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The Book of Ruth: Its Didactic Wisdom Themes

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Abbreviations

Bibles

JB	Jerusalem Bible
NAB	New American Bible
NASB	New American Standard Bible
NEB	New English Bible
NIV	New International Version
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
LXX	Septuagint
MT	Masoretic Text
RSV	Revised Standard Version
TEV	Today's English Version

Periodical, Reference, Serial

AYB	Anchor Yale Bible
<i>ABD</i>	<i>Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary</i>
BCOT	Baker Commentary on the Old Testament
BDAG	<i>A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature</i> , 3 rd ed.
BDB	<i>A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament</i>
<i>BHS</i>	<i>Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia</i>
CBC	Cornerstone Biblical Commentary
CC	Continental Commentary
CCEPONT	Commentary, Critical, Experimental, and Practical on the Old And New Testaments
<i>DBL</i>	<i>Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains</i>
<i>EDB</i>	<i>Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible</i>
EEC	Evangelical Exegetical Commentary
<i>HALOT</i>	<i>Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament</i>
ICC	International Critical Commentary
<i>ISBE</i>	<i>International Standard Bible Encyclopedia</i>
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JETS</i>	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
<i>JPS</i>	<i>Jewish Publication Society</i>
<i>JSOT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
<i>JTS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
<i>LBD</i>	<i>Lexham Bible Dictionary</i>
<i>NIB</i>	<i>New Interpreter's Bible</i>
NICOT	New International Commentary of the Old Testament

<i>NIDOTTE</i>	<i>New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis</i>
NSBT	New Studies in Biblical Theology
NT	New Testament
OT	Old Testament
<i>TDOT</i>	<i>Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament</i>
<i>TLOT</i>	<i>Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament</i>
TOTC	Tyndale Old Testament Commentary
UBS	United Bible Societies
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary

Abstract

This dissertation proposes and argues that the Book of Ruth is better situated in Wisdom literature because of its didactic wisdom themes. Prominent wisdom themes will be analyzed and compared intertextually with the Book of Ruth, which provides Ruth's understanding of YHWH.

The research methodology evaluates the intertextuality, or inter-themes, between the Book of Ruth and the Wisdom literature (Job, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes), the primary source. Peer-reviewed sources (scholarly commentaries, academic peer-reviewed journals, and scholarly biblical dictionaries) are used to evaluate and support the findings uncovered in the primary source. Semantic field and range studies are performed with the help of biblical Hebrew lexicons and lexical aids.

The dissertation stems from the awareness that Ruth's placement in the Old Testament differs between the Greek and Christian Bibles and the Hebrew Bible. In Judaism, Ruth is one of five scrolls in the Megilloth collection. This is significant because the Greek and Christian Bibles place Ruth after Judges and before 1 Samuel, which satisfies judicial and genealogical purposes. However, the Megilloth's chronological order places Ruth first of the five scrolls, follows Proverbs, and precedes Ecclesiastes. Therefore, this chronological order has Ruth as the solution to the question posed in Proverbs 31:10, "An excellent wife, who can find?"¹

Chapter one begins with an introduction highlighting prominent historical, literary, and theological elements of the Book of Ruth, followed by a description of the Megilloth with an explanation of the liturgical and chronological ordering. Finally, intertextuality is discussed, touching on the associated theories and methods.

¹ Unless otherwise noted, all biblical passages referenced are in the *Ryrie Study Bible: New American Standard Bible*, 3rd ed. (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2012).

Chapter two is an overview of Wisdom literature. It will be investigated to analyze its genre, portrayal in Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Ruth, and its association with Old Testament theology. Finally, how wisdom is perceived in the ancient Near East and its influence on Wisdom literature are explored.

Chapter three evaluates fifteen didactic wisdom themes² in the Book of Ruth. These themes will be evaluated to show their relevance to furthering the concept of a moral character properly situated within Yahweh's standards. Biblical verses applicable to each theme will be analyzed, which will include looking at semantic fields and ranges and lexical comprehension of essential biblical Hebrew terms.

Chapters four through six give a comparative study between Wisdom literature and Ruth. Specifically, how each Wisdom book treats the prominent wisdom themes and how Ruth treats the same themes are discussed. The comparative study focuses on specific verses relating to each theme, key terms are excised and studied, and thematic significances are given attention with a detailed explanation.

Chapter seven focuses on how the Book of Ruth comprehends YHWH, though He is not visibly active in the biblical text. The 'fear of Yahweh,'³ divine sovereignty and providence, the

² Proper portion, discipline and hope, friendship and family loyalty, hard work, entreaty, inappropriate touching, true reward, humility, generosity of spirit, kindness, redemption, obeying instructions, worthy woman/wife, city gate, and building up a house will be analyzed.

³ Due to the dissertation's nature, the 'fear of Yahweh' is emphasized throughout. The prominent reason for using the 'fear of Yahweh' is its affiliation with Wisdom literature and the Hebrew Bible. The 'fear of God' is a generic term used throughout the Hebrew Bible. The word 'fear' is not to be construed as being 'terrified,' but have a 'reverence' or 'awe' for Yahweh. Daniel Estes notes that having a reverence for Yahweh produces a wise behavior. See Daniel Estes, *Handbook on the Wisdom Books and Psalms* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 222. Wise behavior reveals a healthy relationship with Yahweh. In Proverbs, wisdom is indicated in how a person conducts themselves, a way of knowing reality, and the way of relating to Yahweh's creative order. Eccl. 12:13 expresses that to 'fear Yahweh' is to keep His commandments, which indicates a reverence towards Him displayed by an obedience to Him. Ruth

concept of *hesed*, and the role of *gō'ēl* are evaluated in Ruth's context. Finally, Chapter eight concludes the evaluation and ties together the crucial points from each chapter. The limitations of the research and its relevancy in understanding the book are presented.

1:16–17 records Ruth's vow of commitment to Naomi, Naomi's people, and Yahweh. The vow includes a curse formula that reveals divine punishment if Ruth does not keep her commitment. In Ruth 1:16, שׁוּב is a verb meaning "to turn, return." *HALOT* explains that in Middle Hebrew, the Qal form of the verb means "to turn around, repent." See Ludwig Koehler, and Walter Baumgartner, "שׁוּב," in *HALOT*, 5th ed. (Leiden: Brill Publishing, 2000), 1428. While Yahweh may be silent in the biblical narrative, His presence is felt throughout the biblical events in Ruth. The Book of Job teaches that life's challenges cannot be fully explained by a human perspective. Likewise, the circumstances that happens in the Book of Ruth cannot be completely comprehended. It is when Yahweh's sovereignty and providence are attached to the circumstances that revelation is made concerning them. Therefore, by revealing the Book of Ruth's affiliation with didactic wisdom and its association with Wisdom literature, the 'fear of Yahweh' will be used.

Chapter 1

Introduction

The Book of Ruth is one of the shorter texts within the Hebrew Bible and Christian Old Testament, consisting of just four chapters that occupy a unique space in the Biblical canon. Its location within the Hebrew Bible is found as one of the “Five Scrolls,” or Megilloth. In the Greek and Christian Bible, It is set during the period of the Judges, a time in ancient Israel marked by social and political disarray. Ruth is a Moabite woman who marries into an Israelite family and, after the death of her husband, follows her mother-in-law Naomi back to Bethlehem. The story serves as a significant narrative in both Jewish and Christian traditions.

The primary characters in the book are Ruth, her mother-in-law Naomi, and Boaz, a wealthy landowner. The narrative revolves around loyalty, love, kinship, divine providence, and redemption. Ruth’s steadfast devotion to Naomi and her adoption of the Israelite faith and customs are portrayed as noble acts, exemplifying wisdom and faithfulness. Boaz, who eventually marries Ruth, is depicted as an honorable man who adheres to the law and traditional customs, demonstrating kindness and generosity.

In scholarly discourse¹, the book is often analyzed for its literary structure and role in shaping the genealogy that leads to King David and, ultimately, in Christian interpretation, to

¹ See “Poetics in the Book of Ruth,” in *Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative* (Sheffield: Almond Press, 1983). 83–110; “Leitwortstil in der Ruthrolle,” in *In Theologie im Wandel* (Munich:ewel, 1967), 394–412; “Ruth. Das Hohelied,” in *Biblischer Kommentar: Altes Testament* 18, 2nd ed. (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1981); *Commentary on the Old Testament, Volume 2* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1973); “The Theme of the Ruth Story,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 22 (1960): 391–9; “Ruth,” in *Forms of the Old Testament: Wisdom Literature* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1981), 83–95; *New International Commentary of the Old Testament: The Book of Ruth* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1988).

Jesus Christ. Some scholars² assert that the story was written to establish the Davidic lineage by incorporating a virtuous, non-Israelite woman into the genealogical line. The text also provides intriguing perspectives on the law and culture of ancient Israel, particularly concerning levirate marriage and redemption of land and people. However, due to its unique position in the Hebrew Bible, the biblical text provides didactic wisdom that aligns with Wisdom Literature (Job, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes). This relationship is readily apparent by answering the question posed in Prov. 31:10, “An excellent wife, who can find?” This literary arrangement offers a unique comprehension that is garnering attention in the scholarly field.

From a theological standpoint, the Book of Ruth is considered by some scholars³ to demonstrate the inclusive nature of the Israelite community and Yahweh’s providential care for individuals who demonstrate holiness and integrity. It also addresses issues of famine, migration, and the complexities of familial relationships. Ruth is the subject of numerous commentaries and scholarly articles⁴. Its concise narrative makes it an enduring academic study and spiritual

² Adele Berlin, W. Dommershausen, G. Gerleman, C. F. Keil, O. Loretz, Roland Murphy, Edward Campbell, Jr., and Robert Hubbard.

³ Diana Edelman, Ehud Ben Zvi, Marjo C. A. Korpel, Edward Jones III, Kirsten Neilsen, Timothy Beal, André LaCocque, Phylis Trible, Michael Fox, Katharine Sakenfeld, and Tod Linafelt.

⁴ See *New American Commentary Volume: Judges, Ruth*. Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1999; *Word Biblical Commentary, Volume 9: Ruth, Esther*. Dallas: Word, Inc., 1996; *The Anchor Bible, Ruth: A New Translation With Introduction and Commentary*. New York: Doubleday, 1975; *Ruth: A Guide to Reading Biblical Hebrew*. Bellingham: Lexham Press, 2022; *New International Commentary of the Old Testament: The Book of Ruth*. Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1988; *Reading Ruth in the Restoration Period: A Call for Inclusion*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc., 2016; *A Continental Commentary: Ruth*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014; *Wisdom Literature: Job, Proverbs, Ruth, Canticles, Ecclesiastes, and Esther*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1981; “The Theology of the Book of Ruth.” *Vetus Testamentum* 30, fasc. 3 (1980): 330–41; and *The NIV Application Commentary: Judges & Ruth*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002.

reflection focus. Due to its didactic wisdom thematic relationship with Wisdom Literature, this dissertation will evaluate and argue that the Book of Ruth is better situated in Wisdom Literature.

The significance is that the book functions beyond a judicial and genealogical purpose.

The objectives and research questions governing the dissertation are:

1. Examine the Book of Ruth's background.
2. Examine the book's location within the Megilloth and its significance.
3. Examine intertextuality, its concepts, and methods.
4. Examine wisdom's role biblically and extra-biblically.
5. Examine the intertextuality, or inter-themes, between the Book of Ruth and Wisdom Literature.
6. How does the Book of Ruth's wisdom contribute to Wisdom Literature?
7. What are the implications for understanding *hesed*, *go'el*, and the fear of Yahweh?

A research methodology will be used to satisfy the objectives and answer the research questions, which involves meticulously evaluating the biblical text and its intertextuality, or inter-themes, with Wisdom Literature.

The dissertation is structured in the following way:

1. Chapter 1: Background studies and intertextuality comprehension.
2. Chapter 2: Wisdom's biblical and extrabiblical role.
3. Chapter 3: Didactic wisdom in the Book of Ruth.
4. Chapter 4: Shared wisdom themes between the Book of Ruth and Proverbs.
5. Chapter 5: Shared wisdom themes between the Book of Ruth and Ecclesiastes.
6. Chapter 6: Shared wisdom themes between the Book of Ruth and Job.
7. Chapter 7: Understanding *hesed*, *go'el*, and the fear of Yahweh.

8. Chapter 8: Conclusion and implication.

Though the Book of Ruth is small, it offers didactic wisdom worthy of scholarly exploration. While the scholarly discussion about the book is vast, this dissertation aims to contribute to the conversation by engaging the book's wisdom teachings and how it supports Wisdom Literature.

Book of Ruth Background Study

The background study for the Book of Ruth depends upon a multidisciplinary approach encompassing a historical-critical methodology and literary criticism. The dissertation's exploration will concentrate on date, genre, canonicity, and theological themes.⁵ These four hermeneutic elements are chosen due to their association with the current scholarly consensus on the biblical text and how they would support a relationship with Wisdom literature. The Book of Ruth narrative takes place in Israelite history during the period of judges. It is a period evidenced by social, political, and religious troubles. While the narrative highlights an Israelite-Moabite relationship, its compositional date is not as straightforward.

The first area to be explored is the compositional date. Two primary theories have been offered to explain the text's date, ranging from the Judges' time to the post-exilic period. An early date, or a Monarchic date, is posited based on some of the narrative's literary and theological elements found in the biblical texts from the Historical writings and the Book of

⁵ Andrea Köstenberger and Richard Patterson labels this process as the hermeneutic triad. They note that a serious and thorough biblical interpretation involves studying the historical setting, the literary context, and the biblical text's theological message. See Andreas Köstenberger, and Richard Patterson, *Invitation to Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic & Professional, 2011), 78. Grant Osborne illustrates that hermeneutics is like a scaffold. A thorough bible study will include understanding the historical and literary context. Performing a careful bible study will provide a solid foundation for interpreting the text's message. A disciplined hermeneutic method is like a sturdy scaffold used to support workers and their work. See Grant Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral*, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2006), 37.

Judges. However, with this theory, date variations exist. Edward Campbell notes that Ruth's language is reminiscent of the monarchic period, probably the Solomonic era.⁶ He theorizes that the book's linguistic features, prose, and theological point of view fit a period from 950–750 B.C.⁷ Robert Hubbard dates the Book of Ruth to the Solomonic period. Hubbard notes that the text's linguistic characteristics parallel those of classical Hebrew and are archaic.⁸ He also points out that some legal customs⁹ in the biblical text reflect practices observed before written documentation. For instance, the shoe removal event in Ruth 4:7 is found in Deuteronomy 25:9; however, it is argued that Ruth is authorially ignorant of this custom. Based on this authorial ignorance, Hubbard concludes that the Book of Ruth was written before 700 B.C.¹⁰ Daniel Block advocates for a Josianic dating. He notes three factors in determining his decision: 1. The reference in Ruth 1:1, "when the judges governed," 2. There is an interest in the Davidic house best understood through a Renaissance dynasty lens, and 3. A Northern provenance was observed during Josiah's reign.¹¹ Because Ruth is a perfect model for non-Israelites to accept and commit to YHWH, they could become a member of the Israelite community. According to Block, this example would resonate with non-Israelites who want to become a member of Israel's community.¹²

⁶ Edward Campbell Jr., *Ruth* (New York: Doubleday, 1975), 28.

⁷ Campbell Jr., 24.

⁸ Robert Hubbard, *NICOT: Ruth* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1988), 30.

⁹ The legal customs addressed in the Book of Ruth include levirate marriage, role of the kinsman redeemer, the legal procedure to become a kinsman redeemer, gleaning, and the custom of the shoe removal.

¹⁰ Hubbard, 31.

¹¹ Daniel Block, *NAC: Judges, Ruth* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1999), 596–8.

¹² *Ibid.*, 598.

Another theory posits an exilic or post-exilic date. A reason for this date is the book's handling of inclusivity, which results from the exclusivity inclination observed during the Babylonian exile. Specifically, the book addresses the discouragement of marriage with foreign women. Peter Lau notes that Ruth's portrayal counters the preconceptions of the pre-exilic Israelite nation and the Ezra and Nehemiah texts.¹³ Edward Jones uses the book's inclusivity to home on a date during the Restoration period. He explains that his research into returning communities from forced migration exemplifies Ruth's handling of outsiders.¹⁴ He focuses on textual evidence and social science corroboration to support his conclusion. Textually, a comparative study was performed with the book of Tobit. He states, "In my estimation, both texts come from a period in which Judeans were trying to navigate the intricacies created by holding together various law codes from Deuteronomy, Numbers, and Leviticus. These determinations are not the focus of the narrative, but the manifestation of such legal sensibilities in the text does point towards a late date of writing."¹⁵ He further explains that Ruth differs from Ezra and Nehemiah in that Ruth reveals how Israel could have an open holy border, allowing foreigners to become a member of the covenant community. This inclusion differs from Ezra and Nehemiah, which calls for exclusivity by mandating an ethnic holy boundary that disallows foreigners from entering.¹⁶ From a social science viewpoint, Ruth demonstrates how the diaspora, who have integrated with their host culture, are more willing to participate equally in the homeland culture. This would be encountered during the Restoration period, unlike with Ezra

¹³ Peter Lau, *Identity and Ethics in the Book of Ruth: A Social Identity Approach* (Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, Inc., 2010), 45.

¹⁴ Edward Jones III, *Reading Ruth in the Restoration Period: A Call for Inclusion* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc., 2016), 180.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 181.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

and Nehemiah.¹⁷ André LaCocque notes that the Book of Ruth is a commentary on the Law seen in other exilic and post-exilic literature (Joseph, Job, Jonah, Daniel, and Esther).¹⁸ He explains that the narrative’s audience would have been in an era fascinated with the legal foundation of a pre-exilic Israel. Another point he mentions is that if Ruth were composed during an early date, then it would mean that David would have had Moabite blood in his ancestry. This impure blood would be a focus point for his opponents advocating against his kingship. Therefore, LaCocque theorizes that Ruth was composed after David’s monarchy when his Moabite lineage would not have cast doubt on his historical significance.¹⁹ Frederic Bush takes a linguistic route to explain Ruth’s late compositional date. He uses the linguistic theory of diachrony by noting the Hebrew language’s transitional history from Standard Biblical Hebrew (SBH) to Late Biblical Hebrew (LBH).²⁰ He performs a linguistic study of ten Hebrew features²¹ in Ruth, noting the distinction

¹⁷ Jones III, 182.

¹⁸ André LaCocque, *CC: Ruth* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014), 19.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 20.

²⁰ Frederic Bush, *WBC Vol. 9: Ruth* (Dallas: Word, Inc., 1996), 20.

²¹ SBH-אִנְכִי vs. אִנִּי, the waw-consecutive tense is in full use throughout, there being only one use of the perfect tense plus waw-conjunctive in 4:7, The decrease in the waw-consecutive tenses occasioned a change in the form of the temporal clause consisting of a preposition, most frequently ב or כ, plus the infinitive or other substantive. In the SBH form of the idiom, the prepositional phrase is regularly preceded by וַיְהִי/וְהָיָה; in LBH texts, וַיְהִי/וְהָיָה is regularly lacking. The Ruth usage accords with SBH: 4 times the prepositional phrase occurs with וַיְהִי/וְהָיָה (1:19; 3:4, 8, 13), the conjunction אֲשֶׁר may be used to subordinate a substantival clause as the object of a verb, rather than the far more regular conjunction כִּי, “that.” This usage is rare in SBH but occurs more frequently in LBH, in the SBH, a substantival clause follows a predicate-subject format; however, in the LBH a subject-predicate format is used, In SBH the use of ל to mark the direct object of a verb instead of the particle אֵל does sporadically occur. In LBH, however, its use markedly increases, the plene spelling of the name David (i.e., with the addition of the vowel letter yodh, דָּוִד) rather than the defective writing (i.e., without the yodh, דוד), long recognized to be a late phenomenon, with the alternative prepositional expressions ... בֵּין ... בֵּין (lit. “between ... and between ...”) and ... ל ... בֵּין (lit. “between. to ...”), the first is by far predominant in SBH; in LBH the second becomes more frequent than the first, and the preposition מִן occurs prefixed to 14 different substantives (without the article) a total of 21

between the SBH and LBH translations. Bush concluded that eight of the ten Hebrew features showed an LBH tendency. Bush notes that his study revealed that the biblical author lived between the SBH and LBH transitional period, the late pre-exilic to post-exilic era.²²

Another point of consideration is the Book of Ruth's canonical position in the Hebrew Bible. It is one of the five festal scrolls, or Megilloth²³, placed within the Writings (Kevutum) section of the Tanakh, or Hebrew Bible. Ruth's canonical placement in the Hebrew Bible occurred during a post-exilic date.²⁴ The significance of this date is that it happened during the

times. Although both assimilated and unassimilated forms occur in both SBH and LBH texts, this number of different substantives and occurrences is much more probable in an SBH text than an LBH one. See Bush, 22–4. LBH- there are 10 examples of the pronominal object attached directly to the verb (1:21; 2:4, 13, 15; 3:16, 13, 13; 4:15, 15, 16) indicating Ruth's accord with the LBH, the form תְּקַלְיִמֶיךָ in Ruth 2:15 accords with the usage in Ezekiel and Chronicles, aligning Ruth with LBH, the one use of קָרוֹב לִי in Ruth (2:20) definitely patterns with the exilic to post-exilic usage, to avoid misunderstanding, נָשָׂא began to be used for “to take a wife.” In Ruth one finds one example of נָשָׂא (1:4) and one example of לָקַח (4:13), aligning Ruth with the late usage of LBH, 4:7, לְקַיִם. An accumulation of late features occurs in Ruth 4:7–8, two lexical and one syntactical. The form קַיִם, the piel stem of קָוַם, with the meaning “to confirm, establish, effect” is unquestionably a late feature, in the book of Ruth one finds in 4:7 the waw-conjunctive plus perfect form (וַיִּתֵּן) to express temporal consecution in the past, instead of the waw-consecutive form (וַיִּתֵּן), which is the form used for this purpose throughout the rest of Ruth and almost invariably throughout SBH. It is highly probable that this syntactic change between SBH and LBH also results from the influence of Aramaic, another LBH feature used in Ruth is נָעַל + 4:7, שָׁלַף, and that שָׁבַר, for which the evidence is not clear cut, is indeed another late feature that has entered the language under the influence of Aramaic. See Bush 24–30.

²² Bush, 30.

²³ Sometimes spelled “Megillot.”

²⁴ Understandably, the date of canonical placement does not constitute an original compositional date. Different dating theories exist for the compositional date of the Book of Ruth. An early dating theory posits that the early monarchic period is preferred because of its mention of David in the genealogy legitimizing the Davidic dynasty. A late dating theory suggests a post-exilic date due to Ruth's addressment of inclusivity and identity. A Persian period date points to the social and legal customs that align with Persian practices. Linguistic evidence, SBH versus LBH, indicate that the Book of Ruth is consistent with later forms of biblical Hebrew. Ruth's canonical placement hinges on its association with the Megilloth. Disregarding the Babylonian Talmud, the MT reveals two locations for the Book of Ruth: a liturgical order which places Ruth after the Song of Songs, and a chronological order which

Persian period (539–333 B.C.), and the narrative reflects pertinent issues during that time. Julius Steinberg and Timothy Stone note that the Book of Ruth is in two places in the Jewish tradition, before the Psalter (Babylonian Talmud) and between Proverbs and the Song of Songs (MT). Of the two arrangements, the MT is viewed as the older.²⁵ A justification for this view is that the Book of Ruth answers the question posed in Prov. 31:10, “An excellent wife, who can find?” The issues the Book of Ruth addresses are social, religious, and intellectual, pertinent to social integration, diaspora existence, and theological reflections. Diana Edelman and Ehud Ben Zvi note that Ruth’s authentic provenance and language stem from the Persian or late Persian period, which deals with securing an identity for the new community of returnees and homelander.²⁶ Expanding further on this compositional date is Tamara Eskenazi’s article “Out From the Shadows: Biblical Women in the Post-exilic Period.” She affirms that the Persian period was a crucial time in Jewish history. It was an era of Jewish restructuring after being exiled.²⁷ Initially, it would seem out of place for the Book of Ruth to be composed during this period because it is void of mentioning women. Unlike ancient Israel, the new Israel concentrated on the prominence of men. However, research has shown that some women stand out in the shadows and play a more prominent role in the post-exilic period. As previously mentioned, Ezra and Nehemiah are opposed to marriage with foreign women, which weakens the ethnic holiness of the community.

places Ruth after Proverbs but before the Song of Songs. The approximate date for the canonical placement is during the Persian period. Therefore, it is plausible that the Book of Ruth could have been composed prior to the canonical placement date.

