her</td>
<td>For thou shalt die, [muwth] and not live (Isa.38:1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v.10) Thou shouldest have brought guiltiness ['asham] upon us</td>
<td>v.10) Thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin ['asham] (v.10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v.11) He that toucheth [naga'] this man</td>
<td>v.4) We did esteem him stricken, [naga'] smitten of God</td>
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“In those days was Hezekiah sick unto death. And Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz came unto him, and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Set thine house in order: for thou shalt die, and not live.” (Isa.38:1)

The emphasis in the above passage is the certainty of death (muwth), this was also Isaac’s fear (at the hands of Abimelech); “Lest I die for her” (Gen.26:9), but the prophet Isaiah exhorts:

21 Ibid, J. Ronning [ Page 2-3 footnote ?]; Most interpreters view v. 12 as indicating that sexual intimacy was out of the question, understanding 'edna (a hapax) as sexual pleasure. In my opinion, this needs to be reexamined. For one thing, it seems to make the connection between Sarah’s words and the Lord’s repetition of them a bit remote (v. 13 quotes her as scoffing, “shall I give birth?”). A. Millard (“The Etymology of Eden,” I’T 24 [1984] 103-6), arguing for the possibility of a West Semitic origin for ‘edna, from a root with “the common idea of ‘pleasure, luxury’ ” (p. 104) as opposed to an Akkadian derivation with the idea of “steppe, plain,” which he finds problematic, cites a mid-ninth-century BC bilingual inscription where the Aramaic uses a verbal form of 'din, which corresponds to the Akkadian mutabbidu, “to enrich, make abundant.” This idea of abundance would give a closer parallel to giving birth than would sexual pleasure, since offspring are associated with “fruitfulness” (Gen 1:28, etc.). M. Jastrow cites a later Hebrew verbal usage of the root with the idea of rejuvenation, which would thus provide an opposite to bll, and would have interesting implications for the thesis of this paper (A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Malhustic Literature, [2 vols.; Brooklyn: Shalom, 1967] 2.1045). Such a usage, however, might seem just as remote from “give birth” as is the concept of sexual pleasure. The NIV (“will I now have this pleasure?”) seems to refer the pleasure to the giving birth just promised, i.e., the joys of motherhood.
“I, even I, am he that comforteth you: who art thou, that thou shouldst be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as grass”. (Isa.51:12)

Isaac had been comforted over Sarah’s death when he took Rebekah into his mother’s tent. (Gen. 24:67). In other words, the matriarchal position was filled by his new bride Rebekah and this was a comfort to him. Now, however, after reminding them of his covenant promise to Abraham and Sarah, Yahweh promises that they will also be comforted (like Isaac was) in the time of their loss, for he will cause a remnant to return.

“Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you: for I called him alone, and blessed him, and increased him. (v.2)…Therefore the redeemed of the LORD shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy shall be upon their head: they shall obtain gladness and joy; and sorrow and mourning shall flee away.” (Isa. 51:11)

The Assyrians found their army destroyed overnight and released all the captives who were en-route for deportation. Sennacherib destroyed 42 cities and took some 200,000 captives (Taylor prism), but Jerusalem never fell. These captives returned with great joy; and like the bride Rebekah, they were ready to step into the void left by the death of so many and were a comfort to Hezekiah. The reformation initiated by Hezekiah in 2 Chron.30 urged the people to “return to the God of Abraham and Isaac” (v.6).…but they “laughed him to scorn, and mocked” (v.10 cf. Ishmael mocking Isaac)…..the people who responded were healed from ritual impurity by Hezekiah’s prayer (v.20) and rejoiced, even the strangers (v.25) and Hezekiah prospered (31:21) and was exalted (32:23) – all these phrases find resonance with the sister-wife motif.

The significance of the near death of Hezekiah (which parallels the destruction of the nation) is that Hezekiah had no heir to the throne. This was a virtual disannulment of the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants. It was only through an open display of covenant love by Yahweh that the promises were upheld. Isaac had dwelt ‘a long time’ or many days in the land - - similarly, the suffering servant would ‘lengthen (prolong) his days.’ The blessing of old age was specifically promised as a reward for obedience to the law; “Thou shalt keep therefore his statutes, and his commandments, which I command thee this day, that it may go well with thee, and with thy children after thee, and that thou mayest prolong thy days upon the earth” (Deut.4:40). Hezekiah was granted an extension of 15 years to his life. In contrast with the beautiful Rebekah (easy on the eye), the servant was repulsive (no beauty = no look upon [lit.]) due to his illness - - note that mar’eb comes from the primitive root ra’ab (see); thematically connected to the Abrahamic covenants. Isaac was afraid to die for the sake of his wife; but although Hezekiah wept and prayed for mercy, they were not tears of self-pity but of despair for the fate of his people, who would be left without a king and without an heir to the throne in their time of greatest need. Unlike Isaac, who feared harm for the sake of his wife, Hezekiah was “wounded for our transgressions” and “bruised for our iniquities”. Abimelech accuses Isaac of bringing “guiltiness” upon his people; in contrast the servant offers his soul (life) for a sin or “guilt offering”. Interestingly, Janowski argues that Isa.53:10 “is the central statement of the fourth servant
Janowski defines אֱשָׁמ (‘asham), from contexts such as Gen 26:10 and 1 Sam 6:3-4 and says that it was after the composition of Isa 53 that the term אֱשָׁמ (‘asham) made its way into Lev 4-5:7. Although one does not necessarily agree with his conclusion regarding Leviticus, Janowski inadvertently connects accounts (C) and (B) with Isaiah 53.

The Chronology of the narratives (A), (B) and (C)

The difficult chronology has been noted by many scholars and critics alike. For example; why would Abimelech take Sarah into his harem at 89 years old? Surely she was an old crone? How is it possible that the same incident occurs with the same Abimelech and Phichol (76 years later). To suggest that this is a different Abimelech and Phichol and that both Abimelech and Phichol are ‘hereditary’ titles is disingenuous.

Ronning, comments that Abimelech and Phichol were granted longevity because of their attitude to Abraham; as God had promised to bless those who blessed Abraham. The age of Sarah (and Abraham) is not a problem as they were rejuvenated (cf. Rom 4:17-19 ‘resurrected’) in order to conceive the child of promise. This parallels the extension of life and rejuvenation/resurrection of the suffering servant. The theme of ‘laughing’ is integral to the narrative. Both Abraham and Sarah are ‘set up’ to laugh with incredulity at promise of a child (Isaac’s name means laughter) - - however, the readers are also ‘set up’ to laugh with incredulity, once they realize the age of Sarah in Abimelech’s harem. This complements our earlier findings as the reader either participates in God’s miraculous promise (Isaac laughing and playing with Rebekah) or laughs with scorn at the absurdity of someone ‘making a fool of themselves’ (like Michal despising David) for the sake of covenant love. Ronning concludes his article as follows:

“In the present case, if our understanding of the laughter in connection with the birth of Isaac is correct, we have done more than simply uncover coherency amid apparent chaos; we have uncovered an author who has played a highly successful joke on readers and scholars down through the centuries.”

Conclusion

None of the great men of faith lived up to the Messianic ideal, whether Abraham, Isaac, David or the ‘suffering servant’ Hezekiah (2 Chron 32:25-26). The conclusion of this article is that the accounts function as a paradigm for Israel’s pre-exilic covenant history:

(A) The Egyptian bondage and Exodus
(B) The early monarchial-prophetic period
(C) The Hezekiah reformation and deliverance

22 Janowski, Bernd, and Peter Stuhlmacher, eds., The Suffering Servant: Isaiah 53 in Jewish and Christian Sources, (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 2004),66
23 Ibid, Ronning, 27
The allusion to the patriarchal narratives by Isaiah establishes that they are also pre-exilic and considerably earlier than the Isaiah prophecy. This negates the hypothesis suggested by some scholars, that the patriarchal narratives are a post-exilic justification of the nation’s claim to the land from which they had been exiled during the Babylonian captivity. The patriarchal chronology in the three narratives may correspond with particular periods of Israel’s covenant history, but the chronology is certainly also integral to our understanding of the narratives themselves. The narratives themselves contain a historic core based on the nomadic wanderings of Abraham (Isaac) and the covenant delivered to them. One can only speculate that these traditio-historic stories were passed on orally until they were initially recorded and then later incorporated in the larger work (under inspiration), using particular literary devices to reflect the theology of the redactor. The importance of these narratives and the art of the literary conventions is such, that the themes are re-employed by the wisdom literature.

In the ANE the taking of a sister as wife was practiced by the Pharaoh’s for dynastic reasons. E. A. Speiser has appealed to literature from the cuneiform world and has suggested that the Nuzi texts provide a historical explanation for the ‘wife as sisters’ stories in Genesis in marriage custom practiced by the upper Hurrian classes, in which a husband could adopt his wife as his sister. Also, the woman given in marriage by her brother would legally become her husband’s sister (see Speiser, 15-28). However, D. Freedman and S. Greengus both challenge his interpretation of the patriarchal narratives and others find fault with his arbitrary arrangement of the Nuzi texts.

However, despite A.N.E. customs, other reasons must be found for this unusual practice; if only to explain why the narratives have been allowed to remain in the Torah, when the marrying of a sister was forbidden under Levitical law. Leviticus 18 (vv.9, 11) forbids sexual congress with one’s sister, either one’s natural sister (your father’s daughter) or one’s half sister (your mother’s daughter). The law about abstention from intercourse with one’s half sister is repeated in v.11 (cf. Abraham’s claim that Sarah is his half sister in Gen.20:12) and the legality of the union is challenged in Lev.20: 17.

This prohibition needs to be placed not only against the patriarchal sister-wife narratives, but also against a celebration of the sister-wife union in Song of Songs; “Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my bride…..how fair is thy love, my sister, my spouse” (Song 4:10). It is probable that ‘sister’ is not meant to be understood literally in these poetic passages – but rather as a companion from the same tribe or family. Whether Abraham/Isaac were actually related to their wives is debatable, perhaps it was merely part of the elaborate deception; nevertheless, the sister-wife relationship is the one that is chosen to represent the Abrahamic covenants; a relationship that the Siniatic covenant did not recognize. The law could only condemn such a relationship, but ironically it was only within the confines of such an unusual union that the Abrahamic covenant could flourish. A husband, who was related to his wife by the same father; pointing to a fulfilment of the Abrahamic covenant by a Messiah who was related both to God and to his bride – a bride for whom, unlike Abraham and Isaac, he was willing to die.

