

FORMATION AND EDUCATION IN PROVERBS 1–9: THEOLOGICAL AND PEDAGOGICAL PRINCIPLES

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It is commonly imagined in modern scholarship that education¹ in ancient Israel was “a harsh and mindless affair that included a healthy dose of zealous thrashing.”² Collins remarks, “It is typical of all ancient wisdom that learning and education was thought to involve suffering.”³ In his authoritative study on education in the ancient Near East, Lorenz Dürr concludes that on the basis of an etymology of *mûsar* and the proverbs praising the rod, the wisdom books of the Old Testament encouraged corporal punishment both at home and school.⁴ Claus Westerman draws a similar picture, however only for postexilic schools.⁵ That is the setting he sees for Proverbs 1–9 as well.

While there is little doubt that ancient cultures resorted to physical punishment in the educational process in both home and school, there is some sign in the Wisdom Literature of at least the limitations of corporal punishment as the following proverb suggests: “A rebuke goes deeper into one who has understanding than a hundred blows into a fool” (Prov. 17:10).⁶ Therefore, contrary to popular opinion of considering education in ancient Israel as “a harsh and mindless affair,” it is our intention in this research to demonstrate, on the basis of Proverbs 1–9, that the sages in ancient Israel seem to have held far more subtle, nuanced, and thoughtful ideas about educational process than the common picture would have it. In order to accomplish that we will attempt to show a wide span of educational methods and techniques that were used and applied by the father/teacher in the process of instruction as demonstrated in Proverbs 1–9. We will also endeavor to explore the theological assumptions permeating Proverbs 1–9 and in fact shaping the sages’ concept of education. After scrupulous exploration and observation of the pedagogical methods and their underlying theological principles, we will deduce what the sages of Proverbs 1–9 believed was the chief goal of the process of instruction offered to the young people.

The choice of Proverbs 1–9 is not arbitrary. In general the book of Proverbs is believed by many scholars to offer a valuable perspective on the efforts of a community to educate its youth in the formation of moral character.⁷ As Hinds asserts, the book of Proverbs gives every indication of being self-consciously didactic literature.⁸ While Proverbs does not describe a systematic way in which the educational process was carried out, one can identify various parts of the process throughout the course of the book.

The first nine chapters of Proverbs give ample evidence of being a discrete unit within the context of the whole book. This section is marked by extended, structured discourses, which contrast with the individual proverbs that characterize the rest of the book. In addition, it is framed by the similar statements in Proverbs 1:7 and 9:10 which define the fundamental significance of the concept of the fear of Yahweh. Furthermore, the content of the section is more explicitly theological than the material found in the remainder of Proverbs. An additional striking feature of this section is its frequent usage of the address ‘Hear, my son,’ which adds a strong didactic cast to its observations and instructions, and apparently unifies the section. Whybray claims, “This is all pedagogical material, designed to be used in the preparation of boys

or young men to face the problems and dangers of the adult world so that they may become wise and responsible members of it.”⁹

Fox notes that though Proverbs 1–9 is clearly a didactic text, modern scholars have given only scant attention to the issues of pedagogy that it raises, preferring rather to view it in literary, philosophical or theological terms.¹⁰ This thesis is an attempt to identify what this particular portion of biblical literature says and implies about education and its theological implications. Though it would be ideal to examine the complete corpus of wisdom literature in the Bible in order to discover its implicit pedagogical theory, that procedure would require a much more extensive study. The present study is much more modest in scope and its focus is only on Proverbs 1–9. Nevertheless, this section of the book is recognized as an introduction to the rest of the book¹¹ as well as an overview of the themes and priorities of Proverbs.¹² Therefore, it would not be surprising if a comprehensive analysis of the wisdom corpus were to support in large measure the implicit pedagogical theory found in Proverbs 1–9.

Formational and educational methods used and applied in Proverbs 1–9

Educational methods comprise the means by which moral instruction is passed on to a learner. The effective instructor employs strategies by which the learner can acquire knowledge, competence, character and attitudes that are desired. The first educational method used in Proverbs 1–9 is address.¹³

Address

In Proverbs 1:20-33 and 8:1-11 personified wisdom assuming the role of a teacher initiates the learning process by addressing prospective learners. She finds them in the squares and at the entrance of the city gates and appeals to them to listen to her words (1:20-21; 8:1-3). When she raises her voice it is not to deliver an academic lecture in a classroom, or a sermon in a temple, but to summon people from their occupations and distractions to take part in an open-air meeting.

In her first address, Wisdom uses two rhetorical questions to draw people’s attention: “How long, O naive ones, will you love being simple-minded? And scoffers delight themselves in scoffing, and fools hate knowledge?” (Prov. 1:22). Here Wisdom addresses three kinds of fools: untutored, immature youths (*petayim*), impudent and scornful people (*lesim*), and dolts (*kesilim*). As Fox observes, the *petayim* are educable, but the ones addressed here have already rejected wisdom.¹⁴ These youths have crossed the threshold of the age of accountability and should have made a decisive commitment to the wisdom of the book before now. But instead of embracing the teaching, they “love being simple-minded.” The *lesim* are chronically arrogant and cynical, and the *kesilim* are smug and thickheaded. Fox comments that the three are addressed together because they are all prone to the complacency condemned in this interlude.¹⁵ All these fools have at some time heard Wisdom and rejected her call.

Using the tone of a prophet, wisdom uses accusations and threats of judgment in an effort to shake the learners from their simplicity, mocking and folly. However, Wisdom is not the agent of the calamity but a scornful observer of it.¹⁶ Because Wisdom has been ignored heretofore, she will deride the calamity of those who mocked her (Prov. 1:26-27). The fools showed contempt for Wisdom by rejecting her advice; now she will likewise show them contempt in return.

Though the fools turn to Wisdom in their distress, they will find that Wisdom must be found on her terms: “Then they will call on me, but I will not answer; they will seek me

diligently but they will not find me” (Prov. 1:28). Whybray claims this language calls to mind a similarity in the relationship between Yahweh and His people. Although Yahweh promises to be found by His people when they seek Him in the times of distress (Deut. 4:29; Jer. 29:13), in Hosea 5:6 He warns His sinful people that though they may seek Him, they will not find Him, because He has withdrawn His presence from them.¹⁷

This leads Estes to assert that the real tragedy of this passage is that in rejecting the teaching of Wisdom humans are refusing to fear Yahweh (Prov. 1:29), and that will lead inevitably to destruction (Prov. 1:30-32).¹⁸ Thus, their willful indifference and hostility are against Israel’s God, not against an impersonal created order or even a hypostatized human wisdom. Submission to Wisdom is equated with submission to God.¹⁹ In opposition to that, to hate knowledge (*da’at*) is equated with not having a proper respect for Yahweh – not submitting to his authority and discipline.

The fools will not find the wisdom they need because they rejected its foundation: fear of God and knowledge (Prov. 1:30). The phrase “So they shall eat of the fruit of their own way” (Prov. 1:31) issues in a declaration of the principle of intrinsic retribution, the behavior-consequence nexus.²⁰ Fools will eat what they planted, suffer the effects of their own schemes and deeds.²¹ Their destruction is inevitable: “For the waywardness of the naive will kill them, and the complacency of fools will destroy them” (Prov. 1:32). Fox claims that *m^ešubah* “waywardness” means the tendency to turn away, namely from right behavior and denotes an attitude or psychological disposition rather than a deed.²²

Nevertheless, Wisdom does extend the prospect of hope, for she concludes her address in Proverbs 1:33: “But he who listens to me shall live securely and will be at ease from the dread of evil.” McKane identifies Wisdom with an authoritative teacher who must be heard and obeyed.²³ A receptive attitude to her instruction produces necessarily a condition of safety and equanimity. Those who listen submissively and attentively will live in security and will have their minds set at rest from the terror of evil.

Having examined Wisdom’s first address we must conclude that this discourse deals with people’s attitudes rather than deeds. In all of her speeches, rather than explaining what deeds are good or bad, Wisdom demands a basic stance toward wisdom itself: a loving openness to wisdom’s message. This attitude is requisite to learning; it motivates effort and enables absorption of the lessons. Wisdom seeks to scare the listeners away from the wrong stance in life. She claims that only the truly wise have access to wisdom’s practical resources – shrewdness, strategy, competence, wits – because they have earned them in a deeper training, driven by fear of God and love of wisdom.²⁴

The address in Proverbs 8:1-11 is part of a longer unit comprising chapter 8 which uses several instructional strategies. As in Proverbs 1:20-33, wisdom takes the initiative to meet people where they are in the marketplace of life. However, her call here is not just addressed to the naive and the foolish (Prov. 8:5), but she raises her voice to all humanity, the “sons of men” (Prov. 8:4). It is obvious from the main body of the address that unlike Proverbs 1:20-33, which denounces the naive and the foolish for rejecting Wisdom, the address in Proverbs 8:1-11 depicts Wisdom’s self-recommendation, “in which she boasts of her power and authority and of the gifts which she is able to bestow.”²⁵

Wisdom as the teacher claims that she speaks what is right and just (Prov. 8:6-8). Those who possess discernment will recognize that her teaching is plain, straightforward, and of the

highest morality (Prov. 8:9). The presence of such terms as *ʿemet* ‘truth’ (v. 7) and *šedeq* ‘righteousness’ (v. 8) evidence the fact that Wisdom’s teaching is concerned with ethical behavior. Fox comments on this that the physical imagery of ethics throughout Proverbs 1–9 is consistent: “Honesty is bright, straight, directly to the front. Dishonesty is dark, crooked, and off to the side—a departure from the right and bright path.”²⁶ Thus, Wisdom is to be desired. She calls upon her hearers to choose her instruction instead of material riches, because no human desire can compare with the benefits of wisdom (Prov. 8:10-11).

In the two examples of address which have been examined, the teacher initiates the learning process by calling to potential learners in the context of their everyday lives. Wisdom challenges her hearers to listen, not to dialogue. By threatening disaster and calamities on those who refuse to listen to her instructions Wisdom calls the learner to receptive submission to her authoritative instruction. The rhetorical form of address contains virtually no reference to active learner participation in the learning process. Nevertheless, the absence of explanation, rationale or illustration in this method does not imply a harsh treatment of students. It simply shows us that the teacher establishes his/her authority as someone who has wisdom and understanding. The learner is expected to accept the instruction on the basis of the authority and wisdom of the teacher.

Description

The second educational method used in Proverbs 1–9 is description that teaches without explicit reference to explanation, rationale or illustration. We find two examples of description, in Proverbs 6:12-19 and 8:22-31. Both can be viewed as lectures by experts that are intended to be heard and understood by the learner. The primary stance of this form of educational method is that of knowledgeable authority.²⁷

Proverbs 6:12-19 consists of two complementary portraits of the evil person (6:12-15) and the evil activities, which Yahweh hates (6:16-19). In the first passage we are introduced to the concept of *ʿadam bʿliyya ʿal* ‘a worthless man,’ who is equated with *ʾiš ʿawen* ‘a wicked man.’ A *bʿliyya ʿal* denotes one who is implacably wicked and who agitates against all that is good. The term is used widely in the Old Testament of various kinds of evildoers.²⁸ Fox maintains that since the term has such a wide usage, one should think of the present passage not as an attempt to describe the man of *bʿliyya ʿal*, as if he were an unknown character, but rather as a censure of certain behaviors by ascribing them to the man of *bʿliyya ʿal*.²⁹ All that such a man does springs from deep-seated corruption. This whole passage is an elaborate extension of the simple statement that the wicked will come to a bad end.