²⁵ Julius Steinberg, and Timothy Stone, eds., *The Shape of the Writings* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2015), 181.

²⁶ Diana Edelman, and Ehud Ben Zvi, eds., *Remembering Biblical Figures in the Late Persian and Early Hellenistic Periods* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 308–9.

²⁷ Tamara Eskenazi, “Out From the Shadows: Biblical Women in the Postexilic Period,” *JSOT* 17, no. 54 (1992): 25.

Eskenazi's research has shown that economic and political forces are at play. She notes that the concerns with intermarriage in Ezra and Nehemiah are a product of socio-economic issues.²⁸ She contends that women were not absent from the post-exilic (Persian) period but viewed in a different light. The changed culture encountered by the Israelite returnees and the role of the family yielded a new emphasis in this era.²⁹

A monarchic compositional date for the Book of Ruth is not preferable, even though it alludes to Judges and the Davidic genealogy.³⁰ The prominent reason is the Moabite inclusion. If Ruth was dated during the monarchic period, Moab was Israel's enemy, and a Hebrew would not have traveled to Moab to find sustenance or allowed their offspring to marry a Moabite woman. A secondary reason is based on the text's linguistic features, previously discussed. The Hebrew features in the Book of Ruth favor an LBH, which indicates a post-exilic compositional date. An early exilic compositional date is also not preferable. Lau notes that the theological-ideological argument is that the Book of Ruth reveals a late compositional date because of its universalist agenda.³¹ Another argument against an early exilic date is found in the Book of Esther. In Esther, a new humanism was taking shape, placing Yahweh in the background.³² This distinctive feature in the Book of Ruth is attributed to a Persian date. Therefore, a post-exilic compositional date is preferable because the Book of Ruth reveals favoritism towards inclusivity, its linguistic features

²⁸ Eskenazi, 35.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 42.

³⁰ LaCocque calls this a "fictitious" because the Book of Ruth is a commentary on the law. Other biblical documents (Joseph, Job, Jonah, Daniel, and Esther) that address the law are composed in the exilic or post-exilic period. See LaCocque, 18–9.

³¹ Lau, 48. Lau notes that Ruth's inclusion into the Israelite community was a rebuttal against the Ezra-Nehemiah exclusivity stance forbidding marriages to foreigners. Ruth's inclusion is furthered by Boaz's actions as a kinsman redeemer to Ruth.

³² *Ibid.*

(SBH versus LBH), and the changed perception of Moab. Edelman and Zvi note that Moab stopped being an entity during the Babylonian invasions of the Eastern Mediterranean and that the Arabians took control of the land during this time.³³ The land was still called Moab but had lost all its Moabite characteristics. This sets the stage for the rebuttal against the Ezra-Nehemiah propaganda against marriage to foreigners.

The books of Ezra and Nehemiah in the Hebrew Bible are considered one book in Jewish tradition (Ezra-Nehemiah). Ezra-Nehemiah concentrates on the exilic period, emphasizing Israel's religious and social identity. Religious exclusivity is indicated through the forbidding of foreign marriages. In Ezra, the Persian king Cyrus decreed that the Jews could return to Jerusalem to rebuild the Temple (Ezra 1:1–3). The Temple was not completed until the reign of Darius, and Ezra returned to Jerusalem during Artaxerxes' reign (Ezra 7:1–10). After Ezra returned, he learned from officials that some of the Israelites and Levites had married foreign women (Ezra 9:1–4), which caused him to endure grief and mourning. The result was instituting a covenant with the people forbidding marriage to foreigners and cleansing the community (Ezra 10). Nehemiah was written during the twentieth year of Artaxerxes (Neh. 1:1; 2:1, 6–8). While in Jerusalem, the priest Ezra read the book of the law of Moses to the people (Neh. 8:1–3), which caused the people to realize their sins and repent. Nehemiah helped to ratify the covenant with the people (Neh. 10:1). Once the walls around Jerusalem were rebuilt, the people cast lots to repopulate the city (Neh. 11:1). A stipulation was that the people agreed not to marry heathens (Neh. 10:30).

³³ Edelman, and Zvi, 308.

Another compositional date consideration is looking at the extrabiblical text, the Book of Tobit. Jones notes similarities with Boaz and Ruth and with Tobias and Sarah.³⁴ The Tobit narrative is set during the exile in the Northern Kingdom and tells the circumstances surrounding the marriage of Tobias and Sarah. Close affiliations with the Book of Ruth include Sarah must marry a close relative (Tob. 3:15), the kinsman redeemer ideal (Tob. 6:12–13), and references to the book of the law of Moses (Tob. 6:13; 7:11–13).³⁵ Jocelyn McWhirter and Sara Ferry note that Tobit was probably written between 400 and 175 B.C.³⁶

Based on the evidence, it would be a logical conclusion that the Book of Ruth would be composed during a post-exilic period to counteract the opposition to intermarriage and reinforce the family's role in the new Israelite community.

The second area of exploration pertains to the Book of Ruth's genre. As stated, genre is a type of literature. It is a contemporary idea that does not affect canonicity. Grant Osborne notes that genre can function as a larger literary unit, a smaller section, or an individual saying.³⁷ There are numerous genres contained in the Scriptures. Köstenberger and Patterson note that each genre has unique characteristics that govern how the biblical text is read and interpreted.³⁸ The Book of Ruth is accepted as a novella, a concise story falling between a novel and a short story. The Book of Ruth as a narrative is read as a dramatic story emphasizing a biblical event or a

³⁴ Jones III, 129.

³⁵ Ibid., 130. Carey Moore and Joseph Fitzmyer see this as a reference to levirate marriage in Deut. 25:5–10.

³⁶ Jocelyn McWhirter, and Sara Ferry, "Tobit, Book of," in *LBD*, ed. John Barry et al. (Bellingham: Lexham Press, 2016), "Date." They state, "Although the author is unknown, the discovery of fragments of the text in Hebrew and Aramaic among the Dead Sea Scrolls shows usage in Palestine (in Aramaic *4QpapTob^a*, *4QTob^b*, *4QTob^c*, *4QTob^d*; in Hebrew *4QTob^e*)."

³⁷ Osborne, 181.

³⁸ Köstenberger, and Patterson, 237.

series of biblical events.³⁹ Osborne explains, however, that biblical narrative, as determined by narrative criticism, is an “art” or “poetry” dependent on the author’s literary style, and the tendency is to treat them as fictional works.⁴⁰ However, Osborne notes that some scholars have claimed a problem with classifying a literary unit as one type or another. He states that a text’s interpretation and genre type can change from one period to another and affect specifying a genre.⁴¹ Bush further explains that the reader, consciously or subconsciously, determines the realities and expectations of the text’s meaning and how the audience accepts it.⁴² For instance, some readers will understand the Book of Ruth as a biblical narrative dated in the Monarchic period based on Ruth 1:1, “Now it came about in the days when the judges governed,” and the genealogy at the end of the book. The biblical text is a transition from Judges to 1 Samuel, is the foretelling of the future David, and an indication of the future Messiah. However, some readers will comprehend the Book of Ruth as a wisdom narrative grappling with Israel’s religious and social identity in the post-exilic period. In this view, exclusivity is countered, *hesed* is given prominence, and a glimpse into the future when Gentiles would be accepted as God’s children. A caution is to be made that forcing a genre on the biblical text can lead to misunderstanding and misinterpretation.

Thus, since the Book of Ruth can be argued to have been composed during the post-exilic period to address the challenges faced by the new Israelite community, it can be shown that the

³⁹ Köstenberger, and Patterson, 238.

⁴⁰ Osborne, 200.

⁴¹ Ibid., 181.

⁴² Bush, 32.

biblical text has wisdom elements to instruct the community. First, the wisdom⁴³ genre needs to be explained. Wisdom guides how to live one's life by Yahweh's rules and understand the life created by Yahweh.⁴⁴ One wisdom characteristic relevant to the Book of Ruth is that it is a story advising living a successful and happy life. This advice is given through practical orientation, or the handing down wisdom from the past to the present and future generations. A prime example of this from Ruth is the idea and actions of a kinsman redeemer (*gō'ēl*).⁴⁵ Boaz's actions ensure the continuance of the family name, prevent financial ruin, and safeguard Ruth's and Naomi's welfare. It is an action that enables a successful and happy life.

Another characteristic is the dependence on Yahweh. While Yahweh does not appear active in the Book of Ruth, He is prominent in the text. The first instance is read in Ruth 1:16–17. Ruth tells Naomi she will not leave her and is willing to accept Naomi's people and God. This statement of commitment involves a formula invoking divine punishment if Ruth does not honor her vow. Another characteristic is read in Ruth 4:13. Ruth was unable to have children with Mahlon; however, Yahweh enabled her to have children with Boaz. Children during that time were seen as a blessing from Yahweh. Therefore, Ruth's ability to have children was dependent on Yahweh.

⁴³ A comprehensive exploration of biblical and extrabiblical wisdom is given in Chapter Two, that includes the ANE concept of wisdom and how it did not affect Israel's understanding of wisdom.

⁴⁴ Osborne notes that wisdom deals with the pragmatic side of life, and it is centered around “fearing Yahweh” and the implications for daily life. This is the foundation to Israelite wisdom thinking. See Osborne, 242. Köstenberger and Patterson explain that genuine wisdom is rooted in Yahweh and is the source for living a profound life grounded in moral order and comprehending the meaning of life. Wisdom is instruction imparted by the biblical author to help with the meaning of life and how to properly live life to the fullest. See Köstenberger, and Patterson, 291–2.

⁴⁵ The role of *gō'ēl* will be comprehensively evaluated in Chapter Seven.

A final characteristic is Yahweh's indirect divine authority. Osborne explains that the Yahwistic view of wisdom is of supreme importance even though Yahweh's name is not mentioned.⁴⁶ Yahweh's divine authority is realized through His providential care in the Book of Ruth. The famine in Bethlehem caused Elimelech to travel to Moab, where his son, Mahlon, marries Ruth. If it were not for Yahweh causing the famine, Elimelech would not have traveled to Moab, and there would not have been a marriage. Elimelech's, Mahlon's, and Chilion's deaths while in Moab caused the return trip by Naomi and Ruth. While death is a sad occasion, Yahweh used death to guide Naomi and Ruth back to the homeland, resulting in Ruth committing to Naomi and Yahweh. While in Bethlehem, Ruth would glean from a field owned by Boaz, a relative of Naomi's husband. Boaz's encounter with Ruth eventually leads him to act as a kinsman redeemer, accepting and protecting Ruth and Naomi. While this is a legal act outlined in Deuteronomy 25:5–10, Yahweh's providence is at play in this biblical event.

The Book of Ruth is generally understood as a narrative genre that involves biblical events. However, when wisdom's characteristics are applied to the biblical text, it is readily seen that the Book of Ruth guides how to live one's life and enjoy it to its fullest properly. In chapter four, many more examples will be explored and analyzed to show Ruth's wisdom value.

Whether the Book of Ruth is comprehended as a narrative or wisdom genre has no bearing on its canonicity. The text's canonical placement⁴⁷ was determined before understanding

⁴⁶ Osborne, 245.

⁴⁷ Brevard Childs notes that his canonical approach theory is based on consistently working within canonical categories. He explains that canonization proper is the final process of the OT theology discipline that defines the scope of the authoritative literature. See Brevard Childs, *Old Testament Theology in a Canonical Context* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 6. Childs mentions that both Jews and Christians believe that the OT canonical process ended and that a new process began that incorporated rabbinic and evangelical traditions. However, he contends that modern OT theology interpretation is a Christian enterprise due to its relationship with the NT and the life of the church. See Childs, 7–8. He agrees that there is a relationship

and labeling its genre. Köstenberger and Patterson explain that “canon” comes from a Hebrew word meaning “reed.” The reed was used as a measuring device, and this idea was carried over into the Greek culture, where canon was used as a standard for grouping books according to their standards and authority.⁴⁸ The Book of Ruth’s canonical placement is in three different locations based on the document where it is located. The LXX, the Christian Bible, and the Roman Catholic Bible⁴⁹ place Ruth after Judges and before 1 Samuel, the Hebrew Bible places Ruth after Proverbs, and the Talmud⁵⁰ situates Ruth before the Psalter. Unlike other books, the Book of Ruth’s canonicity is not disputed by Jews or Christians. Hubbard notes that Ruth frequently mentions Yahweh’s name, embodies Jewish and Christian traditions, recalls both Judges and Samuel, speaks of David’s ancestors, and provides hope for the coming Messiah.⁵¹ What is of

between the two canons; however, a proper OT theology would reflect only on the OT and not Christianize it. See Childs, 9. It is a tenet of the canonical approach that a person theologically explores the OT as it has been shaped and received. The shape of the OT canon was a process involving realigning independent books into canonical categories (Torah, Prophets, and Wisdom). See Childs, 13. He comments that the emphasis on the OT canon concentrates on a process that recognizes that divine truth acquired its authoritative form as it was received and transmitted by a community of faith. See Childs, 14.

⁴⁸ Köstenberger, and Patterson, 152.

⁴⁹ The Roman Catholic Bible is consistent with the LXX, which also influenced the Latin Vulgate, that places the Book of Ruth after Judges and before 1 Samuel. The positioning reflects the book's setting during the period of the Judges and its thematic transition towards the monarchy, as the book concludes with a genealogy that leads to King David. Ruth, the Moabite, is shown as the great-grandmother of David, establishing a narrative bridge to the Books of Samuel, where David's story becomes central.

⁵⁰ The mentioning of the Babylonian Talmud is not to place the document on the same level as the Hebrew, Greek, Roman Catholic, and Christian Bibles. However, it is mentioned here to note that it reflects a distinction between the Prophets and the Writings. The Talmudic arrangement reveals a liturgical and possible theological reflection of the ancient Israelite community of faith. See Greg Goswell, “The Ordering of the Books of the Canon and the Theological Interpretation of the Old Testament,” *Journal of Theological Interpretation* 13, no. 1 (Spring 2019): 4.

⁵¹ Hubbard, 5.

interest for this dissertation is Ruth's canonical placement and how that placement supports didactic wisdom.

Brevard Childs states that a canonical approach is not a form of structuralism or maintaining formal canonical categories.⁵² He explains that OT theology is unmistakable, stating that Israel's received traditions are the object of theological reflection.⁵³ It is not the events or experiences that form the basis for OT theological reflection; however, they bear witness to Israel's life. Canonization proper is a part of the Old Testament's theological reflection, defining the authoritative literature's parameters. While the Roman Catholic and Christian churches did not dispute Ruth's placement in the Hebrew Bible, the churches based their OT canon on the LXX version of the Hebrew Scriptures. Thus, Ruth was placed after Judges and before 1 Samuel and reinforces the tradition that the biblical text was a narrative concerning itself with law and genealogy. Childs postulates that Jewish scholars did not involve themselves with biblical theology. He notes that Jews understand the OT as a continuity between scripture and tradition and its role as an authoritative commentary.⁵⁴ Additionally, this Jewish view does not include the coming of Christ, which Childs calls a "Christian enterprise."⁵⁵ He further writes that OT

⁵² Childs, 6.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁵⁵ There are some criticisms associated with Childs' canon concept. The first is that he has not adequately explained the canon concept. James Barr comments that Childs' canon treatment is "vaguely and unanalytically treated." See James Barr, "Childs' Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture," *JSOT* 5, no. 16 (1980): 13. He explains that Childs' treatment of the canon is sporadic going from a sense of a scripture boundary, sometimes to a final form of the book, sometimes an abstract idea (canon without a definite article), and to more than a context than a unity of books or a final form of words. He further remarks that Childs' vagueness is revealed in his treatment of "integrity, canonical integrity, and canonical intentionality." See Barr, 13. Dale Brueggemann tentatively agrees that Childs' "canon language is slippery." See Dale Brueggemann, "Brevard Childs' Canon Criticism: An Example of Post-Critical Naiveté," *JETS* 32, no. 3 (Sept. 1989): 315. It is overly broad, undefined leaving the reader frustrated. The

theology in Christian scripture functions as a pre-Jesus witness; however, in the Hebrew Bible, it is a testimony to the Yahweh of Israel.⁵⁶ Therefore, the Old Testament canonical approach takes the Hebrew scriptures as a preserved oral tradition affirming the testimony to the Yahweh of Israel.

The work done by Brevard Childs, while contested by some scholars, helps to understand the Book of Ruth's canonical placement in the Hebrew Bible. The biblical text is included in the Megilloth, or five festal scrolls, that places Ruth after Proverbs and before Ecclesiastes. This placement reveals that Jewish tradition did not perceive the Book of Ruth as prominently speaking about the law and genealogy but that it has wisdom qualities that rank the text along with the other Wisdom literature. Greg Goswell explains that the Hebrew Bible is divided into three sections, with the Book of Ruth in the Writings section. A significance of the Writings section is that it provides careful guidance for daily life based on the fear of Yahweh.⁵⁷ He notes that Ruth's placement after Proverbs suggests that Ruth is "viewed as a real-life example of the

second criticism is Childs' handling of historical criticism. Barr explains that contributions made by critical studies have been acknowledged; however, Childs seems disillusioned with historical study. See Barr, 15. Childs discounts claims made by the historical-critical method to its validity as the pathway to meaning. Brueggeman notes that Childs accepts the main claims of the critical approach; however, he posits that what the text says is not what the author, editor, or community intended. See Brueggeman, 314. This is readily apparent in Childs' contention that some OT books have not lent themselves to historical analysis (Zechariah). A third criticism is Childs' position that the Christian OT is a Christian enterprise and the confusion concerning OT theology stems from a reluctance to acknowledge the presence of Christian assumptions. See Childs, 7–8. However, the Christian OT closely follows the Hebrew Bible. It includes the Torah, History, Wisdom, and the Major/Minor Prophets. The prominent differences between the Hebrew and Christian Bible are the ordering of the books, division of the books (the Christian Bible divides Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles; the Hebrew Bible treats each as one book), and textual traditions (the Christian OT is based on the MT, a later textual tradition of the Tanakh).

⁵⁶ Childs, 9.

⁵⁷ Goswell, 11–2.

piety taught in Proverbs and embodied in the exemplary woman of Proverbs 31.”⁵⁸ The Book of Ruth is a persona of Wisdom literature containing themes common to the other wisdom books. Goswell contends that the opposing placements (the Hebrew Bible focuses on the wisdom ideal, and the Christian Bible focuses on the salvation-historical aspect) do not indicate a controversy but an affirmation of ethics and biblical theology.⁵⁹ The book’s canonical placement affects how the reader interprets and understands the text and its theology.⁶⁰ They are not incompatible with each other but reveal how a community understood the biblical text. For the Jewish community, the Book of Ruth is understood for its wisdom qualities.

Comprehending the Book of Ruth’s theological themes is a final hermeneutical trait. The biblical text contains many themes that resonate with the ancient Jewish religious community. The dissertation focuses on the themes evident in Ruth’s placement in the Megilloth after Proverbs.⁶¹ The first theme is divine providence. Ruth supplies three everyday human needs:

⁵⁸ Goswell, 15. Goswell is not arguing that the Book of Ruth should be viewed as wisdom literature, but he agrees that the biblical text does provide a guidance for behavior worthy for the readers. Murphy discusses the characteristics that make up the “Hebrew historical short story” genre for the Book of Ruth. See Roland Murphy, *Wisdom Literature: Job, Proverbs, Ruth, Canticles, Ecclesiastes, and Esther* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, Co., 1981), 85. Two characteristics are the distinctive literary style and the entertaining and instructive purposes for Ruth. He further remarks that the theme of *hesed* derives from wisdom circles ((Ruth 1:8; 3:10; cf. Prov 21:21). See Murphy, 87. In the glossary for *Wisdom Literature*, wisdom saying is defined as a didactic saying based on an experience or tradition that provides a value or lesson. The wisdom saying may not have common currency, it is directly didactic, it teaches, and does not leave an issue as an open question. See Murphy, 184.

⁵⁹ Goswell., 17.

⁶⁰ Goswell notes that the different perspectives on the same book due to various canonical placements does not imply that the biblical text is confusing; however, it is indicative that more than one significant theme is at play in the rich narrative about Yahweh’s providence towards a distressed Israelite family. See Goswell, 17.

⁶¹ This section will concentrate solely on four themes (divine providence, loyalty, redemption, and inclusion of others). A more thorough evaluation of wisdom themes found in Ruth are handled in Chapter Three.

food, marriage, and children. Hubbard comments that Yahweh's divine providence in the Book of Ruth resolves those needs even when no resolution is apparent to the characters.⁶² The rescue from famine (Ruth 1:1), the trip back to Bethlehem (1:6, 22), the reversal of Naomi's fortune (1:22; 2:18; 3:17; 4:13–17), and the reversal of Ruth's fate (1:9, 22; 2:8–9; 3:1; 4:2–10, 13). Block explains that Yahweh's divine providence is revealed through the book's natural events, seemingly chance events, in people's delicate and daring schemes, and through the legal process.⁶³ Through the Book of Ruth, Yahweh sustains and nurtures His people through ordinary means and relationships, albeit subtly.

A second theme is loyalty. The biblical Hebrew *hesed*⁶⁴ is used throughout the Book of Ruth to denote lovingkindness, faithfulness, and loyalty in action and attitude. Ruth's loyalty to Naomi, Boaz's kindness to Ruth, and the redemption of Naomi's family illustrate this theme. Through *hesed*, Yahweh's divine intentionality is revealed, and He blesses those faithful to Him. Through Boaz's, Ruth's, and Naomi's actions, *hesed* is portrayed through their interpersonal and familial obligations. Bush notes that the *hesed* exhibited by these three people guides how they treat others.⁶⁵ LaCocque writes that through *hesed*, Ruth reveals how a non-Judean can show Judeans how rigidity to the law can be broken by going beyond what the law requires.⁶⁶ The role of *hesed* will be further evaluated in chapter seven.

⁶² Hubbard, 63.

⁶³ Block, 608–9.

⁶⁴ A comprehensive lexical study will be performed on *hesed* in Chapter Seven. The purpose is to engage the Hebrew noun and reveal its rich meaning. The mentioning of *hesed* is to serve an introductory purpose.

⁶⁵ Bush, 52.

⁶⁶ LaCocque, 28.