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24 Job 33 echoes Genesis 20. On reading Job as a parabolic dramatization of the Hezekiah period see A. Perry, Job, (Willow Publications,2009)

25 See the article by Victor P. Hamilton in NIDOTTE vol., I G/K 295 p.351-354.
Genesis

The Wells of Salvation

*The theology of water conflict in the Biblical narrative*
Wells of Salvation

“Throughout history, access to water has spawned and escalated both domestic and international conflicts. In recent decades, population growth and global warming have both played a major role in raising the demand for and availability of potable water. The U.S. government has predicted that by 2015 almost half of the world’s population will be "stressed" for water. Water -- rather than oil -- could become the world’s next biggest catalyst for conflict.”

Water has always been scarce in the Middle East and therefore a source of conflict. This article will examine the theology of water conflict in the Biblical narrative – particularly in the patriarchal accounts. Genesis 21:22-34 recounts the dispute between Abraham and Abimelech and Genesis 26:12-33 between Isaac and Abimelech.

Duplications or literary conventions?

Genesis 26:12-33 is usually assigned to a J source (apart from verses 15 and 18 assigned to E) and Genesis 21:22-34 mostly E (apart from verses 28-30 and 33 assigned to J). Under the documentary hypothesis these narratives (especially the sister-wife pericopes of 12:10-20;20:1-18 and 26:1-14) are considered duplications and this is explained as due to the use by J and E of two (or three) independent versions of an old folk-story; according to this theory a later reviser of the J narrative inserted an altered version of E’s story into the narrative of Isaac, and introduced the anachronism of making Abimelech a Philistine king; then the final Priestly editor after the Exile allowed the different versions to stand side by side as independent episodes. However, more recently some scholars have suggested that they are literary compositions based on and presupposing the knowledge of the original source. Moreover, the inadequacy of the criteria employed for assigning the various stories to the traditional sources is coming under renewed critique – “the only reason to view the narratives as emanating from different sources is the use of different divine names.”

Robert Alter remarks: “Different repeated episodes have elicited different explanations, but the most common strategy among scholars is to attribute all ostensible duplication in the narrative to a duplication of sources, to a kind of recurrent stammer in the process of transmission, whether written or oral.”

Alter applies a literary approach to the narratives which he terms “Biblical Type-Scenes and the Uses of Convention.” This formulaic literary device leaves the narrative open to the charge of historicized-

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1 Water Could Become Major Catalyst for Conflict by Roman Kupchinsky
3 For example; while the sister-wife pericope in chap.20 was assigned to E, those of 12 and 26 were widely held to originate from J. However, Van Seters and Westermann suggest that 20 and 26 are literary compositions dependent on 12. [Van Seters, Abraham in History and Tradition, 167-91; Westermann, Genesis 12-36,161,318-320,424]
6 Alter is at his best when challenging preconceptions by introducing the concept of “type-scenes” (recurring episodes or patterns of episodes). The “betrothal scene” is such a convention and variations of the scene are used when finding a bride for Isaac, for Jacob and for Moses who also met his wife by a well. The “type-scene” is even appropriated in the New Testament when Jesus meets the Samaritan woman by a well. Type-scenes are therefore a
fiction, but this is only the case if one equates *Heilsgeschichte* with history and labors under the misconception that history only concerns itself with the mere reportage of facts. Desmond Alexander, commenting on the sister-wife episodes, remarks that;

“While there is evidence that the later accounts have been shaped to some extent by the process of their inclusion within a larger literary work—something which might naturally be expected—it cannot be confirmed that they are merely fictional narratives based on 12:10-13:1.”

His conclusion is as valid for the sister-wife episodes as it is for the chapters under discussion. The occurrence of supposed anachronisms to discount the historicity of the accounts is based on dubious evidence and is open to several other plausible explanations.

The wells of contention (Genesis 21 and Genesis 26)

All the patriarchal narratives share a common theme, namely, that of legitimacy. Who is the legitimate heir? Isaac or Ishmael? Who is the legitimate husband of Sarah (Rebekah); is it Abraham (Isaac) or Abimelech? Who has legitimate ownership of the wells; is it Abraham (Isaac) or Abimelech? Who is the legitimate recipient of the patriarchal blessings, Jacob or Esau? The theme of legitimacy is duplicated with subtle variations throughout the Genesis narrative.

The formulaic incorporation of themes that are coupled with particular type-scenes should be placed in a worldview where the medium for revelation is history itself; not necessarily history as a causal-effectual continuum or even a repetition (with subtle variations), but as rudiments of a larger theological pastiche—an historical harmony, whose teleology extends both forwards and backwards; and whose eschatological purpose will only be fully comprehended right at the end—and that only through divine revelation and intervention, R. Alter observes:

“The type-scene is not merely a way of formally recognizing a particular kind of narrative moment; it is also a means of attaching that moment to a larger pattern of historical and theological meaning. If Isaac and Rebekah, as the first man and woman born into the covenant God has made with Abraham and his seed, provide certain paradigmatic traits for the future historical identity of Israel, any association of later figures with the crucial junctures of that first story—the betrothal, the life-threatening trial in the wilderness, the enunciation

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7 A German word literally translated "salvation history". Used in OT studies in the 50s, as a theological principle, reading Scripture as the story of God's redeeming acts in history. Historical catalogues of God's saving acts are found in both Testaments.

8 Alan R. Millard observes: “Let all who read remember that the patriarchal narratives are our only source for knowledge of the earliest traditions of Israel, that traditions can be correct reflections of ancient events, and that they do not pretend to be textbooks of ancient near-eastern history or archaeology.” Alan R. Millard, Methods of Studying the Patriarchal Narratives as Ancient Texts, A.R. Millard & D.J. Wiseman, eds., *Essays on the Patriarchal Narratives*. Leicester: IVP, 1980.

9 Ibid, T.D. Alexander, p.51

Inerrant Scripture and Intentional Anachronisms James Patrick Holding http://www.tektonics.org/af/anachronisms.html
of the blessing—will imply some connection of meaning, some further working-out of the original covenant.”

The next section will demonstrate that the wells of Genesis 26 served as a model for covenantal relationships with the “Gentiles” during the reign of Hezekiah and that in turn this has been adapted to the needs of the NT as a paradigm for covenantal relationships.

The wells as Paradigm for covenantal relationships

The narrative in Genesis 26 has parallels with the prophetic pronouncements of Isaiah 49 as the following table demonstrates:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Genesis 26</th>
<th>Isaiah 49</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Isaac’s sacrifice (Gen.22)</td>
<td>….and I will give thee for a covenant of the people. (v.8)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| ….and Rebecca lifted up her eyes when she saw Isaac (24:64) [Rebekah=to fetter or tie] | …lift up thine eyes (v.18)  
|                                                | ….gird thyself with them, like a bride (v.18) |
| Isaac unblocks Abraham’s wells                  | …even by the springs of water shall he guide them (v.10) |
| Esek = contention  Sitnah=enmity                | I will contend with them that contend with thee (v.25) |
| Reheboth= to enlarge/broad places               | …the place is too straight for me give me place that I may dwell (v.20)  
|                                                | …who have begotten these?  
|                                                | ….who have brought up these? |

As demonstrated in earlier articles, the *Sitz Im Leben* of the prophecy of Isaiah can be firmly placed in the reign of Hezekiah. The prophecy concerns the reforming king Hezekiah, who re-established covenantal relationships with Yahweh (unblocking Abraham’s wells) and who extended the covenant to “Galilee of the Gentiles”, thereby enlarging or broadening the covenant to fulfil its original intention.

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11 *Ibid,* Alter, p.60  
12 See the End Note on Isaiah 49 in the NT  
13 In the first month of his reign, Hezekiah; “opened the doors of the house of the Lord and repaired them” (2 Chron. 29: 3). This was the beginning of an extended reformation and rededication…..“now it is mine heart to make a covenant with the Lord God of Israel…” (v.10)  
14 ‘Galilee of the nations’ (Isa.9:2) this term (of contempt) is interchangeable with ‘Galilee of the Gentiles’ (cf.1 Mac.5:15). The northern tribes had been deported and intermingled with Gentiles long before Judah was depopulated. These tribes were issued an invitation by Hezekiah to celebrate the Passover at Jerusalem (2 Chron.30:1) – those who accepted the invitation were saved from the Assyrian invasion: “The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.” (Isa.9:2RV) The ‘great light’ refers to the ‘shekinah glory’ revealed at the slaying of the Assyrians (Isa.37:35-38 cf. Isa. 30:30-33). ‘Galilee of the Gentiles’ becomes metonymic for the ‘Gentiles’ expressing the
endured the hostility of the northern tribes and the Assyrian invasion (I will contend with them, that contend with thee); the suffering-servant [Hezekiah] typified the Messiah (I will give thee for a covenant of the people) – Hezekiah, who was about to die childless 16 (thereby nullifying the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants) was reprieved and raised on the third day.17 The work that he had done to establish a safe water supply for the defense of Jerusalem 18 became symbolic for the “wells that Isaac unblocked” and is commemorated in the “wells of salvation” of Isaiah 12:

“Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid: for the Lord Jehovah is my strength19 and song; he also is become my salvation. Therefore with joy shall ye draw from the wells of salvation”(Isa.12:2-3)

The story of Isaac becomes paradigmatic for the extension of the covenant into a new arena in the face of unrelenting hostility.

NT usage of the patriarchal narrative

The Genesis narrative also has parallels with the Johannine account:

15 “In thy seed shall all nations of the earth be blessed” (Gen.22:18).

16 “Who shall declare his generation? (53:8)…..he shall see of the travail of his soul [i.e., his children] and shall be satisfied…” (Isa.53:11)

17 “What shall be the sign that the Lord will heal me, and that I shall go up into the house of the Lord on the third day?” (2 Kgs.20:8)

18 Hezekiah sealed the water sources outside the city and constructed a new water tunnel (2 Chron. 32: 1-4 cf. Isa.36:1-37).

