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The Calls and the Expectations of Wisdom towards her Audience in Proverbs 1-9 (Part 2)

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The First Expectation of Wisdom: The Call for Insight and the Raising of Voice for Understanding (Proverbs 2:3)

Meinhold and Müller depicted Prov 2 as a “*Lehrprogramm*.”¹ The programmatic character of chapter 2 made some scholars suggest that it might actually constitute a better introduction for Prov 1-9 as a whole.² The chapter encapsulates many key motifs, which occur elsewhere in Prov 1-9.³ In Prov 2, certain poetic techniques are taken to extremes such as the extension of the conditional clause (כִּי), which was previously used in Prov 1:10-11.⁴ Eißfeld regarded Prov 2 as a single sentence.⁵ If this latter point can be sustained, I think the way in which one can visualize this chapter is like taking a long, deep breath before uttering a lengthy speech as the speaker has to go on for twenty-two verses until he encounters a full stop. Beside these grammatical aspects the chapter seems to promote something very essential in terms of the expectations of the father, respectively Wisdom. Proverbs 2 reiterates some of the terms encountered in 1:20-33 and thus the instruction betrays the fact that relationship between humans and Wisdom is reciprocal.⁶ There are further

¹Arndt Meinhold, *Die Sprüche: Teil 1: Sprüche Kapitel 1-15* (ZBAT 16.1; Zürich: Theologischer Verlag Zürich, 1991), 43, 62; Müller, *Proverbien 1 – 9*, 52.

²Scott, *Proverbs*, 16.

³Weeks, *Proverbs 1-9*, 60-1.

⁴Weeks, *Proverbs 1-9*, 64; Otto Eißfeld, *The Old Testament: An Introduction* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1965), 472.

⁵Eißfeld, *The Old Testament*, 472.

⁶Van Leeuwen, *Proverbs*, 43. Point also supported by Perdue: “*It is important to note the literary linkages of this first part of the instruction with the opening didactic poem in 1:20-33, which also contains elements of a speech of persuasion. . . . Like Woman Wisdom, who earlier ‘cries out’ and ‘raises her voice’ (1:20-21) in the public places of the city to persuade the simple to learn of her, the ‘son’ in chapter 2 is to respond in kind by*

essential connections between 1:20-33 and chapter 2. Proverbs 1:20-26 (which encapsulates Wisdom's call, "*admonition*"/"*Mahnung*" and "*chiding speech*"/"*Scheltrede*" and "*threat speech*"/"*Drohrede*") and 2:1-5 together with 1:11-15 (the section concerned with the robbers) and 9:1-6 (Wisdom's third speech) may be docketed with the descriptive label of "*dramatic delay*."⁷ In 1:20-33 Wisdom calls but she does not receive an answer, whereas in 2:3 the exemplary student ". . . greets insight and discernment with a shout of acclamation."⁸ Basically, the son is "*urged*" to perform the same thing as Wisdom, to "*call*." The call of Wisdom to humans is "*echoed*" by the call of humans for Wisdom, as lovers seeking each other in the street (Cant 3:1-2 LXX; 5:6; Prov 7:4).⁹ Plöger also talked about the aspect of "*Schatzsucher*," "*lover-seeking*" in Prov 2:4.¹⁰ Fox stated: "*Yet not even a desire for wisdom is sufficient; the*

'crying out' for 'insight' and by raising his voice for 'understanding' (2:3)." See further Perdue, *Proverbs*, 89. I would also add the invitation of the robbers as a speech of persuasion. Murphy also presumed a connection between Prov 2 and 1:20-31, see further Murphy, *Proverbs*, 15.

⁷ Wilfred G. E. Watson, *Traditional Techniques in Classical Hebrew Verse* (JSOTS 170; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 442. Watson defined "*dramatic delay*" as: "*In such cases the beginning of an action is described but only later is the reason (or the effect) of the action (or sequence of actions) made clear.*"

⁸ McKane, *Proverbs*, 282. McKane noted that Prov 2:3 ". . . is almost a personification . . ." of בִּינָה and חִבְיָנָה. See further the similar view in Waltke, *Proverbs*, 221; Fox, *Proverbs 1-9*, 110; Müller, *Proverbien 1 – 9*, 62, n. 6; Baumann, *Weisheitsgestalt*, 230.

⁹ Van Leeuwen, *Proverbs*, 43.