A third theme is redemption. While Yahweh's divine providence leads to redemption, Boaz's act as a kinsman redeemer (*gō'ēl*)⁶⁷ solidifies the theme. Boaz's willingness to assume this role ensures the family line and property continuity. Boaz's actions are not covered in Leviticus concerning levirate marriage. However, they are seen as a form of redemption because he is redeeming ancestral land and Ruth. Hubbard explains that the *gō'ēl* obligation "also justifies Ruth's marriage proposal to Boaz (3:9), although the OT nowhere else identifies marriage to a relative's widow as part of the redeemer's duty."⁶⁸

A final theme pertains to the inclusion of others. The Book of Ruth concentrates on the Israelite community and includes Ruth, a Moabite. This Israelite-Moabite relationship gives prominence to the Israelite community accepting foreigners. There is a complex and challenging history between Israel and Moab; therefore, Ruth's inclusion into the community represents a pinnacle for the Israelites during the post-exilic period. Inclusivity would culminate with Yahweh accepting all people in the New Testament and future generations. Block notes that Yahweh's grace knows no boundaries and is exemplified by Israel accepting a despised Moabite.⁶⁹

This brief discussion is not meant to be an exhaustive list of themes in the Book of Ruth. However, it does highlight the more common ones mentioned by commentators and journal articles. Chapter four will exhaustively look at the wisdom themes associated with the biblical text, and in chapter seven, a more detailed evaluation of *hesed*, *gō'ēl*, divine providence, and the fear of Yahweh will be given.

⁶⁷ A comprehensive lexical study will be engaged for this Hebrew noun in Chapter Seven. The mentioning of *gō'ēl* here is to serve an introductory purpose.

⁶⁸ Robert Hubbard, Jr., "גֹּאֵל," in *NIDOTTE Vol. 1*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 776.

⁶⁹ Block, 615.

In some portions of the background study, Megilloth has been mentioned. It is a formidable part of the Hebrew Bible, has a direct bearing on how the Book of Ruth is to be read and interpreted, and requires a discussion about it.

Megilloth Background Study

The Megilloth is a collection of five festal scrolls (Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, and Esther). The five scrolls are read during specific Jewish festivals: the Song of Songs during Passover, Ruth at Pentecost, Lamentations during the Ninth of Ab, Ecclesiastes at the Feast of Tabernacles, and Esther during Purim. These scrolls play an essential role in the Hebrew Bible and Jewish liturgy. The Megilloth's diverse literary styles and themes touch on love, loss, wisdom, and identity. Before a discussion can begin explaining Megilloth's significance in relating the Book of Ruth to Wisdom literature, its evaluation must ensue. The analysis will focus on its literary characteristics, historical context, theological implications, and how it functions in Jewish liturgy.

The first identifies the Megilloth's literary characteristics by exploring each festal scroll. The Song of Songs is one love poem with twenty-three parts expressed conversationally.⁷⁰ It describes King Solomon's love for a Shulammitte girl. The king comes in disguise to her family's vineyard, wins her heart, and makes her his bride. Initially, the biblical text is interpreted as an expression of human love; however, a careful evaluation reveals that it speaks of Yahweh's

⁷⁰ Tremper Longman III, *CBC, Vol. 6: Song of Songs*, ed. Philip Comfort (Carol Stream: Tyndale House Publishers, 2006), 343. Longman notes that the Song of Songs is composed of twenty-three poems united into a single composition. However, there is not a consensus on the exact number of poems. Murphy notes thirty parts in his structure for the Song of Songs. See Murphy, 100. Barry Webb notes that Marcia Falks' sensitive research of the biblical text revealed thirty-one poems based on a literary and structural analysis. See Barry Webb, *Five Festal Garments, Christian Reflections on The Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther*, ed. D. A. Carson (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 20.

relationship with His people. Tremper Longman notes that the overall canon speaks about people's relationship with Yahweh expressed as a marriage. The Song of Songs teaches sensual, intimate, and exclusive love, developing into an understanding of marriage to Yahweh.⁷¹ Barry Webb comments that while the biblical text is about love, it is not a treatise or a sex manual. However, the text speaks about two people revealing their love for each other and the challenges (Song 5:7; 8:6) associated with their love.⁷² Within its context, the Song of Songs shows how people can be in or remember how to love.

The Book of Ruth is a biblical narrative that concentrates on lovingkindness, kinsman redemption, divine providence, and inclusivity of foreigners (see the Book of Ruth Background Study). While it appears to have been written during the twelfth century, it was written much later⁷³ with one aspect of countering exclusivity exhibited in Ezra and Nehemiah. As mentioned, the Book of Ruth has been diversely located, even within the Megilloth. Liturgically, the biblical text follows the Song of Songs. Chronologically, it is the first festal scroll that follows Proverbs. Webb calls Ruth the "scroll of kindness,"⁷⁴ but its pages speak more than about kindness but how to live one's life reverencing Yahweh.

Lamentations is a series of laments reflecting on Jerusalem's destruction. The text is an order of grief composed of five acrostic poems. Webb explains that each chapter comprises twenty-two verses (the third chapter contains sixty-six verses, but it is a collection of twenty-two sets with three verses each) following the twenty-two Hebrew consonants.⁷⁵ Four chapters use a

⁷¹ Longman III, 343.

⁷² Webb, 18.

⁷³ See Lau, 45; Jones, 180; LaCocque, 19; and Bush, 20 and 30.

⁷⁴ Webb, 37.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 60.

limping meter, a cadence used in funeral dirges.⁷⁶ Laments were used throughout the ancient Near East; therefore, the biblical author would have known about this literary form. Elmer Martens notes the significance of using acrostics. He explains that they provide a distinctive framework, aids in memorization, are pleasing to the reader, and that ordinary language cannot adequately express the subject.⁷⁷ For instance, Jerusalem's destruction was so tragic that ordinary language could not contain the event's scope. Therefore, an acrostic was used to take the reader step-by-step to give justice to the biblical event.

Ecclesiastes, or Qohelet⁷⁸, is wisdom literature depicting the skeptical and essential view of human wisdom and divine providence. It is a compilation of Qohelet's wisdom teachings. His teachings approach different aspects of life, pondering life's aimless cycles and paradoxes, revealing that life is to be enjoyed by the wise person because it is a gift from Yahweh. The pinnacle is that Yahweh will judge all persons; therefore, a life of obedience is crucial. While a person cannot hold all true wisdom, what is learned provides a better outcome than what a foolish person will receive during judgment. Therefore, the entire book is essential to comprehend the relationship between wisdom and obedience and reveal the aimlessness of

⁷⁶ William Andrews notes that the limping meter, or *qinah*, is a poetic line with two unequal parts. See William Andrews, Jr., "Lamentations, Book of," in *LBD*, ed. John Barry et al. (Bellingham: Lexham Press, 2016), "Poetic Features." *HALOT* describes קִינָה as a "funeral song, dirge." See Ludwig Koehler, and Walter Baumgartner, "קִינָה," *HALOT*, 5th ed. (Leiden: Brill Publishing, 2000), 1097.

⁷⁷ Elmer Martens, *CBC, Vol. 8: Lamentations*, ed. Philip Comfort (Carol Stream, Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 2005), 560.

⁷⁸ In biblical Hebrew, the book's title is *Qoheleth* (קהלת) "a preacher" and this is a person who convenes and speaks at an assembly). The Greek counterpart is Ἐκκλησιαστής ("preacher" and is derived from "assembly"). Throughout the dissertation the biblical Hebrew designation will be used.

depending on one's human achievements. Ecclesiastes is a challenging book to understand.⁷⁹ However, a careful and diligent study reveals that wisdom guidance is peppering its pages.

Esther is a historical novella describing Israel's deliverance from Persia. It is set during the Persian empire and tells the history of Queen Esther and Mordecai. Though Yahweh is not mentioned in the biblical text, His divine sovereignty and providence are displayed. Vashti's dismissal, Esther's regal position, Ahasuerus's indebtedness to Mordecai discovered during a sleepless night, and the miraculous deliverance of the Jews all reveal Yahweh's sovereignty over and providence for His people. Webb notes that there are three rounds of feasting in Esther, each associated with a reversal that affirms the text's central theme, deliverance.⁸⁰ Murphy notes that the Book of Esther's setting is the Purim celebration. Esther was written to explain why the Purim celebration existed.⁸¹ Carey Moore notes that some Jews and Christians took offense at canonizing Esther due to its affiliation with a non-Jewish celebration that encourages excessive drinking.⁸² He additionally elucidates that Purim has a Babylonian origin stemming from the

⁷⁹ Longman explains that Ecclesiastes is difficult because of its many interpretive questions and lack of consensus among scholars and commentators. See Tremper Longman III, *CBC, Vol. 6: Ecclesiastes*, ed. Philip Comfort et al. (Carol Stream: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 2006), 253. Webb notes, "Ecclesiastes has effectively scattered the academic field rather than drawing it together around any widely held conclusions. The only point on which there is anything approaching consensus is that it is a relatively late work, in which the kind of confident wisdom associated with Solomon is viewed rather critically in the light of radically changed circumstances." See Webb, 83.

⁸⁰ Webb, 115–6.

⁸¹ Murphy, 156. Murphy explains that the Purim celebration does not have the Torah behind it, and the Book of Esther reveals why the celebration came about and must be celebrated. He states, "The feast itself is probably of non-Jewish origin, although there is no certainty on this score. It would have been adopted by the Jews and provided with the Esther story as an explanation of the feast and the dates and manner of its celebration." See Murphy, 156.

⁸² Carey Moore, "Esther, Book of," in *AYBD*, ed. David Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 637.

word *pûru*, meaning “lot.”⁸³ A suggestion for the festival’s origin is the parallel between Esther and Mordecai, the Babylonian deities Ishtar and Marduk.⁸⁴ Webb comments that the Jewish festival Purim is a celebration of deliverance from the Persians and is a counterpart to the Passover celebration, which is the deliverance from Egypt.⁸⁵ He notes that the Passover on one end and the Purim on the other end, the festivals cover the entire Israelite history and a deliverance story with a beginning and an end.⁸⁶

Second, historical context is in order. The Megilloth covers various historical contexts from the Solomonic period to the post-exilic era. Furthering the challenge is choosing what order to accept. The Talmudic tractate *Bava Bathra* 14b⁸⁷, considered the earliest witness to the Ketuvim, places the Book of Ruth before Psalms. The five festal scrolls are not listed together but are arranged chronologically according to the traditional author and setting.⁸⁸ The Talmud dates to the fifth-sixth century A.D.; however, the traditions are dated to the second and third centuries C.E. The Talmudic *Berakhot* 57b does not include the Book of Ruth. Amy Erickson notes that the minor tractate *Soferim* is a composite work that is difficult to date.⁸⁹ Additionally,

⁸³ Moore, 637.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Webb, 111.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Julius Steinberg is an advocate for the Ketuvim ordering based on the *Bava Bathra* 14b. While this order is not grounded liturgically, it is theologically. The significance of the Talmudic tractate, for Steinberg, is that other ordering systems originated from the Babylonian text or were a derivation from it. For further reading into Steinberg’s work, see Julius Steinberg, *Die Ketuvim: ihr Aufbau und ihre Botschaft*. Bonner Biblische Beiträge 152. Hamburg: Philo, 2006.

⁸⁸ Amy Erickson, and Andrew Davis, “Recent Research on the Megilloth (Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther),” *Currents in Biblical Research* 14.3 (2016): 301.

⁸⁹ Erickson, and Davis, 302.

it does not include the Book of Ruth. Timothy Stone argues that the Megilloth is a part of the Ketuvim and points to the MT as the basis of his argument. He notes that the MT follows the Aleppo Codex and predates the Megilloth's reading liturgically.⁹⁰ Stone comments that the liturgical practices arose because of their relationship with the Hebrew canon. Using the Book of Ruth as a test case, Stone contends that MT is preferable because Ruth had been purposely placed at the end of Proverbs due to textual connections.⁹¹ He further explains that Ruth 4 is the closest lexical and thematic connection to Prov. 31:23, which talks about the husband at the gate among the elders. It is through the textual connections that anchors Ruth to the end of Proverbs and the Writings.⁹² Therefore, logically, Ruth belongs at the end of Proverbs because it is a summation of the wisdom taught in Proverbs. Stone's research reveals that the Megilloth is not a collection of documents before the first century A.D., showing compilation activity involving the biblical texts. This observation indicates that the Hebrew Bible did not originate in a fixed order. The books were arranged according to their meaning. Stone notes that the canon's reconfiguration suggests there was no original order, but they "grew up together much like a forest of trees."⁹³

The third is to understand the Megilloth's theological implications. Each book within the Megilloth reveals a different feature of the relationship between Yahweh and His people, wisdom's nature, and the challenges associated with human emotions and experiences. The biblical authors provide instruction and guidance, but it is up to the reader to comprehend the divine-human interaction in each scroll.

⁹⁰ Steinberg, and Stone, 176.

⁹¹ Ibid., 181–2.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid., 183.

The Song of Songs strongly attests to the goodness of bodily existence and sexual relationships (love between a husband and a wife) as intended by Yahweh and represents His love. It is wisdom guiding the reader against seeking a higher form of religion.⁹⁴ The text downplays the belief that being single is the best condition for a person. The relationship described in the biblical text affirms Yahweh's intention for a man and a woman to unite into a single flesh (Gen. 2:18). Marriage's consummation through a sexual relationship strengthens the unity between a husband and wife and obeys Yahweh's instruction to be fruitful and multiply the earth. As a singular literary work, the Song of Songs theologically reveals Yahweh's love for Israel. However, in the broader Old Testament text, the Song of Songs represents a whole Old Testament theology that involves Yahweh interacting with His people.

The Book of Ruth is associated with the Torah in the Hebrew canon. Within its pages, levirate marriage, recovering property, and the prohibition against marrying foreigners are some of the legal issues dealt with by the biblical text. The Book of Ruth does not seek to abolish the law but to show how some of the Torah is misconstrued and against Yahweh's purpose. It aims to show that its characters are faithful to the law and not viewed as lawbreakers. Webb comments that the Book of Ruth exemplifies *hesed*, a kindness rich in love that fulfills the law.⁹⁵ For a community of returnees looking to restore Israel, the text's message and examples guide its readers to understand how Yahweh's redemption of His people can be reflected through the inclusivity of foreigners and the loving kindness between themselves.

Much like the Book of Ruth, Lamentations has been in various positions within the Hebrew canon. The LXX places the biblical text after Jeremiah because of its perceived

⁹⁴ Webb, 31–2.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 55.

association with the prophet.⁹⁶ While this may seem logical, there is no consensus about Lamentations' authorship because one is not specified in the text.⁹⁷ Another location is in the Ketuvim.⁹⁸ A literary and historical analysis reveals how Lamentations provides a historical reaction to Jerusalem's destruction. Through the acrostic poems, the biblical author tries to capture the immense tragedy of Jerusalem's destruction. In a broader context, some scholars have attempted to show how Lamentations theology is affected by Deuteronomic and Zion theology.⁹⁹ Webb notes that Deuteronomic theology assumes a relationship between obedience and blessing. However, Deuteronomic theology could not explain why Josiah, a righteous king, would violently die, lead to Jerusalem's destruction, and thrust Israel into a theological tailspin.¹⁰⁰ It is best to understand Deuteronomic theology as a reference point for Lamentations. With Zion theology, an attempt is made to create a relationship between Lamentations and Psalms 46, 48, and 76; however, the problem is that a theology and history clash is involved.¹⁰¹ Webb explains that the Psalms reveal Zion's ability to be unconquerable. If Zion is to be unconquerable, how then could it have fallen? While Zion theology can identify the biblical event's tragic aspects, it cannot explain the reason for its occasion. Webb comments that

⁹⁶ Martens explains that in the LXX, Lamentations follows Jeremiah because Lamentation's author is stated as Jeremiah in the Septuagint and because it is a good sequel to Jeremiah's description of the Babylonian destruction. See Martens, 558.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 557.

⁹⁸ H. Eldon Clem notes how the Megilloth (Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther) are festal scrolls located in the Ketuvim (Writings) in modern printed editions of the Hebrew Bible. See H. Eldon Clem, "Megilloth," in *AYBD*, ed. David Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 680.

⁹⁹ See Albrektson, B. *Studies in the Text and Theology of the Book of Lamentations*. Lund: Gleerup, 1963; and Gottwald, N. K. *Studies in the Book of Lamentations*. Studies in Biblical Theology 14. Revised edition. London: SCM, 1962.

¹⁰⁰ Webb, 76.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 77.

Lamentations is a product of applied theology. He notes that the biblical text takes all the OT theological resources and applies them to the present problem.¹⁰² Thus, Lamentations can be read as a wisdom discourse by explaining suffering and how to respond to it in the face of Yahweh's wrath.

Ecclesiastes is a problematic book and seems out of place within the Megilloth.¹⁰³ Chloe Sun comments that the biblical text does not belong to a historical narrative or poetry. Yahweh's covenant with Israel, salvation history, and national interest are absent from its pages.¹⁰⁴ If it is different and challenging than the other books, why was it included in the Megilloth? The reason, and theological implication, is its identity as a wisdom genre, which is the same for Proverbs. While the Book of Ruth does reveal aspects noted in the other Megilloth scrolls, it has ties with Proverbs through wisdom themes. Ecclesiastes operates in the same fashion. Sun concludes that Ecclesiastes is included in the Megilloth because of its dialectical nature, willingness to speak in opposition, and functions to critique other voices within its pages and in the Megilloth.¹⁰⁵ However, why is Ecclesiastes associated with the Festival of Tabernacles (Booths)? Webb explains that Ecclesiastes fully showed how Israel recognized its worth by

¹⁰² Webb, 78.

¹⁰³ Longman explains that Ecclesiastes is difficult because of its many interpretive questions and lack of consensus among scholars and commentators. See Longman, *Ecclesiastes*, 253. Webb notes, "Ecclesiastes has effectively scattered the academic field rather than drawing it together around any widely held conclusions. The only point on which there is anything approaching consensus is that it is a relatively late work, in which the kind of confident wisdom associated with Solomon is viewed rather critically in the light of radically changed circumstances." See Webb, 83. Due to the other scroll's context, Timothy Stone notes that "Ecclesiastes is the odd book of the Megilloth and the OT as a whole." See Timothy Stone, *The Compilational History of the Megilloth: Canon, Contoured Intertextuality and Meaning in the Writings* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 205–7.

¹⁰⁴ Chloe Sun, "Ecclesiastes among the Megilloth: Death as the Interthematic Link," *Bulletin for Bible Research* 27.2 (2017): 186.

¹⁰⁵ Sun, 186.

taking Ecclesiastes' message to heart.¹⁰⁶ Ecclesiastes' somber message places an anchor on joy by reflecting on Israel's wilderness history that involved the brevity of life, fearing Yahweh, and obeying His commandments.¹⁰⁷ During the harvest celebration, Ecclesiastes served as a reminder of Israel's past life and challenges. Ecclesiastes theological implication is that it provides guidance on properly expressing joy, fearing Yahweh, limiting human wisdom, and cautions against self-sufficiency. Miles Custis and James Reitman state, "Once believers in Yahweh, like Qoheleth, acknowledge that self-sufficient schemes will lead to failure, they can overcome their innate human limitations by fearing *Yahweh*. In the process, people realize their preordained purposes as agents of *Yahweh* and are invited to fully face their depravity, forsake self-sufficiency, and fear *Yahweh* (7:15–29)."¹⁰⁸ It is a reminder brought up during the Feast of Tabernacles. Webb states, "It was a lesson they needed to hear again in the context of harvest celebration, lest being able to eat and drink and find satisfaction in their work should be mistaken for an accomplishment rather than a gift and lead them away from *Yahweh* rather than to him. It was a danger against which the Torah itself warned them (Deut. 6:10–12; 8:10–20)."¹⁰⁹ Any other way would lead to *hebel* ("meaningless, vanity, futility").

Esther is a book about reversals, national interest, salvation history, the law, banquets, and extravagance. It is because of its content that caused serious questioning on how it related to the rest of the Hebrew Bible. Exodus 17:14 sheds light on why Esther is included in the Hebrew

¹⁰⁶ Webb, 106. He, additionally, comments that the Feast of Tabernacles is a joyous occasion in the mainstream of Israel's religious life, which reflects on Israel's different past that involved living in booths in the wilderness. See Webb, 106.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Miles Custis, and James Reitman, "Ecclesiastes, Book of," ed. John Barry et al. In *LBD* (Bellingham: Lexham Press, 2016), "Message and Purpose."

¹⁰⁹ Webb, 106–7.

Bible but does not reveal its theological relevance to the Hebrew Scriptures. First is to note how the conflicts in Esther relate to Yahweh's war against Amalek. Webb states that the theological reasoning for the holy war is because "Through Mordecai and Esther, Yahweh continues the war with Amalek he began with Moses. Mordecai's refusal to bow is simply the trigger that opens the next chapter in the conflict."¹¹⁰ The reversal of the Jew's predicament in Esther points back to Yahweh's promise to Abraham that He would protect the nation against enemies despite the Jews being far from the ideal Yahweh-fearing nation that was to be Abraham's offspring. The Jews' deliverance is a revelation of Yahweh's providence, and the text's other biblical events show that Israel is Yahweh's chosen people.

The theological implications tell how each book in the Megilloth affects OT theology. Another analysis involves how the Jewish liturgy handled the five festal scrolls. The Megilloth has a pronounced liturgical function in Jewish tradition. Each book is read during a specific festival that helps shape the Jewish people's spiritual and communal identity. The Song of Songs is the first of the five festal scrolls associated with the Passover celebration, a calm, meditative, and deeply religious occasion. John Goldingay explains that the Song of Songs is associated with Passover because it expresses love. It interprets Yahweh's love for Israel beginning with the exodus.¹¹¹ The Book of Ruth is the second festal scroll associated with Pentecost, seven weeks after Passover. The Jewish harvest season ends with Pentecost. Therefore, scenes of harvest and gleaning in the Book of Ruth resonate with the Pentecost celebration. Goldingay comments that "Pentecost is also an occasion to celebrate the giving of the Torah at Sinai, and Ruth shows a number of themes from the Torah in action. These include rules about gleaning and about

¹¹⁰ Webb, 127.

¹¹¹ John Goldingay, "Megilloth," in *LBD*, ed. John Barry et al. (Bellingham: Lexham Press, 2016), "Song of Songs."

marrying a relative.”¹¹² Webb notes that Ruth read during the Feast of Weeks is significant because the feast is a reflection of the giving of the law seven weeks after the Hebrew exodus from Egypt, apart from the seven weeks associated with the barley harvest (Deut. 16:9) .¹¹³ Lamentations is the third scroll read on the Ninth of Ab (a fasting and mourning day), commemorating Jerusalem’s destruction in 587 B.C. Webb comments that the fast on the Ninth of Ab is not instituted in Scripture but serves as a solemn reminder of the pain and suffering the Jewish people have suffered from 587 B.C. to the Holocaust.¹¹⁴ Ecclesiastes is the fourth festal scroll joined with the Feast of Tabernacles celebration. It is the last harvest celebration and is joyous. It is perplexing that Ecclesiastes would be attached to a joyous festival. However, Ecclesiastes is wisdom that teaches how to express joy properly. Goldingay remarks that Ecclesiastes guides how not to rejoice in things lacking sustenance and embrace joy in the things Yahweh gives.¹¹⁵ Webb notes that Ecclesiastes’ incorporation with the Feast of Tabernacles reveals how Israel embraced its wisdom themes and its role in Israel’s religious life.¹¹⁶ Finally, Esther is the fifth scroll and is associated with Purim. It is a secular, noisy, and merry festival strikingly different from Passover. While the Passover celebrates Israel’s deliverance from Egypt, the Purim celebrates Israel’s deliverance from Persia. Unlike some of the other scrolls, Purim is mandated by Scripture to remember Israel’s near annihilation in Persia.¹¹⁷

¹¹² Goldingay, “Ruth.”

¹¹³ Webb, 55.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 59–60.

¹¹⁵ Goldingay, “Ecclesiastes.”

¹¹⁶ Webb, 106.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 111.

In concluding the Megilloth discussion, a brief point should be made concerning its use with the Book of Ruth and didactic wisdom. Previously discussed were the Megilloth's chronological (MT) and liturgical order. In addition, it was revealed that the Hebrew Bible's ordering was not set in stone, and some books changed locations to reflect associated meanings with other books over time. The Megilloth's chronological order is concentrated on to support the dissertation's thesis due to the Book of Ruth's placement as the first book following Proverbs and before Ecclesiastes. This order supports the argument that the Book of Ruth contains wisdom themes found in Wisdom literature. The liturgical order is essential for different reasons. Again, it is an ordering of books that fit the Jewish liturgical needs.