19 ‘Strength’ is a play on the name of Hezekiah (Yah strengthens)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gen 21 and Gen 26</th>
<th>John 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abraham reproves Abimelech over a well that was violently taken away (v.25)</td>
<td>For every one that doeth evil hateth the light… lest his deeds should be reproved (v.20) …whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him (4:10-14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abimelech claims to know nothing about it (v.26)</td>
<td>…art thou a teacher in Israel and understandest not these things? (v.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>God is with thee (v.22)</td>
<td>…no man can do these signs except God be with him (v.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>….that it may be a witness to thee that I have digged this well (v.30)</td>
<td>He that receiveth his witness hath set his seal to this, that God is true (v.34)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>..we have found water (26:32)</td>
<td>..there was much water there (v.23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isaac’s goods increase greatly (26:13)</td>
<td>..behold…all men come to him (v.26)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The fourth gospel commences with a pericope that parallels the Genesis “creation account” followed by a “patriarchal narrative” shaped around Jacob; even incorporating the “betrothal convention” as the type-scene set at ‘Jacob’s well’ in Samaria. The hostility of the Pharisees, who had “shut up the kingdom of heaven”, (Matt.23:13 cf. ‘He that openeth, and no man shutteth’ in Rev.3:7) mirrors that of the Philistines who had “blocked Abraham’s wells” and is ascribed in Matthew 27:18 to the same motive (envy) as the Philistines in Gen.26:14. Interestingly, the controversy with the Pharisees had repercussions for the relationship between the disciples of John the Baptist and those of Jesus. The Pharisees attempted to drive a wedge between the two parties by provoking envy (Jesus’ baptizes more disciples than the Baptist) and by questioning the efficacy of Jesus’ baptism (questions about ‘purifying’ in John 3:25, 26). It is Jesus who opens the blocked patriarchal wells in order to draw “living water” (John 4:10) and who transforms the water for ‘purifying the Jews’ (John 2:6) – the baptism of John – into the wine of the communion (John 2:10) and the baptism of the Spirit (John 7:38), a fact graciously acknowledged by the Baptist (John 1: 33; 3:30).

The well of the oath - Beersheba

The treaty between Abraham and Abimelech is believed by some scholars (Long and Van Seters for example) to display signs of disunity and the joining of separate traditions. There are two explanations for the name Beersheba – the ‘Well of Seven’ or the ‘Well of the Oath’ and the narrative in 21:22-32 supposedly consists of two accounts describing two separate treaties. In the first treaty Abraham and Abimelech swear to live in peace with one another; to seal this covenant Abraham gives Abimelech sheep and oxen. In the other treaty the dispute over the ownership of the well is resolved by setting aside seven ewe lambs as a witness to the fact that Abraham had dug the well. Driver, however, does not consider the double naming a problem:
“The two explanations resolve themselves into one: for the Heb. Word for ‘to swear’ (nishba’, the reflexive of the unused shaba’) seems to mean properly (as it were) ‘to seven oneself’, i.e., to pledge oneself in some way by seven sacred things, so that, if it might be assumed that the ‘seven lambs’ were used for this purpose, only one ceremony would be described in this passage.”

T. D. Alexander views the entire pericope as a unity, compromising firstly of a ‘friendship’ treaty and only then a treaty over the outstanding dispute over the well (of which Abimelech was ignorant). Alexander observes;

“Once the [friendship] treaty is concluded Abraham is in a position to settle the dispute over ownership of the well. Having acted in a gracious manner towards Abimelech, Abraham now asks him to recognize his claim to the well.”

As with all the patriarchal narratives and indeed even the Exodus, the question of historicity looms large. It is not because of a lack of archeological evidence, but because of discrepancies over the dating. The dating of the finds seems to indicate, for example, that the cities conquered by Joshua did not exist at the time when Israel conquered the land (but are of a later origin). The same problem is encountered in the patriarchal narratives. The Philistines certainly existed, but according to the evidence, supposedly did not inhabit the land in the time of Abraham. Manor’s comments on the well at Beersheba reflect the general consensus:

“It is not possible to determine when the well was dug, although it appears from the building that surrounded the well in stratum VII, and the fact that the well stood almost exactly in the center of the courtyard of this building, that the well existed during stratum VII. Because the stratigraphy of the well area has been disrupted in antiquity (due to the collapse of the upper walls of the shaft), it is impossible to determine stratigraphically the date of the well. The only possibility available to determine its date is to excavate to the bottom of the well, but after excavating through 28 m of accumulation without reaching bottom, it was deemed necessary to abort the operation. On the basis of the orientation of nearby stratum IX architectural features, the excavators suggest that the well was dug in stratum IX (Herzog 1984:4-6). There is, however, no evidence to attribute any part of this well to the patriarchal period.”

Walter Torre, observes;

“Gerar (identified with Tell Haror) is portrayed in Genesis as a Philistine city. The Philistines arrived in Canaan ca. 1175 BCE when they make their first appearance in Egyptian records as the Pelest, one of the Sea Peoples who attempted to invade Egypt in the days of Pharaoh Rameses III. Their distinctive pottery was found at Tel Haror in the 12th

20 Driver, Genesis, 215; further reading; Ibid, T.D. Alexander, p.72
21 Ibid, T.D. Alexander, p.74
century BC levels which are contemporary with Beersheba’s founding. Oren’s article on Gerar notes that the city was founded in the Middle Bronze II era, the 18th century BCE and existed in Late Bronze, Iron Age I-II and Persian times. No remains, not even pottery shards, have been found of the 21st century BCE and Abraham’s world.” 23

Torre cites Oren to establish his case:

“Surveys and excavations have demonstrated that Tel Haror was one of the largest Middle Bronze settlement sites in South Canaan, covering an area of ca. 40 acres…Earlier occupational strata in the 12-11th centuries BCE included…masses of early and late types of beautifully decorated Philistine pottery. One of the refuse pits produced a large collection of scrap iron tools and vessels, implying some processing of iron implements. The rich early Iron Age settlement at Tel Haror testifies to the dynamic eastward expansion of Philistine culture from the South coast into the Judaean Shephelah.” 24

Without being an archeologist it is difficult to comment on such anomalies, but other scholars have criticized the methodology that leads to such conclusions, they have also pointed out, for example, that in the case of Beersheba the well was never excavated to the lowest strata, that there is even uncertainty if it is the correct well (there are many wells in the vicinity), that although the patriarchal narratives name places they rarely name cities (it is possible, for example, that Beersheba and Gerar were transient settlements before cities were established) and that many of the anachronisms are difficult to prove or disprove by archeological finds as they are perishable (an example is the mention of camels in the patriarchal accounts, a supposedly late addition but notoriously difficult to ‘dig up’ as they are perishables that are often scavenged by wild animals).25

The well of the oath - Beersheba in the NT

Luke records parallels with the Beersheba narratives in Zechariah’s hymn of praise at the birth of John the Baptist (Lk.1:67-79):

23 Dating the Pentateuch, Genesis and the Archaeological Anomalies and Anachronisms Walter Reinhold Warttig Mattfeld y de la Torre, M.A. Ed.
Luke 1

71. That we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us.

Genesis 26

18. Isaac digged again the wells of water, which they had digged in the days of Abraham his father.

33. Beersheba—well of the oath

74. ...the oath which he swore to Abraham our father.

24. ...fear not, for I will bless thee,

76. ...the prophet of the Most High

28. We saw plainly that the Lord was with thee

79. ...to guide our feet in the way of peace

31. ...they departed from him in peace.

The correspondences are clear, but the objection might be voiced that the terms of the hymn (and indeed the typology of Isaac), are more appropriate to the Messiah than to John the Baptist. Luke 1:69 refers to a ‘horn of salvation’ (a mighty savior)—‘horn’, suggests the strength of a fighting animal. It is used in Ps. 132:17 of a successor to David, but the language here reflects Ps. 18:2 (see further 1 Sa.2:1, 10; Dn.7:7 f.; 1En.90:9; Shemoneh Esreh, 15; Rev.5:6; 12:3; et al.; W. Foerster, TDNT III, 669-671). The reference to the house (1:27 note) of David his servant (Acts 4:25; Did.9:2; Shemoneh Esreh, 18; SB IV:1, 213; J. Jeremias, TDNT V, 700) identifies the horn as the Messiah—“Since there is nothing to link John himself to the house of David, the reference here cannot be to John himself; rather Zechariah is pictured as knowing of the conception of the Messiah by Mary (Lagrange, 59). The view that the hymn as a whole reflects a messianic veneration of John is thus exposed to strong objection (Wink, 68).” Although the hymn praises the privilege of the preparatory role played by the Baptist (vv.76-77), it recognizes that the full import of the fulfilment of the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants is in the Messianic role played by Jesus (vv.68-75; 78-79).

Isaac and Messianic typology

It is perhaps fruitful to include Alter’s insightful commentary on the life of Isaac before investigating the typology:

“This chapter [Genesis 26] is the only one in which Isaac figures as an active protagonist. Before he was a bound victim; after, he will be seen as a bamboozled blind old man. His only other initiated act is his brief moment as intercessor on behalf of his wife in 25:21. Textual critics disagree about whether this chapter is a ‘mosaic’ of Isaac traditions or an integral literary unit, and about whether it is early or late. What is clear is that the architectonics of the larger story requires a buffer of material on Isaac between Jacob’s purchase of the birth-right and his stealing of the blessing—a buffer that focuses attention

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on Isaac’s right to the land and on his success in flourishing in the land. All the actions reported here, however, merely delineate him as a typological heir to Abraham. Like Abraham he goes through the sister-wife experience, is vouchsafed a covenantal promise by God, prospers in flock and field, and is involved in a quarrel over wells. He remains the pale and schematic patriarch among the three forefathers, preceded by the exemplary founder, followed by the vivid struggler.”