This passage is a reflection, meaning that it describes a reality without explicitly extracting a norm from the observation. It does, however, have a practical goal. As Fox argues, the enumeration of the outward marks and evil effects of the worthless man implies a warning to avoid him and the danger he presents. Such a person is innately and incurably worthless and corrupt, and the audience is presumed not to belong to this hopeless category.³⁰

The second poem (Prov. 6:16-19) employs a diverse list of evil characteristics: (1) arrogant eyes, (2) a lying tongue, (3) hands that spill innocent blood, (4) a heart that crafts wicked plans, (5) feet that run quickly to evil, (6) a lying witness, and (7) fomenting of strife among brothers. The common feature that ties together the traits listed in this passage is disruptive, self-assertive behavior that rejects Yahweh’s values, and which is therefore rejected by Him. Those described here employ their talents to destroy the basis of common life.

Fox asserts that the graded numerical sequence employed in this poem is a frequent rhetorical device in Hebrew poetry, as well as in ancient Near Eastern poetry generally.³¹ It sets a number parallel to the next integer ($x // x + 1$). Thus, not one but two different numerals occur in parallelism, the first being one less than the actual number of items in the list.³² The effect is something like saying, “Not only this, but also that.” Its function is to heighten tension and also to assist poetical parallelism, avoiding the repetition of the same word in parallel lines. The present epigram has a full itemization. Fox argues that the last item, namely “fomentor of strife” seems to be the climax of the epigram, though it is artificial to restrict the object of hatred to “fomentor of strife” alone.³³

The juxtaposition of Proverbs 6:12-15 and 6:16-19 is significant. It suggests that sin involves a combination of reality-rejection, active malice, and a rejection of the Lord as the creator and master of reality. The interaction of the two poems is facilitated by repetition and parallelism, especially of the two lists of body parts. Both of these passages associate a number of unpleasant human traits with parts of the body. Nevertheless, while in Proverbs 6:12-15 the physical organs were mentioned as locations of the body language of the scoundrel, in Proverbs 6:16-19, the organs that “speak” or communicate this language are topics in themselves. The lists in both epigrams culminate in the fomenting of strife (vv. 14b, 19b), for this sums up the effect of all vices.

Close observation of both passages reveals that the list of the evil traits is illustrative, not exhaustive, but their selections elucidate for the learner the kind of behavior which must be avoided. What should be noted, however, is that the teacher does not make a specific appeal to the learner, but gives words of description without explicit direction.

Another occurrence of description in Proverbs 1–9 is found in Proverbs 8:22-31. It consists of a self-description by personified wisdom. In establishing its credibility as an authority to be heard and heeded, wisdom describes its relationship to Yahweh and its antiquity. These two factors are emphasized, so the learner will become disposed to accept and obey the instructions of wisdom.

In Proverbs 8:22-26 Wisdom establishes her temporal priority before all created things. In verse 22, Wisdom appears to have been created by the Lord, but she exists prior to and on a different plane from all other creatures, “The Lord created me at the beginning of his work, the first of his acts of long ago” (Prov. 8:22, NRSV). The meaning of “created me” (*qanani*) has been hotly debated over the centuries.³⁴ Since ancient times, interpreters have been divided whether *qanah* denotes acquisition (and thus possession) or creation. The former interpretation (“possessed me”) is reflected in a Greek variant and in the Vulgate. Interpreting thus allows for the possibility that wisdom was preexistent and coeval with God. The latter interpretation (“created me”) is represented by the main Septuagintal tradition and the Syriac Version (Peshitta). This is accepted by the medieval Jewish commentators and most modern translations and interpreters.³⁵ By this interpretation, verse 22 declares both Lady Wisdom’s derivation from Yahweh and her subordination to Him.

Irwin suggests another interpretation. He claims that more precisely *qnh* probably means “to beget,” “to bring forth,” in Proverbs 8:22.³⁶ This meaning best suits the parallel verbs in 8:22-26, “I was formed” (v. 23) and “I was brought forth” (vv. 24-25). Fox seems to support this view, “Since *qanah* can refer to the parent’s role in procreation, this verb introduces the theme of begetting as the governing metaphor in describing this act of creation.”³⁷ However, we need to

note that the notion of begetting refers to a one-time event and action, not to an eternal birth. God created wisdom as the first of his deeds. Wisdom “was born” (vv. 24, 25) at that time. She did not exist from eternity.

Nevertheless, Proverbs 8:22-26 clearly demonstrates that Wisdom’s precedence in rank and dignity over the rest of the creation is both qualitative (begotten) and temporal (existing “before” any other creature). Having established that, Wisdom describes her special relationship to Yahweh in Proverbs 8:27-31. Throughout the whole creation of the world, Wisdom was with God, observing with delight how He crafted the universe, including humanity. The presence of Wisdom at God’s primordial creation and ordering of all things is important. This means she not only knows all the particulars and individual quirks revealed in the history of humankind from the beginning, but also knows equally the basic structures, components, patterns, and functions of reality.

It must be pointed out that Proverbs 8:30a, “Then I was by him, as one brought up with him [*wa’ehyeh ’eshlo ’amon*]” has provided one of the great puzzles of the Hebrew Bible because of its theological implications.³⁸ The most important explanations of *’amon* may be grouped into three categories: (1) artisan, (2) constant(ly)/faithful(ly), and (3) ward/nursling. Although all three interpretations are possible, the third seems more appropriate in the context of Proverbs 22-31. Throughout this passage Wisdom is pictured as being with Yahweh as His companion during His creation, but not as an active agent of the creative work. The repeated verb “give birth” in verses 24-25 fits better the image of a child than it does of an artisan. It seems more appropriate therefore to adopt the sense of nursling, or young child, for *’amon*. Thus, Wisdom is declaring that while God was busy creating the world, she was near Him, growing up in His care and giving Him delight.

Therefore, Proverbs 8:22-31 does not describe wisdom as an active participant in creation but as a delighted spectator of Yahweh’s work.³⁹ Nevertheless, Wisdom’s ancient origin and her proximity to Yahweh establish her as a reliable authority for life. Though the description does not draw the conclusion, the implication for the learner is clear: it would be foolhardy to neglect the principles taught by this longstanding and well-connected teacher.

Condition with command

In Proverbs 6:1-5 a set of conditions precedes explicit words of command. It addresses the son, although without the introductory call to attention. It uses imperatives extending a conditional. In this passage the teacher sets forth a set of circumstances in which a person’s misguided generosity in pledging his financial resources as security for a neighbor risks his own impoverishment. Though the Mosaic Law encouraged mutual financial support within the covenant community (Deut. 15:7-11; 24:6, 10-13, 17; Exod. 22:25-26), Proverbs contains numerous warnings against going surety. Guaranteeing another’s loan is always risky (Prov. 17:18; 22:26), but most dangerous is when one does so on behalf of a stranger (6:1; 11:15; 20:16 = [27:13]).

The situation envisioned in this passage is that one man (the addressee) has given surety to a neighbor (*rea’*) on behalf of a less familiar person (a “stranger” *zar*) to enable the latter to borrow from the former. A creditor naturally prefers to receive a commitment from an acquaintance rather than a stranger. The phrase that NASB translates as “you have given a pledge for a stranger” in Proverbs 6:1b can be translated literally as “you have struck your hand for a stranger,” which represents the gesture given for sealing an agreement (2 Kgs. 10:15) and in

wisdom literature always for going surety (Prov. 11:15; 17:18; 22:26; Job 17:3).⁴⁰ If one gives such an undertaking, he has fallen into his neighbor's power, for the stranger may renege on his commitment with little concern for the personal consequences and leave the guarantor to make good the loss.

The one who has committed himself unwisely must humble himself if necessary as he importunes his neighbor to release him from the obligation. Like an animal that has been cornered or ensnared, he must make every effort to extricate himself, "Go, humble yourself, and importune your neighbor. Give no sleep to your eyes, nor slumber to your eyelids; deliver yourself like a gazelle from *the hunter's* hand and like a bird from the hand of the fowler" (Prov. 6:3b-5).

As we will see further, the wise one of Proverbs 1–9 makes good use of commands to instruct the learner. As McKane observes, "the function of the conditional clause is to define the condition or circumstances in which the imperative(s) applies."⁴¹ This rhetorical form is highly directive, for if the learner finds himself/herself in the described circumstances, then he/she needs to follow the command. The teacher offers no reason to justify the command. If the learner meets the stated conditions, then he/she is obligated to obey the authoritative directives of the teacher.

Command with reason

Proverbs 1–9 makes a wide use of commands supported with reasons. The commands may be either positive admonitions or negative prohibitions. By employing reasons with the commands, the teacher is moving away from the stance of the authoritative expert to that of the persuader. The teacher challenges the learner to think through the issue and to obey the command because it is the wise thing to do. Thus, the teacher is a spiritual director whose role is to counter the natural aimlessness of the learner, for as Eaton remarks, "Left to themselves, beginners flounder from one extreme to the other. The experienced sage can establish lines by which the disciple can develop the self-control necessary for the good ends in view."⁴²

Proverbs 3:1-12 consists of six quatrains, each of which presents one (v. 9), two (vv. 1, 3, 7, 11), or three (vv. 5, 6a) admonitions (commands) in the odd verses and a motivating argument (reason) in the even verses, containing either one (vv. 4, 6b) or two promises (vv. 2, 8, 10), or a reason (v. 12). Anchoring his teachings in the Lord, the father's admonitions progress from a call to preserve his teaching (v. 1), to retaining the learned ethical behavior (v. 3), to active piety: trust (v. 5), humility (v. 7), worship (v. 9), and submissiveness (v. 11). If we look at the motivating arguments, we observe that the first five reasons all relate to the personal prosperity the learner will experience as a result of keeping the commands. The final reason in Proverbs 3:12 supports the prohibition against despising Yahweh's discipline and resenting His rebuke by arguing that divine discipline is the evidence of Yahweh's parental love.

C. Newsom observes that the father begins using the parallel, "my law" and "my commands," which "has resonances of God's *tôrâ* and *mišwôt* to Israel and so subtly positions the father in association with divine authority." She further asserts that his appeals to have a right relationship with the Lord (vv. 5-12) parallel "in structure and motivation to the father's call for obedience to himself in verses 1-4." She says finally, "It comes as no surprise that . . . the passage concludes in verse 12 with the metaphor of God as a 'father reproving his son.'"⁴³ Only the Lord can give the reciprocal rewards of the even verses: long life and peace (v.2), favor with

God and people (v. 4), a straight path (v. 6), total healing (v. 8), abundant harvests (v. 10), and a heavenly Father's love (v.12).

Thus, the motivation for the learner's response to the father's commands is the recognition that this way is advantageous to him, and that Yahweh's discipline is a demonstration of divine love. It is in the learner's best interests to submit to the directions of the teacher.