The Megilloth is a complex collection that attracts scholarly attention. It has a vast historical context with wide-ranging theological implications. As a liturgical collection, it holds a special place in Jewish religious practice and a fertile ground for Christian exegesis.

Intertextuality: Reading between the Texts

Of the many tools used to construct this dissertation and defend its thesis, one is intertextuality or inter-themes. It is a useful analytical tool for understanding how biblical texts interact with each other as with extrabiblical and ancient Near Eastern texts. Biblical intertextuality shows a relationship between texts within their meaning, cultural context, and historical provenance. This dissertation section aims to discuss intertextuality's historical context and methodological implications.

To understand biblical intertextuality, it is necessary to comprehend the historical context in which the Hebrew Scripture was composed. The Hebrew Bible unifies diverse texts comprising various genres with a rich history. P. E. Koptak explains that intertextuality is the

meaningful relationship between biblical and extrabiblical texts that can be identified.¹¹⁸ It is an interpretive rule that the context's interpretation is determined by its meaning and interrelation with the Hebrew Scripture. Intertextuality's concept can be traced back to the works of Plato and Aristotle. However, the first person to coin the term 'intertextuality' is thought to be French linguist and philosopher Julia Kristeva in her 1966 essay "Word, Dialogue, and Novel."¹¹⁹ Kristeva expounds on Russian Mikhail Bakhtin's and Ferdinand de Saussure's work, which explained that specific texts could be used to define or interpret other specific texts (dialogicity) based on structuralism founded on the concept of 'sign' (a signifier and signification). Kristeva's use of Saussure's structuralism meant that she could challenge the relationship between a signifier and signification, diachronically or synchronically.¹²⁰ The dialogic approach explains that a text enters an environment of competing texts and that its contribution is reflected in itself and its response.¹²¹ This approach would allow interpreters to identify connections between texts by parsing the reuse of well-known terms and explaining the purpose for reusing the words. Richard Schultz explains that Kristeva focused on the intersection of literary textual planes rather than a singular literary point (a fixed meaning), which is not dependent on the authors, readers,

¹¹⁸ P. E. Koptak, "Intertextuality," in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Wisdom, Poetry, and Writings*, eds. Tremper Longman III and Peter Enns (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 325.

¹¹⁹ There is a debate on whether Julia Kristeva is the first person to recognize this literary technique. Some argue that Roland Barthes is the first person to define intertextuality and it was Kristeva who popularized the literary term. David Yoon notes that it was Roland Barthes who was the inspiration for Kristeva's work and that Barthes' definition for intertextuality occurred after Kristeva's in 1973. See David Yoon, "The Ideological Inception of Intertextuality and Its Dissonance in Current Biblical Studies," *Currents in Biblical Research* 12.1 (2013): 59–60. Additionally, while she may or may not have been the first to coin the term, her work is based on a previous concept developed by Mikhail Bakhtin.

¹²⁰ Jordan Scheetz, *The Concept of Canonical Intertextuality and the Book of Daniel* (Cambridge: James Clarke Co. Ltd., 2012), 4–5.

¹²¹ Koptak, 327.

and cultural context.¹²² This literary shift prioritizes the text's use from its users and negates intersubjectivity. It places a prominent weight on semantics rather than a user's subjective understanding. David Yoon notes that intertextuality was a response to the social and political environment in Europe and attempted to wrestle control from the author (authority) and give it to the reader (civilian).¹²³ Intertextuality has garnered increased attention from literalists and biblical scholars in the last three decades. Schultz notes that due to intertextuality's popularity, it has developed a perplexing array of meanings and uses.¹²⁴ Therefore, due to intertextuality's modern conception and increased usage, the term can be broadly defined as all the possible relationships between texts for inner-biblical exegesis, concentrating on linkages that may or may not have been authorially intended.¹²⁵ However, how does a person apply intertextuality in research?

Three methods can be used for intertextuality: diachronically, synchronically, and canonically. The diachronic approach considers the historical and cultural context in which the text was written. Michael Fishbane uses an example of this approach with his inner-biblical exegesis explanation. Fishbane explains that the Hebrew Bible is a composite source, so separating biblical from post-biblical materials cannot occur but relies on discerning its own levels.¹²⁶ For Fishbane, understanding a text involves comprehending its biblical *traditum* from its post-biblical *tradition*. He notes that understanding a scribe's role in the text's transmission

¹²² Richard Schultz, "Intertextuality, Canon, and 'Undecidability,'" *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 20.1 (2010): 21.

¹²³ Yoon, 67.

¹²⁴ Schultz, 22.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

¹²⁶ Michael Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 10.

and corrections regarding the Hebrew Bible is necessary. Scribes were responsible for receiving the texts, studying and copying them, resolving textual challenges, and preserving their meaning. Fishbane notes that the biblical materials' origins and history became scribal manuscripts that future generations use concerning meanings, comments, and corrections. This is exemplified with the MT.¹²⁷ The class of Jewish scribes from the post-exilic period noted in canonical and extra-canonical rabbinic literature were responsible for transforming ancient Israel to ancient Judaism and ancient Israelite exegesis to ancient Jewish exegesis.¹²⁸ For Fishbane, diachrony mattered. Russell Meek affirms that without a diachronic relationship between texts, inner-biblical exegesis cannot happen, and an author cannot develop or expound on a text.¹²⁹ However, he stresses that this is not intertextuality because intertextuality is not burdened with textual origins and influential direction.¹³⁰ However, Geoffrey Miller explains that a diachronic approach to intertextuality requires understanding the alluding text, especially any corrections or exegesis.¹³¹ As such, lexical similarities, thematic parallels, shared genre, and shared structural features are relevant for a diachronic methodology.

A second methodological approach is synchronic. The synchronic approach focuses on the text, not the historical and cultural context. It involves literary criticism to uncover the layers of meaning. This approach is reader-focused, in which the person draws a connection between two or more texts. It does not consider any authorial intention. Miller notes that the synchronic

¹²⁷ Fishbane, 23.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 24.

¹²⁹ Russell Meek, "Inner-Biblical Exegesis, and Inner-Biblical Allusion: The Ethics of a Methodology," *Biblica* 95, no. 2 (2014): 287.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 288.

¹³¹ Geoffrey Miller, "Intertextuality in the Old Testament," *Currents in Biblical Research* 9.3 (2011): 284.

approach helps the researcher explore the inexhaustible meanings characteristic in all texts.¹³²

This approach can be subjective because the reader places a meaning on the text regarding other texts. As such, it opens to an indefinite number of possible meanings. Schultz remarks that this approach is akin to abandoning biblical interpretation and allowing readers free reign to make meaning that could diminish normative theology.¹³³

A third method is the canonical approach. This method considers the text within the biblical canon framework. The text's relationship is analyzed and is influenced by the canonical interpretation. Scheetz notes that canonical intertextuality is the realization that specific biblical texts have been intentionally grouped, reflecting a dialogue of continuity.¹³⁴ Canonical intertextuality is not a source criticism or inner-biblical exegesis. However, the texts exegete other texts within their order and canonical placement. This concept revolves around broader themes, motifs, and structural elements that allow for a holistic interpretation by evaluating how individual biblical texts function within the more extensive collection. It is a concept championed by Brevard Childs. Childs explains that the canonical approach resolves many methodological issues. He asserts that the object of theological reflection is the OT canon, the collection of Israelite traditions. Therefore, the events and experiences behind the text are irrelevant because it is a dynamic witness to the life of Israel.¹³⁵ A concern with this line of reasoning is that the approach imposes a structure on the biblical texts that may not have been authorially intended. Another concern is the anachronistic nature of interpreting older texts viewed by later ones.

¹³² Miller, 284.

¹³³ Schultz, 24.

¹³⁴ Scheetz, 32–3.

¹³⁵ Childs, 6.

Intertextuality is a multifaceted subject that has significant implications for biblical interpretation. It can provide insight into meaning, historical context, and theological reflections. This dissertation will employ a diachronic methodology to reveal how the Book of Ruth's didactic wisdom is associated with Wisdom literature.

Chapter 2

The Role of Wisdom

In this chapter, the role of wisdom will be evaluated within the biblical corpus.¹ Wisdom can be revealed throughout the OT; however, certain books focus entirely on wisdom and its necessity for righteous living.² What is wisdom, and how is it supposed to be used by a person? Roland Murphy notes that wisdom is anything taught by biblical wisdom, an ANE movement associated with sages, or an understanding of reality that counters teaching from another book.³ He explains that wisdom's goal is to instill a sense of order in a person's life through a fundamental, practical, and proper action.⁴ Martin Shields notes that wisdom is taught in the OT to instruct a person on developing practical skills to live a successful, faithful, and obedient life.⁵ Wisdom practiced in a person's life is the pathway to a moral and ethical character.⁶ Wisdom in

¹ Before this chapter begins with a comprehensive exploration of biblical and extra-biblical wisdom, gratitude is given to the many scholars and authors whose works have contributed to the dissertation's composition. Without their published research, composing this dissertation would have been challenging, and some sections nearly impossible to comprehensively analyze. This dissertation's prominent goal is to honor and glorify Yahweh through analyzing the Book of Ruth and its association with Wisdom literature. A second goal is to further the scholarly discussion on the topic while respectfully engaging the work composed by others.

² In the OT, a section of books is called Wisdom literature. These books are Job, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes.

³ Roland Murphy, "Wisdom in the OT," *AYBD*, ed. David Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 920.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Martin Shields, "Wisdom," *LBD*, ed. John Barry et al. (Bellingham: Lexham Press, 2016), "Wisdom in the Bible."

⁶ James Crenshaw notes that wisdom was the formation of a character that primarily took place in the familial setting through instruction. Wisdom focused on the person and not on the society and it was guidance handed down from the parents to their children to form a moral character that was taught in a practical, traditional, and a positive manner. See James Crenshaw, *Old Testament Wisdom: An Introduction* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998), 3. S.

the OT is called חָכְמָה. *HALOT* defines חָכְמָה as “skill in technical matters,” “experience, shrewdness,” “worldly wisdom,” “the pious wisdom of Israel,” “God’s wisdom,” and “wisdom personified.”⁷ The verb’s basic form is “to be/become wise; gain wisdom.”⁸ M. Sæbø notes that חָכְמָה and its variations are found 183 times in Wisdom literature. Sæbø further elaborates that “to be/become wise” is objectively determinable whose presence makes things possible, and its absence prohibits things.⁹ Tremper Longman points out the most crucial wisdom aspect, which comes from Yahweh.¹⁰ He explains that since wisdom comes from Yahweh. A person seeking wisdom from traditions, experiences, and observations inevitably only achieves folly; therefore, it is crucial to seek Yahweh’s wisdom.¹¹ Yahweh’s revelatory wisdom did not conform to social classes, the educated or uneducated, or had an age restriction.¹² Daniel Estes comments that

R. Driver notes that wisdom was an acute observation, shrewd in device, and clever in invention. Wisdom educators were focused on the character development, acted as moral advisors, and concerned with guiding the young. See S. R. Driver, *An Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1914), 392–3.

⁷ Ludwig Koehler, and Walter Baumgartner, “חָכְמָה,” in *HALOT*, 5th ed. (Leiden: Brill Publishing, 2000), 314.

⁸ Gerald Wilson, “חָכְמָה,” in *NIDOTTE Vol. 2*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 128. Wilson further explains that a person can enhance their natural understanding of wisdom through appropriate instruction and encouragement. Wisdom can imply that a person is already skilled or an expert and has the ability to direct others in wisdom.

⁹ M. Sæbø, “חָכְמָה,” in *TLOT Vol. 1*, ed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 418–9.

¹⁰ Tremper Longman III, *The Fear of the Lord is Wisdom* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017), “7. Source of Wisdom.”

¹¹ *Ibid.* Martin Shields notes that wisdom is a gift from Yahweh. Joseph, Solomon, Daniel, and Jeremiah received their wisdom from Yahweh. See Shields, “Who is Wise?”

¹² Shields explains that Yahweh’s gift of wisdom was not reserved for the intellectual elite or the upper class. However, it can find itself in a domesticated and rural context. For instance, Amos was an unprofessional prophet, probably a shepherd (Amos 1:1) who had visions and was led to Bethel to preach. See Shields, “Who is Wise?” In his discussion on the Book of Job, Estes notes that practical wisdom is reliable to a degree; however, it does not encompass all

wisdom is grounded in a relationship with Yahweh that shows reverence, wise behavior, and respect.¹³ While this discussion covering wisdom seems primarily applicable to Wisdom literature, how does it pertain to the Book of Ruth? A more comprehensive evaluation of wisdom's role in the Book of Ruth will follow later in this chapter. However, it is worth noting that there are displays of moral behavior pleasing to Yahweh. Gregory Goswell comments that the Book of Ruth gives an example of a worthy behavior that Ruth's readers should emulate.¹⁴ Crenshaw writes that a definition of wisdom cannot be too narrow or too broad and needs to be both inclusive and exclusive.¹⁵ The variability of wisdom's group and thought cannot be contained within one unusable and comprehensible definition.¹⁶ Crenshaw does not believe that wisdom can be understood as a self-understanding wisdom journey in the relationships with nature, people, and Yahweh, which is nature, juridical, and theological wisdom.¹⁷ How does comprehending wisdom affect how an OT book is categorized in its genre?

of divine wisdom. Therefore, wisdom can be revelatory and mysterious. See Daniel Estes, *Handbook on the Wisdom Books and Psalms* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 25.

¹³ Estes, 223.

¹⁴ Gregory Goswell, "Is Ruth Also Among the Wise?," in *Interpreting Old Testament Wisdom Literature*, eds. David Firth and Lindsay Wilson (Westmont: InterVarsity Press, 2017), 122. Goswell notes that the worthy behavior is exhibited in marriage, a suitable wife, theodicy, providence, and caring for the poor and widows. It is through a thematic link with Prov. 31:11, that the Book of Ruth can provide wisdom guidance. See Goswell, 121.

¹⁵ J. L. Crenshaw, "Method in Determining Wisdom Influence upon 'Historical Literature,'" *JBL* 88, no. 2 (1969): 130.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 131.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 132. Crenshaw's article does not have the Book of Ruth in mind; however, the methodology he explains can apply to the Book of Ruth. For instance, Ruth's commitment vow to Naomi (Ruth 1:16) reflects a wisdom about people and exhibits a good behavior, Boaz's kinsman redeemer actions (legal proceedings at the gate; Ruth 4:1–12) reflect a juridical wisdom, and Ruth invoking a formula with a divine punishment (Ruth 1:16–17) reveals a theological wisdom.

Wisdom Genre

Before a discussion can begin on distinguishing the wisdom genre and its association with wisdom theology, it is necessary to comprehend the genre from a hermeneutical view. Therefore, a brief discussion will ensue on this literary categorization device. Genre is a literary category that functions to identify a piece of literature, whether it is an entire biblical book or a smaller text within the biblical book.¹⁸ Various genres help the expositor correctly interpret and understand the biblical passage intended by the ancient biblical author. Duvall and Hayes comment that literary genre plays the role of a communication covenant between the biblical author and the reader, enabling the reader to understand the author's words in his biblical text.¹⁹ The OT is comprised of narratives, poetry, and prophetic writing. Historical narratives are further categorized as either stories, accounts, or reports.²⁰ Stories contain much of the OT's historical

¹⁸ When determining a genre for a specific biblical text, the text's outside and inner form should be taken into an account. In other words, the grammar, tone, purpose, setting, and audience associated with the biblical text needs to be considered when properly interpreting the text. See Grant Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral*, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2006), 181. Köstenberger and Patterson call these "rules." They explain that to pick up on the fine details of the text it is to comprehend the characteristics of the genre which the text belongs to. See Andreas Köstenberger, and Richard Patterson, *Invitation to Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic & Professional, 2011), 238. J. Scott Duvall and J. Daniel Hays explains that a literary genre is a type or a kind that when applied to biblical literature notes the text's category or type. See J. Scott Duvall, and J. Daniel Hays, *Grasping God's Word* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 150. John Barton remarks that the word genre for the contemporary reader suggests a literary category (novels, poems, etc.); however, OT genres possibly went back to a time of oral composition. See John Barton, "Form Criticism," in *AYBD*, ed. David Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 839.

¹⁹ Duvall, and Hays, 151. A caution is given in that if the biblical author's words are misunderstood or misinterpreted then the communication covenant is broken and the reader misses Yahweh's inspired message.

²⁰ Biblical narrative is a text that is structured by its communication, setting, and events. Biblical narrative can take the form of a dramatic story, an account, or a report. The dramatic nature of the story is used by the biblical author to emphasize the significance of a biblical event or events included in the narrative. See Köstenberger, and Patterson, 238–9.

information., which may or may not be factual.²¹ Accounts include sections of the OT that the biblical author uses to write a coherent history.²² Reports provide historical information.²³ Each narrative has a plot (exposition, conflict, and resolution), a setting, the characters, and the narrator's point of view.²⁴ The poetry genre is a category read through large sections of the OT.²⁵ The OT poets wrote to appeal to the reader's emotion; they use images to convey meaning, and the figures of speech are critical to analyzing.

Specific characteristics are observed in the poetry genre: parallelism, patterns, imagery, terseness, and its concrete nature. Köstenberger and Patterson explain that parallelism can be similar, antithetical, or progressive. Similar parallelism involves a close relationship of thought

²¹ Stories may be pure fiction or a record of actual people and events. The historical narrative's nature involves complexity with the people and settings involved and, therefore, the historicity should not be second nature or disregarded. See Köstenberger, and Patterson, 239. Osborne explains that the narrative includes both history and theology. The narrative's historical foundation is crucial and the text that contains it is the focus of interpretation. See Osborne, 200. Longman III writes that a narrative includes factual information that is theological, doxological, teachable, and composed to be a pleasing read for the reader. See Tremper Longman III, *Literary Approaches to Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987), 68–71.

²² The Pentateuch, prophecy, and wisdom are examples of narrative accounts. See Köstenberger, and Patterson, 242.

²³ Census reports (Num. 1:17–46; Num. 26:1–62; 2 Sam. 24:4–9), list reports (2 Sam. 23:1–7, 8–36; 24:1–2; Gen. 35:23–26; Exod. 1:1–4), vision reports (Gen. 46:2; 2 Sam. 7:4; Job 7:13–14; 20:8; 33:15; cf. Dan. 7; Mic. 3:6), vocation reports, and battle reports (Gen. 14:1–12; Josh. 10:1–15; 1 Sam. 31:1–7; 2 Sam. 1:1–10; 1 Kgs. 22:29–38; 2 Kgs. 25:1–21) are recorded in narrative form; however, they can be seen in other genres. For instance, vocation reports are seen in the prophetic genre to introduce the reader to the prophet and comprehending his call and ministry. Vision reports; additionally, can be read in the prophetic genre. Vision reports in a narrative help to provide historical information and record the key events that progresses the narrative. See Köstenberger, and Patterson, 244–5.

²⁴ Duvall, and Hays, 339. The authors further explains that the exposition is the narrative's setting, the conflict is either an internal or an external source, and the resolution involves resolving the conflict.

²⁵ The poetry genre can be seen in the narratives and across sections of the major/minor prophets. Therefore, the poetry genre is a major rhetorical device in the prophetic and wisdom writings. See Osborne, 222.

and expressions over parallel lines.²⁶ Antithetic parallelism involves a similar thought but with contrasting lines.²⁷ Progressive parallelism involves completing the first line's thought through a second line or a succession of lines.²⁸ These are not the only forms of parallelism but indicate the prominent ones.²⁹ Poetry patterns are determined by stress (oral side of poetry) or syllable (basic speech units) counts.³⁰ Poets use imagery to convey a realistic or concrete picture that could not be handled by abstractions that require an interpreter's careful attention.³¹ Terseness involves the

²⁶ Köstenberger, and Hays, 266. The grammatical structure and phraseology of similar parallelism reveals a general term in the first verse to a specific and highlighted term in the second line. The authors provide an example by using Psalm 19:1. The first line speaks of the heavens and the glory of Yahweh; however, the second line is more specific by noting the skies and the works of His hands. Therefore, a heightened perspective is provided by the second line even though both lines indicate the same thought or image. Osborne refers similar parallelism as synonymous parallelism, where the same idea is indicated by both lines. See Osborne, 225–6.

²⁷ Köstenberger and Hays provide Prov. 14:34 as an example of antithetic parallelism. In this example, the imagery and thought of the first line is contrasted with the second line (“righteousness” versus “sin”, “exalts” versus “disgrace”, and “a nation” versus “any people”). See Köstenberger, and Patterson, 268. Osborne notes that antithetic parallelism the same thought is indicated by parallel lines; however, the second line restates the first line's thought through a contrasting way. He; additionally, notes that an introverted parallelism is a form of an antithetic parallelism. See Osborne, 229.

²⁸ Köstenberger and Patterson provide Psalm 98:2 as an example. In the first line, Yahweh's deliverance of the people is the first thought that is complemented by the second line, that reveals a testimony to Yahweh's righteousness to the surrounding people. See Köstenberger, and Patterson, 269.

²⁹ Duvall and Hayes notes that there are developmental, illustrative, and formal parallelisms. See Duvall, and Hayes, 378–9. Osborne notes that there is step, climatic, incomplete, and ballast variant parallelisms. See Osborne, 227–30.

³⁰ Osborne notes that there is not a method for unlocking the Semitic pattern. Recognizing the stress and syllable counts requires an understanding of phonetics and Hebrew. He further explains that each OT poem is different; therefore, the poems must be individually studied in lieu of a collective study. See Osborne, 224–5.

³¹ Longman notes that imagery is a specific way of writing that elicits an emotional response from the reader as well as information. See Tremper Longman III, *A Complete Literary Guide to the Bible*, eds. Leland Ryken and Tremper Longman III (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993), 251. Köstenberger and Patterson comment that imagery uses figures of speech. Figurative language enables words to take on a meaning that is not literally intended; two dissimilar things are comparatively brought together. See Köstenberger, and Patterson, 273.

poet's ability to state their thoughts without rambling or providing useless details concisely.³² A poem's concreteness allows the reader to experience the senses that it portrays.³³ Gerhard von Rad explains that didactic poems stand independently and should not be interpreted by comparing them with a similar poem. Each didactic sentence and poem have an unmistakable self-contained meaning.³⁴

Now that a hermeneutical comprehension of the genre has been established, the scope can shift to the wisdom genre.³⁵ Wisdom genre is commonly associated with Wisdom literature (Job, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes).³⁶ However, the wisdom genre can be seen in many places in the OT

³² Köstenberger and Patterson reveals that in Exod. 15:3, that Yahweh is a conquering warrior and exercises divine sovereignty. See Köstenberger, and Patterson, 271–2. Duvall and Hayes explain that poetic lines are shorter than a narrative's descriptive sentences. Therefore, the poet chooses words that provide the optimum impact, are powerful, and are concise. See Duvall, and Hayes, 376.

³³ See, taste, touch, smell, and hear are senses that a poet appeals to and defines the poem's concrete nature. See Köstenberger, and Patterson, 272. However, Joseph Blenkinsopp comments that using abstract qualities with personal attributes was a common practice. As an example, he indicates that Woman Wisdom has character, attributes, and activities. She can be loved, embraced, grasped, and is life altering. See Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Wisdom and Law in the OT* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 157–9.

³⁴ Gerhard von Rad, *Wisdom in Israel* (Great Britain: SCM Press Ltd., 1972), 5.