Isaac is indeed the “typological heir” to Abraham; his Messianic foreshadowing shows him as the covenantal sacrifice and the one who “unblocks” the promises in the face of growing hostility. He resolves all the old disputes over “legitimacy” and declares a Messianic banquet. Interestingly, once the perpetual quarrels over wells have been eternally laid to rest his servants arrive (the same day) with more good news – we have found water (26:32). This seems both superfluous and extraneous; superfluous because everyone now has their own legitimate claim to a water source; extraneous because Isaac’s servants were digging a new well (which we are not informed about) while the negotiations were still ongoing. This new well represents the outpouring of the Spirit in the Messianic age:

In that day (the same day) there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and uncleanness. (Zech.13:1)

The Messianic age is one where all covenantal relationships are restored, where there is room enough for everyone to live peaceably; where the nation of Israel and the Gentiles live in covenant relationship with the same God through the means of his son who “unblocked” all the wells and dwells in their midst.

Genesis 26  
Receives a blessing (multiply thy seed)  I will place them and multiply them…

He builds an altar  … set my sanctuary in the midst …

Pitches his tent there  My tabernacle shall also be with them

They depart in peace  I will make a covenant of peace with them

“Therefore with joy shall ye draw from the wells of salvation”

Conclusion

The patriarchal narratives, like the Bible itself, stubbornly refuse to be classified; is it history masquerading as theology, or artful literature? What are the sources and dates of composition? How can type-scene and convention reflect historical reality? In a perverse twist the same questions surround the “living word”; where did He come from? Who was His author? Who is the historical Jesus? Ultimately these are questions of faith - - and both the written and the “living word” will be shown to come from the same source - - a unique interaction between God and man through the Spirit. Scholarship should recognize limitations in understanding how God works, “for now we see through a glass darkly”, an appeal to scholarly humility in the face of the numinous, “Therefore I have uttered that which I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not.” Our concept of ‘inspiration’ is not necessarily the same as God’s, nor is our understanding of history the same as the One who knows “the beginning from the end.” What is clear, however, is that the collective experience of Israel is somehow also the individual experience of Israelites. That Abraham can be both a historical reality and at the same time act as a federal representative for the community of faith; the NT writers had no problem understanding the Levites paying ‘tithes’ through the loins of Abraham. Scholarship must somehow resolve its schizophrenic attitude to the Bible, attempting to force it into their agenda. The NT authors can take the example of Isaac and shape it under the inspiration of the Spirit to reflect the historical reality surrounding the hostility towards Jesus in the first century.

Water conflict has always troubled the Middle East and will probably contribute to the next war, but more importantly it masks a deeper enmity; a hatred born out of envy and a spiritual dispute over legitimacy and ownership. This is particularly relevant to the current claims of ownership related to the Palestinian question and appeals to being the legitimate heirs of Abraham. It also relates to Christ himself, who is claimed by the Muslims as a prophet, by the Jews as an itinerant exorcist and by the Gentiles as their God (a claim never made by Jesus). Water conflict in the patriarchal narratives allegorizes the covenants and typifies the Messiah as the only legitimate source of water. It is only through him that all the disputes can be resolved. At the great eschatological (Zech.14:16) “Feast of Tabernacles”, where the ceremony of water pouring (in anticipation of the blessing of rain for the next crop), was practiced with water sourced from the Virgin spring, Jesus declared; “Out of his (the believers) belly shall flow rivers of living water. [But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive] (7:37-40). The believer would become the receptacle of the “Spirit” and it would flow forth like water in its healing and unifying effervescence.

28 Roman Kupchinsky observes: "Writing about the 1967 Six Day War in his 2001 memoirs, Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon said that "While the border disputes between Syria and ourselves were of great significance, the matter of water diversion was a stark issue of life and death." “People generally regard 5 June 1967 as the day the Six Day War began,” Sharon later told the BBC in 2003. "That is the official date. But, in reality, it started two-and-a-half years earlier, on the day Israel decided to act against the diversion of the Jordan [River].”See: http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2005/09/f4c46732-8f80-46a0-8c74-afddecc3b794.html
29 The pool of Siloam is fed by a conduit that is cut for a distance of 1,780 feet through solid rock (by Hezekiah), and which starts at the so-called Virgin’s Spring. It was from Siloam that water was brought in a golden vessel to the Temple during the feast of Tabernacles and poured out on the altar. http://www.bible-history.com/jerusalem/firstcenturyjerusalem_pool_of_siloam.html http://www.season-of-our-joy.com/WaterPouring.htm
“These seven ewe lambs shalt thou take out mine hand, that they may be a witness unto me, that I have digged this well” (Gen.21: 30).

The faithful witness with seven churches in his hand (Rev.1: 5, 20)

End Note

Isaiah 49 is also used in Acts 3 as a template for the healing of the lame man:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Isaiah 49</th>
<th>Acts 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3. My servant, in whom I will be glorified.</td>
<td>13. The God of our fathers hath glorified his servant Jesus.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. My God shall be my strength. [strength is a play on the meaning of Hezekiah’s name]</td>
<td>16. His name…hath made this man strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. To raise up the tribes of Jacob.</td>
<td>7. He raised him up.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. For a covenant of the people</td>
<td>25. Children of the covenant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>6. My salvation to the ends of the earth.</strong></td>
<td><strong>25 All kindreds of the earth blessed.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9, 10,13. Pastures…springs of water etc</td>
<td>19. Seasons of refreshing from the presence of the Lord.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. All these gather themselves together, and come to thee.</td>
<td>11. All the people ran together unto them.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Peter’s choice of words (recorded by Luke) was meant to impress on the people that they were wrestling against God (like the ‘lame’ Jacob in Gen. 32:31) and that if they refused the healing of Christ, their great salvation would be extended to the Gentiles. Luke also stresses the inclusion of the Gentiles by drawing parallels with Isaiah 49 in Luke 2:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Isaiah 49</th>
<th>Luke 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13. Comforted his people</td>
<td>25. The consolation of Israel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Called me from the womb.</td>
<td>23. Every male that openeth the womb…holy to the Lord.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>6. A light to the Gentiles.</strong></td>
<td><strong>31. A light to lighten the Gentiles.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Can a woman forget her suckling child…the son of her womb?</td>
<td>35. Yea, a sword shall pierce thine own heart also.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. They shall not be ashamed that wait for me.</td>
<td>25. Waiting for the consolation of Israel.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Princes shall worship, kings shall see and arise.</td>
<td>34. The fall and rising up of many in Israel.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Solomon son of God?
Solomon Son of God?

There can be no doubt that the Deuteronomist envisaged the fulfilment of the covenant promises in a ‘human’ descendant of David. In the first instance this descendant or ‘Son of God’ was Solomon:

“I will be his father, and he shall be my son.” (2 Sam.7: 14)

There is of course a qualitative and quantitative difference between the ‘sonship’ of Jesus and that of Solomon, nevertheless, the Davidic covenant model has Solomon as the first realization. This poses a problem because of Solomon’s apostasy towards the end of his reign. It is however often argued that Solomon repented before he died with the book of Ecclesiastes and Song of Songs often cited as supportive evidence and Jesus’ supposedly positive mention of Solomon in the NT.

Did Solomon repent?

If we limit our investigation solely to the historical chronicles the conclusion must be that Solomon did not repent. On other occasions when the kings of Judah sinned it is clearly stated that they repented, or that they were acceptable to Yahweh:

“Now when he was in affliction, he implored the LORD his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, and prayed to Him; and He received his entreaty, heard his supplication, and brought him back to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the LORD was God”. (2 Chron 33:12-13)

Solomon’s father David is a good example of finding acceptance despite having sinned (but then we know that David repented):

“Nevertheless for David's sake the LORD his God gave him a lamp in Jerusalem, by setting up his son after him and by establishing Jerusalem; because David did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, and had not turned aside from anything that He commanded him all the days of his life, except in the matter of Uriah the Hittite”.(1 Kgs 15:5)

The assessment at the end of Solomon’s reign is negative and it is found in 1 Kings 11:9;

“So the LORD became angry with Solomon, because his heart had turned from the LORD God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice”

Solomon loved many strange women

Solomon used polygamy as a deliberate tool of statesmanship. From a human perspective such a policy was astute as marrying into the dynasties of the surrounding Kings would ensure stability and peace for his kingdom. However, compromise always comes at a price and the political policy that he pursued would need to be cemented with covenant agreements, including the “freedom of worship” thus enabling the foreign wives that he acquired to import their cults into Israel. Inevitably, the triumph of human reason over divine wisdom led to the downfall of Solomon. Solomon was in fact doing what the nation (God’s firstborn son) had been explicitly warned not to do – intermarry and make covenants with the surrounding nations (Deut 7:3-6).
The sons of God and the daughters of men

A tabular comparison of corresponding Genesis motif’s, demonstrates an undeniable connection:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Genesis</th>
<th>Solomon</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Let us make man in our image, after our likeness (Gen.1:26)</td>
<td>I will be his father and he shall be my son (2 Sam. 7: 14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Tree of the knowledge of Good and evil.</td>
<td>Wisdom — Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and evil…. (1 Kgs. 3: 9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ye shall be as Elohim knowing <strong>good and evil</strong> (Gen.3: 5)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose. (Gen.6:2)</td>
<td>Solomon loved many strange women (1Kgs.11:1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Namaah</strong> (Gen.4:22; the daughter of Lamech)</td>
<td><strong>Namaah</strong> (1 Kgs.14: 21; the mother of Rehoboam)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Genesis account is referring to ‘divine’ kingship, where the king acts as God’s agent. Of particular interest are the ‘knowledge of good and evil’ motif, and the mention of Namaah (which is not a coincidence). The acquisition of the ‘knowledge of good and evil’ is initially what made Adam (God’s “son”) god-like (like the *elohim*). This “knowledge” is associated in the Old Testament with passing judgement ¹ and therefore also has correspondences with the heavenly ‘divine council’ whose primary function is to implement righteous judgement. David was likened to the angel ² of God in his function as judge – his insight was recognised as the product of divine guidance not of human reasoning:

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¹ W.J. Dumbrell comments: “The phrase ‘knowledge of good and evil’ is better taken, following W.M. Clark as referring to the exercise of absolute moral autonomy, a prerogative which the Bible reserves to God alone. Clark is able to illustrate the point from a wide range of Old Testament contexts. Solomon, for example, prays (1 Kgs.3:9) for an understanding heart to govern his people that he ‘may discern between good and evil’. This is an absolute for the task before which he is placed, since he continues in the test “for who is able to govern this thy great people?” The latter half of the same chapter offers a parade example of Solomon’s judicial wisdom, and when Israel acknowledges the astuteness with which the matter of disputed motherhood of the child has been resolved, they perceive that ‘the wisdom of God was in him, to render justice’ (1 Kgs.3:28). What is clear from this passage is that final authoritative decisions of this nature, which affect the whole shape of life, require the mind of God. For the human being, wisdom of this character is derivative, not natural. It must be sought from God and its source must be acknowledged. W.J. Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation*, Paternoster Press, 1984, pp 36 – 39; W. M. Clark , A Legal Background to the Yahwist’s Use of “Good and Evil” in Gen.2-3 *JBL* 88 (1969), pp. 266- On the general relationship of Gen.2:4-3:24 and the view that sin was an attack upon and a breach of the harmony of the created order cf. also Jerome T. Walsh, ‘Gen.2:4b-3:24 A Synchronic Approach’, *JBL* 96 (1977) PP. 161 – 177.