The next passage where the method of command with reason is found is Proverbs 4:10-19. The teacher sets before the learner two ways, the path of wisdom and the path of the wicked. Estes observes that in the wisdom literature, and particularly in Proverbs, the metaphor of the path or way, *derek*, is a familiar image for the course of life.⁴⁴ The *derek* speaks of ordered, purposive movement in a single direction.⁴⁵ The path that wisdom teaches, the one the righteous take, is the "Way of Life" (*'orah hayyim* in Proverbs 5:6 and 15:24; *derek hayyim* in 6:23) or "Ways of Life" (*'orhot hayyim*, 2:19). The "Way of Life" is the way to life, and it is so formulated in Proverbs 10:17 (*'orah l' hayyim*). Any reference to the way of the righteous and wise belongs in this category. The opposite path is the "Way of Death." The term occurs only in the plural, "ways of [i.e., to] death" (*darke mawet* in Proverbs 14:12; 16:25) or "ways of [to] Sheol" (*darke s'e' ol* in Proverbs 7:27). All wicked, foolish ways lead to the same end and are really one and the same. Fox correctly observes that within the two paths metaphor, there are a plurality of "paths of life," actions and types of behavior that lead to life (Prov. 2:19); these are the "ways of the righteous" (Prov. 2:20). Likewise, a single sinner takes many roads on his way through life, but each one leads to death. It requires wisdom to recognize which path leads to which end.⁴⁶

Corresponding to the two paths there are two classes of people. Proverbs splits the world along a moral fault line that runs between two classes, the wicked/foolish and the righteous/wise. The first class is the source of all evils and dangers; the second is innocent. The two remain apart, each type pursuing its own path. Proverbs 4:10-19 builds on this dichotomy and affirms human freedom to make a choice about the conduct of one's life. The way of wisdom leads to pleasurable progress in life (Prov. 4:10-12), so the learner should hold on to the instruction he has received (4:13). However, in Proverbs 4:14-15 the teacher cautions against the path of the wicked, for it is the way which destroys character (4:16-17).

The final verses of the passage set out the inevitable consequences of the two "ways of life," that of righteousness and that of wickedness, "But the path of the righteous is like the light of dawn, that shines brighter and brighter until the full day. The way of the wicked is like darkness; they do not know over what they stumble" (Prov. 4:18-19). Whybray draws a corollary, "A strong pressure is thus put on the pupil to choose now, and to choose rightly and wisely."⁴⁷ Thus, education in wisdom is needed to enable a person to do so.

The rhetorical technique of commands with reasons is also used in Proverbs 4:20-27. The renewed address to the son to hear the parental teaching helps differentiate this lecture from the preceding one (Prov. 4:10-19). This passage is especially weighted toward commands, with reasons represented only in verses 22 and 23b. The image of the path of life is alluded to in verses 25-27, but it is not developed into a clear statement of the two ways, as in Proverbs 4:10-19. Proverbs 4:20-27, by contrast, envisions a single path, a person's life course. It instructs the reader to walk straight ahead. Temptations lie on each side, requiring the learners to keep their

eyes before them and to walk without deviating to either side. This single path must be made straight and smooth.

The learner is challenged to align each area of life, represented by the sensory organs, with what is right: the ear (v. 20b), the eyes (vv. 21a, 25a, 25b), the heart (vv. 21b, 23a), the mouth (vv. 24a, 24b), and the feet (vv. 26a, 27b). An inner sense of straightness is to permeate all one's thoughts, words, and actions. Above all, the learner is advised to guard his heart,⁴⁸ the wellspring of life (Prov. 4:23), by keeping the teacher's words within it (vv. 20-21). Waltke observes that the point here is that the heart is the source of the body's activities.⁴⁹ As the heart receives the parent's teachings, they influence the character of the whole, but the heart as a totality must let these forces enter it and determine its direction. Since the heart is the center of a person's emotional-intellectual-religious-moral activity, it must be safeguarded above all things.

In Proverbs 5:7-23 the father employs reasons to support the warning against involvement with the adulteress. He now specifies the deadly effects of the unchaste wife (vv. 3-6). He introduces the lesson with an urgent call to attentiveness (v. 7), which is given point in the command to avoid her (v. 8). In 5:9-14 he paints the economic and social downside of becoming involved with her. The high price in personal loss is a mirror image of the blessings poured out by wisdom (3:13-18).

In the succeeding strophe, Proverbs 5:15-20, the father shifts from the folly of promiscuity with the unchaste wife to the wisdom of sexual satisfaction with one's own wife. By an allegory (vv. 15-17) he teaches conjugal fidelity as an anodyne to the elementary sex urge (vv. 18-19). With this source of legitimate pleasure available, the teacher poses two rhetorical questions calculated to press the learner to consider carefully his decision in the face of temptation: "Why be captivated, my son, by an adulteress? Why embrace the bosom of another man's wife?" (Prov. 5:20, NIV). In view of the better way of conjugal bliss with the blessed wife, involvement with the unchaste wife is absurd. The rhetorical questions express amazement and indignation against the undesirable alternative.

In conclusion, the father grounds his teaching in theology, that is, the Lord's omniscience (v. 21) and justice (vv. 22-23). God's all-seeing eye is upon the wrong doer, watching and observing, weighing and judging (Prov. 15:3). The father warns the son that rejecting the discipline of wisdom leads into sin which enslaves. However, if the son desires true pleasure, real freedom and God's approval, then he should heed the counsel of the father.

In contrast to most of Proverbs 1-9, which is typically addressed directly to the learner, Proverbs 9:7-12 employs a more indirect form of rhetoric. The teacher declares that some people are unteachable mockers (Prov. 9:7-8a) who "resist all attempts to educate them, not only because of intellectual but also because of moral obtuseness."⁵⁰ The wise person, however, welcomes instruction (9:9). Verses 11-12 contrast the personal gain of being wise with the great loss of being a mocker. Waltke remarks insightfully that looking back to verses 7-9, verse 10a states that the essential foundation of being educable or wise is the "fear of Yahweh," and looking ahead, verse 10b names "insights" from knowing the Holy One as the essential foundation for wisdom's benefits (vv. 11-12a).⁵¹ What is evident is that the learner must choose which path to follow, and the choice that is made will lead to predictable ends. So, the teacher gives instructions and warnings together with reasons to justify the admonitions, but the learner has the freedom to make the decision, and bears the major responsibility for it. As Kidner concludes, "The ultimate gainer or loser is the man himself."⁵²

The use of reasons with commands is highly significant for defining how the teacher approaches the learner. McKane explains this approach well, “The authoritative aspect of the teaching is strongly emphasized, but care is taken to show that there are good reasons why the teaching can be inculcated with such assurance.”⁵³ Thus, rather than demanding compliance based only upon the authority of the teacher, commands upheld by reason direct the learner toward right thinking. In doing this, the teacher brings the learner face to face with the issue at hand. The responsibility to act reasonably is then placed upon the learner. Education is, thus, viewed as a synergism, with both the teacher and the learner playing crucial roles. The learner is treated with respect and dignity.

Command with reasons and illustrations

On some occasions the teacher supports his commands with reasons and compelling illustrations designed to persuade the learner. The illustrations employ the rhetorical strategy of pathos, for the teacher moves the learner to action by the intentional heightening of emotions.⁵⁴

In Proverbs 1:10-19 the father presents a hypothetical situation, to support the command to resist the enticements of sinners. The hypothetical situation sketched by the father uses realistic dialogue to disclose the powerful impulse of peer pressure which confronts the son. The repeated use of first person plural forms reflects the pull of youthful peers against the hierarchical authority of the father.⁵⁵

“My son, if sinners entice you, do not consent” (Prov. 1:10): the vocative, “my son,” is given considerable highlighting here by being placed before the conditional clause.⁵⁶ Although “if” represents a hypothetical and fictitious situation, its possibility is just as real as the possibility of putting up surety for a stranger (see Prov. 6:1). The hypothesized situation was a reality during the reign of Manasseh, who shed much innocent blood (2 Kgs. 21:16). The enticement of the sinners in Proverbs 1:11-14 consists of two couplets: the proposition to join them in their bloody deed (vv. 11-12) and their arguments (vv. 13-14).

Once the learner has sensed the power of the enticement by imaginatively entering into the hypothetical situation, the father repeats the prohibition, “My son, do not walk in the way with them. Keep your feet from their path” (Prov. 1:15). Fox correctly observes that the ground metaphor of this lesson is “going on a path.”⁵⁷ The gang urges the youth to come with them, and the father tells him not to go with them, not to step on their path, for their course of action is both evil (Prov. 1:16) and foolish (vv. 17-19). Waltke observes that in verses 17-19 the folly of sinners, who are blind to the deed-consequences connection, is contrasted with the insight of birds, who can see the connection.⁵⁸ Every flying creature has the God-given instinct to avoid the fowler’s net (v. 17), but these sinners set up an ambush for themselves (v. 18). The wise son with his father’s help is now able to deconstruct the trap of words set up by the sinners. Like every flying creature, the wise son will take flight, for they spread their net in his full view. However, those who lie in wait for others will themselves be destroyed. “So are the ways of everyone who gains by violence; it takes away the life of its possessors” (Prov. 1:19) - the lesson culminates in a grand declaration of the principle of intrinsic retribution: Evildoers destroy themselves by means of the evil they themselves create.

Estes observes well, “In Yahweh’s ordered world evil actions lead to calamity, so the learner should choose to resist the pressures of his peers.”⁵⁹ The father’s illustration will increase his awareness of the danger; the command will instruct him how to act; and the reasons will provide logical rationale to persuade the youth to adopt the wise course of action.

In Proverbs 7 the father in his address to the son recognizes the alluring power of sexual temptations for the youth and that is why he employs a potent and realistic illustration of a young man being seduced by an adulteress.⁶⁰ The lecture's structure suggests the father's urgency to protect his son from the unfaithful wife who embodies all that is against true Israel's world-and-life view (vv. 6-23).⁶¹ He frames her seductive speech (Prov. 7:14-20) with his negative characterization of the vixen (vv. 6-13) and the horrid consequences for her prey. She is *homiyyah*—noisy, turbulent and *soreret*—a defiant and brash huntress seeking prey on the streets of the city, who leads her victims to the grave. The elaborate description of the woman's bed (Prov. 7:16-17), with erotic overtones in the terms she selects, enables the learner to feel vicariously the force of the enticement. Through the rhetorical strategy of illustration the son is involved in the emotions of the imaginative situation, so he experiences how compelling the temptation can be. He can surrender to fantasy, enjoy the titillation, relax into the vicarious eroticism, and imagine himself in that bed. Then, when his guard is down, the reality slaps him in the face, "Suddenly he follows her as an ox goes to the slaughter, or as *one in fetters* to the discipline of a fool, until an arrow pierces through his liver; as a bird hastens to the snare, so he does not know that it *will cost him* his life" (Prov. 7:22-23).

Then the father drops the picture to reassert the principle. He admonishes the son to stay clear of the adulteress (Prov. 7:24-27), including an address and a call to resolute obedience (vv. 24-25) with renewed argumentation (vv. 26-27). Here the woman is described in nearly superhuman terms, as a mass murderer and an affiliate of the underworld. Now the father's warning is made more effective because the son is sensitized by the illustration to the danger against which the father is warning him. Therefore, we see a thoughtful and creative approach toward the process of formation that supports our thesis.