³⁵ James Crenshaw calls biblical wisdom an elusive creature because the various definitions given for wisdom only highlight a certain feature. There is not a singular definition that captures wisdom's phenomenon in the OT. See James Crenshaw, "The Wisdom Literature," in *The Hebrew Bible and Its Modern Interpretation*, eds. Douglas Knight and Gene Tucker (Chicago: Scholars Press, 1985), 369. Richard Belcher remarks that wisdom genre as entity marked by a movement within a societal context and distinct from the OT should be abandoned. See Richard Belcher, *Finding Favour in the Sight of God: A Theology of Wisdom Literature* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2018), "The Definition of Wisdom."

³⁶ A challenge associated with wisdom is its affiliation with the OT. In the mid twentieth century, an attempt was made to unify the OT through a salvation-history lens. However, Wisdom literature does not openly speak about Israel's relationship with Yahweh. Specifically, Wisdom literature does not broach the Yahwistic traditions practiced by Israel. See John McLaughlin, *An Introduction to Israel's Wisdom Traditions* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2018), 171–2. Katharine Dell comments that wisdom is outside the historical concepts of covenant, election, and salvation history. The lack of covenant language in Wisdom literature makes it seem that it comes from more ANE influence than Yahweh's

(Deuteronomy, Psalms, Song of Songs, Prophecy, and through Joseph, Daniel, Adam, and Solomon). Richard Belcher explains that a crucial approach to revealing wisdom's influence on the biblical corpus is through intertextuality, which can reveal wisdom themes and ideas.³⁷ A key to its recognition is words used to express wisdom.³⁸ Biblical wisdom instructs readers on achieving a life according to moral and ethical behavior and exploring life's meaning.³⁹ Biblical wisdom is instructional, with the biblical author guiding through wise observations on how to live meaningfully and properly. Longman notes that learning wisdom from experience and observation teaches a person what will and will not work. Observing other's experiences guides a person on how to use those observations to lead a successful life and apply behaviors when faced with challenges and difficulties.⁴⁰ Biblical wisdom can be seen as Yahweh's interventions in the world: creation, order, and a supplement to salvation history.⁴¹ Walther Zimmerli posits that wisdom's theological attitude purposely fits within the theology of creation.⁴² Wisdom is the

relationship with Israel. See Katharine Dell, *The Book of Proverbs in Social and Theological Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 9–10.

³⁷ Belcher, "The Definition of Wisdom."

³⁸ Köstenberger, and Patterson, 291.

³⁹ The meaning of life can be achieved through reflection, speculation, and debate. Köstenberger and Patterson explain that true human wisdom is the accumulation of knowledge and how to apply it to Godly wisdom in various settings, which allows a wise person to perceive the meaning of life and how to enjoy it fully. See Köstenberger, and Patterson, 291–2. Osborne calls it "living life in God's world by God's rules." See Osborne, 242.

⁴⁰ Longman III, *The Fear of the Lord is Wisdom*, "7. Experience and Observation." He continues to explain that some observed experiences include learning from other's mistakes and embracing the wisdom of elders.

⁴¹ McLaughlin, 174.

⁴² Walther Zimmerli, "The Place and Limit of the Wisdom in the Framework of the Old Testament Theology," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 17, no. 2 (1964): 148. Leo Perdue, *Wisdom & Creation: The Theology of Wisdom Literature* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2009), 12.

best of Yahweh's creative acts.⁴³ As Yahweh's creation, people are an active component of His creation who go into the world to understand its order. For the Israelites, to know Yahweh as the Creator was to fear Yahweh.⁴⁴ Strongly associated with creation is order. Finding wisdom is knowing how to discover it in Yahweh's creation.⁴⁵ Von Rad discusses lived experiences and how they can fit into a self-knowledge about oneself and the world.⁴⁶ Every culture has devoted literary resources to gathering and recording experiential knowledge, generally using sentence-type proverbs.⁴⁷ The purpose is to prevent harm and personal danger caused by threats against order. As a supplement to salvation history, wisdom's reflection on human activity and the world leads to Yahweh, the Creator. McLaughlin states that it is a revelation from down below and from above.⁴⁸

The wisdom genre has characteristics that make it distinguishable from other biblical genres. First, it has a practical orientation.⁴⁹ Osborne explains wisdom is how young people are

⁴³ Perdue, 12.

⁴⁴ Zimmerli, 150–1. Zimmerli additionally comments that wisdom is like a portrait framed by a given order in life. The question of theodicy finds its roots from a societal and cultural beginning, who, the Teacher, states is futile. See Zimmerli, 155.

⁴⁵ C. G. Bartholomew, "Wisdom Books," in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander and Brian Rosner (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 121. Because Yahweh created life and the world, wisdom should be sought from it.

⁴⁶ Rad, 3.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁴⁸ McLaughlin, 180. Stuart Weeks posits that wisdom and salvation-history should not be grouped together to satisfy biblical theology. He comments that modern research on wisdom has been concerned with establishing it as a separate entity "steeped in the language and ideas of other biblical literature." See Stuart Weeks, "The Place and Limits of Wisdom Revisited," in *Perspectives on Israelite Wisdom*, ed. John Jarick (London: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2015), 6. Bartholomew explains that redemption and creation are held closely together, Yahweh is Creator and Redeemer. See Bartholomew, "Wisdom Books," 120.

⁴⁹ Eric Heaton remarks that a proverbial function is to highlight the relationship between an action and its moral consequences, which establishes a general set of principles for handling different circumstances encountered in life. The authority comes from people's lived experiences

taught to take their proper place in society.⁵⁰ It must be mentioned that biblical wisdom is ascertained correctly according to its intended meaning for the original audience and not misconstrued for the modern audience.⁵¹ Second, biblical wisdom has a dependence on Yahweh. This understanding is the primary motif of biblical wisdom. Osborne notes that the many challenges and difficulties a wise person faces force them to recognize their dependence on Yahweh.⁵² Proverbs 1:7 states, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; Fools despise wisdom and instruction.”⁵³ Wisdom teachers ascribed that the fear of Yahweh is the beginning and motivation for biblical wisdom. It is not acquired through human means but through a righteous relationship with Yahweh.⁵⁴ Leo Purdue notes that the fear of Yahweh is the starting point for courts and schools taught by sages, who had a higher social standing.⁵⁵ It was the fertile ground that wisdom instruction recognized that it began with faith and was under

and consolidated over the years. See Eric Heaton, *The School Tradition of the OT* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 170.

⁵⁰ Osborne, 243. Wisdom’s past is handed down to the younger generation to instruct them on proper etiquette and speech, self-control, family relationships, material wealth, and how to handle the problem of evil (the righteous suffer and the evil prosper).

⁵¹ Here, Osborne explains that some contemporary ministers misuse biblical wisdom to preach it in a literalistic fashion, misunderstanding the biblical word “fool,” which refers to a pagan person who does not believe in Yahweh, and some people erroneously apply biblical wisdom to prove something is wrong. See Osborne, 243–4.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 244. Bartholomew comments that fearing Yahweh is knowing how to live a successful life in Yahweh’s world, and it is the start of a journey and not the destination. See Bartholomew, “Wisdom Books,” 120.

⁵³ Unless otherwise noted, all biblical passages referenced are in the *Ryrie Study Bible: New American Standard Bible*, 3rd ed. (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2012).

⁵⁴ The imperatives look, listen, think, and reflect are essential to developing a Godly character, a character that will make wise choices in the various aspects of life. See Duvall, and Hayes, 423. In his discussion on the Wisdom of Solomon, Blenkinsopp comments that ethical instruction, as revealed in older wisdom, was a wisdom that stood for a quality of life attained by the application of reason and expenditure of effort. See Blenkinsopp, 171.

⁵⁵ Purdue, 24.

divine authority. Crenshaw comments that wisdom's influence can only be proven through Wisdom literature's ideology, an understanding that relationships with people, things, and Yahweh depend on Yahweh as the ultimate source and meaning.⁵⁶ Third, wisdom is an indirect authority. Osborne explains that Yahweh is not the source of wisdom tradition; therefore, divine authority is presupposed.⁵⁷ However, Yahweh must be behind every wisdom admonition that requires obedience to acquire a wise living. Finally, there is creation theology, the fabric of OT wisdom.⁵⁸ According to Yahweh's divine order and purpose, all people must realize their proper place and make the most of their appointed life.

Biblical wisdom can take many forms in the OT.⁵⁹ First is the proverb. It is the primary form of wisdom found in the OT. It is a truth statement universally accepted and presented memorably.⁶⁰ Duvall and Hayes note that proverbs are catchy, short (usually two parallel lines), and easy to memorize.⁶¹ In biblical Hebrew, a proverb is called a מִשְׁלֵי. *HALOT* explains that a

⁵⁶ Crenshaw, 132. Osborne calls this an extension of Yahweh Himself. See Osborne, 245.

⁵⁷ Osborne, 246.

⁵⁸ The Book of Job handles creation theology by teaching how Yahweh created the world according to His will and purpose. Therefore, humans do not possess the full knowledge and understanding of Yahweh's creative order, nor should they question it. Yahweh maintains control over His creation and all created things must answer to Him. See Osborne, 246. Perdue comments that creation theology embraces universalism, that Israel points to Yahweh as Creator of the world and the cosmos. See Perdue, 26.

⁵⁹ These may be called subgenres because each has its distinctive characteristics and identification rules. See Osborne, 247.

⁶⁰ Osborne, 247. Duvall and Hayes explain that a proverb is a nugget of wisdom and not a universal truth. They point to Prov. 10:4 and 3:9–10 as examples of how the texts reflect a practical wisdom but it cannot be universally applied. See Duvall, and Hayes, 427–8.

⁶¹ Duvall, and Hayes, 426. They further elaborate that the nature of biblical proverbs makes them applicable to anyone. The ancient Hebrews borrowed some of their proverbs from wisdom literature found in neighboring countries. Köstenberger and Patterson note that these memorable truth statements are called an apophthegm (short, witty, instructive sayings) in the Book of Proverbs. See Köstenberger, and Patterson, 292.

The biblical Hebrew מִשְׁלֵל is a saying of different types: a proverb, a wisdom saying, or a song of jest (mocking).⁶² Gerald Wilson explains that מִשְׁלֵל describes a popular saying or maxim that is lost in antiquity (i.e., 1 Sam. 24:4); however, its common form involves a sage’s teachings.⁶³ *BDB* notes that מִשְׁלֵל can, additionally, refer to prophetic figurative communication, parables, poems (didactic psalms), and ethical wisdom sayings.⁶⁴ Proverbial sayings help trace theology and cosmology in Scripture.⁶⁵ They can be recognized by containing catchwords, can be divided by a theme or a concerned area of life, and can employ some poetic characteristics.⁶⁶

Köstenberger and Patterson explain that proverbs can be classified. There are descriptive proverbs (image of a way of life, Prov. 26:13–16), prescriptive proverbs are motivational (Prov. 14:27), comparative proverbs where one thing is likened to or better than another thing (Prov. 17:1), contrastive proverbs when a better way of life is reflected through contrastive settings (Prov. 13:10), conditional proverbs deal with the consequences resulting from a person’s actions (Prov. 17:13), declarative proverbs make a statement (Prov. 18:1), instructional proverbs have a

⁶² Ludwig Koehler, and Walter Baumgartner, “מִשְׁלֵל,” *HALOT*, 5th ed. (Leiden: Brill Publishing, 2000), 648.

⁶³ Gerald Wilson, “מִשְׁלֵל,” in *NIDOTTE Vol. 2*, ed. Willem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 1127–8. Wilson further explains that מִשְׁלֵל, in certain constructions, loses its neutral sense and becomes a source of negative comparison, that occasionally uses the term “byword.” For instance, in 1 Kings 19:7, both “proverb” and “byword” are used to indicate that Israel is being used as a negative example to dissuade others from following the same path. See Wilson, 1128.

⁶⁴ Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles Briggs, “מִשְׁלֵל,” *BDB* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1996), 605.

⁶⁵ Justin Strong, “Proverb,” *LBD*, ed. John Barry et al. (Bellingham: Lexham Press, 2016), “Proverbial Theology.” Strong elaborates that in the earlier collections, proverbial statements reflected a cosmology that dealt with universal balance and retribution.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, “Parsing Proverbs.” The shared poetic characteristics are parallelism (synonymous, antithetical, and synthetic), acrostics, word play, chiasms, and alliteration.

distinct form that includes an imperative, and numerical proverbs that involve staircase parallelism (Prov. 30:15–16).⁶⁷

A second form is the saying. While a proverb is a saying, not all sayings are proverbs.⁶⁸ Murphy explains two types of sayings: experiential or observational and didactic. Experiential or observation sayings state a fact (Prov. 10ff), and when a value is stated, the proverb becomes didactic.⁶⁹ A third form is the admonition. In its basic structure, an admonition is followed by a motivational clause telling the reader why they should obey a command.⁷⁰ It is used to dissuade individuals or a group of people from conducting their lives in a particular manner.⁷¹ A third form is the allegory, common in ANE wisdom literature but only used twice in the OT.⁷² Murphy defines an allegory as a speech form resembling figurative or metaphorical language. It is shaped against the background of interpretation, and each allegorical detail is repeated in the interpretation.⁷³ A fourth form is the dialogue, a subgenre in the Book of Job (Job 32–41). The dialogues are between Job and his friends and Job and Yahweh.⁷⁴ Köstenberger and Patterson note that the Book of Job is a narrative (plot, setting, characters, conflict, and resolution) that

⁶⁷ Köstenberger, and Patterson, 293–6.

⁶⁸ Osborne explains that a saying is not as developed as a proverb or has obtained universal recognition. See Osborne, 247.

⁶⁹ Roland Murphy, *Wisdom Literature: Job, Proverbs, Ruth, Canticles, Ecclesiastes, and Esther* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1981), 181.

⁷⁰ Osborne, 248–9.

⁷¹ Murphy, *Wisdom Literature*, 172. In a wisdom setting, the admonition sets the statement's mood (Is. 1:16–17; Jer. 25:1–7).

⁷² The two instances are Prov. 5:15–23 and Eccl. 12:1–7. See Osborne, 249.

⁷³ Murphy, *Wisdom Literature*, 172.

⁷⁴ Osborne, 249. Murphy refers to the dialogues as disputations. He explains that a disputation is an argument in which differing points of view are held. He notes that it is an overarching genre held in the discussions of wise men, judicial setting, and in prophecy. See Murphy, *Wisdom Literature*, 175.

contains biblical wisdom. This literary device helps the interpreter comprehend and apply biblical wisdom intended by the biblical author.⁷⁵ A final form is the beatitudes, which help to give a theological tone to biblical wisdom. Psalm 1:1; 112:1; Eccles 10:17; Prov 3:13; 8:32–34; 14:21; 16:20; 20:7; 28:14; 19:18 are examples of beatitudes that are motivational biblical wisdom.⁷⁶ The beatitude is a literary form that conveys blessings in a moral or spiritual context. There are forty-five beatitudes in the Hebrew Bible, with most occurring in Wisdom literature. These beatitudes are biblical wisdom sayings taking the form of a declarative statement expressing an exhortation.⁷⁷ Collins notes that beatitudes are isolated sentences found in various antithetical products.⁷⁸

In conclusion, the wisdom genre is a literary classification primarily concerned with wisdom's nature, obtaining knowledge, and application to everyday life. The texts containing biblical wisdom instruct the reader on how to live morally and ethically and reverencing Yahweh. Biblical wisdom uses practical advice, reflects on the human condition, employs many forms to convey its messages (poetry, proverbs, sayings, admonitions, allegories, dialogues, and beatitudes), teaches that the fear of Yahweh is the beginning of wisdom, and addresses everyday circumstances that laws would not cover.

Wisdom's Place in Old Testament Theology

Wisdom in OT theology is a rich, multifaceted, and profound concept central to several OT books and passages. The idea of wisdom in the OT is not confined to intelligence and

⁷⁵ Köstenberger, and Patterson, 300.

⁷⁶ Osborne, 250.

⁷⁷ Raymond Collins, "Beatitudes," *AYBD*, ed. David Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 629.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 629–30.

knowledge. It encompasses intellectual understanding, moral living, and a fear of Yahweh. Since wisdom is interwoven with OT theology, it is significant for understanding the religious and ethical dimensions of the OT.⁷⁹ Wisdom's theological foundation in the OT is closely joined to the Hebrew belief in a wise and benevolent Yahweh who created the cosmos and established humanity's moral and ethical guidelines. Therefore, it is reflected in creation's order and harmony and Yahweh's providence for His people. Three primary areas are concentrated on for wisdom's place in OT theology: creation, practical ability, and guidance for life.

Biblical wisdom reflects the belief that Yahweh created the universe according to moral standards that reflect His standards.⁸⁰ As Woman Wisdom told in Proverbs, she was with Yahweh during the creation event. Therefore, creation and wisdom are intrinsically entwined. There is no area of Yahweh's creation that wisdom does not apply. Humans, as created in Yahweh's image, can cultivate and nurture wisdom.⁸¹ Proverbs 3:19–20 further alludes to wisdom's dynamic role in creation. Yahweh used wisdom to change chaos to order, and this

⁷⁹ Murphy comments that wisdom presents a theology of its own kind. Its integration into OT theology is a challenging and an ongoing task. See Murphy, "Wisdom in the OT," 924. One of the challenges is wisdom's presentation in the OT as positive and negative. Shields notes the first negative wisdom is revealed in the Garden of Eden when describing the serpent as "crafty." When wisdom is attributed to Yahweh directly, it is positive. See Shields, "Wisdom. Wisdom in the Old Testament."

⁸⁰ Zimmerli writes that the Yahweh of Israel is known as the Creator of heaven and earth. Israel understood Yahweh's creation of humans as a great gift from Him empowering people with independence. Independence is reflected in the Garden of Eden through Yahweh's allowance for Adam to name all the created beasts. However, Yahweh's decree of dominion came with a stipulation that Adam and Eve do not eat from the tree of good and evil. See Zimmerli, 151.

⁸¹ Raymond Van Leeuwen notes that Israel understood Yahweh's creation as the building block for humans to create a cultural world. Therefore, human wisdom must combine cultural developments with Yahweh's created world, creatures, and reality's norms and laws. See Raymond Van Leeuwen, "Chapter 5 Theology: Creation, Wisdom, and Covenant," in *The Oxford Handbook of Wisdom and the Bible*, ed. Will Kynes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, Inc., 2021), 65–6.

effect has a bearing on human life. Israel's monotheism reflected a belief that Yahweh was the source of authority and wisdom. Any daily experiences lead back to Him.⁸² Perdue calls creation a blessing that joins Yahweh's power, protects and enhances life, and provides the foundation for evolving creation.⁸³ Thus, Yahweh's blessing includes procreation and His sovereignty and providence. Creation did not focus solely on Israel; it has a universal scope shared with wisdom, revealing Yahweh's creative purposes, provision, and blessings.⁸⁴

Biblical wisdom is seen in the OT as a practical ability. The practical ability is not seen as an intellectual insight but a possessed skill.⁸⁵ Wisdom literature abounds with examples of wisdom instruction for a person to cultivate and nurture wisdom in a practical aspect. Murphy explains that wisdom instructions are based on lived experiences and written down to be passed on to future generations.⁸⁶ Wisdom teachings are rooted in the doctrine of fearing Yahweh. This aspect provides a religious tone to the lived experiences, instructing a living model. Isaiah 28:23–29 uses the analogy of farming to know how to engage the world through wisdom. Just as

⁸² Craig Bartholomew, and Ryan O'Dowd, *Old Testament Wisdom Literature: A Theological Introduction* (Westmont: InterVarsity Press, 2011), "Chapter 11 The Theology of Old Testament Wisdom." It is additionally, noted that with wisdom's roots in creation, it is available for humans because it is built into the nature of things. Therefore, the wiser a person becomes, the closer to *imago Dei* they become.

⁸³ Perdue, 25.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 26. Perdue notes that wisdom's gifts are procreation, maturity, longevity, and life's enhancement. These wisdom gifts are the result of Yahweh's blessing, which are available to all humans because of their creation in the *imago Dei*. Murphy explains that creation is a Yahwistic blessing on all His handiwork, which is continuous, unobtrusive, and a work in progress. See Murphy, "Wisdom in the OT," 924.

⁸⁵ Shields, "Wisdom: Wisdom in the Old Testament."

⁸⁶ Murphy, "Wisdom in the OT," 925.

a farmer uses the proper threshing tools for each crop, Yahweh uses wisdom for instruction.⁸⁷ A reader would not think wisdom is involved in the Joseph narrative (Gen. 37–50); however, it plays a role in Joseph’s life experiences. Joseph endured much pain and suffering during his life, from being sold into slavery (Gen. 37:1–36) to imprisonment (Gen. 39:20). Throughout Joseph’s ordeals, Yahweh was working in the background.⁸⁸ Pharaoh realizes the significance of Joseph’s wisdom in Genesis 41:38–39. In verse 38, Pharaoh realizes that Joseph had divine insight, and in verse 39, Joseph was wise because of Yahweh’s presence in Joseph’s life.⁸⁹ While not a perfect picture of wisdom, the Joseph narrative provides complementary insight into biblical wisdom.⁹⁰ In Exodus, a couple of events involving wisdom or practical skill are read. In Exodus 28:3, Yahweh instructs Moses to gather skilled workers who possess the spirit of wisdom to make the priestly garments for Aaron. This verse is the first time that skilled work and wisdom are mentioned together to reveal that Yahweh imparts this gift and ability.⁹¹ Exodus 31:3; 35:31; 35:35–36:2 refer to Bezalel as a person to whom Yahweh gave wisdom to build the Tabernacle. The words used in Exodus 31:3 reveal that Yahweh has imparted a practical skill or ability to

⁸⁷ Farming is a common teaching tool used for wisdom thinking. A person needs to know how to use the right tools to face the challenges and tragedies faced in life. See Longman III, *The Fear of the Lord is Wisdom*, “4. God’s Great Wisdom.”

⁸⁸ Joseph recognized that Yahweh used his pain and suffering to put him in a position of power so that he could provide for his family, a family chosen and blessed by Yahweh (Gen. 12:1–3). See Longman III, *The Fear of the Lord is Wisdom*, “5. Joseph and Daniel.”

⁸⁹ The presence of Yahweh’s spirit indicates that He is equipping a person. In the Joseph narrative, Yahweh is equipping Joseph with wisdom, frequently seen as a gift from Yahweh’s spirit. The skilled workers of the priestly garment and the tabernacle in Exodus were gifted with wisdom, and Solomon was gifted wisdom by Yahweh. See Gordon Wenham, *WBC Vol. 2: Genesis 16–50*, ed. Bruce Metzger et al. (Dallas: Word Books, 1994), 394.

⁹⁰ Longman III, *The Fear of the Lord is Wisdom*, “5. Joseph and Daniel.”

⁹¹ Eugene Carpenter, *EEC Vol.2: Exodus*, ed. H. Wayne House (Bellingham: Lexham Press, 2016), 216. Skilled workers were people who already had skills and to those with undeveloped abilities. Yahweh equips people with abilities to perform His work.

Bezalel to perform his work.⁹² Exodus 35:35–36:2 is a reiteration of Yahweh imparting skill and ability to those responsible for building the Tabernacle. A distinction between the two biblical passages is that in 36:2, the workers who received Yahweh’s gift are willing to serve Him, “everyone whose heart stirred him.” While it is not stated, an implication is that the workers feared Yahweh, which allowed them to have the proper knowledge to complete the work before them.⁹³

The Book of Daniel is not considered wisdom literature or about wisdom; however, its primary character, Daniel, is wise (Dan. 1:17).⁹⁴ René Péter-Contesse and John Ellington explain that the Book of Daniel can be divided into two parts. Daniel 1–6 focuses on Daniel and his companions, narrating their wisdom and noting the challenges Jews faced from their oppressors. Daniel 7–12 concentrates on Daniel’s apocalyptic visions.⁹⁵ It is through Daniel’s refusal to defile himself by eating food not prepared by the Mosaic law and drinking wine offered to a pagan god that Yahweh blesses Daniel and his friends with wisdom, not human wisdom.⁹⁶ While the Babylonian king took notice of Daniel’s wisdom through interpreting dreams and visions, Daniel himself stated that wisdom and knowledge came from Yahweh (Dan. 2:20–23). In verse

⁹² Carpenter, 275.