² The text refers to an angel *[mīlšk]* and not to *elohim* but the Hebrews (unlike the Canaanites) did not differentiate the terms (or the functions) as they are interchangeable. There is a heavenly hierarchy but it is not one of ‘gods’ and ‘angels.’ The hierarchy is one of the chief angel (who bore the Yahweh name and is referred to as ‘Yahweh’) and his subordinates who had specific administrations (such as Michael). The Cherubim (and Seraphim) are depictions of the divine throne and stand as a metaphor for the manifestation of God’s glory in his creation.
“For as an (the) angel [mal'āk] of God, so is my lord the king to discern good and bad: therefore the Lord thy God will be with thee [cf. Emmanuel]” (2 Sam.14:17)

The Genesis account (4:23-25) has Lamech usurping the prerogative of ‘discerning good and evil’ and boasting that his own judgement on wrongdoers will be 77 times more severe (without mercy) than God’s. The insertion of the Lamech poem at this point in the Genesis narrative and his boast to his wives comes directly after the mention (v.22) of Lamech’s daughter Naamah (pleasant one):

“The Sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; [towb] and they took [laqach] them wives of all which they chose” (Gen.6:2)4

The Lamech poem is not an independent literary unit inserted randomly in the narrative - nor is the mention of Naamah coincidental, rather it is imperative to understanding the ‘Sons of God’ incident. Lamech was the first polygamist, thus breaking the divine wish for man to be a monogamous creature. He is also found boasting to his wives of passing judgment and avenging himself because a young man had hurt (dishonoured) him. He was proud of his disproportionate response. What had this young man done? The context implies that he had dishonoured Lamech by taking his daughter – which explains the mention of her name (the mention of females in a generation list is a very unusual feature)5 and also why he addressed his warning poem to his wives. The forcible recruitment of female concubines to the royal harem was a common practice in the A.N.E. witness the problem that Abraham had with Sarah and Isaac with Rebecca. David J. A. Clines discusses this option in his article on the Sons of God Episode: “The ‘sons of God’ are dynastic rulers who, as oriental despots, established royal harems by force or practised indiscriminate rape. This view has the merit of taking seriously the phrase ‘and they took for themselves wives from all whom they chose’. It also makes intelligible the divine punishment upon

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3 The Septuagint version has 70x7
4 The Hebrew towb [translated as ‘fair’ in Gen.6:2] carries a similar meaning to the name of Lamech’s daughter Naamah. It is used 6 times in the creation narrative of chapter one in the formulaic “God saw that is was good (towb)” it is also used for the “tree of the knowledge of good (towb) and evil” and for Eve’s temptation; “the woman saw that it was good (towb) for food.” It is fitting that the same formulaic expression is used by the “Sons of God”; “[they] saw the daughters of men that they were good (towb).” God had declared that it was “not good (towb)” that man should be alone and that he should have a partner – but now the “Sons of God” are using coercion to fulfil their lusts. The use of the formulaic expression suggests that this is an inversion of the creative act.
5 Robert Alter comments as follows: “Naamah – One might expect an identification that would align Naamah with her siblings as a founder of some basic activity of human culture, but if such an identification was part of the original epic role call, it has either been lost or deleted. The Midrash recognized that the root of her name can refer to song; perhaps Naamah is meant to be associated with her half brother Jubal, the founder of instrumental music – he as accompanist, she as singer.” [Robert Alter, Genesis, Translation and commentary,(New York London,1996)] The Midrashic explanation is unlikely and probably owes its existence to the root carrying the general meaning of ‘pleasant’ (in a sensory sense) and therefore apt to describe musical instruments. Samuel Meier explains: “The term that focuses on the intrinsic appeal of an object to observers surfaces in personal names for males and females, both Israelite and non-Israelite (Naomi in Ruth 1:2, Naaman in 2 Kgs.5:1, Naam in 1 Chron. 4:15, Naamah in 1 Kgs. 14:21). It is difficult to determine in such names where a divine element is lacking whether the pleasant quality refers to a deity or to the individual who bears the name….But also sounds that are pleasing to hear: the lyre is described as nā ‘îm and so particularly appropriate to praising Yahweh.” [NIDOTTE 5838 p.121 Samuel A. Meier]
humanity as a whole because of the sin of these despots; for in oriental ideology it is not uncommon for the fate of the people at large bound up with the fate of the king.”

The parallels between Solomon’s reign and Genesis are not coincidental: Solomon committed polygamy (like Lamech) married an Ammonite woman with a similar name to Lamech’s daughter (because she was fair?) and therefore Solomon sinned like the sons of God in Genesis. Furthermore Solomon fulfilled all the negative stereotypes of monarchism that the Deuteronomist had warned against in 1 Sam 8:11-18, so much so that the people did indeed, “cry out in that day because of your king” (v.18); “Your father [Solomon] made our yoke heavy; now therefore, lighten the burdensome service of your father, and his heavy yoke which he put on us, and we will serve you.” (1 Kgs 12:4) Divine displeasure with Solomon was such that the kingdom was divided by rebellion as soon as his son Rehoboam ascended to the throne. Finally we note that the amount of wealth acquired by Solomon in one year of trading;

“The weight of gold that came to Solomon yearly was six hundred and sixty-six talents of gold” (1 Kgs 10:14)

The number six is constantly associated with Solomon’s reign and used to describe his trading, his throne, his chariot, his decorations (1 Kgs10; 16, 19, 20, 29); we are left in no doubt that his promising reign, that began with the privilege of being a “Son of God” ended with Solomon as the “Son of Adam.” Solomon’s reign was debilitated by compromise leading to apostasy and self-glorification. Solomon’s divine wisdom had degenerated into perverse human wisdom.

**Jesus and Solomon**

When Jesus mentions Solomon it is by way of comparison and contrast. The “lilies” are arrayed with more “glory” than Solomon (Matt 6:29//Lk 12:27) and a “greater” than Solomon is present (Matt 12:42//Lk 11:31) to dispense judgment (the eschatological judgment). The sayings are neutral and cannot be interpreted as an endorsement of Solomon, merely as a reference to his past “glory” and his “greatness” (juridical wisdom), which were ultimately both compromised and temporary in nature (unlike that of Christ cf. John 17:5; 5:22). Only the commencement of Solomon’s reign realizes a functional messianic typology, particularly when the queen of Sheba is introduced, thereafter it rapidly deteriorates.

**Conclusion**

“Therefore you, O son of man, say to the children of your people: “The righteousness of the righteous man shall not deliver him in the day of his transgression; as for the wickedness of the wicked, he shall not fall because of it in the day that he turns from his wickedness; nor shall the righteous be able to live

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7 Unlike, Saul this was not a king that “they had chosen” nevertheless Solomon fulfilled all the negative attributes of oppressive kingship. Notice also that “crying out” to God is what the Israelite slaves did in Egypt.

8 Revelation 13:18 Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man: His number is 666. (Note: the context is economic sanctions adopted by a despot)
because of his righteousness in the day that he sins.” (Ezek 33:12) Although it is not for us to judge “another man’s servant”, we should be careful in asserting that Solomon repented and refrain from holding him as a paragon of virtue when Scripture is at the very least ambivalent towards his reign. Moreover, we should hesitate at the unchallenged acceptance of attributing Solomonic authorship to Ecclesiastes and Songs, especially when other explanations have greater if not equal plausibility.
Appendices
Appendix 1, Proverbs:
Differences between the LXX and the MT;
from Hermeneutics Stackexchange
**Proverbs: differences between the LXX and the MT**

The books of the Septuagint (= LXX, here not the Septuagint "proper", which is limited to the Pentateuch, but the whole of the Jewish scriptures in Greek) were produced by different translators; the various books thus exhibit vastly different styles and approaches to the task. LXX-Proverbs is well known for being among the most "free" in making the Hebrew text* available for Greek readers in antiquity.

* For the sake of this answer, I'll take the masoretic text (MT) as the basis of comparison, although I'm not thereby pre-judging the question as to what Hebrew the Greek translator might have had in front of him.

The "special" problems of LXX-Proverbs are immediately apparent to anyone who reads the Greek beside the Hebrew. LXX-Proverbs already attracted specialist attention in the work of the seminal scholar of the 19th Century, Paul de Lagarde, in his Anmerkungen zur griechischen Übersetzung: Der Proverben (Brockhaus, 1863). A general orientation to the ancient versions of Proverbs is provided by R.N. Whybray, The Book of the Proverbs: A Survey of Modern Study (Brill, 1995), chapter 7, "Texts and Versions".

The **problem** here in giving a straightforward "yes" or "no" answer to this way of putting OP's question...

Is there any evidence to suggest that the translation of the LXX was based on a Hebrew text different from the MT?

...is that there is an abundance of evidence -- but not quite of the right kind (no "smoking gun"). There are, however, basically two options.