Command with consequences

In this category of instruction, the teacher links his command with an indirect motivation. He desires the learner's obedience, but the rhetorical form places a higher degree of responsibility in the hands of the learner. The teacher presents the issues and explains what consequences can be expected, but then leaves the decision to the learner.

Thus, in Proverbs 1:8-9 two lines call for attention (v. 8), and two lines motivate the call (v. 9). In spite of the fact that these two verses are often used as an introduction to the lesson contained in Proverbs 1:10-19, Waltke claims that the distinctive forms of verses 8-9 and verses 10-19 suggest that originally they were two different pericopes.⁶² In verse 8 the father admonishes the son to listen to his parents' instructions.⁶³ The admonition places the father and mother on equal footing as the child's pedagogues. Then the father follows his command with a positive incentive as he states the beneficial consequences the obedient learner will enjoy: "Indeed, they are a graceful wreath to your head and ornaments about your neck" (Prov. 1:9). Perseverance in Israel's wisdom heritage adorns the son with a wreath on his head and a chain around his neck, symbols of honor and life that can hardly be disregarded.

Proverbs 5:1-6 uses a negative approach, for the command to listen to the father's words (vv. 1-2) is reinforced by a description of the danger the adulteress poses for the youth (vv. 3-6). In this lesson the father assumes the son is old enough to experience sexual temptation and pleasure. The son is either married or on the verge of marriage. As McKane asserts, "It is a robust man-to-man warning against the consequences of liaisons with loose women."⁶⁴

Proverbs 5:3-4⁶⁵ clearly demonstrates the adulteress works her wiles more by speech than by beauty (though she may be beautiful; see Prov. 6:25) or by physical stimulation (she begins with just a hug and a kiss; see Prov. 7:13). Her honeyed words are described in a lovely assonance, which intimates the dripping of the honey by its very sound.⁶⁶ However, once the confection is tasted, the sweetness turns to wormwood (a bitter plant) and the smoothness to an eviscerating sword. The paths of her life lead to death (Prov. 5:6). Thus, we can observe that the statement of negative consequences itself is the warning for the young man, but he is left to make his own decision.

Proverbs 2 comprises a set of conditions (Prov. 2:1-4) and the resultant consequences (2:5-22). We must note that instead of a usual command, the father switches to recommendation. Now the son is urged to “accept” the parental teaching (Prov. 2:1). This approach enables the teacher to guide the learner through the logical process that will equip him to make wise judgments.

The expanded conditional clauses (Prov. 2:1-4) introduced by “if” govern the glorious consequences developed in the rest of the poem. The first condition (vv. 1-2) stipulates that the son accept his father’s words and store them away intact as a treasure. They are to be held in the chambers of the heart. “You accept” (*tiqqah*) lays the foundation for all the subsequent conditions (vv. 1b-4) and promises (vv. 5-22). Learning begins with imbibing and absorbing the father’s commands. It is interesting to note that the father speaks authoritatively of “my words” (*amaray*)⁶⁷, which he equates with wisdom (v. 2) proceeding from God himself (v. 6). The father bases his authority not on his patriarchal position or on tradition, but on the Lord himself. Waltke suggests the following schematization of the chain of command in view: the Lord (2:6; 30:6) > Solomon (1:1) > the parents (1:8; 2:1) > the son.⁶⁸ Thus, the father’s will and communal will carry authority only as they conform to the Lord’s will.

The three conditional particles in Proverbs 2:1-4 mark off the phases of the son’s task: he must (passively) absorb the father’s words; (actively) call to wisdom; then take the initiative and go forth to seek her. If he does so, then he will understand the fear of Yahweh⁶⁹ (v. 5) and he will have understanding for life (v. 9). In addition, wisdom will give protection from both the evil man (vv. 12-15) and the evil woman (vv. 16-19). Over the long term of life, wisdom will provide stability, but wickedness will lead to insecurity (vv. 20-22). By framing the lesson as conditions leading to consequences, the father points out the impact of the son’s decision. What is clear is that the youth himself must make that decision, and what he decides will have a profound effect on his life.

Thus, Proverbs 2 comes forward as a healthy corrective to the popular notion that education in Ancient Israel was “a harsh and mindless affair in which demands for obedience to rules were learned by rote and drummed in by incessant rebukes, simplistic promises, and, above all, zealous thrashings.”⁷⁰ As we can observe, the tone of the exordium in Proverbs 2 is accordingly sympathetic and supportive. The gist of the lecture is not “Seek wisdom!” but rather “If you seek wisdom you will find it.” We believe this chapter sheds some light on the nature of Israelite education. Sa’adia Gaon, a medieval Jewish commentator, recognized that according to Proverbs 2 education has two phases. 1) It commences with the father’s teaching and its rote incorporation by the child, but this must be complemented by the learner’s own thought and inquiry. 2) Then God steps into the picture and grants wisdom. However, God’s grant of wisdom is preconditioned by the labor invested in study. Thus, education is a cooperative effort of child, parents, and God.⁷¹

Command with rhetorical questions

By using a command that is followed by rhetorical questions, the teacher tries to bring the learner to the place of personal decision. The lesson in Proverbs 6:20-35 presents a single and cohesive argument whose main point is the inevitability of the adulterer's punishment. Thus, the father exhorts the youth to preserve his parents' instruction (vv. 20-21), for their commands are the way to life (vv. 22-23) which provides protection from the immoral woman (v. 24). It is interesting that in Proverbs 6:27-28 the father changes his form from direct address to third-person rhetorical question: "Can a man take fire in his bosom and his clothes not be burned? Or can a man walk on hot coals and his feet not be scorched?"⁷²

Waltke asserts that these questions demand the negative answer, "Of course not."⁷³ By asking these questions the father aims to involve the son in thoughtful participation. The learner is to recognize in these questions the rule that one cannot avoid the natural consequences of one's actions. At the same time, these questions leave the learner with a memorable image with which to imagine the deed described: Adultery is playing with fire. Just as touching the fire hurts, so touching another man's wife hurts. Thus, according to Crenshaw, the rhetorical function of these questions is an appeal to consensus.⁷⁴

In Proverbs 6:30-35 the father speaks in the third person as he makes observations of life which support the implicit answer to the rhetorical questions he has posed. The adulterer is brainless and bent on his own destruction, "The one who commits adultery with a woman is lacking sense; he who would destroy himself does it. Wounds and disgrace he will find, and his reproach will not be blotted out" (Prov. 6:32-33). This statement points to the fact that the adulterer will find physical, as well as social ruin - "disgrace" (*qalôn*) and "reproach" (*herpâ*). According to Fox, the retribution pictured in verses 33-35 is a physical attack by the wronged husband.⁷⁵ He will never be pacified, since his marriage has been violated, and will want nothing less than the adulterer's death. In a way, verses 34-35 seal the case by appeal to psychology: Nothing can placate a cheated husband.

It can be said by way of conclusion that by reinforcing his command to the son with rhetorical questions the father places the responsibility for the decision squarely in the son's hands. The rhetorical questions are highly persuasive, because they represent the logical consensus of the society, but of primary significance is the learner's choice whether to act in accord with the obvious answers to the questions, or in conscious rejection of them.

Incentive

Proverbs 3:13-18 and 8:12-21 appeal to the learner by extolling the benefits of wisdom. The teacher now endeavors to create in the learner a desire to choose what is best. He/she does that by describing the intrinsic good of wisdom and the instrumental benefits it can provide. Instead of explicit command, logical rationale, or direct motivation, the teacher simply presents the virtues of wisdom as an incentive for the learner's own choice.

In Proverbs 3:13-18 the teacher changes style from commands to statements of the blessedness of finding wisdom. The opening line, "How blessed is the man who finds wisdom" (v. 13a), is answered by the concluding verse, "She is a tree of life to those who take hold of her, and happy are all who hold her fast" (v. 18). The body of the passage (vv. 14-17) comprises several statements of the benefits wisdom gives to those who find her. Wisdom gives both physical and spiritual benefits: long life, wealth and honor. Clearly, the teacher has not moved

away from his goal of challenging the learner to accept the way of wisdom, but the rhetorical strategy he uses is more indirect than are the commands he employs elsewhere.

In a similar manner, in Proverbs 8:12-21 personified wisdom does not issue a command, or even provide explicit rationale for the desired response by the learner. Instead, wisdom recommends herself because of the benefits she confers on humans who love her. After introducing herself and proclaiming her powers (vv. 12, 13bc), wisdom commends herself as the fount of statecraft, thus of ordered society itself (vv. 14-16), and as the source of wealth for her followers (vv. 18-21). The second and third strophes are introduced by general affirmations of wisdom's qualities – her practical intelligence (vv. 12, 13 bc) and her generosity (v. 17). Thus, wisdom sets before the learner the benefits she gives to those who embrace her, with the hope that the learner will appropriate for himself the available blessings by choosing to love her.

Invitation

In Proverbs 9 Wisdom speaks in words of invitation, rather than in commands. The wise teacher juxtaposes two personifications of wisdom and folly issuing parallel invitations to the learner. In each picture the person is described: wisdom in 9:1-3, and folly in 9:13-15. Wisdom is depicted as a noble patroness and folly as a pretentious hostess. Both invite the gullible to their houses for a feast. Wisdom invites them to leave behind their old identification and become wise at her banquet of life (vv. 4-6); folly lures those who have been going straight to turn aside, heedless of the consequences, to her feast of death (vv. 16-18).

Wisdom speaks in words of invitation, rather than in commands. Her preparation for the banquet includes building her large house (v. 1),⁷⁶ preparing the lavish banquet (v. 2),⁷⁷ and issuing an open invitation (v. 3), suggesting that her position in society is one from whom this kind of noble treatment is expected.

In Proverbs 9:4 wisdom personally invites the naïve (*peti*) and spiritually brainless (*ḥasar leb*) to repent and turn the direction of their lives over to her. The imperatives in Proverbs 9:5-6 are plural, showing that all are urged to come, “Come, eat of my food and drink of the wine I have mixed. Forsake *your* folly and live, and proceed in the way of understanding.” Wisdom now pictures repentance as changing direction along a way, using the sage's favorite metaphor of “way” for his teaching (e.g., Prov. 1:15). Wisdom's house is an entrance into life.

Using language similar to Proverbs 9:1-6, folly utters her invitation in Proverbs 9:13-18. Instead of building a house, preparing a banquet, and sending maidservants in preparation for her banquet, the “woman of folly” (*'ešet k^esilut*) pompously sits on an elevated throne at the opening of her house (vv. 13-15). From this pompous posturing and prominent position she seduces the gullible to steal from her husband her erotic pleasures that rightly belong to him (vv. 16-17). Tragically the naive are unaware that her house is a death trap (v. 18). Behind the scene of sensual delight is a scene of the dead in the depths of the grave.

The juxtaposition of these two invitations makes a powerful rhetorical point. Ultimately, it is the learner who must decide between the alternatives. The teacher has a crucial function in bringing the learner to the point where he can recognize the issue and understand the consequences of the alternatives, but only the learner can decide which voice to follow. That is the climactic point of decision to which Proverbs 1–9 leads.