⁹³ David Firth, and Lindsay Wilson, *Interpreting Old Testament Wisdom Literature* (Westmont: InterVarsity Press, 2017), 186.

⁹⁴ Blenkinsopp explains that the Book of Daniel is included in the Writings because it is an apocalyptic writing. Daniel is a book handled by sages and scribes; however, it revealed mysteries that concerned the future. Daniel represents himself as a sage (Dan. 1:4), who can interpret divine mysteries. See Blenkinsopp, 175.

⁹⁵ René Péter-Contesse, and John Ellington, *A Handbook on Daniel* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1993), 1. Blenkinsopp calls the Book of Daniel an apocalyptic wisdom. See Blenkinsopp, 173.

⁹⁶ Robert Chisholm Jr., *Handbook on the Prophets* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 295.

22, Daniel states that Yahweh knows what is in a person's heart; nothing is kept secret from Him.

Biblical wisdom is seen in the OT as guidance for life, the moral and ethical decisions a person makes to be wise (faithful and obedient to Yahweh). Murphy notes that the wisdom approach to morality is broader than the Decalogues because it involves character formation.⁹⁷ Longman comments that the Decalogue is the foundation of Yahweh's law, indicating how the Hebrews were to relate to Him and others. Therefore, the OT Law has overlapping purposes and interests with proverbial wisdom, implying certain attitudes and behaviors.⁹⁸ Wisdom and law differ; however, they are equal when establishing moral behavior and a Godly character.⁹⁹ Another aspect of OT Law is the idea of retribution. Retribution in Israelite society is that Yahweh is just and exacts justice.¹⁰⁰ Retribution can be seen on the covenant (corporate) and wisdom (individual) levels. Corporately, retributive theology is indicated through covenant blessings and curses. A tie that binds OT covenant and OT wisdom is the fear of Yahweh. The fear of Yahweh allows faithfulness to the covenant and the beginning of wisdom seen in Wisdom

⁹⁷ Murphy, "Wisdom in the OT," 925. However, comparing Proverbs to Exodus 20 is like comparing an orange to an apple. Shields does not adequately explain that the Decalogue is geared to character formation, too. One goal of biblical wisdom is a person's character formation that reveals a moral behavior that honors Yahweh. The Decalogue were Yahweh's commandments that established a baseline for faithfulness and obedience from the Hebrews, a development of moral behavior that pleases Yahweh. When Israel remained faithful to Yahweh, He blessed them; however, when they strayed or forsook Yahweh, He cursed them.

⁹⁸ Longman III, *The Fear of the Lord is Wisdom*, "10. Wisdom and Law." He notes that the word "command" used in Exodus and the word "instruction" used in Proverbs are affiliated with the legal tradition.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Tremper Longman III, and Peter Enns, "Retribution," in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Wisdom, Poetry, & Writings* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 650.

literature.¹⁰¹ As associated with individual sayings, retribution is shown in Wisdom literature when the wise person is contrasted with the fool, an erroneous view of Yahweh (Job 42, the three friend's correction), and Qoheleth's quest for life's meaning. Longman and Enns comment on how retribution is played out in Psalm 1 and is the primary theme in Wisdom literature.¹⁰² Van Leeuwen remarks that wisdom is crucial for solving reality's problems. In 2 Samuel 14, Joab goes to a woman in Tekoa to return Absalom to David, Adonijah consults with Jonadab to get Tamar, Solomon solves the problem of the two women arguing over the possession of a child, and Yahweh bestows wisdom on the skilled workers making the priestly garment and building the tabernacle.¹⁰³ Throughout the OT, it is seen that wisdom leaves its mark. During the research phase for this subsection, it was noticed how the ancient Near Eastern understanding of wisdom possibly influenced the Hebrew comprehension of wisdom. Therefore, wisdom in the ancient Near East must be evaluated.

Wisdom in the Ancient Near East

The concept of wisdom in the ancient Near East (ANE) is a dynamic and evolving area of study pertinent to biblical exposition. Archaeology in the Mesopotamian and Egyptian regions have yielded discoveries that shed light on the concept of wisdom in these areas.¹⁰⁴ ANE wisdom texts are from around 3500 years in four cultural regions: Egypt, Mesopotamia, Syria, and

¹⁰¹ Longman III, *The Fear of the Lord is Wisdom*, "10. Wisdom as Covenantal."

¹⁰² Longman III, and Enns, 651.

¹⁰³ Van Leeuwen, 76.

¹⁰⁴ Murphy notes that within the last century and a half, ANE literature has been discovered that has a profound effect on understanding the Hebrew Bible, especially Wisdom literature. See Murphy, "Wisdom in the OT," 928.

Israel.¹⁰⁵ ANE didactic wisdom was given to young boys, applicable to their social status, religion, and culture. Two regions will be evaluated for their literary contributions to the concept of wisdom and how they might have influenced the Hebrew understanding of wisdom: Egypt and Mesopotamia.¹⁰⁶

Egyptian wisdom¹⁰⁷ literature has had a profound effect on studying biblical wisdom. A clue for Egypt's prominence and its effect on Hebrew wisdom is read in 1 Kings 4:30, "Solomon's wisdom surpassed the wisdom of all the sons of the east and all the wisdom of Egypt." Nili Shupak notes that Egyptian wisdom literature was abundant from the middle of the third millennium to the first century B.C.¹⁰⁸ Egyptian wisdom was either didactic or speculative. Due to the cohesiveness and clarity of didactic Egyptian wisdom literature, it will be explored over the speculative type. A distinction between Egyptian and Hebrew wisdom is that there is not an Egyptian word for wisdom. The closest that comes to bear the same meaning as wisdom is

¹⁰⁵ Michael Fox, "Ancient Near Eastern Wisdom Literature (Didactic)," *Religion Compass* 5, no. 1 (2011): 1. Fox chooses to elaborate the didactic function of the ANE wisdom literature because it is the most cohesive and clearly defined. ANE didactic wisdom literature provided instruction for young men for living a good life.

¹⁰⁶ Wisdom's observational and analytical foundation in the ANE was recorded through shared literary forms with Mesopotamia and Israel. The most common literary form was proverbs, or aphorisms. See Shields, "Wisdom: Wisdom in the Ancient World." The following evaluation is not an exhaustive look into all the relevant ANE wisdom texts to biblical wisdom. However, a few examples are provided from each region to indicate how ANE and biblical wisdom align.

¹⁰⁷ Bartholomew, and O'Dowd comment that Egyptian wisdom was like Israelite wisdom in that it was grounded in creation. See Bartholomew, and O'Dowd, "2. Egyptian Worldviews."

¹⁰⁸ Nili Shupak, "The Contribution of Egyptian Wisdom to the Study of Biblical Wisdom Literature," in *Was There a Wisdom Tradition? New Prospects in Israelite Studies*, ed. Mark Sneed (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2015), 266. Murphy notes that Egyptian wisdom teachings and instructions have been handed down from a period from that of Prince Hardjedef (or Djedefhor, of the Fifth Dynasty) down to the Insinger Papyrus which dates from the Ptolemaic period. See Murphy, "Wisdom in the Old Testament," "Extra-Biblical Wisdom."

ma'at. *Ma'at* means 'justice' and 'truth,' constituting Egyptian cultural and religious virtues.¹⁰⁹ *Ma'at* provided justice and order, which could be sought out, unlike biblical wisdom, a Yahwistic gift requiring reverence.¹¹⁰ Since the Pharaoh was considered a god, that would make him god over *Ma'at*.¹¹¹ However, Pharaoh was to utilize *ma'at* to maintain creation's order and human society. This ability was enabled by imparting wisdom to facilitate order and rulership.¹¹² The Egyptian king used instructions to teach his son(s) how to be an effective ruler, a military force, and interact with people throughout the land. The instructions were designed as a positive or negative command, referred to specific life situations, and sometimes based on the teacher's life experiences.¹¹³

The *Instruction of Ptahhotep* is the most important and best preserved of the early Egyptian wisdom books. The form of this wisdom book is a father's instruction to his son. The father persona primarily belongs to a king, vizier, or scribe, who is instructing, from their life experiences, a son on how to live a proper life and cultivate a relationship with the father's god.¹¹⁴ Thirty-seven statements are given for proper behavior, human relationships, and virtues

¹⁰⁹ Fox, "Ancient Near Eastern Wisdom Literature (Didactic)," 2. The Egyptian understanding of *ma'at*, "truth, justice, and order," reflected their understanding of creation and world order. Therefore, *ma'at* was a divine attribute of the creator that enabled structure and maintenance of creation. Through *ma'at*, the just and orderly societal function was harmonized with the cosmos. See Perdue, 37–8.

¹¹⁰ Bartholomew, and O'Dowd, "2. The Ancient World of Wisdom."

¹¹¹ The Egyptian king ruled the land as a god and was seen as a synthesis of other gods who embodied sovereignty, intelligence, providence, and military might. See James Pritchard, ed., *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*. 3rd ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), 431.

¹¹² Perdue, 38.

¹¹³ Shupak, 269.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 267. Don Benjamin and Victor Matthews explain that a teacher like Ptah-Hotep bore the title Father or Mother (Prov 1:8). A student was called Child. Students came from powerful households, and teachers like Ptah-Hotep prepared them to assume important positions

(moderation, generosity, honesty, and modesty).¹¹⁵ The Egyptian structure of a father advising his son is reminiscent of the proverbial sayings in Proverbs (Prov. 1:17; 9:17; 10:1; 22:17).¹¹⁶ Three Egyptian wisdom texts parallel the Book of Job. *The Protests of the Eloquent Peasant*, also known as *The Eloquent Peasant* or *The Tale of the Eloquent Peasant*, is a text from the Middle Kingdom period. Miriam Lichtheim notes that the work, a narrative consisting of nine poetic dialogues, is contained in four papyrus copies, albeit incompletely, comprising 430 lines.¹¹⁷ It is a lengthy discussion on the need for justice and a vehicle for eloquent speech.¹¹⁸ William Simpson mentions, "The appeal of the text is not so much in its actual content as in the artistic manner in which that content is expressed, for it says nothing new or significant on its subject."¹¹⁹ The tale's plot concerns a peasant who has been robbed and his appeal to the Chief Steward or magistrate. However, the peasant's eloquent speech wins the king's attention. The king finds the speeches entertaining, requiring many from the peasant and eventually providing justice. Finally, the peasant receives his stolen property from the rich man who took it. Lichtheim

in public life. Teachers taught students to observe, to judge, and to act. See Victor Matthews, and Don Benjamin, *Old Testament Parallels*, 4th ed. (New York: Paulist Press, 2016), 315.

¹¹⁵ Fox, "Ancient Near Eastern Wisdom Literature (Didactic)," 2.

¹¹⁶ Egyptian and biblical wisdom resemble each other in structure, literary form, style, vocabulary, and topics. Egyptian wisdom literature was primarily in a poetic form making use of similes and metaphors, proverbs, admonitions, antithetical concepts, and used wisdom vocabulary like biblical wisdom. See Shupak, 285–6.

¹¹⁷ Miriam Lichtheim, ed., *Ancient Egyptian Literature, Volume 1: The Old and Middle Kingdoms* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 175.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁹ William Simpson, *The Literature of Ancient Egypt* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 25.

notes that the mixture of seriousness, irony, a plea for justice, and demonstratable rhetoric provides the literary work's foundation.¹²⁰

Several dialogues are contained in a narrative framework in the Book of Job. Job has endured disastrous calamities and appeals to Yahweh for justice. Through several speeches made by his companions, Yahweh comes onto centerstage and repetitively questions Job about His sovereignty. The parallels between the two works are the extensive uses of dialogue and pleas for justice. John Hartley notes that the differences between the two texts are Job's increasing confidence and that the appeal is made to Yahweh, not to the Chief Steward.¹²¹

The Admonitions of Ipuwer, also known as *The Admonitions of an Egyptian Sage*, originates from the Twelfth Dynasty and is debated by scholars. However, the extant copy, Papyrus 344, dates from the Nineteenth Dynasty.¹²² It is an incomplete copy; both the beginning and ending have been lost. Therefore, the text's setting and solution cannot be determined. However, what can be determined is the addressment of a national calamity. Some scholars have used the national disaster to date the work to the First Intermediate Period; however, others view the disaster as a literary setting. As a textual setting, Simpson comments that the disaster demonstrates the striking contrast between chaos and orderliness.¹²³ Lichtheim notes that it is unhistorical and contradictory.¹²⁴ *The Admonitions of Ipuwer* tells how the poor infringe on and illegally take the wealthy's possessions. Ipuwer addresses the king concerning the lawless and

¹²⁰ Lichtheim, 175.

¹²¹ John Hartley, *NICOT: The Book of Job* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1988), 7.

¹²² Lichtheim, 157; Simpson, 188.

¹²³ Simpson, 188–9.

¹²⁴ Lichtheim, 156–7.

chaotic situation, social instability, and the unknown future. The addressment continues by imploring the king to restore law and order through traditional ceremonial practices.¹²⁵

The Admonitions of Ipuwer parallels the Book of Job through its theme of suffering and justice. However, the ancient Egyptian text is more concerned with social than moral justice. Moreover, it is polytheistic due to Ipuwer's request for the king to revert to traditional religious practices to entice help from the gods. On the other hand, the Book of Job appeals to Yahweh, for only Yahweh's sovereignty and providence can help Job and make known the companion's erroneous thinking.

The Dispute Between a Man and His Ba, also known as *The Man Who Was Weary of Life* or *A Dispute Over Suicide*, is a Middle Kingdom text preserved on Papyrus Berlin 3024.¹²⁶ The ancient Egyptian text is translationally problematic, making it difficult and controversial. Lichtheim contends that the literary work, composed of structured prose and poetry, entails the debate between a man and his soul, Ba, over his death.¹²⁷ Simpson does not see it as a debate but as a psychological picture of a depressed man contemplating death because of life's evils.¹²⁸ Accordingly, the text provides insight into the complexities of human psychology dealing with peace, hope, despair, endurance, and the ability to deal with life's challenges. However, Lichtheim views the Egyptian text as a debate. The debate's center concerns the man longing for death and his soul threatening to leave him. Egyptians believed that if a person dies without their soul, they will cease to exist. Therefore, there would not be an immortal existence. Therefore, *A Dispute Between a Man and His Ba* is a dialogue involving the pros and cons of suicide and

¹²⁵ Simpson, 189.

¹²⁶ Lichtheim, 170; Simpson, 178.

¹²⁷ Lichtheim, 170–1.

¹²⁸ Simpson, 178.

natural death. Finally, it concludes that the man understands death and resurrection better, and his soul agrees to remain with him.

The *Instruction of Amenemope* resembles the autobiographical form found in Ecclesiastes.¹²⁹ This Egyptian text was about guidance from an old and experienced king to his son. In thirty chapters, Amenemope teaches meaningful behavior that will bring success and divine favor by emphasizing moral and religious virtues.¹³⁰ It is comparable to Ecclesiastes because of the setting. Wisdom is given in both texts by a person experienced in life. In Ecclesiastes, Qoheleth reports on his own experiences and conclusions that help to shape the biblical book as an autobiographical narrative.¹³¹

The other cultural region to consider for parallels to Hebrew wisdom is Mesopotamia. Just like Egyptian wisdom texts show affiliation to some biblical wisdom texts, Mesopotamian wisdom texts correlate with biblical wisdom, primarily the wisdom associated with suffering, retributive theology, and theodicy.¹³² Mesopotamian wisdom reveals a relationship between god, king, creation, building, and wisdom.¹³³ Three gods came from chaos in Mesopotamia: Anu, Enlil, and Enki. The Mesopotamian tenet for three gods resides in their polytheistic naturalism view.¹³⁴ Polytheistic religions recognize that there are many finite gods who are not eternal and have a beginning, and they view fate as an impersonal force that defines the nature of things.¹³⁵

¹²⁹ Bartholomew, and O'Dowd, "2. Egyptian Worldviews."

¹³⁰ Fox, "Ancient Near Eastern Wisdom Literature (Didactic)," 2; Pritchard, 418.

¹³¹ Fox, "Ancient Near Eastern Wisdom Literature (Didactic)," 6.

¹³² Murphy, "Wisdom in the OT," 929.

¹³³ Bartholomew, and O'Dowd, "2. Mesopotamian Worldviews."

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ R. Brian Rickett, "Polytheism," *LBD*, ed. John Barry et al. (Bellingham: Lexham Press, 2016), "Formal Polytheism." Bartholomew and O'Dowd suggest that the naturalistic view was a result of Mesopotamia's climate. Since the climate could be unpredictable and the nation

The Mesopotamian gods used the image of a house to symbolize the universe that needed to be organized. The house imagery indicates that the person who builds and fills his house establishes himself as a wise ruler who uses the created order.¹³⁶ A significant difference between Mesopotamian and biblical wisdom is that the Hebrews hold a monotheistic view of the one and only Yahweh.

One of the most well-known ANE compositions is the *Stories of Ahiqar*. It tells the story of a court official, Ahiqar, that has been betrayed and restored. The significance of this composition is its association with other ANE proverbial collections and biblical wisdom.¹³⁷ Ahiqar is a childless character who adopts a son, Nadin, to take over his court position. However, Nadin would eventually betray him by accusing him of treason and sentencing him to die. The executioner recognized Ahiqar as the one who spared his life and, therefore, spared Ahiqar's life. By helping the Assyrian king win a bet over the Egyptian Pharaoh, Ahiqar is restored to his court official position while exposing Nadin's treachery.¹³⁸ Ahiqar's sayings are practical and religious instructions concerning heavenly wisdom, discipline, speech, submitting to the god's will, and proper behavior.¹³⁹

had turbulent borders, creation was viewed as turbulent, and the three gods came into existence to provide order to the chaos. See Bartholomew, and O'Dowd, "2. Mesopotamian Worldviews."

¹³⁶ Bartholomew, and O'Dowd, "2. Mesopotamian Worldviews."

¹³⁷ Murphy, "Wisdom in the OT," 930. Ahiqar is a wise man whose fortunes rise and fall, but in the end, he prevails. Like Joseph (Gen 37:2–50:26), Daniel (Dan 1:1–21), Mordecai (Esth 1–11), and Tobit (Tob 1:1–14:15)—where Ahiqar appears as Tobit's nephew (Tob 1:21–22; 4Q Tobarama)—Ahiqar learns from his experiences, even when those experiences are painful. See Matthews, and Benjamin, 336–7.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 337.

¹³⁹ Fox, "Ancient Near Eastern Wisdom Literature (Didactic)," 3.

The Babylonian Theodicy, also known as *The Babylonian Ecclesiastes* or *A Dialogue about Human Misery*, provides the closest parallel to Job and his friend's dialogues. However, there is only a dialogue between the sufferer and one friend in this ancient text. The original composition could have dated to the second millennium, with extant copies dating to the first millennium Neo-Assyrian or Neo-/Late Babylonian periods.¹⁴⁰ It is of an acrostic structure consisting of twenty-seven strophes with eleven lines for each strophe. The text uses cuneiform signs, repetitions, rhymes, and couplets. The author identifies himself in the text as an incantation-priest. *The Babylonian Theodicy* does not begin with a descriptive narrative but commences with the dialogue between two unnamed protagonists. Takayoshi Oshima notes, "Unlike other Sumero-Akkadian debate-texts, the speakers make no effort to convince their opponents of their superior authority: instead, the debate concentrates entirely on a point of doctrine, i.e., the meaning of belief in the gods and its benefit."¹⁴¹ The Babylonian text centers on the many woes experienced by the sufferer and the friend's replies of comfort, sharp criticism, and the need for piety to the gods.¹⁴² The literary work abruptly ends without indicating the outcome of the dialogue. Christopher Hayes notes, "Furthermore, it makes no effort, not even a superficial one, to settle the issues that it raises, and the speaker closes the composition still in distress and misfortune."¹⁴³ Despite the ancient Mesopotamian text's lack of resolution, it and Job have a few similarities. Yair Hoffman notes that both literary pieces concentrate on the main character who is suffering and wondering how they are going to be

¹⁴⁰ Takayoshi Oshima, *Babylonian Poems of Pious Sufferers* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2021), 117.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 125.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 127.

¹⁴³ Christopher Hays, *Hidden Riches* (Louisville: Presbyterian Publishing Corp., 2014), 332.

saved, both deal with bodily and social suffering, both seek the reasons for their suffering, both reject sin as the reason for suffering, both deal with the wicked's prosperity, and both involve friends offering explanations for the suffering.¹⁴⁴

The study of ANE wisdom literature and its association with the OT is significant in biblical studies. Scholars have long recognized the parallels and influences between the wisdom literature found in the Ancient Near East and the wisdom literature found in the Old Testament, particularly in the books of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Job. This influence is a testament to the interconnectedness of cultures and the cross-fertilization of ideas during the ancient period. ANE wisdom literature often grapples with questions of human suffering, the meaning of life, and theodicy, themes found in books like Ecclesiastes and Job within the OT.

Wisdom's Influence in Job, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes

Each Wisdom book deals with biblical wisdom in distinct ways. August Konkel alludes to the Book of Job as one of the most significant literary works compared to the *Divine Comedy* or *Faust*.¹⁴⁵ It is the cornerstone of biblical wisdom literature engaging with theological and existential questions concerning lament, complaint, suffering, wisdom's nature, and Yahweh's sovereignty and providence. Job emphasizes the limits of human understanding, challenges theological norms, and helps the reader comprehend the mysteries of existence. It highlights that true wisdom does not always reveal a concise answer, but it is a journey for understanding

¹⁴⁴ Yair Hoffman, *A Blemished Perfection* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc., 2009), 253–7.

¹⁴⁵ August Konkel, *CBC: Job*, ed. Philip Comfort (Carol Stream: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 2006), 15. The *Divine Comedy* is by Dante Alighieri, and *Faust* is by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. Duvall and Hayes comments that the Book of Job is popular with readers because it deals with tragic suffering. Tragic suffering is a common occurrence and affects many people. See Duvall, and Hayes, 431.

undertaken with a humble attitude acknowledging Yahweh's divine wisdom. It uses a variety of literary devices to convey its message to the reader.¹⁴⁶ However, attempts have been unsuccessfully made to categorize the Book of Job.¹⁴⁷ John Hartley proposes that Job be classified as an epic and wisdom disputation that handles the issue of theodicy. Therefore, subgenres are used to compose and support the disputations.¹⁴⁸ Crenshaw explains that the Book of Job comprises a narrative framework with a poetic core, with the prologue and epilogue framing the poetic core.¹⁴⁹

Despite the variety of literalistic features, the prominent wisdom teaching is about handling human suffering and the problem of evil. Evil is portrayed as an injustice that Job suffers.¹⁵⁰ This topic is centered on the traditional retributive theology view that Yahweh rewards

¹⁴⁶ Murphy notes that the Book of Job contains many literary characteristics that makes it hard to categorize the biblical text as didactic, dramatic, epic, or anything else. As such, any attempt to singularly classify it has proven to be unsuccessful. See Murphy, *Wisdom Literature*, 16. Konkel explains that all literary characteristics have been transformed or transcended intended by the biblical author to convey his message(s), which includes extending language beyond its capable limitations. See Konkel, 15.