(1) **The Greek translator also acted as "editor"**

For some, the many, many small scale differences between the LXX and MT are most readily explained by the translator's evident penchant for "Hellenizing" his proverb collection. Here's what Jan de Waard has to say on this by way of summary to his section on the LXX in his edition of Proverbs for the Biblica Hebraica Quinta:

> It should particularly be stated that few Greek translators have been so much receptor language and culture oriented as the Greek translator of Proverbs. His respect of the rhetorical canons of Greek poetry is remarkable. ... This insight will certainly put some restrictions on the relevance of G[reek Proverbs] for Hebrew textual criticism.¹

To de Waard's work may be added at least two others. First, this view was anticipated long ago by Henry St John Thackeray (best known today for his Loeb translations of Josephus). In his Schweich Lectures published in 1921, he characterized our translator as a "classical scholar" who "happily, put much of his work into verse".² More recently, the industrious Johann Cook has contributed many
studies arguing for the *editorial* nature of the work of the translator of LXX-Proverbs. Both his monograph on LXX Proverbs, as well as the introduction to his translation for *NETS* bear this out at great length.³

It isn’t surprising, then, that this line of thinking would lead to the *conclusion* that the large-scale differences, too, find their *origins* in the hands of this creative, Hellenizing translator.

**(2) There was a different Hebrew edition in antiquity**

However, as mentioned above, there is no "smoking gun". In the case of other texts -- most notably Jeremiah -- there is a similar relation between MT and LXX, but *for* which there *is* Hebrew evidence of the LXX-like text from among the Dead Sea Scrolls. Naturally, then, this raises the possibility of different Hebrew "recensions" (or editions) in antiquity. For some, like Jeremiah, we have the good fortune of accidental preservation of evidence. For others, we don’t.

There have been advocates for *differing Hebrew recensions* in antiquity, which thus gave rise to, and are reflected in, the distinctive shape of LXX-Proverbs -- some "micro", but some "macro" too, as in the examples from OP. Foremost of these scholars is Emanuel Tov. He registers this possibility ("Two Parallel editions of Proverbs") in his standard work, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible* (3rd edn; Fortress, 2012), p. 304; he argues for it at length in an earlier essay, originally published in 1990, but more conveniently available among his collected essays.⁴

Tov noticed, of course, the clear precedent of Jeremiah, but also the fact that many of the differences between LXX and MT are *not* of the Hellenizing variety, but rather have to do with loose structure, missing or differing headings, and so on. That is, these are differences which are more readily explained by a different *Hebrew* edition, than by the translator’s obvious fondness for Greek language and culture.

In this he was anticipated by H.B. Swete.⁵ Referring specifically to the macro-reordering stated in the Question, Swete writes:

Evidently the order of this portion of the book had not been finally settled when the Alexandrian translator did his work.

Tov also has notably been followed by Michael Fox (author of the two-volume Yale Anchor Bible commentary on Proverbs) who is preparing the Hebrew text for what was called the *Oxford Hebrew Bible project*. In an essay reflecting on this task,⁶ he makes explicit his agreement with Tov, and adds:

More precisely, the LXX is a translation of a recension, that is to say, one that descends from a deliberately reworked Hebrew text, and his not merely a translation of a corrupted and elaborated copy of the MT.

**Summary**

That such informed, able, and judicious specialists align on different sides of this question *should obviously counsel caution*. (I put that in bold for a reason...)
Meanwhile, my own inclination (FWIW) is towards the latter position (Tov/Fox). They are, I believe, quite right to note that the differences between MT and LXX Proverbs are not all of one kind, and the difference between the differences (!) is best explained by positing different Hebrew recensions in antiquity, one unlike our MT being the basis for the classical-loving Greek translator that took on this project in the early centuries BCE.

Notes


3. J. Cook, The Septuagint of Proverbs: Jewish And/or Hellenistic Proverbs? Concerning the Hellenistic Colouring of LXX Proverbs (Brill, 1997), which has had mixed reviews at the level of detail; see also the PDF of his NETS Proverbs.


Appendix 2, Proverbs Extract;

Dating the Old Testament by Craig Davis
Craig Davis, Dating The Old Testament, [RJ Communications, 2007], 378-34

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5.3 Proverbs

The book of Proverbs is the second book in the Bible to present itself as an anthology, though with less diversity than Psalms. The Proverbs are attributed as follows:

1:1 “The proverbs of Solomon” – probably this is a header for the whole book
1:2-9:18 Introduction
22:17–24:34 “The words of the wise”
30:1–33 “The words of Agur the son of Jakeh”
31:1–31 “The words of King Lemuel, the oracle which his mother taught him”

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The different sections can be shown to be clearly distinct. The longest section is 10:1-22:16, assigned to Solomon and containing 375 proverbs. All of these proverbs are in the form of short couplets, each one essentially standing alone with no connection to a larger context. The number of these proverbs, 375, exactly matches the numeric value of Solomon’s name in Hebrew. 1 Kgs 4:32 says Solomon spoke 3000 proverbs, so this collection of 375 might be a subset selected from an older, larger collection that is now lost.

Authorship of these proverbs by Solomon would place them at about 950 B.C. What little internal evidence there is tends to be supportive of this date. The verses which talk of kings or a king are mostly favourable and stated in such a way as to be consistent with an Israelite king (Prov 16:10-15, 20:2, 20:8, 20:26, 20:28 and 22:11). It would be difficult to imagine an Israelite writer applying words like “loyalty,” “truth,” and “righteousness” (20:28) to a king of Babylon or Persia. The references to sacrifice (15:8, 21:3 and 21:27) rule out a time during the Babylonian exile. Prov 14:12 is repeated in 16:25.

The second collection of proverbs by Solomon is in chapters 25-29. These proverbs were apparently copied from an older text by the “men of Hezekiah” (25:1). The mention of Hezekiah also provides the earliest possible date for compilation of the book – during the reign of Hezekiah (716-687 B.C.). This collection of proverbs again shows marks of pre-exilic origin in the favourable way it speaks of kings (25:1-6, 29:4 and 29:14). Unlike the first collection from Solomon, some of these proverbs span multiple verses (25:4-5). Prov 25:24 is a duplicate of Prov 21:9, from the first collection of Solomon. It is possible that the
number of Proverbs in this collection is based on the numeric value of Hezekiah’s name in Hebrew – 130 or 136, depending on which spelling of Hezekiah (חִזְקִיָּהוּ or חִזְקִיָּה) is used. The “words of the wise” collection in 22:17-24:34 is different from the collection of Solomon’s proverbs in that most of these proverbs span multiple verses (23:1-3, etc.). It has become popular

in recent years to identify this collection as dependent on the “Instruction of Amenemope,” an Egyptian wise man who lived about 1100 B.C. This idea is strengthened by the division of the instruction of Amenemope into 30 sections, a number which is reflected in the Hebrew qire reading {Footnote: The qire is a note in the margin of the Hebrew Bible provided by the Masoretic scribes, indicating how a passage should be read and deviating from the kethiv, the written text.} of Prov 22:20. It is possible to divide 22:17-24:34 into 30 sayings. Weakening the case for dependence on Amenemope is the fact that only a few of the biblical proverbs are similar to the Egyptian text. Also, certain of the biblical proverbs are Yahwistic (22:19, 22:23, etc.), showing a distinctly Israelite identity. Some of the proverbs in this collection reflect the ideas and even the wording of the first Solomon collection, such as Prov 24:6b, which matches Prov 11:14b, “in abundance of counselors there is victory.” Since Amenemope predated Solomon, however, it would not be surprising if Solomon borrowed at least the genre of Egyptian proverbs for his work. Egypt and Israel were at peace during Solomon’s reign, and Solomon and Pharaoh had formed a marriage alliance (1 Kgs 3:1 and 9:16). These factors support a date during Solomon’s reign for Prov 22:17-24:34.

To date the introductory section of Proverbs 1-9, it is necessary to first consider the drawback of publishing in Hezekiah’s time a new collection of proverbs by Solomon. The advantage is obvious – Solomon’s wisdom is legendary and his reign represented the golden age of Israel. However, his worship of foreign gods late in his life is troublesome, and the enormous number of his wives and concubines is embarrassing. Proverbs 1-9 address these concerns by focusing on the fear of YHWH (3:5-6) and providing numerous warnings about the dangers of adultery. This section could also reasonably be assigned to Hezekiah’s time.

To date Prov 30-31, it is best first to try to identify Agur the son of Jakeh (30:1) and King Lemuel (31:1). Agur might be a genuine

personal name of an individual unknown to us. On the other hand, it might be a pen name. Agur means “gatherer” and Jakeh means “pious,” perhaps pointing to the individual who gathered the collection of Proverbs together. This then would also be an individual working in Hezekiah’s time. There are some clues, discussed below, indicating that this individual may have been Isaiah.

We know the name of all the Israelite kings, and Lemuel is not one of them. It is possible, but it seems unlikely, that Lemuel was king of a non-Israelite country. More likely is that
Lemuel is also a pen name. Some scholars have suggested Solomon is Lemuel, bringing Bathsheba into the picture as Solomon’s mother (31:1). However, it is not clear why Solomon would have needed a pen name – having already been named three times earlier in the book. Also, the praise of one excellent and apparently non-royal wife in 31:10-31 does not naturally flow from the lips of a man with 700 of them. One king who may have needed a pen name is Hezekiah, if the book was put in final form just after his reign. Hezekiah’s son Manasseh turned dramatically against his father’s policies, so Hezekiah’s name might have been an issue on a newly published book. Likewise, Isaiah, Hezekiah’s right-hand man, might have needed a pen name. If tradition is correct, Isaiah was executed by Manasseh.

There are additional reasons to believe Isaiah may be the author of Proverbs 30, and even the introductory section of Proverbs 1:2-9:18.

1. Emphatic duplication, so characteristic of Isaiah’s style (see section 4.2.1.2.9) but largely absent elsewhere in the Bible, makes a prominent appearance in chapter 30. Prov 30:9-10 repeats “lest” three times, 30:11-14 repeats four times “There is a generation...,” 30:15 says “give, give,” 30:19 says “the way” four times, and the Hebrew of 30:21-23 has “under” (תַּחַת) repeated four times.

2. Prov 1:16 essentially equals Isa 59:7, “Their feet run to evil, and they hasten to shed blood.”

3. The Prov 30:4 string of rhetorical questions is similar to the string of rhetorical questions in Job 38-41, Isa 10:8-11, 40:12-14, 40:21, etc.