By way of conclusion, we have demonstrated in this chapter, through the study of formational and educational methods in Proverbs 1–9, that the sages made wide use of various

rhetorical strategies and techniques in the process of instructing learners and shaping them into people who live in conformity with God's principles and commandments. We have observed that the methods used in these chapters of the book of Proverbs have nothing to do with the idea of "a mindless affair and zealous thrashing" that have been popularly ascribed to the process of education in ancient Israel. On the contrary, we have evidenced a subtle, nuanced, and thoughtful approach to education and young people's formation used and applied by the teachers.

As shown in this chapter the majority of methods used in Proverbs 1–9 combine commands by the teacher with some type of proof and evidence designed to persuade the youth to choose to act in accordance with the teacher's direction. Various logical, illustrative, pragmatic and literary devices are used to appeal to the learners and demonstrate the benefits of choosing wisdom over folly. The teacher tries to be very creative and persuasive, while constructing the case to motivate the learner toward a wise decision. Nevertheless, the teacher understands that the responsibility for the decision belongs to the learner; this is especially noticeable with the use of such subtle techniques as incentive and invitation. Therefore, the learner is treated as a respected partner and direct participant in the learning process. Even in such directive modes as address and description, where the virtual absence of explanation, rationale or illustration implies that the learner is expected to accept the instruction on the basis of the authority of the teacher, the learner is still treated with respect and deference.

Theological principles of education in Proverbs 1–9

We now move to theological principles and assumptions that shaped the process of formation and education as seen in Proverbs 1–9. Murphy remarks that Old Testament wisdom was always theologically grounded, even though its theological language may have become more or less explicit in different times and genres. In spite of the fact that the wisdom literature had its own emphases that distinguished it from the legal, prophetic and hymnic literature, its worldview reflected the understanding of reality shared by all Israelites.⁷⁸ Nevertheless, Old Testament theologians struggle to integrate Proverbs into the rest of the Bible. Thus Hartmut Gese complains, "It is well known that the wisdom literature constitutes an alien body in the world of the Old Testament."⁷⁹ On account of its striking parallels in form and content with ancient Near Eastern wisdom literature, Preuss goes so far as to suggest that Israel's wise men attempted to shape Israel into the image of their pagan environment.⁸⁰ Although this statement seems far-fetched one still must agree that Proverbs does share many resemblances with its ancient Near Eastern neighbors, which, according to Wright, creates a problem for finding a proper place for wisdom literature in biblical theology.⁸¹

To resolve this problem we need to start with an understanding of the fact that from the time of Solomon onward ancient Israel was profoundly involved in international affairs. It is not surprising, therefore, that the biblical wisdom literature includes language and concepts that parallel what is found in Egyptian and Mesopotamian texts. However, according to von Rad, what typically happened was that Israel borrowed language and concepts generated within other worldviews, and then adapted them to fit into its own view of the world.⁸² The same happened with other parts of the Old Testament, where its commandments (Exod. 21-23) can be paralleled at point after point in the Babylonian, Assyrian, and Hittite laws, and its hymns reflect similarities to hymnology common to the ancient Near East.⁸³ In other words, Proverbs' similarity to pagan literature is part and parcel of Scripture's incarnation within its historical milieu.

Nevertheless, Proverbs' theological significance does not depend on the originality of its individual sentences or sayings any more than the theological significance of the Book of the Covenant (Exod. 21-23) rests on the originality of its individual commandments. Waltke is profound in his assertion that the theological significance of the Old Testament rests rather on the connection of all its literature with Yahweh, the God of Israel.⁸⁴ Yahweh is God's personal name, revealed to Israel in connection with His election of and His covenant with them (Gen. 12:8; Exod. 3:15; 6:2-8). Kaiser rightly unites Proverbs and the rest of the Old Testament in terms of their common appeal to their audiences' "fear of Yahweh" (Deut. 6:5; Josh. 24:14; Prov. 1:7; Isa. 29:13).⁸⁵ This is the very essence of the difference between other ancient Near Eastern literatures and biblical materials. Even though such writings as *Amenemope* call for "the fear of God," their appeal refers to God's general revelation to all people, especially through conscience.⁸⁶ Biblical "fear of Yahweh" refers to God's special revelation to Israel. Therefore, the difference between the Egyptian and biblical corpora is that the God of Proverbs is named and so known; that of *Amenemope* is not.

Waltke rightly concludes, "Moses, the prophets, and the sages were true spiritual yokefellows sharing the same Lord, cultus, faith, hope, anthropology, and epistemology, speaking with the same authority, and making similar religious and ethical demands on their hearers."⁸⁷ However, this unity of thought is not demonstrated by Proverbs' explicit reference to prescriptions of the law or the acts of salvation history. Proverbs has a different agenda from that of the Torah and the prophets. According to Craigie, the ethical message of Proverbs builds upon the assumed base of the theology already known to the hearers.⁸⁸ Therefore, the pedagogy of Proverbs assumes the reader shares its worldview and only rarely makes explicit reference to what is taught elsewhere in the Bible. Our task, then, will be to pinpoint those references and try to recreate the assumed worldview of Proverbs 1-9, which will help us understand the theological principles that inform Proverbs' pedagogy.

Yahweh is the Creator of the universe

The most fundamental assumption of the worldview represented in Proverbs 1-9 is the whole world which exists at the present time was created by Yahweh. He is the only true Creator. He is the Maker of heaven and earth, not merely a limited tribal deity. Though Yahweh initiated a special covenant relationship with Israel, Yahweh is Lord over all the nations.

The creation motif is mentioned in two poems in Proverbs 1-9: 3:19-20; 8:22-31. These two texts refer to Yahweh as the Creator – none speaks of creation apart from His activity, and they assume He is the sole, sovereign Creator. The first of the poems, 3:19-20, is a part of the father's lesson to the son (3:13-35) and points to the creation of the world as firmly established (3:19) and as being both protected from chaotic depths below (3:20a) and refreshed by life-giving water from clouds above (3:20b). The verbs "founded" and "established" are standard terms used to describe divine creative activity. As the Creator, Yahweh is actively involved in the world which He made.

However, according to Waltke's observation, the theological focus of the passage is not on God as the Creator (3:19) and Sustainer of the world (3:20), which is assumed; the point is rather that He effected an enduring creation by wisdom.⁸⁹ In other words, wisdom was God's instrument that effected creation. Within the same passage the father exclaims, "How blessed is the man who finds wisdom and the man who gains understanding" (Prov. 3:13). Ross asserts that this collocation indicates the wisdom that directs life is the same wisdom that created the

universe; to surrender to God's wisdom is to put oneself in harmony with creation, the world around one.⁹⁰

The second poem, Proverbs 8:22-31, also presents wisdom in connection with Yahweh as Creator and Sustainer of the world, but this time wisdom is personified as Yahweh's companion throughout His creating process. As discussed above,⁹¹ this poem aims to demonstrate that Wisdom's precedence in rank and dignity over the rest of the creation is both qualitative (begotten) and temporal (existing "before" any other creature). This shows the authority of wisdom and her importance for understanding the basic structures, components, patterns, and functions of reality. These are the constant, unshakable conditions of human and cosmic existence.

As a corollary of the two poems, it can be asserted that Yahweh embedded wisdom in His creation, so only through wisdom can one discern how to live successfully in the world. Therefore, if the universe is made in accordance with the principles of wisdom, it is folly for anyone to live contrary to those principles.

Another important implication of the assertion of the divine creation of the world is that there is no legitimate division between sacred and secular spheres of life. Because the entire universe has its source in the creative activity of Yahweh, there is a common ethical system that applies to all humans and to all spheres of life. As O'Conner concludes, "Ordinary life and the life of faith are not two separate spheres but one unified experience of God's creation."⁹² The modern dichotomy between secular life and religious faith is foreign to the theological assumptions of Proverbs' sages.

Yahweh is sovereignly controlling the world

Proverbs 1-9 refuses to believe the world is driven about by erratic, arbitrary and accidental forces. Instead the sages hold fast to the belief that Yahweh is continually and actively controlling the world and its order. Moreover, as Proverbs 1-9 teaches, there is a predictable relationship between acts and consequences which holds true in most situations in life.

This fact is demonstrated well in Proverbs 5:21-22. In warning the learner against the allurements of the adulteress, the teacher gives this rationale: "For the ways of a man are before the eyes of the Lord, and He watches all his paths. His own iniquities will capture the wicked, and he will be held with the cords of his sin" (Prov. 5:21-22). This passage not only assures of divine omniscience, but also of divine governance where human deeds are recompensed.

That led the sages of Proverbs to believe that people's actions typically produced predictable results. Thus, the wisdom teachers attempted to understand how the order in Yahweh's world functions, so they could define the relationships between acts and consequences. Many passages in Proverbs 1-9 reflect this act-consequence connection.⁹³ For example, Proverbs 3:1-12 contains six pairs of causes with corresponding consequences. Likewise, in Proverbs 7:25 the father supports his prohibition against succumbing to the adulteress' urging with the dire consequences which follow (7:26-27). On the contrary, the person who finds wisdom (Prov. 3:13) is blessed by its beneficent rewards (3:14-18).

While the presence of the act-consequence connection is obvious, the relationship of Yahweh to this connection has been widely debated by scholars. Koch, for instance, removes God altogether from involvement in the world, or at best reduces Him to a first cause within a deistic view of reality.⁹⁴ He argues that reward and punishment are integrally attached to the

deed. The evildoer creates a sphere of evil that then harms him. No external interference by God is necessary to complete the process.

It is true that a passage such as Proverbs 1:10-19 does not include explicit reference to divine retribution. Proverbs 5:21-23, however, contains an explicit statement of divine causality (v. 21) juxtaposed with human responsibility (vv. 22-23), which suggests that consequences are ultimately determined by Yahweh's governance of the world, even when they are not specifically stated as such in the text. This observation is supported by Waltke's conclusion in reference to the whole of Proverbs. His analysis led him to believe it is more appropriate to speak of personal divine retribution in Proverbs than of an impersonal world order.⁹⁵ While the consequences of behavior are often formulated impersonally, in many sayings God is explicitly active in retribution, though the sentences usually do not indicate just how the consequences will be realized (e. g., Prov. 12:2; 15:3, 25; 16:2, 3, 5, 9; 19:17, 21; 22:12). This implies that the doctrine of divine retribution also involves divine inscrutability. As Whybray puts it, "Taken together with the predominant witness to divine retribution, Proverbs portrays Yahweh as governing the world in justice, but also remaining free to act in ways which are inscrutable to humans."⁹⁶ Yahweh does not have to submit to the limitations of human understanding, as He governs the universe He created.

This brings us to the conclusion that just as Yahweh created the world, so He himself sustains order in it. He is personally involved in the ongoing progress of history. Proverbs 8:31 substantiates this point, for it presents wisdom as "rejoicing in his whole world" (NIV). It is Yahweh's world, the universe which He sustains, in which wisdom finds its delight. Estes remarks, "The world is ordered, because Yahweh is sovereignly controlling the world He created."⁹⁷

Yahweh's world is knowable, but also inscrutable

Because Yahweh created the world and established His order in it, wisdom is a skill in living according to that order. Folly is choosing to live contrary to the order God embedded in the universe. Just as wisdom was present at the creation as Yahweh established His structure for the world (Prov. 8:22-31), so each person is obliged to live by wisdom if success is to be achieved.