¹⁰ Plöger, *Sprüche*, 25. He wrote: "*Sie findet ihren Ausdruck in der Eigenbetätigung des Schülers, der nach Weisheit sucht und nach ihr forscht wie ein Schatzsucher nach verborgenen Schätzen (V. 4).*" See further Gemser, *Sprüche*, 25. Gemser detected the same thing somewhat earlier: "*Bedingung für Erlangung des Segens der Weisheit ist die dauernde, eifrige Bemühung um sie; man muß nach ihr suchen, wie Schatzgräber nach vergrabenen Kostbarkeiten.*" See further Kayatz, *Proverbien 1-9*, 98-102. See further Ringgren, *Sprüche*, 18. Ringgren, following Gemser, also articulated the same aspect that the son has to make a greater effort in terms of reaching out for Wisdom and seeking her just as those who bury

pupil must take the initiative and actively summon – ‘call to’ – wisdom.”¹¹ The son is encouraged to make his ear attentive to wisdom and to incline his heart to understanding (2:2)¹² and to call out for insight and to raise his voice for understanding (2:3). This becomes all the more important when we see this encouragement to call in the sequence of the speech of the robbers in 1:10-14 and then Wisdom’s call in 1:20-33. In invitations, which encapsulate elements of a speech of persuasion¹³ the son is called by the robbers (1:10-11), then by Wisdom (1:20-33) and furthermore the son is not asked to stand idle either in 2:1-4,¹⁴ where the elements in question reoccur.¹⁵

treasures look for hidden treasures: “. . . *sie wollen den Weisheitsbegriff nur stärker hervortreten lassen - , muß man sich bemühen und sie ‘wie Schatzgräber nach vergrabenen Kostbarkeiten’ (Jer. 41,8; Mt 15,44) suchen (Gemser).*” See further Scott, *Proverbs*, 43. Scott’s opinion too tallied with that of Gemser and Ringgren: “*The same figure of the arduous search for precious metals appears in the striking poem on the inscrutable source of wisdom, in Job xxxviii.*” Scott probably meant Job 28 and not 38. I think that this search for Wisdom as a quest for a lover becomes even more prominent in the other two expectations of Wisdom.

¹¹ Fox, *Proverbs 1-9*, 110.

¹² Proverbs 2:2 is a partial chiasmus with an unchanged /a/ element. See further Wilfred G. E. Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry* (JSOTS 26; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1986), 204; Watson, *Techniques*, 339; Nicholas P. Lunn, *Word-Order Variation in Biblical Hebrew Poetry: Differentiating Pragmatics and Poetics* (PBM; Bletchley: Paternoster, 2006), 108. See further Watson, *Techniques*, 371. In terms of the function of the partial chiasmus in Prov 2:2, Watson explicated the chiasmus as “*to express reversal of existing state. . . which perhaps indicates that further subdivisions of function is necessary. The chiastic pattern is used to emphasize the meaning of the words: that a drastic change is either imminent or has already taken place.*” Proverbs 2:2 stresses the change that will be enacted by the diligent pupil, who unlike the audience in 1:20-33, will embrace wisdom, understanding and knowledge. Proverbs 3:10 is another example of the same chiasmus. See further Watson, *Techniques*, 382. The chiasmus in Prov 2:2 also exhibits a sound pattern, namely assonance.

¹³ Perdue, *Proverbs*, 89.

¹⁴ Meinhold, *Sprüche*, 64. Meinhold wrote: “*Über diese aufnehmende, hörende Tätigkeit hinaus ist es nach V.3f. an dem Schüler, selbst einse*

He is conditioned to listen attentively to wisdom (2:2a) and to call out for insight (2:3a). I mentioned the view that Prov 2 takes to extreme some poetic techniques in relation to 1:10-19.¹⁶ Why do I highlight this again? The enticing address of the robbers in 1:10-14 resembles very closely 2:1-4. If the son “receives” what the father says (2:1a: אָמַר), conditional clause (2:1a), as opposed to what the sinners are saying (1:11a: אָמַר), and “treasures” the father’s commandments (the same verb צָפַן is used here for “treasure” in 2:1b and 2:7a as in 1:11c and 18b for “ambush”)¹⁷ and if the search for wisdom (2:2a), understanding (2:2; 2:3b) and insight (2:3a) is sought like silver and hidden treasure (2:4; conditional clause),¹⁸ then the son will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God (2:5).¹⁹ This is in contradistinction to the call of the sinners, the clause being conditional (אִם; in 1:10a; 2:1a, 4a),²⁰ who “ambush”

starke, suchende Aktivität zu entwickeln.” See further Müller, *Proverbien 1 – 9*, 62. Müller wrote in similar fashion: “In v.3 wird der Schüler zu dieser in v.2 eingeführten Größe in Beziehung gesetzt. Soll er in v.1 noch passiv hören und das Gebot des Lehrers aufbewahren, so soll er nun aber auch die Weisheit selbst anrufen.”

¹⁵Perdue, *Proverbs*, 89.

¹⁶Weeks, *Proverbs 1-9*, 64.

¹⁷Van Leeuwen, *Proverbs*, 43. Proverbs 1:19 is wrongly listed in Van Leeuwen’s commentary as a verse in which the verb צָפַן occurs. The right locus is 1:18.

¹⁸Watson, *Techniques*, 169, n. 294. Proverbs 2:4 is a half-line (internal) parallelism. Similar examples in Prov: 1:18; 3:2; 3:7; 3:22; 4:5; 4:7; 5:19a; 6:10 (= 24:33); 6:12a; 6:13; 6:14; 6:17a; 6:19b; 6:23; 6:32a; 7:7; 7:12a; 8:2a; 8:3a; 8:14; 9:2 etc.