¹⁴⁷ Hartley explains that H. Richter tried to categorize Job as a lawsuit due to the various sections of the book corresponding to stages in a lawsuit (pre-trial, trial, appeal, litigation, and reconciliation). He additionally notes that C. Westermann likened Job to a dramatized lament that incorporates legal language. However, a problem with this categorization is that a dramatized lament is not a biblical genre, only a description. See Hartley, 38.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ James Crenshaw, "Job, Book of," *AYBD*, ed. David Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 858. However, William Brown comments that the narrative framework and poetic core ideal is debatable. He contends that the narrative was the original composition (an early folktale about the character Job) with the poetic core as a later addition. See William Brown, "Job, Book of," in *EDB*, ed. David Freedman et al. (Grand Rapids, William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2000), 716.

¹⁵⁰ Justice and goodness belong to Yahweh's sovereignty. Therefore, the problem of evil encountered in Job casts Yahweh as an unjust God. However, a central point to the Book of Job is theodicy, having faith that Yahweh will exact justice according to His timetable and purpose. See Konkel, 17–8.

good deeds and punishes evil deeds. As the Book of Job reveals, human justice does not always secure blessings.¹⁵¹ Job, a righteous and blameless man, undergoes profound suffering, challenging the simplistic equation of righteousness with prosperity and wickedness with suffering. Job's three friends lean towards the traditional retributive theology by forcibly trying to get him to repent to secure Yahweh's blessings.¹⁵² The dialogue between Yahweh and Job reveals that Yahweh has complete control over His creation (Job 38:16–24), refuting the traditional retributive theology. Through the Yahwistic dialogues, He reveals to Job that no human can fully comprehend the course of matters in the universe. Yahweh exercises His power through wisdom as a ruler in justice.¹⁵³ Yahweh's response to Job (Job 38–41) does not directly answer the problem of evil but emphasizes creation's vastness, complexity, and mystery. It reveals that divine wisdom is outside of human understanding. Yahweh reveals that people cannot grasp the larger cosmic order due to the universe's intricacies. Konkel comments that if people see the beauty, power, and goodness in creation through a limited comprehension of Yahweh's sovereignty, their faith will be rewarded.¹⁵⁴ It is through Job's restoration in Job 42 that vindication of Job's integrity is given, and it underscores the inscrutability of divine wisdom. Job's friends spoke erroneously about Yahweh; they are corrected, revealing that the problem of evil's past explanations can be misguided (Job 42:7–9). The Book of Job presents a dynamic and evolving comprehension of wisdom by delving into the gray areas of life, where clear and concise answers are elusive. As a characteristic of biblical wisdom, the Book of Job teaches a

¹⁵¹ Murphy, *Wisdom Literature*, 20.

¹⁵² Hartley, 48. As Hartley points out, the very actions of Job's friends would cause him to use Yahweh for a personal gain, which is the essence of sin.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 49.

¹⁵⁴ Konkel, 21.

valuable lesson on how to handle life's challenges and tragedies with proper behavior and faithfulness to Yahweh. Longman comments that the Book of Job provides a crucial example of how fearing Yahweh, characterized by a proper relationship with Yahweh, moved Job from tragic suffering to a deeper understanding of wisdom.¹⁵⁵

Whereas the Book of Job openly engages deep theological and existential questions about human suffering and the problem of evil, the Book of Proverbs provides practical wisdom in a rational and ordered world. If people serve Yahweh faithfully, work hard, and treat others correctly, then they will receive Yahweh's blessings and live a prosperous life.¹⁵⁶ Reyburn and Fry explain that three words occur repeated throughout the book; "wise," "be wise," and "wisdom."¹⁵⁷ They state, "The "wisdom" that is the subject of Proverbs is not merely intellectual and philosophical. It is practical, involving what the wise person does in any situation. It is an ethical, giving moral guidance and leading to the right living. Moreover, it is religious because its foundation is *Yahweh's* wisdom...."¹⁵⁸ The Book of Proverbs gives insights, advice, and moral teachings on living by wisdom as a divine principle and practical knowledge for daily living. Proverbs 1:2–4 states the purpose of the biblical book so that the reader might

¹⁵⁵ Longman III, *The Fear of the Lord is Wisdom*, "7. The Fear of the Lord is the Beginning of Wisdom."

¹⁵⁶ Duvall, and Hayes, 431. Longman explains that Yahweh created the cosmos through His wisdom which is ordered and predictable, not chaotic. In turn, it is possible for a person to live a life in a manner that maximizes success and minimizes snares. However, he comments that Proverbs does not make such a claim that takes these words and ensure a desired outcome. Sometimes, bad people prosper, and good people have a hard time making ends meet. What the Book of Proverbs does claim, or teach, is how people should do, say, and act the right thing at the right time, which is grounded in the fear of Yahweh. See Longman, *The Fear of the Lord is Wisdom*, "8. Wisdom and Creation Order: The Right Time."

¹⁵⁷ William Reyburn, and Euan Fry, *A Handbook on Proverbs* (New York: United Bible Societies, 2000), 8.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

know wisdom and allow it to govern their life. The verses reveal that wisdom is the use of knowledge practically and successfully through instruction (v. 2), training in wise dealings that lead to success (v. 3), and safeguarding against being misled by people undecided in their views and easily influenced.

Wisdom's preeminence is stated in Proverbs 1:7, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; Fools despise wisdom and instruction." The reverence for Yahweh is the starting point and essence of wisdom expressed by obedience and faithfulness to Him. Wisdom is not acquired by human ingenuity but through a righteous relationship with Yahweh. The biblical Hebrew term *חָכְמָה* ("wisdom") is a skill of living life the way Yahweh intended, connected by understanding and knowledge, and embracing all aspects of life.¹⁵⁹ While Proverbs uses "teachings" and "instructions" throughout its pages, "fools" should not be understood as an uneducated person. Chou-Wee Pan explains that a *לֵאמֹן* ("fool") describes a morally deficient person.¹⁶⁰ Reyburn and Fry explain that a "fool" is an uninstructed person who will mislead others and think that wisdom is worthless.¹⁶¹ Much of Proverb's biblical wisdom concentrates on moral integrity and righteousness. Specific teachings include instruction on folly, sin, goodness, wealth, poverty, the tongue, pride, humility, justice, vengeance, strife, gluttony, love,

¹⁵⁹ Estes, 221.

¹⁶⁰ Chou-Wee Pan, "לֵאמֹן," in *NIDOTTE Vol. 1*, ed. Willem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 304. The characteristics of a *לֵאמֹן* are foolishness (Prov. 16:22), despises discipline and correction (Prov. 15:5), having bad manners in speech (Prov. 10:8), lack self-control (Prov. 12:16), are rude and disrespectful (Prov. 12:15), unable to manage finances and material possessions (Prov. 21:20), and are punished for their folly (Prov. 26:3).

¹⁶¹ Reyburn, and Fry, 30–1.

lust, laziness, friends, family, life, and death.¹⁶² Proverbs 11:8 states, “The righteous is delivered from trouble, but the wicked takes his place.”

Biblical wisdom in Proverbs is teachable and accessible. In Proverbs 8–9, wisdom is personified¹⁶³, Woman Wisdom, and reveals that wisdom appeals to all to receive her instruction and is available everywhere.¹⁶⁴ Woman Wisdom embodies wisdom throughout Proverbs and is the key to understanding wisdom. The poetic representation emphasizes wisdom’s accessibility and its proactive nature, inviting people who will listen.¹⁶⁵ The key to comprehending wisdom’s personification is that it represents Yahweh. R. N. Whybray comments that Yahweh is the subject in these chapters, and He created the world with Wisdom in a secondary position.¹⁶⁶ Proverbs 8 presents a Yahwistic theme closely associated with wisdom in Prov. 8:23, wisdom

¹⁶² Estes explains that Proverbs instructs how the acts, attitudes, and values of a wise person are contrasted with a foolish person. The choice that a person makes, wisdom or folly, will determine their outcome, full life, or full death. See Estes, 221–2.

¹⁶³ There is a debate whether wisdom is personified or hypostasized in Proverbs. 8:22–36. Ernst Lucas comments that there is not a clear and concise definition for hypostasis. He does point to H. H. Ringgren’s study that concluded that Woman Wisdom was a hypostasis revealing that she was self-existent and had substance. Lucas remarks that it is highly improbable that the ancient Hebrews would have known what a hypostasis is given their monotheistic view. See Firth, and Wilson, 44.

¹⁶⁴ Woman Wisdom is a metaphor of Yahweh’s wisdom and her place at the highest point in the city (Prov. 9:3) is a figurative substitution for Yahweh Himself. All immature men are invited to join her for a meal to establish a relationship resulting in gaining understanding (Prov. 9:6). It is through wisdom’s personification that Proverbs teaches that wisdom comes from Yahweh and only Yahweh. See Longman, *The Fear of the Lord is Wisdom*, “7. Learning from Woman Wisdom.”

¹⁶⁵ Jason Kuo, “Proverbs, Book of,” *LBD*, ed. John Barry et al. (Bellingham: Lexham Press, 2016), “Themes and Theology: Woman Wisdom.”

¹⁶⁶ R. N. Whybray, *The Composition of the Book of Proverbs* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 41. He notes that Prov. 8:22–31 is a Yahwistic passage. Woman Wisdom makes claims for herself; however, she confesses that she is inferior to Yahweh and good things come from Him and not from her.

(Yahweh) is older than creation, Yahweh used wisdom for His creation (v. 30), and Yahweh, with His wisdom, delighted in creation (vv. 30–31).

Estes notes several characteristics exhibited by a person instructed in wisdom. A wise person is cheerful. Prov. 15:13 states, “A joyful heart makes a cheerful face, but when the heart is sad, the spirit is broken.” Cheerfulness is not the result of pleasant experiences, but from a joyful heart, it can surpass any negative and painful external forces.¹⁶⁷ It results from wise choices obtained through values, inspiration, and a commitment to Yahweh. Contentment is expressed by a wise person with the possessions they have and produces moderation.¹⁶⁸ Prov. 16:19 states, “It is better to be humble in spirit with the lowly than to divide the spoil with the proud.” Prov. 30:8 further the moderation idea by stating, “Keep deception and lies far from me. Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with the food that is my portion.” In a fast-paced and overbearing world, the Book of Proverbs instructs the reader to be thankful for what they have, where they live, and to develop the values that honor Yahweh.

Decisions are made by people every minute of every day. Proverbs teach that sound decisions come from a Godly character, a wise person’s inner being (heart). Prov. 4:23 urges the reader to guard their heart, and 21:2 states that Yahweh weighs the heart. Estes remarks that Yahweh knows a person’s heart, which determines their motivation; obedience to Yahweh develops good decisions and integrity, and good decisions are made after considering all the facts.¹⁶⁹ Good decisions lead to a good character when grounded in the fear of Yahweh. While Proverbs is concerned with the life actions of people (concrete, individual acts), it is ultimately

¹⁶⁷ Estes, 224–5. Whybray calls this a psychological observation. See Whybray, 104.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 227. Whybray notes that this is foundational for humility as well. See Whybray, 109.

¹⁶⁹ Estes., 232–3.

concerned with a person's character.¹⁷⁰ A sign of a good character is diligence. It is a quality that motivates a person to move quickly to accept challenges, focus on the long term, and welcome opportunities presented by Yahweh.¹⁷¹ Diligence is revealed from the biblical Hebrew word מְהִיר. *HALOT* defines מְהִיר to mean "to hasten," "quickly," "experienced and learned," to be "skillful and experienced," and to be "zealous for what is right."¹⁷² Anthony Tomasino explains that מְהִיר suggests that a scribe was in mind for Prov. 22:29. It notes that speed and skill were crucial for a scribe's work.¹⁷³

A wise person will be cognizant of how they meet and handle people. Therefore, friendship results from a wise person's relationship with other people. With human relationships, there is a horizontal and a vertical component. The vertical component is a healthy and proper relationship with Yahweh. When that is established, and a Godly character is developed, it helps form human relationships, the horizontal component.¹⁷⁴ Proverbs 27:10 states, "Do not forsake your own friend or your father's friend, and do not go to your brother's house in the day of your calamity; better is a neighbor who is near than a brother far away." In essence, while this verse does not teach us to be indifferent to a family member, it teaches that a close friend, at times, can be more beneficial than a distant relative. True friendship fosters an attitude of servitude, giving instead of receiving from another person. This idea is reflected in 27:6, "Faithful are the wounds

¹⁷⁰ Firth, and Wilson, 42.

¹⁷¹ Estes, 236.

¹⁷² Koehler, and Baumgartner, "מְהִיר," 552.

¹⁷³ Anthony Tomasino, "מְהִיר," in *NIDOTTE Vol. 2*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 852.

¹⁷⁴ Proverbs teaches that kindness and truthfulness lay the foundation for a relationship with Yahweh and people. Just as biblical wisdom cultivates a Godly character in a person, it also helps to cultivate a wise person's desire to meet the needs of other people. See Estes, 237.

of a friend.” Here, the wise teacher tells the reader that a loyal friend may correct, and the wounds inflicted will heal.¹⁷⁵

Another vertical and horizontal aspect of biblical wisdom is a person’s generosity. Yahweh is generous to people who are faithful and obedient to Him. Likewise, a wise person is generous to another person (stranger, needy, another friend). Proverbs 10:22 provides the basis for generosity, Yahweh’s divine pattern for generosity. The verse states, “It is the blessing of the Lord that makes rich, and He adds no sorrow to it.” Real prosperity is a divine blessing for this life and the next.¹⁷⁶ Generosity entails a willingness to help others through time, resources, and materials. Through this aspect of generosity, Yahweh is honored and reflects a Godly character.¹⁷⁷ Underscoring cheerfulness, friendship, and generosity is humility. In biblical Hebrew, ענה means to be “poor” and “destitute.”¹⁷⁸ How then did it morph to mean humble (Prov. 18:22)? A possible scenario is that עני underwent a semantic development from meaning “poor” to meaning “humble, pious.”¹⁷⁹ Stemming from friendship, generosity, and humility is

¹⁷⁵ Both verses 5 and 6 pertain to friendship and the willingness of a loyal friend to plainly speak within the friendship. See Whybray, 125.

¹⁷⁶ In the OT, a good wife, children, material possessions, etc. were viewed as blessings from Yahweh. Woman Wisdom is herself generous to those who accept her invitation and love her. See Estes, 240. Whybray explains that Prov. 10:22 is related to 10:4, 6–7. It is used to clarify the blessings stated in verses 6 and 7 by noting the content of the blessing. With verse 4, there is an affiliation with the diligent person and divine blessings. A diligent person cannot bestow on themselves blessings for working hard and skillfully, It is Yahweh who bestows the blessings. See Whybray, 95.

¹⁷⁷ Generous people honor Yahweh by helping the needy, which reflects a compassion for the individual and for Yahweh. On the other hand, to refuse generosity to another person reflects a contempt for that individual and Yahweh. See Estes, 242.

¹⁷⁸ R. Martin-Achard, “ענה,” in *TLOT Vol.2*, ed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 931.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 933.

kindness.¹⁸⁰ The biblical Hebrew term רַחֲמִים (“kindness”) is a characteristic of Yahweh’s relationship with humans. It is a mark of a valued man specifically targeted in two Proverbial texts. In Proverbs 29:7, a person is to show kindness towards the poor, “The righteous is concerned for the rights of the poor.” In this verse, a link between righteousness and compassion, or kindness, reveals a sensitivity for all humans made in Yahweh’s image.¹⁸¹ In Proverbs 12:10, kindness is exhibited towards animals, “A righteous man has regard for the life of his animal.” This verse takes righteousness and kindness a step further by revealing that a wise person shows kindness to humans made in Yahweh’s image and indicates that the wise person shows the same towards Yahweh’s creation.¹⁸² This person will not exploit Yahweh’s creation for selfish reasons.

Purity reflects a person’s heart. A person’s internal motives and values are what control their external actions.¹⁸³ People can justify their actions to satisfy their conscience; however, Yahweh knows a person’s heart and what truly motivates their actions. Proverbs 21:2, a variant of 16:2, reveals that Yahweh will scrutinize a person’s heart and lead to a possible judgment.¹⁸⁴ The heart not only controls motivation but also how it governs conduct. Proverbs 21:8 states that a pure person will have upright conduct. A wise person will exhibit upright conduct by living according to Yahweh’s standards, pleasing Yahweh, and yielding spiritual maturity by staying on the path that Yahweh has designated.¹⁸⁵ The wise person who cultivates a pure heart will act in

¹⁸⁰ The biblical Hebrew רַחֲמִים will undergo a comprehensive treatment in Chapter Seven.

¹⁸¹ Estes, 246.

¹⁸² Ibid., 247.

¹⁸³ Ibid., 253.

¹⁸⁴ Whybray, 117.

¹⁸⁵ Estes, 253.

righteousness. The fear of Yahweh is the beginning of wisdom that leads to righteousness. Proverbs 2:9 mentions righteousness or *קִדְּוָה*. *HALOT* defines *קִדְּוָה* as “communal loyalty, conduct loyal to the community” regarding persons.¹⁸⁶ K. Koch states that *קִדְּוָה* means “to be communally faithful, beneficial.”¹⁸⁷ Of Proverbs 2:9, Koch explains that *קִדְּוָה* is not a given but is cultivated through instruction and insight. Morally good conduct is not self-evident; it requires understanding wisdom from all wise doctrine and Yahweh.¹⁸⁸ Righteousness yields truthfulness. A truthful person will not perjure themselves or bear false witness against another person, provide effective governmental leadership, be honest in their dealings with the public, and deal truthfully with their sins before Yahweh. Therefore, truthfulness affects every aspect of a person’s life.¹⁸⁹ Proverbs 12:13 speaks about how a truthful person will escape trouble. David Reimer notes the high concentration usage of *קִדְּוָה* in Wisdom literature. In Proverbs, the adjectival form of *קִדְּוָה* is preferred, which notes that the wise teacher is more interested in the person’s nature than abstract conceptions.¹⁹⁰

The Book of Proverbs presents a holistic view of wisdom, encompassing both the moral and the practical. Its teachings provide a source and guidance for wisdom. The wisdom in Proverbs is both a challenge to live righteously and an invitation to discern the patterns and principles that govern life.

¹⁸⁶ Koehler, and Baumgartner, “*קִדְּוָה*,” 1005.

¹⁸⁷ K. Koch, “*קִדְּוָה*,” in *TLOT Vol.2*, ed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 1046.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 1057.

¹⁸⁹ Estes, 258–60.

¹⁹⁰ David Reimer, “*קִדְּוָה*,” in *NIDOTTE Vol. 3*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 751–4.

If the Book of Job deals with profound theological questions about suffering and the problem of evil, and the Book of Proverbs provides practical wisdom instruction for everyday living, Ecclesiastes provides a unique perspective that contrasts the other two. Proverbs provides an optimistic view of wisdom; however, Ecclesiastes gives a skeptical and existential outlook on life's meaning. Its purpose is to reveal human wisdom's limitations from Yahweh's viewpoint.¹⁹¹ In Qoheleth's eyes, everything is הֶבֶל (“meaningless, vain, futile”). Longman notes that Qoheleth is looking for answers in all aspects of life and is coming up empty.¹⁹² However, what is הֶבֶל? *BDB* notes that when *hevel* is a masculine nominative, it is translated as “vapour, breath” with a figurative meaning of “of what is evanescent, unsubstantial, worthless, vanity.”¹⁹³ Middle Hebrew translates the noun as “warm breath, vapour,” and Jewish Aramaic (Targumic tradition) supports “breath, vanity.”¹⁹⁴ R. Albertz cautions that interpreting *hevel* as “nothing, nothingness” is too general, and the term's meaning is influenced contextually.¹⁹⁵ It further explains, “For Qohelet, *hebel* refers not simply to everything, but to three specific complexes: (1) his efforts, indeed, human work in general, are unproductive, useless, and vain (2:1, 11, 19, 21, 23; 4:4, 8; 5:9; 6:2); here *hebel* is an exact antonym for *yitrôn* “use” (cf. 2:11; so also Ellermeier, op. cit. 38). Work is senseless, because God capriciously allows one to enjoy the fruits of one's work but denies them to another (2:24–26); finally, however, because humans are mortal and must leave

¹⁹¹ Miles Custis, and James Reitman, “Ecclesiastes, Book of,” *LBD*, ed. John Barry et al. (Bellingham: Lexham Press, 2016), “Critical Issues: Message and Purpose.”

¹⁹² Tremper Longman III, *CBC: Ecclesiastes*, ed. Philip Comfort et al. (Carol Stream: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 2006), 257.

¹⁹³ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “הֶבֶל,” 210.

¹⁹⁴ Koehler, and Baumgartner, “הֶבֶל,” 236.

¹⁹⁵ R. Albertz, “הֶבֶל,” in *TLOT Vol.1*, ed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 351–2.

their possessions to another (2:18–21; 6:1f.). (2) The wisdom mastery of life, which seeks to order human behavior and actions, is senseless, for, as it happens, the righteous have the fate of the godless (8:10–14); in the final analysis, the wise die like the foolish (2:15; 6:7–9). (3) Behind these judgments stands Qohelet’s insight into human transience (6:12; 11:8, 10; cf. 7:15; 9:9), which makes humanity equal to all creation (3:19). In the light of the impending fate of death, all the future (11:8), all events whatsoever, are incomprehensible and senseless (1:14; 2:17). God is certainly not subject to the *hebel* verdict, but neither is he a savior from that verdict (thus Hertzberg, KAT 17/4, 222ff.; Loretz, op. cit. 234ff.); rather, in his incomprehensible actions he is the final cause for human finitude.”¹⁹⁶ The term *hevel*, comprehended uniformly, is problematic because it is not viewed contextually. The term’s Ecclesiastical nuances require a contextual awareness that specifies its understanding. Miller concurs by noting that “no proposal to date has been completely successful in its attempt to translate הֶבֶל by one abstract concept.”¹⁹⁷ K. Seybold explains that *hevel* serves the purpose of valuation or devaluation in a nominal statement.¹⁹⁸ It states, “The total equalization of all earthly, human activity in 1:14 runs contrary to a sapiential value system; such a radical disqualification is directed against the norm of *yithron* thinking which underlies this system. *hakkol*, “all,” is the subject of *hebhel* in the predicate nominative in several passages. In 1:13f. and 2:17, it denotes the totality of human activity; in 2:11, the speaker’s own work as “king over Israel in Jerusalem,” in 3:19 all living things; and in 11:8 the

¹⁹⁶Albertz, “הֶבֶל,” 352.

¹⁹⁷ Douglas Miller, “Qohelet’s Symbolic Use of HBL,” *JBL* 117, no. 3 (Fall 1998): 439.

¹⁹⁸ K. Seybold., “הֶבֶל,” in *TDOT Vol. 3*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David Green (Grand Rapids.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 319.

future. In 1:2 and 12:8 it is used in a universal sense. The reference is to a creaturely, breathing, working life.”¹⁹⁹

To comprehend Qoheleth’s use of *hevel* is to understand how the Hebrew term functions in Ecclesiastes. Instead of interpreting *hevel* with a specific meaning(s), it should be viewed symbolically. Miller argues “that the author of Ecclesiastes adopted הֶבֶל, “vapor,” as a symbol by which to represent the entirety of human experience. On the one hand Qohelet has taken הֶבֶל in three different directions, so that three senses, or “Referents,” of the term may be discerned, each of which happens to be metaphorical. The three Referents of הֶבֶל are: “Insubstantiality,” “Transience,” and “Foulness.””²⁰⁰ Insubstantiality involves reality versus expectation. Insubstantiality is the intended metaphorical use when Qohelet “evaluates toil (1:2–11; 1:12–15; 2:24–26), wisdom (2:12–17; 4:13–16), pleasure (2:1–11), and all three (6:7–9) as things that accomplish nothing of substantial or significant benefit.”²⁰¹ This symbolic use is attached to 4:17–5:6 (a fool’s talkativeness), 6:10–12, wealth in 5:7–11, and 3:16–22 (the human condition). Transient use is the least of the three but is noticeable. Concerning 6:12, Miller writes, “Such a meaning is established here by the reference to “few days” and by the synonym “shadow” (צל), a common metaphor for brevity. Like a short-lived shadow, a vapor quickly dissipates.”²⁰² Brevity is revealed in 11:7–10 through the period of youth and the enjoyment of life before evil comes. Finally, Foulness is metaphorically considered. Miller comments, “This use of הבל is frequent and important, describing realities that, for example, are an affront to Qohelet’s sense of justice.