The implications of this are that the divine order in the world is knowable, at least in part. Crenshaw puts it well, "Yahweh planted truth within His universe, and He endowed humans with the capacity to discover it by using their intelligence."⁹⁸ Proverbs 1:20-21 and 8:1-3 support this by portraying wisdom as calling out to humans, seeking to elicit their attention and response. It can be observed from these passages that wisdom is not trying to be secretive, hiding knowledge from people. Quite the contrary, she addresses humankind inside and outside the city walls, in high places and low grounds, repeatedly and forever. Wisdom's address is not reserved for the learned only. Her invitation is addressed to all humans (Prov. 8:4).

Her appeal, however, must be answered by a conscious, decisive commitment to acquire wisdom. This can be seen clearly from Proverbs 4:7, "The beginning of wisdom *is*: acquire wisdom; and with all your acquiring, get understanding." The search for wisdom must become one's priority in life. Proverbs 2:3-4 demonstrates well one must actively strive for wisdom, seeking it as eagerly as *maṭmonim*, treasures hidden or buried, thus not easily accessible. Thus, the need to expend effort in one's search for wisdom is stressed. Fox observes well that the three conditional particles in Proverbs 2:1-4 mark off the phases of the learner's task: he must

(passively) “absorb” the father’s words; (actively) “call” to wisdom; then take the initiative go forth to “seek” her.⁹⁹

In practical terms, the search for wisdom involves careful observation of life through personal experience and through the experiences of others as passed down through teachers. The sages frequently drew lessons from nature as well as from observations of social behavior. Thus, in Proverbs 6:6 the teacher exhorts the learner, “Go to the ant, O sluggard, observe her ways and be wise!” The wisdom tradition gathered these observations into a traditional corpus of tested information. Instead of each person having to discover wisdom through individual experience, the teachers of wisdom accumulated the insights past generations had observed. This wisdom was transmitted both by parents and by teachers.

Nevertheless, as we have noticed above, in describing how Yahweh’s world functions and how Yahweh typically acts in it, wisdom does not domesticate Him into total predictability. This suggests the sages believed Yahweh left some elements of this world inscrutable to humans. Although Proverbs 1–9 does not provide clear examples of this teaching, passages from the larger corpus of Proverbs include sayings such as these: “Man’s steps are ordained by the Lord, how then can man understand his way?” (Prov. 20:24), and “There is no wisdom and no understanding and no counsel against the Lord” (21:30). Yahweh is free to act in ways mysterious and unpredictable.

The sense of mystery humans necessarily have as they seek to understand the world impels them to faith in Yahweh, who alone knows the world exhaustively. The fact that life cannot be explained and secured by human effort alone prompts humans to place their trust in Yahweh.

The wise versus the fool

Although human beings are fully aware of God’s superiority to them and even of their dependence on Him, they differ in their responses. In this connection Proverbs divides humanity into two classes: the wise and righteous over against fools and the wicked.¹⁰⁰ Waltke claims these wisdom and ethical terms are correlative, for though they do not mean the same thing, they have the same referent.¹⁰¹ The wise, who are righteous, trust and obey Yahweh; the wicked deny and rail against Him. In light of the importance of trust and obedience to Yahweh, a very important concept, “the fear of Yahweh,” appears as the very “first step of commitment without which the voice of wisdom could not be heard.”¹⁰²

The fear of Yahweh

The expression “the fear of Yahweh” frames Proverbs 1–9, occurring both near the beginning of the section (1:7) and near the end (9:10) to form an inclusion. In addition, the expression also occurs in Proverbs 1:29; 2:5; 3:7; and 8:13. Thus, the significance of the term is indicated both by its frequency and by its positioning in the section.

Waltke claims that “the fear of Yahweh” (*yir’at YHWH*) cannot be understood by studying “fear” and “Yahweh” in isolation from each other. The expression is compound.¹⁰³ Waltke asserts that “the fear of Yahweh” involves both rational and non-rational aspects at the same time. Its rational aspect entails an objective revelation that can be taught and memorized in the form of laws, statutes, commands, and ordinances of the Lord. A non-rational aspect of “the fear of Yahweh” implies an emotional response of fear, love, and trust. Taking both aspects into account, the child is expected to accept the revelation because s/he fears and stands in awe of

Yahweh, who upholds the teaching that promises life to the obedient and threatens death to the disobedient.¹⁰⁴

As Proverbs 1:7b states, only a fool would ignore the Creator and endeavor to live in opposition to His moral will. The creative order mandates that the proper stance for humans is humble submission to the ethical demands of the just God, rather than arrogant insistence on choosing their own way independent of Yahweh who made them. Proverbs 3:7 draws an antithesis between fearing Yahweh, which causes one to turn away from evil, and being wise in one's own eyes. Instead of pursuing personal preferences, the wise person places confidence in Yahweh's direction. Therefore, "The fear of Yahweh" is profound respect which causes the human to acknowledge creaturely dependence upon Him.

However, knowledge is not divorced from faith; its ultimate connection with Yahweh the Creator is always affirmed by the sages. Because every facet of life has a religious dimension, wisdom calls its hearers to a whole-life response to Yahweh. In the worldview of Proverbs 1–9, faith seeks understanding because reverence for Yahweh cultivates the kind of life that mirrors the Creator's values.

The teachable spirit

In close connection with "the fear of Yahweh" is the concept of teachability. Proverbs 9:10 points to the fact that "the fear of Yahweh" is the root of teachability. Indeed, to become wise one must begin with a vital relationship with the Lord, an attitude of reverential submission to Him which leads the person to accept what He teaches as reliable instruction.

Numerous verses depict the foolish person as one who rejects instruction. For example, in Proverbs 1:25, 30, wisdom justifies her lack of support for the foolish because of their refusal to accept her counsel and their resistance to her reproof. It is clear from Proverbs 8:36 that the choice to reject instruction has calamitous consequences, for the one who sins against wisdom injures himself, and all those who hate wisdom love death. Rejection of instruction is a degenerative condition that leads to scoffing and folly.

As mentioned above, the wisdom terms for the unwise distinguish three classes of fools according to their educative capacities: the naive ones (*petayim*), the scoffers (*lešim*), and the fools (*kesilim*) (Prov. 1:22).¹⁰⁵ The naive love their simple ways, because they do not possess the knowledge necessary to make wise decisions. They are easily swayed by temptations because they have not yet developed a strong moral foundation for life. Though intellectually flawed, the naive are capable of being shaped and improved by the educational process (Prov. 1:4; 8:5), and still have hope of joining the company of the wise.¹⁰⁶ However, until they repent, they are grouped with morally culpable fools and scoffers. Their "waywardness" kills them (Prov. 1:32).

The scoffers are the most hardened apostates. They disdain wisdom because they take pleasure in tearing down what they do not accept. According to Proverbs 9:7-8, the scoffer is unteachable, because he rejects both the teacher and the teaching. His supercilious arrogance and pride blocks him from wisdom (Prov. 14:6). Even though the scoffer may regard himself as beyond good and evil, he will have to face the consequences of his choices. Proverbs 9:12b is explicit in that, "And if you scoff, you alone will bear it." In other words, the stubborn pride of the scoffer which makes him reject the instruction of wisdom will cause him to reap the penalty which will ultimately come to him.

The fool is the third type of persons addressed in Proverbs 1:22. The fool is fixed in the correctness of his own opinion. Instead of welcoming instruction, the fool hates knowledge. As Proverbs 1:7b asserts, fools despise wisdom and discipline, which is the precise antithesis of “the fear of Yahweh,” the beginning of knowledge (v. 7a). Waltke remarks, “Cocksure of his own point of view, he has no heart for education or disregards moral truth and recklessly vents his folly.”¹⁰⁷ This kind of attitude and behavior gets him and others into trouble (Prov. 18:6, 7).

In contrast to the fool’s rejection of instruction, the wise person has a teachable spirit and heeds the instruction of parents and teachers (Prov. 1:8; 6:20-22). Their instructions and commandments will protect, and Yahweh will uphold him/her (Prov. 2:7-8). The teachable person learns from past tradition. Rather than demanding the right to learn solely from personal experience, an approach to life fraught with risk, he acquires wise counsel from those who have come before (Prov. 4:1-5). By remaining teachable, even in the adult years, the wise person continues to grow in the understanding of life in Yahweh’s world.

Concluding this chapter, we need to realize that the worldview of Proverbs 1–9 that shaped the theory of education of the sages is constructed on four prominent theological assumptions. First, the universe is the creation of Yahweh, the only true God. Second, Yahweh as sovereign orders the world which He created, so there is a significant degree of predictability between acts and consequences. Third, because Yahweh is a moral Governor of the universe, the world is knowable to a great degree, but His transcendence means He has chosen to leave some of life inscrutable to humans. Fourth, according to their response to the Creator humans are divided into the wise and the foolish. The wise reverence Yahweh, submit to His leading, and accept His teaching. By contrast, the foolish act in opposition to God. They are unwilling to heed His teaching, thus bringing calamities and destruction upon themselves.

Education and formation, thus, become crucial for enabling persons to relate faith in Yahweh to daily life and work, for shaping and sustaining their faith, character, and consciousness. People are offered a choice of which path to take. Proverbs 1–9 is intended to lead readers toward the path of wisdom, for it promises long life and prosperity. It promises the kind of life the Creator had in mind when He designed the world. For the sages of Proverbs 1–9, therefore, the life of wisdom becomes the primary goal of formation and education.

Wisdom is the prime value in life

Having observed the educational methods and theological principles revealed in Proverbs 1–9, we have come to the conclusion that by dealing with various moral and ethical issues this section of the book reveals a great wealth of godly principles that guide a person on a path through life. However, our attention has been captured by the discovery that wisdom is the one major unifying factor or value that guides the individual of sound character to make decisions which are both right and beneficial. The acquisition of wisdom is the implicit goal of the educational process embedded in this prominent portion of the biblical wisdom corpus.

It is evident from Proverbs 4:5-7 that wisdom is placed as the prime value in life. The father urges the child, “Wisdom is supreme; therefore get wisdom. Though it cost all you have, get understanding” (Prov. 4:7, NIV). Whatever the child treasured in his/her heart as more precious than wisdom, and in which s/he invested time, energy, and resources, must be given up to get wisdom. McKane comments well, “Wisdom is an unquestionable first in any order of priorities.”¹⁰⁸

In Hebrew “wisdom” (*ḥokmâ*) is essentially a high degree of knowledge and skill in any domain.¹⁰⁹ It combines a broad faculty and knowledge. Both facets are always implied by the word *ḥokmâ*; one cannot have wisdom purely as a potential or as mere inert information. *Ḥokmâ* always implies ability to carry out what one knows. Therefore, in the wisdom literature and in Proverbs, in particular, *ḥokmâ* is most frequently used in the moral sense of skill in living within the moral order of Yahweh’s world. Proverbs teaches that there is a global intellectual power—wisdom—that can be called upon in all endeavors and that is inherently righteous and almost always effective.¹¹⁰ Thus, in the summary statement of the book’s purpose wisdom entails all the other virtues listed in its preamble: knowledge, insight, prudence, cunning, discretion, learning, and guidance (Prov. 1:2). To this Proverbs 1:25 adds counsel; 2:1-4, understanding or competence and resourcefulness; and 8:14, heroic strength.