¹⁹This latter verse may be seen as the contrast of Prov 1:29, where Wisdom in her “chiding speech” (“Scheltrede”) spurns the audience for hating knowledge and not choosing the fear of the Lord.

²⁰Fox, *Proverbs 1-9*, 110. Regarding Prov 2:3 a midrashic interpretation in *b. Ber. 57a* reads אִם, “mother” instead of אִם, “if,” so “for you will call understanding ‘Mother’.” This is buttressed by the Tg. (אימא לביינתא חקרי) (ארי) and extensively cited by medieval commentators. This was based on 7:4, i.e., “and call understanding your friend.” See further Delitzsch, *Proverbs*, 76; Healey, “The Targum of Proverbs,” 15, n. 2. Healey noted

their own lives (1:18b: כָּפַר) and to the goods and plunder promised by the robbers (1:13-14). Therefore, it is evident that 2:1ff plays upon the quest for treasure just as 1:10-14 does.²¹

I think it is important to note that the verb employed in the conditional clause of 2:3a for expressing what the son is conditioned to perform is קָרָא, “call,” just as in the previous section Wisdom “calls” (1:21a; 8:1a; 9:3a: קָרָא). Moreover, the same expression קָרָא is used in 2:3b as in respect to Wisdom in 1:20a and 8:2a, connecting the son’s “emotional call” with that of Wisdom even more strongly.²² So I conclude that this inferred expectation and urging of the son to call out for Wisdom emphasizes again that aspect, according to which what Wisdom’s calls express and reveal is somewhat different than what the calls of her counterparts express and reveal. This “calling out” and “raising of the voice” is not expected by any of Wisdom’s counterparts, which point I think is very significant. The instruction of Wisdom and that of the father makes it lucid that in the process of the differentiation between the competing calls that although Wisdom’s calls are similar to that of her counterparts they can still be distinguished not only by the way in which Wisdom’s calls are public through and through without any hint of devious concealment but also by the way in which she expects her audience to perform something in turn.

The Second Expectation of Wisdom: The Seeking and Searching for Understanding (Proverbs 2:4)

Proverbs 2:4 also commences with the conditional אִם, pointing back to 1:10-11 and to what I noted above that chapter 2 develops some of the poetic techniques of 1:10-11.²³ With this verse the scene changes,

that the reading of the Tg. makes Prov 2:3b difficult to comprehend. The Syr. does not include it.

²¹ Van Leeuwen, *Proverbs*, 43; Perdue, *Proverbs*, 89.

²² Waltke, *Proverbs*, 221. Waltke did not list Prov 8:2a.

²³ Weeks, *Proverbs 1-9*, 64; Perdue, *Proverbs*, 88. For further treatments of Prov 2:4 see further Schäfer, *Poesie*, 54-6; Gemser, *Sprüche*, 25; Ringgren, *Sprüche*, 18; Lelièvre and Maillot, *Proverbes*, 43-4, 49-50; Plöger, *Sprüche*,

Wisdom appears and her high worth is mentioned.²⁴ The son is encouraged not only to call (2:3) but also to seek (שָׁקַח) understanding like silver (2:4a: כֶּסֶף) and search (חָפַח) for it as for hidden treasures (2:4b: מְטֵמוֹן),²⁵ i.e. a reference to the treasure imagery. An intensive searching and finding is necessary.²⁶ Then (אָז) the son will understand (בִּין) the fear of the Lord (2:5a) and find (מָצָא) knowledge of God (2:5b). Seeking and searching, and respectively finding are prominent features of Proverbs, especially in the first and second speeches of Wisdom. The first part of Wisdom's "threat speech"/"Drohrede" in 1:28 formulates what happens when the audience calls (1:28a: קָרָא) and seeks (1:28b: שָׁחַר) Wisdom when it is too late. The result is that Wisdom will neither answer (1:28a: עָנָה), nor let herself to be found (1:28b: מָצָא). So the second expectation of Wisdom in 2:4-5 is that the son should not only hearken to the wholehearted seeking of understanding but also to search for her as one would search for hidden treasures. Wisdom is more precious and desirable than all treasures, although she is not against the accumulation of wealth if it is performed in the right way.²⁷ To

24-6; Toy, *Proverbs*, 33; Oesterley, *Proverbs*, 14; Cohen, *Proverbs*, 9; Greenstone, *Proverbs*, 17; McKane, *Proverbs*, 282; Scott, *Proverbs*, 43; Fox, *Proverbs 1-9*, 110; Delitzsch, *Proverbs*, 76-7; Waltke, *Proverbs*, 221-2; Murphy, *Proverbs*, 15; Clifford, *Proverbs*, 47; Whybray, *Commentary*, 22; Derek Kidner, *The Proverbs An Introduction and Commentary* (TOTC; Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1964), 61; Van Leeuwen, *Proverbs*, 43. For a treatment of the LXX text of Prov 2:4 see D'Hamonville and Dumouchet, *Proverbs*, 167-9.

²⁴ Meinhold, *Sprüche*, 64.