4. “Righteous One” is a designation for God only in Isa 24:16, 53:11 and Prov 21:12. {Footnote: The term “Righteous One” in Isa 53:11 applies to the Suffering Servant, an individual identified with Christ in Christian theology}

5. The word לַיִשָּׁם for “young lion” appears only in Isa 30:6, Job 11:4 and Prov 30:30

6. Personification, like the personification of wisdom in Proverbs, was a literary technique of Isaiah also (Isa 24:23, 35:1, 44:23, 55:12, etc.).

7. Isaiah was the only prophet to use the phrase “fear of the LORD” (Isa 11:2-3 and 33:6), a phrase which occurs 24 times in the Bible, including 14 times in Proverbs, and also in Job 28:28.

8. Prov 7:6 indicates that the author’s house had a lattice. Only the more affluent homes in Jerusalem had lattices. {Footnote: Jones, The Complete Guide to the Book of Proverbs, p. 67} Isaiah was a favourite of the king, and likely had such a home.

These are verbal connections between Job and Proverbs:
1. Eloah is used for God (41 times in Job, also in Isa 44:8, Prov 30:5 and Psalm 114)
2. “Fear of the LORD is wisdom” (Job 28:28, Prov 1:7 and 9:10)
3. “Hidden treasures” (Job 3:21, Prov 2:4 and Isa 45:3)
4. God “your confidence” (Job 4:6 and Prov 3:26)
5. The search for wisdom in Job 28:12-28 matches the Proverbs introduction, particularly the Prov 8:10, 8:11 and 8:19 comparisons valuing wisdom above gold and jewels.
6. Prov 9:10 and 30:3 refer to God as “Holy One,” a phrase from Job 6:10 and one of Isaiah’s favourites.

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7. Prov 6:16 and Job 5:19 both use the literary device of saying “six...even seven.”

Our earlier identification of Isaiah as being the translator of Job means that the ties between Job and Proverbs 1-9 and 30 provide evidence that Isaiah was also involved with these sections of Proverbs.

Contrary arguments can be made. Since Agur’s father is also named (Jakeh), this makes it less likely that Agur is a pen name. Isaiah’s father was named Amoz (Isa 1:1). Also, in the section by King Lemuel, “bar” is used three times for “son” (Prov 31:2), and this is a significant Aramaism (Hebrew for son would be “ben”). This may in fact point to a non-NIsraelite king. The Aramaism may also point to Bathsheba, Solomon’s mother, who was married to a non-Israelite, Uriah the Hittite.

5.3.1 External Dependencies
Proverbs has few dependencies other than the connections with Job and Isaiah noted earlier. Proverbs does speak about the importance of the Torah in 28:4, 28:7, 28:9 and 29:18. Allusions to the tree of life, from Genesis 2N3, are in Prov 3:18, 11:30 and 15:4. Ecclesiastes seems to draw from Proverbs, as described in section 5.6.1.

5.3.2 Linguistic Analysis

The main sections of Proverbs in chapters 10-29 consist mostly of couplets with no references to completed past events, so they cannot be checked to see if the verb usage matches Classical or Early Biblical Hebrew.

The Septuagint version of the virtuous woman passage of Prov 31:10-31 has verses 25-26 switched. Since this is an acrostic, the verse 25-26 switch is a pe-ayin switch, just as is present in Lamentations 2-4. This fact points to the use of an older alphabetical order, making it unlikely that the passage could be post-exilic, since the modern alphabetical order was well established in the post-exilic era.

The spelling in Proverbs is one of the most modern in the Bible. This is probably due to the activity of the scribes (see Appendix B, section B.1.1).

5.3.3 Oldest Texts
The oldest texts of Proverbs are two Dead Sea Scrolls. Portions of seven chapters are represented.

5.3.4 Conclusion
Proverbs was put into final form around the time of Hezekiah or shortly afterward, around 720-680 B.C. The older core of the book, Proverbs 10-29, consists of selected proverbs from Solomon’s time, around 950 B.C. The introduction, Proverbs 1-9, and conclusion, Proverbs 30-31, were added in Hezekiah and Isaiah’s time.