Nevertheless, wisdom transcends human intelligence and cleverness, for it is rooted in trust in Yahweh. The antithetical parallelism in Proverbs 3:7 makes it explicit that wisdom cannot be found in doing what merely appears to be wise to the individual, but rather in fearing Yahweh and shunning evil. Even when one acquires wisdom, s/he must hold to humility and not allow confidence in his/her own intellect and learning to displace the demands of religious conscience and faith. Isaiah is very explicit on this as well, “Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes and clever in their own sight!” (Isa. 5:21).¹¹¹ We must never forget it is Yahweh who gives wisdom (Prov. 2:6). He is its source.

Consequently, wisdom requires humble trust in Yahweh, rather than proud self-confidence. As Proverbs 9:10 concludes, the fear of Yahweh is the beginning of wisdom. Wisdom acknowledges the limitations of human understanding, and places its confidence in Yahweh who alone understands exhaustively the world He created.

In Proverbs 2:4-5 the child is admonished to seek wisdom like silver, to search for it as for hidden treasures. However, whereas we would expect the quest for wisdom to culminate in the finding of wisdom, verse 5 makes an even greater claim. It promises no less than religious enlightenment: the understanding of the fear of Yahweh and the knowledge of God, “Then you will discern the fear of the Lord and discover the knowledge of God.”

Therefore, wisdom both begins with the fear of Yahweh (Prov. 1:7; 9:10) and leads to it (2:5). If the youth does his/her part—and the other parties do theirs—his/her fear of Yahweh will move to a higher stage. The simple fear of divine anger that prompted the first, juvenile steps toward wisdom matures into a reasoned, cognitive conscience. Thus, the fear of Yahweh at the mature stage is the object of understanding (Prov. 2:5a) and is defined by the parallel as a form of knowledge (2:5b). Fear of Yahweh then becomes conscience, an inner sense of right and wrong and a desire to do what is right.

In connection with this passage Fox comments that the fear of Yahweh and the knowledge of God have much the same qualities and functions, but there is a difference. For him fear of Yahweh is essentially an emotion or attitude. Hence, it can commence before the attainment of knowledge. A child may have fear of Yahweh before acquiring knowledge of Him. Knowledge of God is in essence an awareness or cognition, though it is inextricably bound to fear of Yahweh and righteous action.¹¹² Therefore, Proverbs 2:5 shows that wisdom bases its character on the fear of Yahweh and knowledge of God.

The person who finds wisdom is amply blessed. Wisdom in itself is better than all material things which can be desired (Prov. 8:11). However, wisdom brings with it many other

attendant blessings, “Long life is in her right hand; in her left hand are riches and honor. Her ways are pleasant ways and all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to those who take hold of her, and happy are all who hold her fast” (Prov. 3:16-18). Proverbs 2, and 3 add to this list of blessings deliverance from the ways of wicked men (2:12), deliverance from the adulteress (v. 16), a long life (v. 21), a good name and prosperity (3:2), health (v. 8), wealth (vv. 9-10), safety (v. 22), grace (v. 34), and honor (v. 35).

These chapters make it very clear that wisdom is moral in nature, for they specify some of the choices wisdom will lead a person to make. The wise person will receive wisdom from Yahweh and as a result will choose: against the ways of the wicked (Prov. 2:12); against involvement in adultery (v. 16); for goodness and righteousness (v. 20); for love and faithfulness (3:3); for disciplined giving to God (v. 9); for giving to the needy (vv. 27-28); against plotting to harm anyone (v. 29); against false accusation (v. 30); against envy (v. 31). While situations may arise in which it seems expedient to make a different kind of choice, the wise person will “trust in the Lord with all [the] heart and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight” (Prov. 3:5-6). McKane concludes, “Wisdom is to be sought first and the other things will be added.”¹¹³

Conclusion

Proverbs 1–9 demonstrates the wide span of educational methods and techniques at the disposal of the sages who instructed the young people of ancient Israel in the ways of Yahweh. The choice of this particular portion of the biblical wisdom literature has been very beneficial for our understanding of the Israelite concept of instruction, for even a cursory reading of Proverbs 1–9 reveals it is dominated by the subject of education. The striking feature of this section is its frequent usage of the address ‘Hear, my son,’ which adds a strong didactic cast to its observations and instructions and unifies the section. This material rightly may be called pedagogical. Proverbs 1:2-6 already sets forth its didactic purpose. It is likely designed to be used in the preparation of (mainly) boys or young men in ancient Israel to face the problems and dangers of the adult world so they could become wise and responsible members of it.

In this connection Proverbs 1–9 has proven helpful in elucidating many of the formational and educational methods comprising the means by which moral instruction was passed on to learners in ancient Israel. We have observed that the methods used in these chapters of the book of Proverbs have nothing to do with the idea of “a mindless affair and zealous thrashing” that have been popularly ascribed to the process of education in ancient Israel. On the contrary, we have evidenced a subtle, nuanced, and thoughtful approach to education and young people’s formation used and applied by parents and teachers.

Proverbs reveals an effective teacher employs strategies by which the learner can acquire knowledge, competence, character, and desired attitudes. In directive modes, such as address and description, the teacher expects the learner to accept the instruction simply on the basis of the authority of the teacher. In a similar way, a set of conditions preceded by a command implies a highly directive pedagogical method. However, the majority of the educational techniques of Proverbs 1–9 combine commands of the teacher with some type of substantiation, to persuade the learner to choose the wise direction. These methods are characterised by employment of logical, illustrative, pragmatic, and literary devices on the part of the teacher to appeal to the learner. Thus, the learner is regarded as a direct participant in the learning process, for s/he is given the opportunity to choose how to act. The teacher’s task here is to motivate the learner to

make a wise decision. Nevertheless, the responsibility for the decision belongs primarily to the learner. The learner is treated with respect and worth. In the last two educational methods, those of incentive and invitation, the teacher is moved into the background of the instructional process even more. His responsibility is to present the potential blessings of wisdom and the enticements of folly and to give the learner an opportunity to respond to the alternatives presented.

The concept of education embedded in Proverbs 1–9 is shaped by key theological assumptions. Among them Yahweh as the Creator of the universe is especially highlighted. Consequently, all the universe is dependent upon God for its origin and its continued existence. Yahweh is sovereignly controlling the world, so there is a significant degree of predictability between acts and consequences. God made this world knowable, and He wants humans to understand how the world works. Through observation of life and reception of tradition as transmitted through parents and teachers, a person can understand how Yahweh’s moral order typically functions in the world. But God’s transcendence means that He has chosen to leave some of life inscrutable to humans. Nevertheless, God offers wisdom to all humans, but according to their response to that offer they are divided into two categories: the wise and the fool. The wise reverence Yahweh in their life and search for wisdom. They are on the path to life and security. The fools trust in themselves and their own understanding. They are on the path to their destruction.

Therefore, wisdom becomes the prime goal of the process of instruction and the prime value to acquire in life. In the world there are many values competing with biblical ones. Many may look attractive and seem desirable. But one should only listen to wisdom, and act in accord with wisdom. Wisdom provides the insight to master life’s challenges through a responsive personal relationship. Wisdom bases its character on the fear of Yahweh and knowledge of God. While its ways involve rebuke and discipline, the way of wisdom is rewarding. Every follower of Yahweh is admonished and encouraged by Proverbs 1–9 to make a commitment to God and His ways and to live faithfully by that commitment.

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NOTES

¹ Theorists in modern Christian educational theory make the distinction between instruction, education and formation. Instruction is understood primarily as a process through which a person acquires knowledge, skills or abilities useful for Christian life in church and society. Education, then, is geared toward a person's development and actualization of one's human potential to make possible the reformation of personal and communal faith and life, and to enable the person to relate Christian faith to daily life and work. Formation in its turn is primarily intended to shape and sustain persons' faith, character, and consciousness. While instruction is found in the book of Proverbs, it is not our primary focus in this thesis. Rather, our focus is on the educational and formational aspects of Proverbs 1-9. Therefore, although we use the word "education" predominantly in this thesis, our intent is to include "formation," as well, especially as these two tend to overlap in the pedagogical discussion comprising Proverbs 1-9.

² Dave Bland, "The formation of character in the book of Proverbs," *Restoration Quarterly* Vol. 40, No. 4 (Fourth quarter 1998), 229; Claus Westerman, *Wurzeln der Weisheit* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1990); John Collins, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1980).

³ Collins, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes*, 40.

⁴ Lorenz Dürr, "Das Erziehungswesen im Alten Testament und im antiken Orient," *Mitteilungen der Vorderasiatisch-Ägyptischen Gesellschaft* Vol. 36, No. 2 (1932), 114.

⁵ Westerman, *Wurzeln der Weisheit*, 38-40.

⁶ Unless otherwise noted, this thesis uses NASB for biblical quotations.

⁷ Bland, "The formation of character in the book of Proverbs," 221.

⁸ Mark Hinds, "Teaching for responsibility: Confirmation and the book of Proverbs," *Religious education* 93 (Spring 1998), 210.

⁹ Roger N. Whybray, *The Composition of the Book of Proverbs* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1994), 11.

¹⁰ Michael V. Fox, "The Pedagogy of Proverbs 2," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 113 (1994): 233.

¹¹ Michael V. Fox, *Proverbs 1-9: a new translation with introduction and commentary* (Doubleday: The Anchor Bible, 2000), 6.

¹² Daniel Estes, *Hear, My Son: teaching and learning in Proverbs 1-9* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 17.

¹³ The terminology for the formational and educational methods discussed in this chapter is adopted from Estes, *Hear, My Son*, 104ff.

¹⁴ Fox, *Proverbs 1-9*, 98.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Roger N. Whybray, *Proverbs* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 47.

¹⁷ Whybray, *Proverbs*, 48-49.

¹⁸ Estes, *Hear, My Son*, 105.