²⁵ The same occurs in Job 3:21b. What a striking contrast between 3:21 and Prov 2:4! In Job 3:21 Job talks about those who long for death but that does not seem to come and dig for it more than for hidden treasures. In Prov 2:4 the son is encouraged to seek and search for understanding, being provided with the hope that he will find. Thus death in Job 3:21 contrasts the life-beaming passage of Prov 2:4.

²⁶ Meinhold, *Sprüche*, 64; Lelièvre and Maillot, *Proverbes*, 49-50; Scott, *Proverbs*, 43; Kidner, *Proverbs*, 61.

²⁷ Cohen, *Proverbs*, 47; Oesterley, *Proverbs*, 60; Greenstone, *Proverbs*, 81; McKane, *Proverbs*, 346; Baumann, *Weisheitsgestalt*, 102-7; Whybray,

understand (בין) and to find (מצא), just as in 2:5 is also connected in 8:9. In 8:9 Wisdom states that her words are straight (ישר) to the person who understands (8:9a: בין) and right (ישר) to those who find (מצא) knowledge (8:9b). This verse is followed by two verses (8:10-11), in which Wisdom claims that her instruction should be taken instead of silver (8:10a) and knowledge rather than choice gold (8:10a), because wisdom is better than jewels (8:11a) and all that one may desire cannot be compared with her (8:11b), i.e. another instance of the importance of the treasure imagery. This is followed by a covert allusion to the house imagery in 8:12, when Wisdom specifies that she cohabitates with prudence (8:12a) and finds (מצא) knowledge and discretion (8:12b).²⁸ In 8:17 Wisdom demands reciprocal love, followed by a verbatim reiteration of the aspect of seeking and finding mentioned in the “*threat speech*”/“*Drohrede*” in 1:28b, which in 8:17b becomes a positive statement: וְיִמְשְׁחוּרֵי יִמְצְאוּנִי, i.e., those who will love Wisdom will also experience that seeking her will not be futile as in 1:28b but she will let herself to be found. Proverbs 8:17 and the aspect of seeking and finding is again followed by a section concerned with something similar, in which the worth of Wisdom is compared to earthly wealth, i.e. again an additional reference to the treasure imagery. Moreover, Wisdom claims that if she is hearkened to and accepted, then she will bestow wealth and fill the storehouses with wealth, i.e., house and treasure imagery intertwined. Finally, 8:35a also encourages the finding of Wisdom, which results in genuine life: כִּי מִצְאֵי (מִצְאֵי) [מִצְאֵי] חַיִּים. Therefore, the second expectation to seek and to search for understanding is connected with knowledge not only in 2:4-5 but also in the second speech of Wisdom, i.e. in 8:9. Moreover, the aspect of seeking and finding Wisdom is especially significant not only in the expectation stated in 2:4-5 but also in the first and second speeches of Wisdom.

Commentary, 50; R. N. Whybray, *Wealth and Poverty in the Book of Proverbs* (JSOTS 99; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990), 102; Fox, *Proverbs 1-9*, 270; Kidner, *Proverbs*, 78; Barucq, *Proverbes*, 87.

²⁸ Lelièvre and Maillot, *Proverbes*, 201.

The Third Expectation of Wisdom: To Love Wisdom and not to Forsake Her, to Prize Her Highly and to Embrace Her (Proverbs 4:6, 8)

Emphasis is placed on the aspect of reciprocal love, especially in Prov 8:17. Wisdom not only requires to be loved by her devotees but she also makes it clear that she rejoices over humankind with great joy (8:30-31).²⁹ Love is not only an expectation in Prov 1-9 but also a metaphor, which may be treated as a separate imagery.³⁰ Regrettably there is not enough space here to provide a treatment of the love imagery present in Prov 1-9³¹ but only to focus on how it functions as an expectation on the part of Wisdom towards her devotees. How the relationship between Wisdom and the instructed is envisaged in Prov 1-9 is an important question. It is described not only in terms of reciprocal call, or reciprocal seeking and searching but also in terms of reciprocal love. Proverbs 9:1-5 may be cited (cf. 1:20ff and 8:1ff) as an example of how Wisdom, the “*true partner*” calls humankind to herself. Leaving aside the debate as to how much the Egyptian idea about the love of the goddess Maat has influenced the metaphor of love and the love of Wisdom in Prov 1-9,³² it is still possible to maintain that something “*remarkable*” happens to reason as it begins to seek and search knowledge. Wisdom addresses

²⁹ See further Exod 20:6, where God talks about those who love him, i.e., אהב. Concerning reciprocal love see further Delitzsch, *Proverbs*, 181; Toy, *Proverbs*, 168; Cohen, *Proverbs*, 45; Von Rad, *Wisdom*, 166-76; Plöger, *Sprüche*, 90; Baumann, *Weisheitsgestalt*, 98-100, 111; Barucq, *Proverbes*, 88; Boström, *Proverbiastudien*, 162-3; McKane, *Proverbs*, 350; Van Leeuwen, *Proverbs*, 92; Kayatz, *Proverbien 1-9*, 77, 98-102; Schäfer, *Poesie*, 207; Whybray, *Commentary*, 49; Clifford, *Proverbs*, 95; Murphy, *Proverbs*, 51; Meinhold, *Sprüche*, 142; Waltke, *Proverbs*, 404, 404, n. 87; Fox, *Proverbs 1-9*, 275. For a philological treatment of Prov 4:6-9 see further Van Der Weiden, *Proverbes*, 44-5. For a treatment of the LXX text of Prov 4:6, 8 see D’Hamonville and Dumouchet, *Proverbes*, 183.