1 Much of the “Older Vocabulary” has been identified by Rendsburg as originating in Northern Israel see the vocabulary table [PW]
Appendix 3,
Proverbs Israeli Hebrew vocabulary,
extracted from; A comprehensive guide to Israeli Hebrew: grammar and lexicon by Gary A. Rendsburg
Data gathered from:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proverbs</th>
<th>Transliterated</th>
<th>Translation</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1:20</td>
<td>baqənôt</td>
<td>wisdom</td>
<td>Feminine singular nominal ending –ət as in Phoenician</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:10</td>
<td>nə'äm</td>
<td>good, pleasant</td>
<td>(including verbal forms from the root nm): Gen 49:15 (Issachar), 2 Sam 23:1, Ps 16:6, 16:11, 81:3, 133:1, 141:4, 141:6, Proverbs 9x, Job 36:11, Song 1:16, 7:7, Isa 17:10 (style-switching - Aram), Ezek 32:19 (style-switching - Egypt); thus 22 of 30 attestations in IH. Ugaritic, Phoenician</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:17</td>
<td>'lp</td>
<td>teach, learn (noun form)</td>
<td>Job 15:5, 33:33, 35:11. Aramaic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:13</td>
<td>pwaq</td>
<td>find, obtain</td>
<td>Ps 140:5, [Isa 58:10, Ps144:13 (reunion?).] Ugaritic, Phoenician</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:24</td>
<td>'qb</td>
<td>be sweet, pleasant</td>
<td>Song 2:14. MH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:9</td>
<td>mga</td>
<td>give, deliver</td>
<td>Hos 11:8, [Elsewhere Gen 14:20 (Melchizedek).] Phoenician, Ugirtic, Aramaic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:14</td>
<td>'sr</td>
<td>walk, proceed</td>
<td>[Other occurrences of 'sr appear to derive from the homonymous root 'be happy'.] Ugaritic 'ṣr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:17</td>
<td>lhm</td>
<td>eat</td>
<td>Ps 141:4, (perhaps Deut 32:24), Ugaritic lhm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:19</td>
<td>meh</td>
<td>what?</td>
<td>Interrogative pronoun meh before non-laryngeal consonants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:26</td>
<td>pls</td>
<td>level, straighten (noun form)</td>
<td>Ps 58:3, 78:30, [See also Isa 26:7.] [Elsewhere Isa 40:12 (noun form).] Phoenician pls 'architect'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5:3</td>
<td>nōpeṯ</td>
<td>honey</td>
<td>Song 4:11. [Elsewhere Ps 19:11.] Ugaritic nūṯ, Phoenician nūt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5:6</td>
<td>pls</td>
<td>level, straighten (noun form)</td>
<td>Ps 58:3, 78:30, [See also Isa 26:7.] [Elsewhere Isa 40:12 (noun form).] Phoenician pls 'architect'</td>
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<td>5:19</td>
<td>'ałḥābîn</td>
<td>love</td>
<td>Northern Israelite (cf. Hos.8:9)</td>
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<td>5:21</td>
<td>pls</td>
<td>level,</td>
<td>Ps 58:3, 78:30, [See also Isa 26:7.] [Elsewhere Isa 40:12 (noun form).] Phoenician pls</td>
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<td>6:8</td>
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<td>gather, collect</td>
<td>[Deut 28:39 northern? pass Weinfeld.] MH</td>
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<td>6:13</td>
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<td>7:10</td>
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<td>7:16</td>
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<td>and not silver</td>
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<td>9:6</td>
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<td>walk, proceed</td>
<td>[Other occurrences of 'îr appear to derive from the homonymous root 'be happy'.] Ugaritic 'îr</td>
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<td>10:5</td>
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<td>[Deut 28:39 northern? pass Weinfeld.] MH</td>
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<td>10:8</td>
<td>lḇî</td>
<td>incite, be excited, be troubled</td>
<td>Hos 4:14</td>
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<td>Hos 4:14</td>
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<td>10:15</td>
<td>qîrâb</td>
<td>city</td>
<td>Hos 6:8, Ps 48:3, Proverbs 5x, Job 39:7. [IH texts (e.g.,Torah) use qîrâb to refer to Transjordanian cities or as B-word for 'îr.] Ugaritic, Phoenician, MH</td>
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<td>10:30</td>
<td>bal</td>
<td>no, not</td>
<td>Negative particle bal 'no, not', as in Ugaritic and Phoenician. To negate nouns and verbs, Phoenician/Punic used îb yîb and îb bîl balî (along with the compound îbr îbrî)</td>
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<td>11:10</td>
<td>qiry̱b</td>
<td>city</td>
<td>Hos 6:8, Ps 48:3, Proverbs 5x, Job 39:7. [IH texts (e.g., Torah) use qiry高空 to refer to Transjordanian cities or as B-word for <em>yè</em>]</td>
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<td>find, obtain</td>
<td>Ps 140:9, [Isa 58:10, Ps 144:13 (reunion?).]</td>
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<td>12:3</td>
<td>bal</td>
<td>no, not</td>
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<td>12:7</td>
<td>hāpōk rūšāîm</td>
<td>the wicked are overthrown</td>
<td>Infinitive absolute used as narrative tense, as in Byblos Amarna, Ugaritic, and Phoenician</td>
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<td>not death</td>
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<td>13:23</td>
<td>baḻ</td>
<td>without (lit., 'in-not')</td>
<td>Negative particle <em>bal</em> 'no, not', as in Ugaritic and Phoenician. To negate nouns and verbs, Phoenician/Punic used <em>yèl</em> and <em>yèl</em> / <em>bal</em> / (along with the compound <em>yèlb</em> / <em>yèlbal</em> /), as opposed to Hebrew <em>wèl</em> lō. See also the negation <em>ḥal</em> without, literally 'in-not'</td>
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<td>13:24</td>
<td>y̱wwe̱ḻ</td>
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<td>bier, thorn</td>
<td>Mic 7:4, MH, Aramaic</td>
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<td>baḻ</td>
<td>without (lit., 'in-not')</td>
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<td>16:16</td>
<td><em>hārūs</em></td>
<td>gold</td>
<td>Zechariah 9:3 (style-switching — Tyre), Ps 68:14 (ABH). Ugaritic <em>hrs</em>, Phoenician <em>hrs</em></td>
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<td>16:24</td>
<td><em>nālim</em></td>
<td>good, pleasant</td>
<td>(including verbal forms from the root <em>nm</em>):Gen 49:11 (Issachar), 2 Sam 23:1, Ps 16:6, 16:11, 81:3, 153:1, 141:4, 141:6; Proverbs 9:9, Job 36:11, Song 1:16, 7:7, Isa 17:10 (style-switching - Aram), Ezek 32:19 (style-switching - Egypt); thus 22 of 30 attestations in UH. Ugaritic, Phoenician</td>
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<tr>
<td>16:26</td>
<td><em>ĕp</em></td>
<td>press, urge</td>
<td>Job 33:7 (noun form). Syriac</td>
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<td><em>krb</em></td>
<td>make a feast</td>
<td>2 Kings 6:23 (noun)</td>
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<td>16:30</td>
<td><em>pāqîl dolp tâkkîl brîz</em></td>
<td>better that a bereaved bear meet a man</td>
<td>Infinitive absolute used as narrative tense, as in Byblos Amarna, Ugaritic, and Phoenician</td>
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<td><em>wâl-kâsîl</em></td>
<td>and not a fool</td>
<td>Negative particle <code>âf followed by a noun, as in Deir </code>Alla</td>
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<td>17:16</td>
<td><em>zeh</em></td>
<td>this</td>
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<td><em>ghh</em></td>
<td>heal</td>
<td>Hos 5:13</td>
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<td>18:11</td>
<td><em>qiryâb</em></td>
<td>city</td>
<td>Hos 6:8, Ps 48:3, Proverbs 5x, Job 39:7. [JH texts (e.g., Torah) use <em>qiryâb</em> to refer to Transjordanian cities or as B-word for <em>îr</em>] Ugaritic, Phoenician, MH</td>
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<td>city</td>
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<td>18:19</td>
<td><em>`arman</em></td>
<td>palace, citadel</td>
<td>1 Kings 16:18, 2 Kings 15:25, Hos 8:14, Amos 11x, Ps 48:4, 48:14, Jeremiah 5x (Benjaminite?). [9 JH exx.]</td>
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<td>18:22</td>
<td><em>pwaq</em></td>
<td>find, obtain</td>
<td>Ps 140:5, [Isa 58:10, Ps144:13 (reunion?)] Ugaritic, Phoenician</td>
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<td>18:24</td>
<td><em>èš</em></td>
<td>is</td>
<td>Particle of existence <em>è</em> with cognates in Ugaritic <em>q</em>, Aramaic <em>š</em></td>
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<td>19:2</td>
<td><em>balô</em></td>
<td>without (lit., 'in-not')</td>
<td>Negative particle <em>bal</em> 'no, not', as in Ugaritic and Phoenician. To negate nouns and verbs, Phoenician/Punic used <em>x</em> <em>ybl</em>/<em>bal</em> (<em>halô</em>/<em>hal</em>), as opposed to Hebrew <em>nâ</em> <em>lô</em>. See also the negation <em>nâ</em> without, literally 'in-not'</td>
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<td>19:20</td>
<td><em>qbl</em></td>
<td>take, receive</td>
<td>Aramaic</td>
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<tr>
<td>19:23</td>
<td><em>bal</em></td>
<td>no, not</td>
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<td>20:14</td>
<td><em>by</em></td>
<td>go</td>
<td>Deut 32:36, Job 14:11, 1 Sam 9:7 (Benjaminite?). Aramaic</td>
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<td>20:16</td>
<td><em>sqâh</em></td>
<td>take</td>
<td>Retention of <em>sqâh</em> in imperative of <em>qâh</em> 'take', as in Aramaic</td>
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<td>20:17</td>
<td><em>šb</em></td>
<td>be sweet, pleasant</td>
<td>Song 2:14. MH</td>
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<td>21:5</td>
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<td><strong>mašar</strong></td>
<td>abundance, advantage, profit</td>
<td>Qoh 3:19: MH, Aramaic</td>
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<td>22:18</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>naštan</strong></td>
<td>good, pleasant</td>
<td>(including verbal forms from the root nm): Gen 49:15 (Issachar), 2 Sam 23:1, Ps 16:6, 16:11, 81:3, 133:1, 141:4, 141:6, Proverbs 9x, Job 36:11, Song 1:16, 7:7, Isa 17:10 (style-switching - Aram), Ezek 32:19 (style-switching - Egypt); thus 22 of 30 attestations in IH. Ugaritic, Phoenician</td>
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<td>22:21</td>
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<td><strong>qōš</strong></td>
<td>truth</td>
<td>Aramaic</td>
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<td>22:25</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>l♣</strong></td>
<td>teach, learn</td>
<td>Job 15:5, 33:33, 35:11. Aramaic</td>
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<td>22:29</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>bal</strong></td>
<td>no, not</td>
<td>Negative particle bal 'no, not', as in Ugaritic and Phoenician. To negate nouns and verbs, Phoenician/Punic used <em>y taw b</em> / <em>bal</em> (along with the compound *ybb / <em>tawbal</em>), as opposed to Hebrew <em>‘âlō</em>.</td>
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<td>22:29</td>
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<td><strong>mähîr</strong></td>
<td>skilled</td>
<td>Ps 45:2, Isa 16:5 (style-switching —Moab). [Ezra 7:6 as Aramaism.] Ugaritic, Aramaic</td>
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<td>23:1</td>
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<td><strong>sîm</strong></td>
<td>eat</td>
<td>Ps 141:4, (perhaps Deut 32:24), Ugaritic <em>lim</em></td>
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<td>23:2</td>
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<td><strong>kâr</strong></td>
<td>throat</td>
<td>Aramaic</td>
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<td>23:6</td>
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<td><strong>sîm</strong></td>
<td>eat</td>
<td>Ps 141:4, (perhaps Deut 32:24), Ugaritic <em>lim</em></td>
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<td>23:7</td>
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<td>23:13</td>
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<td><strong>mn</strong></td>
<td>prevent, withhold</td>
<td>1 Kgs 20:7, Amos 4:7, Ps 84:12, Proverbs 5x, Job 4x, Neh 9:20, Qoh 2:10, Jeremiah 6x, Numb 22:16, 24:11 (style-switching - Balak), Gen 30:2 (Aram), Ezek 31:15 (addressee-switching: Egypt); thus 22 of 30 attestations in IH. Ugaritic, Phoenician</td>
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<td>23:19</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>šër</strong></td>
<td>walk, proceed</td>
<td>[Other occurrences of <em>šër</em> appear to derive from the homonymous root 'be happy'.] Ugaritic <em>šr</em></td>
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<td>23:28</td>
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<td><strong>h̄kip / h̄ip</strong></td>
<td>snatch</td>
<td>Job 9:12 h̄ip, Judg 21:21, Ps 10:9 h̄ip MH (with <em>taw</em>), Aramaic (with both <em>taw</em> and <em>taw</em></td>
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<td>24:12</td>
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<td><strong>nöºpet</strong></td>
<td>honey</td>
<td>Song 4:11. [Elsewhere Ps 19:11.] Ugaritic <em>nh</em>, Phoenician <em>vat</em></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

See also the negation *alb* ‘in-not’
24:25  **nāšān**  
good, pleasant  
(including verbal forms from the root nm): Gen 49:15 (Issachar), 2 Sam 23:1, Ps 16:6, 16:11, 81:3, 133:1, 141:14, 141:16, Proverbs 9x, Job 36:11, Song 1:16, 7:7, Isa 17:10 (style-switching - Aram), Ezek 32:19 (style-switching - Egypt); thus 22 of 30 attestations in HL. Ugaritic, Phoenician

25:12  **helyāa**  
jewel  
Variant forms: Hos 2:15, Song 7:2

25:13  **sināh**  
cold  
MH, Aramaic

25:14  **mattot**  
gift  
1 Kgs 13:7, Qoh 3:3, 5:18. [2x in Ezekiel.] Phoenician

25:20  **‘dh**  
pass (Qal), remove (Hiphil)  
Job 28:8. Aramaic

26:7  **dahūa**  
hang  
Retention of yod in H ky verbs, as in Aramaic and Deir ‘Alla

26:9  **bōb**  
thistle  
Hos 9:6, Job 31:40; Song 2:2. See also 2 Kgs 14:9 = 2 Chr 25:18 (in the mouth of the Israelian king Jehoash, with reference to Lebanon). [Exception is Isa 34:13.] Aramaic

27:2  **wélah-sáfaltaľâ**  
and not your lips  
Negative particle ‘al followed by a noun, as in Deir ‘Alla

27:7  **nēpat**  
honey  
Song 4:11. [Elsewhere Ps 19:11.] Ugaritic nêt, Phoenician qpt

28:20  **лимûnîf**  
faith  
Feminine singular nominal ending –îf as in Phoenician

29:5  **pōöl**  
foot  
Ps 58:11, 140:5, Song 7:2. [See also Isa 26:6.] [Elsewhere 2 Kgs19:24 = Isa 37:25.] Phoenician pèm, Ugaritic pûn

29:8  **qiryab**  
city  
Hos 6:8, Ps 48:3, Proverbs 5x, Job 39:7. [JH texts (e.g., Torah) use qiryâb to refer to Transjordanian cities or as B-word for 'îr.] Ugaritic, Phoenician, MH

30:2  **nā’um**  
averment-of*  
* An *averment* is a formal statement by a party in a case of a fact or circumstance which the party offers to prove or substantiate, it is an “introduction formula” usually left untranslated. With human speakers: Numb 24:3-4, 24:15-16, 2 Sam 23:1, Ps 36:2

30:7  **mnî**  
preserve, withhold  

30:28  **bēkâl**  
royal palace  
1 Kgs 21:1, Hos 8:14, Amos 8:3, Ps 45:9, 45:16, Joel 4:5 (Phoenicia). Ugaritic, Aramaic

31:2  **meâ**  
what?  
Interrogative pronoun meâ before non-laryngeal consonants

31:3  **mslakîn**  
kings  
Masculine nominal plural ending -în in Aramaic, Moabite, Deir ‘Alla, Phoenician (Arslan Tash dialect)

31:4  **qiî**  
any  
Ugaritic ay

31:30  **hîp tithallâl**  
she is to be praised  
Hitapa’el used with passive sense, as in Aramaic (two different T-stem formations) and MH (in the Nitpa’al form)