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- ¹⁹ Bruce K. Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 1-15* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 210.
- ²⁰ The term will be discussed at a greater length later in the article.
- ²¹ Fox, *Proverbs 1-9*, 102.
- ²² *Ibid.*, 103.
- ²³ William McKane, *Proverbs: a new approach* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1970), 276.
- ²⁴ Fox, *Proverbs 1-9*, 105.
- ²⁵ Whybray, *Proverbs*, 119.
- ²⁶ Fox, *Proverbs 1-9*, 270.
- ²⁷ Estes, *Hear, My Son*, 106.
- ²⁸ For a closer look at various instances of this idiom, see Fox, *Proverbs 1-9*, 219.
- ²⁹ Fox, *Proverbs 1-9*, 219.
- ³⁰ *Ibid.*, 222.
- ³¹ Fox, *Proverbs 1-9*, 223.
- ³² W. M. W. Roth, "The Numerical Sequence 10/10+1 in the Old Testament," *Vetus Testamentum* 12 (1962), 300-311.
- ³³ Fox, *Proverbs 1-9*, 223.
- ³⁴ Leander E. Keck, and Thomas G. Long, eds., *The New Interpreter's Bible*. Vol.V. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1997), 92.
- ³⁵ JPSV, NRSV, Toy, McKane, Fox, etc.
- ³⁶ For a more detailed discussion of Irwin's philological and contextual arguments see W.A. Irwin, "Where Shall Wisdom Be Found?" *Journal of Biblical Literature* 30 (1961): 133-42.
- ³⁷ Fox, *Proverbs 1-9*, 280.
- ³⁸ For a survey of the history of the interpretation, see R.B.Y. Scott, "Wisdom in Creation: The 'amom of Proverbs viii:30a," *Vetus Testamentum* 10 (1960): 213-23.
- ³⁹ Whybray argues cogently: "For the purposes of the interpretation of the poem as a whole the crucial question is obviously whether Wisdom is here seen as actively participating in the creation of the world or simply as a spectator whose mere presence there gives her eminent status. It is significant that nowhere else in the poem is there any suggestion of such constructive activity on her part. However the verbs in verses 22-6 are interpreted, she is not credited there with any form of activity; and in relation to the acts of creation described in verses 27-30a Wisdom only says of herself 'I was there' (v. 27) and 'I was beside him' (v. 30). In verses 30-31 she merely delights in the world that God has made. *Master workman*, then, as referring to Wisdom, seems out of place" (Whybray, *Proverbs*, 135).
- ⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 331.
- ⁴¹ McKane, *Proverbs*, 76.
- ⁴² J. Eaton, *The Contemplative Face of Old Testament Wisdom* (London: SCM, 1989), 27.
- ⁴³ Carol A. Newsom, "Woman and the Discourse of Patriarchal Wisdom: A Study of Proverbs 1-9," in *Gender and Difference in Ancient Israel*, (ed. Peggy L. Day; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), 149-51.
- ⁴⁴ Estes, *Hear, My Son*, 113.
- ⁴⁵ N. C. Habel, "The Symbolism of Wisdom in Proverbs 1-9," *Interpretation* 26 (1972), 137.
- ⁴⁶ Fox, *Proverbs 1-9*, 130.
- ⁴⁷ Whybray, *Proverbs*, 79.

⁴⁸ “Heart” (*leb/lebab*) is the most important anthropological term in the Old Testament. Not only the body’s functions were attributed to the heart, but also the psyche’s and spiritual functions. No other English word combines the complex interplay of intellect, sensibility, and will. The heart experiences emotions (Prov. 12:25; 14:10, 30; 15:15); it thinks, reflects, ponders (24:12), and plans (6:14, 18; 16:9). As the eyes were meant to see and the ears to hear, the heart is meant to discern and prompt actions. The heart also accepts, and trusts (Prov. 3:5). The heart feels all modes of desire, from the lowest physical forms, such as hunger and thirst, to the highest spiritual forms, like reverence and remorse. Basic to its psychological and spiritual functions is the heart’s spiritual state or condition; it can be wise (Prov. 14:33) and pure (20:9), or perverse (17:20). This direction or bent of the heart determines its decisions and thus the person’s actions (Exod. 14:5; 35:21; Num. 32:9).

⁴⁹ Waltke, *Proverbs*, 90-91.

⁵⁰ McKane, *Proverbs*, 368.

⁵¹ Waltke, *Proverbs*, 439.

⁵² Derek, Kidner, *The Proverbs: An Introduction and Commentary* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1964), 83.

⁵³ McKane, *Proverbs*, 78.

⁵⁴ J. L. Crenshaw, “Wisdom and Authority: Sapiential Rhetoric and its Warrants,” *Vetus Testamentum*, Supplements 32, (1981), 19.

⁵⁵ Waltke comments on the language of this passage, “Unlike the father, who has a hierarchical relation to the son in his representing wisdom’s traditional worldview, sinners are the son’s peers with regard to generations, as indicated by the cohortative “let us” and the often repeated “us” and “we.” See Waltke, *Proverbs*, 188.

⁵⁶ Fox, *Proverbs 1–9*, 85.

⁵⁷ Fox, *Proverbs 1–9*, 85. Cf. above, p. 8 for more on two paths of life.

⁵⁸ Waltke, *Proverbs*, 195.

⁵⁹ Estes, *Hear, My Son*, 117.

⁶⁰ For a detailed analysis of the character of the adulteress of Proverbs 7 see Fox, *Proverbs 1–9*, 252 ff.

⁶¹ Waltke, *Proverbs*, 367.

⁶² He further explains, “The former (vv. 8-9) resembles the imperatival form in Egyptian prologues (i.e., an injunction unpacked by several imperatives [cf. v. 8]) followed by substantiation or motivation (cf. v. 9). The latter (vv. 10-19) is like the imperative form in these same texts (i.e., a conditional clause followed by the main clause, another distinct form in the Egyptian parallels). However, the brevity of verses 8-9 in comparison to the comparable forms in the prologue and the typical form of the lesson consisting of an introduction and a lesson with a conclusion suggests that the compiler aimed to combine the two into a unified whole. See Waltke, *Proverbs*, 185 f.

⁶³ Instruction/teaching [*musar/torah*]. In the introduction to the lectures, these terms designate the lesson about to be delivered. In other words, the verse is not a general admonition to obey one’s parents, but an injunction to hear the instruction and teaching in verses 10-19. Each lecture is an instruction and a teaching. See Fox, *Proverbs 1–9*, 79.

⁶⁴ McKane, *Proverbs*, 312.

⁶⁵ “For the lips of an adulteress drip honey and smoother than oil is her speech; but in the end she is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword.”

⁶⁶ The stressed vowels are capitalized: *ki nOfet tiṭṭOfnAh siftEy zarAh, w^eḥalAq miššEmen ḥikkAhh.*

⁶⁷ “My words” and “my commands” do not refer to the teachings of the present lesson. Verse 2 refers to the father’s words and commands taught in the collections that follow, for there are no commands in this chapter, and “wisdom” (v. 2) embraces all wise teachings. See Fox, *Proverbs 1–9*, 107.

⁶⁸ Waltke, *Proverbs*, 220.

⁶⁹ This concept will be discussed later in the article.

⁷⁰ Fox, *The Pedagogy of Proverbs 2*, 233.

⁷¹ The reference is found in Fox, *The Pedagogy of Proverbs 2*, 242.

⁷² Sa’adia Gaon draws a distinction between the two analogies. In the first (v. 27), a man brings fire into contact with his garment. This corresponds to merely caressing a woman. One who does this does not escape punishment altogether. In the second (v. 28), a man comes into direct contact with the fire. This is like having intercourse. The perpetrator cannot escape the fire of hell. Thus, Sa’adia Gaon has rightly noted an intensification in the imagery from indirect to direct contact. The reference is found in Fox, *Proverbs 1–9*, 233.

⁷³ Waltke, *Proverbs*, 357.

⁷⁴ J. L. Crenshaw, “Impossible Questions, Sayings, and Tasks,” in *Semeia* 17 (1980), 23.

⁷⁵ Fox, *Proverbs 1–9*, 236.

⁷⁶ Despite the suggestions of some scholars like Albright, McKane, etc. that the seven-pillared house of wisdom has cultic or cosmological overtones, it seems better to agree with Aitken and Whybray that it indicates a patrician mansion representing security and splendor. Waltke asserts that considering the restrictions of space in ancient Israel’s cities, seven supporting pillars points to an exceptionally large, grand, and stately structure where numerous guests are expected. “Seven,” he adds, “in this literary fiction symbolizes perfection; her perfect house has plenty of room to entertain everyone.” See Waltke, *Proverbs*, 432-433.

⁷⁷ Every Hebrew word of this verse ends in /a[h]/, referring to woman wisdom and so underscoring her diligence in this preparation scene. The repetition of “she” and “her” tries to capture her activity and investment. See Waltke, *Proverbs*, 433.

⁷⁸ Roland E. Murphy, “Wisdom Literature: Job, Proverbs, Ruth, Chronicles, Ecclesiastes, and Esther,” *The Forms of the Old Testament Literature* 13 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 3.

⁷⁹ Hartmut Gese, *Lehre und Wirklichkeit in der alten Weisheit* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1958), 2.

⁸⁰ H. D. Preuss, “Erwägungen zum theologischen Ort alttestamentlicher Weisheitsliteratur,” *Evangelische Theologie* 30 (1970), 393-417.

⁸¹ G. E. Wright, *God Who Acts* (London: SCM, 1952), 115.

⁸² G. von Rad, *Wisdom in Israel* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1972), 5.

⁸³ Waltke, *Proverbs*, 66.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ Walter C. Kaiser Jr., *Toward an Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), 46.

⁸⁶ “Fear of God,” says Whybray, refers “to a standard of moral conduct known and accepted by men in general,” (*Wisdom in Proverbs*, 96). Boström says that “the reason for the use of the generic term for the deity which is so common in wisdom texts is ... that the specification intentionally is left open to the reader and to the situation. These generic designations of God function in a way parallel to blank spaces in a liturgical text which are to be filled in with the appropriate expression by the supplicant.” See L. Boström, *The God of Sages*, 44-45.

⁸⁷ Waltke, *Proverbs*, 67.

⁸⁸ P. C. Craigie, “Biblical Wisdom in the Modern World: I. Proverbs,” in *Crux* 15.4 (1979), 8.

⁸⁹ Waltke, *Proverbs*, 69.

⁹⁰ A. P. Ross, "Proverbs," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*. Vol. V. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), 919.

⁹¹ Cf. above, p. 5 f.

⁹² K. M. O'Conner, "The Wisdom Literature," *Message of Biblical Spirituality* 5 (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1988), 16.

⁹³ In an influential essay, K. Koch named this concept as *Tat-Ergehen Zusammenhang*, the deed-consequence nexus. See K. Koch, "Gibt es ein Vergeltungsdogma im Alten Testament?" *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 52 (1955), 1-42.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ For a detailed discussion see Waltke, *Proverbs*, 73-76.

⁹⁶ Whybray, *Proverbs*, 11.

⁹⁷ Estes, *Hear, my son*, 30. Waltke also concludes, "The sages believed in and taught a harmonious world order created and sustained by the Lord, but not an impersonal one." See Waltke, *Proverbs*, 75.

⁹⁸ J. L. Crenshaw, *Old Testament Wisdom* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1981), 209.

⁹⁹ Fox, *Proverbs 1-9*, 110.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. above, p. 8 where people are divided into two classes according to which path of life they choose.

¹⁰¹ Waltke, *Proverbs*, 93.

¹⁰² R. E. Clements, *Wisdom in Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 156.

¹⁰³ Bruce K. Waltke, "The Fear of the Lord," in *Alive to God* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1992), 17-33.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. above, p. 2.

¹⁰⁶ McKane, *Proverbs*, 265.

¹⁰⁷ Waltke, *Proverbs*, 113.

¹⁰⁸ McKane, *Proverbs*, 305. He continues, "She [wisdom] should determine the structure of a man's life, giving it form and proportion and establishing a scale of priorities and a right distribution of emphasis."

¹⁰⁹ Fox, *Proverbs 1-9*, 32.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 33.

¹¹¹ Cf. also Jeremiah 9:23-24, "Thus says the Lord, 'Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom, and let not the mighty man boast of his might, let not a rich man boast of his riches; but let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the Lord who exercises lovingkindness, justice and righteousness on earth; for I delight in these things,' declares the Lord."

¹¹² Fox, *Proverbs 1-9*, 111-12.

¹¹³ McKane, *Proverbs*, 295.