³⁰ Baumann, *Weisheitsgestalt*, 98-100, 111 (“*Liebesmetaphorik*,” “*reziproke Formel*” in Prov 8:17).

³¹ See further R. E. Murphy, “Wisdom and Eros,” *CBQ* 50 (1988): 600-3.

³² Kayatz, *Proverbien 1-9*, 77, 98-102; Von Rad, *Wisdom*, 167, 174; Fox, *Proverbs 1-9*, 276.

humankind and it is on her way towards them, speaking to them from the place, for which reason is searching but which it cannot attain by its own efforts (Job 28). Wisdom “*moves*” towards men and seeks their ear and for this very reason Wisdom “. . . *must, indeed, may now be loved by man.*”³³ For this reason the pupil is urged not to forsake (עָזַב) Wisdom (Prov 4:6a), since she will keep (שָׁמְרָה) her devotee (4:6a) and to love (אָהַבָהּ) her (4:6b) because she will guard (נָצְרָה) her lover (4:6b). This verse seems to achieve an “*inclusio*” between 4:5a and 4:7:

4:5a - קְנֵה חִכְמָה קְנֵה בִינָה

4:6 - אֲלֵת־עֹזְבָהּ וְחַשְׁמֶרֶךָ אֹהֶבָהּ וְחָצְרֶךָ -

4:7 - רַאשִׁית חִכְמָה קְנֵה חִכְמָה וּבְכֹל־קִנְיָנֶךָ קְנֵה בִינָה

Proverbs 4:7 seems not only to interrupt the sequence of the parental appeal between 4:6 and 4:8³⁴ but also to create a chiasmic structure:

“A *Get wisdom (5).*

B *Keep wisdom and she’ll reward you (6).*

A’ *Get wisdom (7).*

B’ *Keep wisdom and she’ll reward you (8).*”³⁵

The root קָנָה, which occurs three times here (4:5a; 4:7a; 4:7b) is the root, which also occurs in 8:22a, producing a wordplay. The way in which God made (קָנָה) Wisdom as at the beginning (רַאשִׁית) of his way (8:22a: דִּרְגָךְ) parallels how the son is also encouraged to realize that the beginning (רַאשִׁית) of wisdom is to get (קָנָה) wisdom (4:7a) and insight (4:7b: בִּינָה). The verb קָנָה conveys the “*acquisition*” metaphor, which is combined with the treasure imagery in 16:16.³⁶ Some have

³³ Von Rad, *Wisdom*, 167-8. Cf. Fox, *Proverbs 1-9*, 295. Fox reckoned that the fact that the wise love Wisdom is a “*truism.*” He found it “*surprising*” that Wisdom loves the wise.

³⁴ Waltke, *Proverbs*, 280-1; Fox, *Proverbs 1-9*, 175.

³⁵ Fox, *Proverbs 1-9*, 175; Waltke, *Proverbs*, 279; Clifford, *Proverbs*, 63.

³⁶ Baumann, *Weisheitsgestalt*, 240. The acquisition metaphor or “*die Metapher vom Erwerben der Weisheit.*” Proverbs 16:16 reads:

seen in this acquisition metaphor allusions to the praising of a bride in Israel.³⁷ Again in 4:8 the metaphor of embracement³⁸ appears when the pupil is also encouraged to prize (ריו) Wisdom highly and she will exalt him (4:8a: סָלַל) and to embrace (חָבַק) her and she will honour him (4:8b: כָּבֵד).³⁹ The reward at the fulfilment of this expectation is the putting on the head of a graceful garland (4:9a: חֵן לְיוֹתָם) and the bestowing (מָנַן) of a beautiful crown (4:9b: עֲטֹרַת הַפְּאֵרֶת) on the head of the devotee.⁴⁰ Wisdom loves those who love her and those who seek her will find her (8:17). Wisdom also “congratulates” the devotee who like a lover, watches day after day at her doors (8:34) and invites him to lodge with her.⁴¹ The authors of Proverbs demanded that the pupils might strive for something more than the utilitarian advantages of the teachings of the sages and the learning of wisdom. They stressed the substantial character of

קָנָה חֲכָמָה מִה־טוֹב מִזְרוּזִין וּקְנוֹת בִּינָה נִבְחָר מִכֶּסֶף.

For a treatment of 16:16 as part of 16:16-30 see Heim, *Like Grapes of Gold*, 215-21.

³⁷Meinhold, *Sprüche*, 92-3; Baumann, *Weisheitsgestalt*, 240. Baumann disagreed with Meinhold.

³⁸Baumann, *Weisheitsgestalt*, 242.

³⁹For additional treatments of Prov 4:6, 8 see further Müller, *Proverbien 1 – 9*, 110-6; Schäfer, *Poesie*, 106-10; Gemser, *Sprüche*, 33-4; Kayatz, *Proverbien 1-9*, 110-1, 116; Ringgren, *Sprüche*, 25-6; Barucq, *Proverbes*, 67; Lelièvre and Maillot, *Proverbes*, 83-4; Plöger, *Sprüche*, 46-7; Duesberg, *Proverbes*, 338-9; Toy, *Proverbs*, 86-9; Cohen, *Proverbs*, 22; Greenstone, *Proverbs*, 39-40; Oesterley, *Proverbs*, 30; McKane, *Proverbs*, 305-6; Fox, *Proverbs 1-9*, 174-5; Delitzsch, *Proverbs*, 107; Perdue, *Proverbs*, 112-3; Waltke, *Proverbs*, 278-82; Murphy, *Proverbs*, 27; Clifford, *Proverbs*, 63; Whybray, *Commentary*, 30-1; Kidner, *Proverbs*, 66-7; Van Leeuwen, *Proverbs*, 58-9.

⁴⁰Note how the term עֲטֹרַת, “crown” also appears in Isa 28:3 but in a negative connotation in relation to the crown of pride of the drunkards of Ephraim. While the term הַפְּאֵרֶת, “beauty” occurs in 28:4 referring to the “fading flower of its glorious beauty” (צִיֵּצֶה נֹבֵל צְבִי הַפְּאֵרֶתוֹ). Cf. G. Boström, *Proverbiastudien: Die Weisheit und die fremde Weib in Spr. 1-9* (LUÅ N.F. Avd. 1. Bd 30, Nr 3; Lund: Gleerup, 1935), 168.

⁴¹Von Rad, *Wisdom*, 168, 172.

emotional commitment, a desire for learning. This love impels one to seek and search the mysteries of wisdom and knowledge and permits learning to impress itself on the character of the pupil. Without love, knowledge is “*inert*.” Therefore, one is expected to love Wisdom (4:6; 7:4; 29:3; 8:34). In Proverbs “*love*” and “*hate*” are not two mere emotions. They reflect the polar mind-sets that describe the shape and the development of a person’s character. Wise men are typified by love of wisdom and hate of wickedness, whereas fools are characterized by their crooked love and hatreds. Fools hate wisdom (1:29) and they despise rebuke (1:30) and instruction (5:12). The thoughtless loves his thoughtlessness (1:22a). The “*cynic*” delights in his own cynicism (1:22b)⁴² and all those who hate Wisdom love death (8:36). A sluggish man is not only jaded but loves sleep (20:13). A quarrelsome man is not just easily provoked to anger but loves transgression (17:19). To be wise is not merely to know wisdom, but also to love and seek it and this love meets that of Wisdom, i.e., “. . . *the attraction of like to like* (8:21).”⁴³ Wisdom is attracted to humankind and vice versa by the energy of eros or the “*spiritual-intellectual eros*” (“*der geistige Eros*”), the way von Rad called it. The portrayal of reciprocal love between Wisdom and humanity reflects the language employed in the description of the seduction of the wife and the temptress. Wisdom is likened to a lover who seeks and is sought in turn by her beloved (8:17, 34-35; cf. Cant 3:1-4; 5:2-6:2). The assumed sexual connotations in the description of Wisdom are more muted than is usually believed and in Prov 8 assume a lesser profile. Eros is the desire for completion by filling a void in itself. In this way, the declarations of reciprocal between Wisdom and humankind promulgate this “*intellectual eros*.” Wisdom’s “*pique*” towards those who repel her call infers a need for love (1:24-33).⁴⁴

This intellectual love is developed further in Sirach and Wisdom of Solomon. The sages speak in the style of biographical confessions

⁴² Fox, *Proverbs 1-9*, 275-6.

⁴³ Fox, *Proverbs 1-9*, 276.

⁴⁴ Fox, *Proverbs 1-9*, 294-5.

about the wooing of Wisdom and the amazing successes of her efforts in Sir 51:13, 19, 26f⁴⁵ and Wis 8:2, 16.⁴⁶

Apparently in Israel a picture has been created of the “*highly remarkable,*” “*ideal man*” who is in a quest for knowledge. What awaits this ideal man is almost described in a voluptuous manner, if he offers Wisdom the trust she requires and hearkens to the words which she tells him. The picture of this ideal man motivated by a love of knowledge has not been described more “*beautifully*” and “*modestly*” than by Sirach in 14:20-27.⁴⁷

Possibly, von Rad was right when he postulated that: “*If there was, somewhere in Israel, a surrender, verging on the mystical, of man to the glory of existence, then it is to be found in these texts which can speak of such sublime bond of love between man and the divine mystery of creation. Here man throws himself with delight on a meaning which rushes towards him; he uncovers a mystery which was already on its way to him in order to give itself to him.*”⁴⁸ This love relationship creates a tension through being wooed and anticipating precious intellectual satisfaction. Therefore, in this process of wooing Wisdom proffers everything that a man, “*in his isolation,*” might need: wealth and honour (Prov 8:18, 21), guidance and security in life (1:33ff; 2:9ff; 4:6; 6:22; 7:4f), knowledge of God and rest for the soul (2:5; Sir 6:28; 51:27).⁴⁹ Wisdom even sets out to meet her lover (Sir 15:2; Wis 6:13-16) and waits at his door.⁵⁰ Her offers “*. . . can only be described, with full theological weight of the word, as ‘salvation benefits.’ Here, all striving for success, for mastery of life, fades into silence.*”⁵¹ Wisdom’s invitation to give oneself intellectually to her together with her gifts and offers are not

⁴⁵ Von Rad, *Wisdom*, 168.

⁴⁶ Von Rad, *Wisdom*, 168; L. Alonso Schökel, *A Manual of Hebrew Poetics* (SB 11; Rome: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 2000), 125.

⁴⁷ Von Rad, *Wisdom*, 168-9.

⁴⁸ Von Rad, *Wisdom*, 169. See further Sir 15:2 and Wis 6:12-16.

⁴⁹ Von Rad, *Wisdom*, 169. See further Sir 6:26-28 and 4:15.

⁵⁰ Von Rad, *Wisdom*, 169; Weeks, *Proverbs 1-9*, 165.

⁵¹ Von Rad, *Wisdom*, 169.

anymore means towards the attainment of a purpose in life but ends in themselves.⁵²

The Fourth Expectation of Wisdom: To Call Wisdom “My Sister” and Insight “Intimate Friend” (Proverbs 7:4)

The final expectation towards the instructed is in agreement with the previous ones. Calling, seeking, searching, loving and finally calling Wisdom my sister and insight intimate friend. The father instructs the son in an appeal to keep his words (7:1a), to treasure up his commandments (7:1b), to keep his commandments and he will live (7:2a) and to keep his teaching as the apple of his eye (7:2b). The succeeding verse is concerned with the binding of the father’s teaching on the finger (7:3a) and with their binding on the tablet of the heart (7:3b).⁵³ The following verse, which changes the theme,⁵⁴ encapsulates the expectation to say (אָמַר) to Wisdom, “*You are my sister*” (7:4a: אָחוּת) and to call (קָרָא) insight (בִּינְיָה) intimate friend (7:4b: מוֹרֵעַ). This parental appeal is immediately followed by the extensive section concerned with the seduction of the Strange Woman (7:6-22), which makes this expectation even more significant. There are some examples in the Hebrew Bible, which recall the same expression אָחוּתִי אָתָּה. The expression occurs in Gen 12:13 as part of Abram’s request to Sarai. Then again in Gen 24:60 in relation to Rebecca and in Ezek 16:45 a similar expression is to be found in relation to the personified sisters of Jerusalem and Samaria. The term מוֹרֵעַ occurs in Ruth 2:1, while 3:2 encapsulates the related term מוֹרְעָה, “*kindred*.”⁵⁵ The expectation of Prov 7:4 has sometimes

⁵²Von Rad, *Wisdom*, 169.

⁵³ See further Plöger, *Sprüche*, 76; Hilaire Duesberg, *Les Scribes Inspirés: Introduction aux Livres Sapientiaux de la Bible. Le Livre des Proverbes* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1938), 397. Duesberg reckoned that Prov 7:3: “*C’est bien là une expression de scribe . . .*”

⁵⁴ Baumann, *Weisheitsgestalt*, 245.

⁵⁵ Baumann, *Weisheitsgestalt*, 246-7. The expression אָחוּתִי הוּא also appears in Gen 12:19; 20:2, 5, 12; 26:7, 9; Lev 18:11. Cf. Oesterley, *Proverbs*, 50. The latter term entails an intimate knowledge.

been regarded as a quasi marriage relationship with Wisdom.⁵⁶ Here it appears as an encouragement to become a sibling of Wisdom and of insight. Therefore, this is not a call to a wedding ceremony but it is an indication of blood-relationship established with Wisdom from early childhood. Through this form of address, which calls Wisdom sister and intimate friend, she appears as a reader and listener.⁵⁷

Summary

In conclusion, as I said above, Weeks claimed that only those who are instructed are able to differentiate between true and perverted speech, so the opposition or contrast between the speeches of Wisdom and that of her counterparts finds its main fulfilment in this stress on instruction throughout Prov 1-9.⁵⁸ I am not entirely disagreeing with this view but if the uninstructed are unable to distinguish between true and perverted speech, then how will they come to the point where they can distinguish between true or perverted speech and how will they ever decide that they want to be instructed at all when in the first instance they are unable to perform any of these? This point is important when the issue is addressed from the point of view of the חָכְמָה. However, the same point may be examined from the perspective of the apparent affinities between the speeches of Wisdom and that of her counterparts, which allegedly

⁵⁶ Boström, *Proverbiastudien*, 161-2; Ringgren, *Sprüche*, 106; Meinhold, *Sprüche*, 125 (cf. Tob 7:15).

⁵⁷ Baumann, *Weisheitsgestalt*, 247. See further Müller, *Proverbien 1 – 9*, 137-40; Schäfer, *Poesie*, 198; Gemser, *Sprüche*, 43; Kayatz, *Proverbien 1-9*, 98; Ringgren, *Sprüche*, 35; Barucq, *Proverbes*, 83; Lelièvre and Maillot, *Proverbes*, 155-6, 164-5; W. A. Van Der Weiden, *Le Livre des Proverbes: Note philologiques* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1970), 68 (Van Der Weiden alluded to the friendship of Kothar wa Hasis and Hassis: “Kothar est ton camarade et Hassis ton ami.”); Plöger, *Sprüche*, 76; Toy, *Proverbs*, 145; Oesterley, *Proverbs*, 50; Cohen, *Proverbs*, 39; Greenstone, *Proverbs*, 69; McKane, *Proverbs*, 334; Fox, *Proverbs 1-9*, 240-1; Delitzsch, *Proverbs*, 157; Perdue, *Proverbs*, 134; Waltke, *Proverbs*, 369-70; Murphy, *Proverbs*, 43; Clifford, *Proverbs*, 87; Whybray, *Commentary*, 45; Van Leeuwen, *Proverbs*, 84.

⁵⁸ Weeks, *Proverbs 1-9*, 82.

are so emphatic that the audience finds it difficult to differentiate between them. Is the problem to be found in the indistinguishable aspect of the speeches or in the attitude of the uninstructed? Knowing this when will the audience ever be able to distinguish between these speeches and how is it possible to reach this crucial point? The possible answer may be to become instructed. This raises a further dilemma, namely, that to become instructed one must differentiate between the speeches of Wisdom and that of her counterparts. However, if these speeches appear to be so alike that it is impossible to know which is which, then this becomes an impediment. The other possibility is for the פְּתוּיִם to have some ability to perform a distinction between the competing speeches but if this is denied, then that is a hindrance too. The speeches of Wisdom and that of her counterparts are truly alike but they also have features that make them distinct from one another and perhaps the פְּתוּיִם also have some ability to make the necessary judgment.

This question leads to two possible answers. First, that the question of the understanding of the uninstructed is somewhat more complex than one would think and second one might postulate a “*deus ex machina*” intervention in the state of the uninstructed, which would make them able to decide to want to be instructed so that in the end they might show capability of differentiating between true and perverted speech.⁵⁹ What I suggest is that Wisdom’s calls in terms of the way in which Wisdom reveals herself, lacking any hidden element or secrecy, then her luxury to be able to withdraw herself, to remain silent and to be critical towards the audience and finally making clear that she has expectations are evident signs of the fact that her speeches are somewhat different than those of her counterparts. I think the uninstructed can hear and see these aspects in Wisdom’s calls fairly clearly. Or would one suggest that the uninstructed audience would have found it hard to distinguish

⁵⁹ I presume Weeks’s views concerning the “*uninstructed*” are possibly based on the definitions of the פְּתוּיִם. As I have pointed out before, I do see in Weeks’s treatment a lack of clear distinction between the different grades of fools.

between the chiding and threatening voice of Wisdom in 1:20-33 and the smooth call with an offer of instant gratification presented by the Strange Woman in 7:14-20? Or were the uninstructed unable to distinguish between the appealing and instantly gratifying invitations of the Strange Woman and Folly and the slightly more time consuming process of calling for Wisdom, understanding and insight?⁶⁰ Could not the uninstructed differentiate between the evident expertise of Wisdom and the lack of it in the case of the robbers, the Strange Woman and Folly? What about the expectations recommended by Wisdom and the wisdom teachers? Do Wisdom's counterparts enumerate expectations of this kind? The expectations of Wisdom however, are not there to intimidate those who are ready to become instructed. The son is encouraged to call and he is promised to receive an answer, to seek and search in order to find, not to forsake Wisdom in order to be kept, to love her in order to be guarded, to prize Wisdom highly which results in exaltation and to embrace her in order to be honoured by her. I think that it is reasonable that these expectations were not designed to be chores but invaluable promises designed to reinforce Wisdom's claims and the benefits of internalizing her instruction. What Wisdom's counterparts are offering are indeed instant and immediate gains and pleasures but just as quickly as they appear to give pleasure just as swiftly the end result turns out to be doom. Similarities and differences in terms of Wisdom and her counterparts walk hand in hand and therefore, highlighting and examining both of them was essential.

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⁶⁰ Fox, *Proverbs 1-9*, 110. I think Fox's comment in relation to Prov 2:4 supports my reasoning: "Not even 'calling out' to wisdom suffices; one must actively strive for it, seeking it as eagerly as . . . [מְטַמְּוֹנִים] . . . [מְטַמְּוֹנִים] are treasures that are hidden or buried and thus not easily accessible. There is some ambivalence about the accessibility of wisdom (contrast 8:1-5). In this passage, the need to expend effort on its behalf is stressed." Furthermore Perdue wrote: "Though it [Wisdom] is a gift that cannot be grasped, at the same time wisdom comes only to those who search for it as a greatly valued treasure (see Job 28)." See further Perdue, *Proverbs*, 89; Murphy, *Proverbs*, 15; Oesterley, *Proverbs*, 14.