¹⁹⁹ Seybold., “הֶבֶל,” 319.

²⁰⁰ Miller, 443.

²⁰¹ Ibid., 447.

²⁰² Ibid., 448.

In this case, vapor has become “bad air.”²⁰³ This difference is distinguishable when רַע is found with הַבֵּל. Hebrew and Aramaic texts, *hevel* “designates a kind of vapor that carries life-threatening properties within itself.”²⁰⁴ Therefore, Qoheleth uses this metaphorical term to denote unfavorable valuations. Ecclesiastes 2:18–19, 21; 4:7–12; 6:1–6; 9:1–3 is unacceptable, repugnant, and unsatisfactory in providing a sense of lasting fulfillment or meaning.

Compounding Qoheleth’s הַבֵּל is the limitations of human wisdom. While wisdom is often portrayed positively, Qoheleth challenges this by asking what good there is in gaining wisdom. Ecclesiastes 1:18 states, “Because in much wisdom there is much grief, and increasing knowledge results in increasing pain.” It seems Qoheleth is saying that the more one knows, the more one realizes the inherent complexities and contradictions in life, leading potentially to existential despair rather than clarity or peace. Verse 18 is both a process and a result. The process of obtaining wisdom involves enduring challenges and failures. The unsatisfactory result of gaining wisdom is that the more a person knows, the less they know.²⁰⁵ It is a painful task that proves to be futile. If Solomon is Qoheleth²⁰⁶, then verse 18 makes sense because he had wisdom (Eccl. 1:16), wealth (Eccl.2:7), pleasure (Eccl. 2:3), and women (1 Kings 11:3, 700 wives and

²⁰³ Miller, 449.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 450.

²⁰⁵ Roland Murphy, *WBC Vol. 23A: Ecclesiastes* (Dallas: Word Books, 1992), 14. Estes refers to this as faculty and knowledge. It is a faculty because it is an intellectual power that combines common sense, practical skills, and reason. It is knowledge, that which is the communicable content of knowledge. Hence, the more Qoheleth has learned about life, the worse life gets. See Estes, 297.

²⁰⁶ The long-standing tradition is that the author is Solomon based on Eccl. 1:1, “David’s son.” However, that has since been rejected due to conflicting Ecclesiastical passages. See Murphy, *WBC: Ecclesiastes*, xx–xxi; Custis, and Reitman, “Critical Issues: Authorship, Date, and Language;” Estes, 271; and Longman III, *CBC: Ecclesiastes*, 254. Some other scholars that refute the Solomonic authorship include Luther, Moses Stuart, Delitzsch, Young, and Kidner.

300 concubines); however, Solomon temporarily became an apostate, and all that he gained amounted to nothing.²⁰⁷

Another wisdom component in Ecclesiastes is the limited time for worldly achievements compared to eternal matters. The Book of Ecclesiastes advises the reader to focus on the eternal by acknowledging Yahweh's sovereignty and appreciating Yahweh's life blessing. The key is found in Ecclesiastes 12:13, which is to fear Yahweh. The two instructions in verse 13 are the reasons for Qohelet's teachings. The righteous and obedient follower will "fear Yahweh" and "keep His commandments."²⁰⁸ This is not a new OT concept, but one addressed in Wisdom literature. It additionally solves the לִּירְאֵהוּ problem.²⁰⁹ Longman comments that to fear Yahweh (the foundation of true wisdom) is to establish a righteous relationship with Him, and to obey His commandments (using wisdom to be obedient to Yahweh) is how that relationship is maintained.²¹⁰

Even through its skepticism, Ecclesiastes is closer to mainline wisdom than the Book of Job. Ecclesiastes stands on one end of the wisdom spectrum and critiques it. Qoheleth's sentiments are anti-wisdom and skeptical about the meaning, but at the end of Ecclesiastes, the affirmation that fearing Yahweh is the basis for true knowledge.²¹¹

²⁰⁷ Longman III, *WBC: Ecclesiastes*, 267.

²⁰⁸ Michael Fox notes that verse 13 reflects an attitude that is close to traditional Wisdom epistemology. He explains that "The words of sages steer us in the direction, but in fact knowledge of this principle is accessible to everyone from the start." See Michael Fox, *Qoheleth and His Contradictions* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc., 1989), 328. This statement rings some truth by comprehending Yahweh's general and special revelation.

²⁰⁹ Estes, 383.

²¹⁰ Longman III, *CBC: Ecclesiastes*, 333–4.

²¹¹ Firth, and Wilson, 96.

Wisdom's Influence in the Book of Ruth

The Book of Ruth does not fit neatly into traditional wisdom literature; however, it does show elements of wisdom that touch on themes of loyalty, kindness, redemption, virtuous characters, and moral considerations. Previously, it was seen how Wisdom literature provided wisdom for living virtuously and with an upright life. A stronger bond is realized when the Book of Ruth is viewed through the same lens as Wisdom literature. Therefore, an analysis of the character of Ruth and ethical themes, which include fear of Yahweh, social justice, respecting traditions, *hesed*, and *go'el*, will be performed to reveal how the biblical text provides wise guidance on living a proper and moral life honoring Yahweh.

Ruth's character embodies different wisdom characteristics, including loyalty, resourcefulness, humility, trust, initiative, and adherence to traditional customs. It is because of Ruth's actions and values that she can be seen as an exemplary character in her behavior and relationships, which answers the question posed in Proverbs 31:10.²¹² Ruth's fulfillment of the "excellent wife" in 31:10 allows her to be an example of Wisdom herself.²¹³ This fulfillment reveals that Ruth embodies values taught by proverbial wisdom. The connections between Prov. 31:10 and the character of Ruth are that they are both active (Ruth 2:2, 7, 17; Prov. 31:15, 27), they both work to support the household (Ruth 2:18; Prov. 31:15, 21), show kindness (Ruth 3:10; Prov. 31:26), their superiority is recognized by their husbands and community (Ruth 3:10–

²¹² Katherine Dell, and Will Kynes, eds., *Reading Proverbs Intertextually* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc., 2018), 103.

²¹³ Ibid. It is noticed that due to Ruth's lowly status and as a foreigner that she does not fit the probable wife profile in Prov. 31:10; however, she does portray the image after marrying Boaz and having a son. Peter Lau, and Gregory Goswell note that the narrative reveals that in Ruth a behavior that is worth imitating (i.e., Prov. 6:6–11; 10:26; 13:4). Peter Lau, and Gregory Goswell, *Unceasing Kindness: A Biblical Theology of Ruth* (Westmont: InterVarsity Press, 2016), 41–2.

11; 4:15; Prov. 31:28–29), hard-working (Ruth 2:2, 17, 23; Prov. 31:13, 27; a reflection of practical wisdom), and they fear Yahweh (Ruth 1:16; 2:12; Prov. 31:30).²¹⁴ Fearing Yahweh is a prominent wisdom theme in Wisdom literature, and in Ruth 1:16, Ruth commits to Yahweh and implicitly to Israel’s covenantal faith. This commitment is realized when she speaks the vow formula to Naomi, which contains divine punishment if Ruth does not keep her vow.²¹⁵ A Hebrew understanding is that marriage and children are a blessing from Yahweh; wisdom is also seen as a blessing from Him. In the Book of Ruth, Yahweh blesses Ruth by her marriage to Boaz. Interestingly, it is Ruth who has become a blessing for Boaz. In Ruth 3:10, Boaz receives Ruth’s affection and marriage proposal, indicating that Ruth and Yahweh have recognized his moral, proper behavior, and Godly character.²¹⁶

The Book of Ruth contains ethical themes that resonate with wisdom principles in Wisdom literature. Ruth offers valuable lessons on how individuals and communities can embody and uphold virtuous conduct in their relationships and decisions. In Ruth 1:16, Ruth pledges her loyalty to Naomi, the Israelites, and Yahweh. She is so resolute in her decision that she includes with her vow divine punishment if she reneges on her commitment. The significant aspect of her vow of loyalty is to Yahweh. There is no indication of her level of knowledge about Yahweh; however, she willingly acknowledged and accepted Him. Wisdom literature speaks about fearing Yahweh and how having a righteous relationship with Him results in His

²¹⁴ Lau, and Goswell, 42; Timothy Stone, *The Compilational History of the Megilloth* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 134.

²¹⁵ Ben Ollenburger, ed., *Old Testament Theology: Flowering and Future* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2004), 332.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 335.

providential care and blessings. Through her words and actions, Ruth has converted to Yahwism.²¹⁷

The ethical theme of social justice is indicated in Ruth 2:2 when she gleanes grain from the field. טָרַף (“to gather, glean”) is used as a piel verb in verse 2.²¹⁸ The significance of the piel form of טָרַף in this verse constitutes a complete gathering of grain or grapes. Leviticus 19:10 instructs harvesters not to strip the field bare but to leave grain or grapes around the edges for the widows, needy, and foreigners to pick. This was a social justice law that elicited moral behavior from the Hebrews. In Ruth 2:2, it is revealed that Boaz adheres to this Leviticus law. While the people were following a Mosaic law, the authority behind these laws was Yahweh.²¹⁹ Boaz’s instruction to the harvesters to leave behind extra grain stalks for Ruth indicates more than a legal obligation; it is an outward showing of *hesed*.²²⁰

²¹⁷ Robert Hubbard explains that Ruth’s words and tone point to a confession. The use of the covenantal name Yahweh instead of Elohim by Ruth suggests that her vow meant beyond the physical life and included the afterlife. See Robert Hubbard, *NICOT: Ruth* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1988), 120. André LaCocque comments that Ruth knew that Yahweh was Naomi’s God and that she would have had some knowledge about Yahweh. Therefore, her decision to live her homeland and her god to go with Naomi, to accept Israel as her home, and to accept Yahweh as her God meant that Ruth was willing to convert to Yahwism out of fear for Yahweh. See André LaCocque, *CC: Ruth* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014), 52. Daniel Block disagrees and sees Ruth’s vow as a transference of cultural membership rather than a Yahwistic conversion. See Daniel Block, *NAC Vol. 6: Judges, Ruth* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1999), 641.

²¹⁸ Cleon Rogers, Jr., and I. Cornelius, “טָרַף,” in *NIDOTTE Vol. 2*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 810–1.

²¹⁹ Hubbard, 136. The provision by a generous landlord reflects Yahweh’s providential care for His people. The farmers worked the landowner’s fields; however, Yahweh is the true landowner.

²²⁰ Barry Webb, *Five Festal Garments*, ed. D. A. Carson (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 44. An extensive evaluation of *hesed* will occur in Chapter Seven.

There is the ethical theme of respecting tradition. This theme is reflected in Ruth 4:1–12, where Boaz goes to the city gate to take care of a legal matter, which can be seen as juridical wisdom. Hubbard comments that Boaz had two reasons for going to the city gate: the first to find out if there was a nearer kinsman than himself, and secondly, it was the place where legal transactions occurred.²²¹ *HALOT* explains that שַׁעַר ("gate") was a link to a city or some other location in an elevated position, such as a hilltop or a mountain ledge.²²² Russell Fuller states that the city gate is the strategic center of an ancient city. Its possession meant the conquest of the city (Gen 22:17; 24:60). It was closed at night for protection (Josh 2:5). It was opened to receive tribute (Isa 60:11; cf. Rev 21:25; 1QM 12:13–14) and to welcome its king (Ps 24:7, 9). When a city was captured, kings and officials placed their thrones and chairs at the gate to judge the vanquished city (Jer 1:15; 39:3). There are examples of administration of justice in times of peace as well (Deut 16:18; 17:5). Judges were appointed at every gate. The elders and the wise sat at the gate to decide cases, and that is where punishments and executions were meted out (Deut 21:19; 22:15, 24; Prov 24:7; Jer 20:2). At the gate, property exchanges could be conducted in front of witnesses (Gen 23:10, 18).²²³ LaCocque notes that Boaz willingly went before the people at the gate to interpret the laws concerning redemption and levirate marriage. He would be at the mercy of a moral community, who would decide if Boaz could marry Ruth and take care of the family and family property.²²⁴

²²¹ Hubbard, 232.

²²² Koehler, and Baumgartner, “שַׁעַר,” 1615–6.

²²³ Russell Fuller, “שַׁעַר,” in *NIDOTTE Vol. 4*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 208.

²²⁴ LaCocque, 126.

Finally, there is the ethical obligation to care for a family and fulfill responsibilities towards relatives in need. Boaz's willingness to take on the role of a kinsman redeemer portrays the importance of fulfilling familial duties with compassion and honor. In Ruth 2:20 and 3:9, Boaz is referred to as a לַאֲלֵי ("redeemer"). *HALOT* defines לַאֲלֵי as the duty of a male relative of the deceased who leaves behind a childless widow to redeem her childlessness through marriage.²²⁵ J. Stamm explains that Boaz also acquires Ruth, the widow of Mahlon, together with the field "in order to reestablish the name of the deceased on his property" (4:5, 10). Boaz enters a levirate or in-law marriage with Ruth, who represents Naomi here. Because this is the only case of this nature in the OT, one may not be sure whether the levirate is one of the obligations of the *gō'ēl*. Given the essential relationship of *g'e'ullâ* and levirate—both seek to keep the family whole—it is entirely probable.²²⁶ Boaz's willingness, out of compassion, to act as a redeemer reflects how Yahweh provides for His people. Divine providence is encountered in Wisdom literature. To receive Yahweh's providence is to establish a proper and moral relationship with Him that begins with acknowledging Him and cultivating wisdom to live according to His standards.

The Book of Ruth, while in the Hebrew Bible, is not traditionally viewed as a piece of wisdom literature. However, a look at the character of Ruth and examining some of the ethical themes within indicate that Ruth has more didactic wisdom than previously thought. In the following three chapters, an in-depth look will entail evaluating fifteen themes²²⁷ common

²²⁵ Koehler, and Baumgartner, "לַאֲלֵי," 169. The biblical Hebrew לַאֲלֵי will be extensively studied in Chapter Seven.

²²⁶ J. Stamm, "לַאֲלֵי," in *TLOT Vol.1*, ed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 290.

²²⁷ Proper portion, discipline and hope, friendship and family loyalty, hard work, entreaty, inappropriate touching, true reward, humility, generosity of spirit, kindness,

between the Book of Ruth and Wisdom literature. Chapter three will concentrate on these themes in the Book of Ruth.

redemption, obeying instructions, worthy woman/wife, city gate, and building up a house will be analyzed.

Chapter 3

Proper Portion—Ruth 1:1, 6–7

The idea of a proper portion is not to have an excess of or less than necessary of something: food, money, material possessions. In Wisdom literature, the guidance for maintaining a proper portion hinged on the belief that having an excess of something led to self-sufficiency and less dependence on Yahweh; on the other end, having less than what is necessary led to stealing and other mischievous behavior which contradicted the moral standards that Yahweh wanted His people to cultivate and nurture.¹ The precedent for a proper portion can be traced back to Exodus 16:4, where Yahweh supplied enough manna for the Hebrews each day. Yahweh tells Moses that this test is to see if the Hebrews would follow His instruction. This manna provision exemplifies Yahweh's providential care for His people.²

In the Book of Ruth, the reader comes across the idea of a proper portion in 1:1, where Elimelech and his family must leave Bethlehem to travel to Moab for food. The biblical Hebrew רָעָב is used to denote the reason for Elimelech's family to relocate temporarily. The term רָעָב is translated as famine (ninety-four times), famished (one time), and hunger (six times) in the OT. Robert Way explains that Yahweh is concerned about His people's moral welfare and material well-being. Therefore, Yahweh rewarded obedience (Lev. 26:3–12) and punished disobedience

¹ Katherine Dell, *The Solomonic Corpus of 'Wisdom' and Its Influence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, Inc., 2020), 174.

² The manna was a Yahwistic blessing that was to be shared equally and not stockpiled for future use because Yahweh would send manna each day, except on Friday where He would send the double of the amount to carry through the weekend. See Anthony Harvey, "Daily Bread," *JTS* 69, no. 1 (April 2018): 29.

(Lev. 26:14–20). A form of punishment that Yahweh used was famine.³ A famine could have several causes: drought (Gen. 41:27), disease, locusts (Amos 4:9–10), loss of livestock (1 Kings 18:5), warfare (2 Kings 7:24–25), and Yahweh’s judgment (2 Kings 8:1). Famines, although tragic events, were used by Yahweh to serve His will and purpose.⁴ While the famine’s cause is not revealed in the Book of Ruth, Yahweh’s purpose for the famine is revealed because while Elimelech and his family are in Moab, Ruth, the Moabitess emerges into the narrative (Ruth 1:4).

In Ruth 1:6–7, Naomi learned that Yahweh had blessed the land with food, and the famine was over. Amid a family tragedy, the deaths of Elimelech, Mahlon, and Chilion, Naomi hears the good news. Daniel Block notes four crucial elements for the phrase פָּקַדָהּ?הָיָה (“Yahweh visited”).⁵ First, it was a blessing from Yahweh for Naomi to hear the good news in Moab. Second, Yahweh intervened on the behalf of His people. *HALOT* defines פָּקַד as “to look at, see to something (of Yahweh) of the people.”⁶ Tyler Williams explains that פָּקַד semantic range has posed interpretive challenges.⁷ However, when Yahweh is the subject, there is a positive context,

³ Robert Way, “רָעַב,” in *NIDOTTE Vol. 3*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 1132. These blessings and curses were a part of Yahweh’s covenant with the Hebrews. Therefore, the faithful and obedient comprehended Yahweh’s actions as a reward (blessings for the righteous) and as a punishment (curses for the unrighteous).

⁴ Robert Hubbard, *NICOT: Ruth* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1988), 84.

⁵ Daniel Block, *NAC Vol. 6: Judges, Ruth* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1999), 631.

⁶ Ludwig Koehler, and Walter Baumgartner, “פָּקַד,” *HALOT*, 5th ed. (Leiden: Brill Publishing, 2000), 956.

⁷ Tyler Williams, “פָּקַד,” in *NIDOTTE Vol. 3*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 655. The *NASB Exhaustive Concordance* notes פָּקַד uses: “am indeed concerned (one time), any reason (one time), any reason he is missing (one time), appoint (twelve times), appointed (nine times), appoints (one time), assign (three times), assigned (one time), attend (one time), attended (one time), bring punishment (one time), brought (one time), call their to account (one time), calls me to account (one time), care (three times), charge (one time), commit (one time), committed (three times), concerned (one time), counted (one time), damage (one time), deposited (three times), deprived (one time), empty (three times), entrusted

and פקד can mean “to be concerned about, care for, attend to, help.” In a negative context, פקד commonly means “to punish.”⁸ Third, Yahweh’s divine blessing fell on His people. Robert Hubbard explains that this implies that Yahweh is acting like a supervisor over His subordinates because of the special covenant relationship with Israel.⁹ Yahweh visited Bethlehem to evaluate the situation and either bestow a blessing or continue the curse (a famine). Fourth, Yahweh blessed His people with bread. The *NASB* translates אֶלֶּם as “food.” However, Block contends that אֶלֶּם is a play on Bethlehem (“house of bread”), which would render אֶלֶּם to mean “bread.”¹⁰

Ruth 1:1 and 1:6–7 reveal Yahweh’s providence and use of tragedy to advance His purpose. Yahweh uses Bethlehem’s famine to have Elimelech and his family temporarily relocate to Moab to seek food. Because Bethlehem had less than the family needed, they sought a proper portion from a neighboring country. After Elimelech’s, Mahlon’s, and Chilion’s deaths, Yahweh had good news traveled to Moab so Naomi could find out that He had blessed

(one time), examine (one time), foremen (one time), gave (one time), had the oversight (one time), lack (one time), longed (one time), look (one time), made him overseer (two times), made them overseers (one time), miss (two times), missed (three times), misses me at all (one time), missing (five times), mustered (six times), mustering (one time), number (thirteen times), numbered (ninety-nine times), officers (two times), oversight (three times), punish (forty-six times), punished (six times), put him in charge (one time), put in charge (one time), put under (one time), put under the charge (one time), register (two times), see (one time), sought (one time), suffer (one time), summoned (one time), supervisors (one time), surely take care (three times), take care (one time), take notice (one time), took a census (one time), took note (one time), untouched (one time), visit (seven times), visited (six times), and visiting (four times).” “פקד,” *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, 2nd ed., ed. The Lockman Foundation (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 1456.

⁸ Williams, 656. Daniel Block explains that in the Ruthan context, פקד means “to come to the aid of, to intervene on the behalf of.” See Block, 631.

⁹ Hubbard, 100.

¹⁰ Block, 631. However, Jan de Waard and Eugene Nida notes that אֶלֶּם should mean “crops,” because Yahweh did not visit the land to pass out food but to make the crops harvestable by ending the famine. Jan de Waard, and Eugene Nida, *UBS: Ruth*, 2nd ed. (New York: United Bible Societies, 1992), 10.

Bethlehem by ending the famine. Yahweh had properly portioned the land with harvestable crops, which furthered His purpose of getting Ruth out of Moab and into Israel.

Discipline and Hope—Ruth 1:12–13; 4:1–17

Discipline is one of the themes in Wisdom literature. The biblical Hebrew term יָסַר (“discipline”) is the instilling of values and norms through instruction or, if necessary, rebuke and punishment.¹¹ Of the verb’s use, the piel form is the most used in Wisdom literature and Psalms.¹² Discipline should not be given to break a person down but to have hope that a person will change. M. Sæbø explains that יָסַר is given to edify, discipline, and remove the folly from a person. The result is to cultivate a moral behavior that meets Yahweh’s standards.¹³ Hope is desired by the person giving out discipline that the person receiving it will amend their ways and not receive destruction; however, too much discipline can lead to discouragement and damage.¹⁴

In Ruth 1:12–13, Naomi instructs in hopes that Ruth and Oprah avoid destruction. Naomi sees her life as hopeless, with no husband and no sons to return to Bethlehem with her. She

¹¹ E. H. Merrill, “יָסַר,” in *NIDOTTE Vol. 2*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 471.

¹² Merrill, 471. The vb. occurs 42x, 2x in qal., 5x in niph., 1x in nitp., 1x (?) in hiphil., and the rest in piel. Not surprisingly, many of the occurrences are in the Wisdom literature and Psalms (6x and 9x respectively), with the remainder fairly evenly distributed among the Pentateuch (8x, mainly Deut), the historical books (6x), and the Prophets (13x, 7x in Jer). Bruce Waltke and Michael O’Connor explain that a piel verb can function as a factitive. The qal verb is transformed and the piel yields an effected state and governs the object. As an example, they use לָמַד. The qal form renders “to learn;” however, the piel form renders “to teach (someone or something). Therefore, יָסַר in the qal form is” to admonish.” In the piel form, the rendering is “to disciple, to correct.” See Bruce Waltke, and Michael O’Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 401.

¹³ M. Sæbø, “יָסַר,” in *TLOT Vol.2*, ed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 550.

¹⁴ Dell, 174.

reasons that even if she could find a husband that night, she is probably too old to have sons. To avoid Ruth and Oprah succumbing to her hopelessness, she disciplines or instructs them to return to Moab, where they will have better opportunities to meet future husbands and bear sons. She is disillusioned to think she knows the best for her daughters-in-law and that forcing them to return to Moab will keep them from destruction.¹⁵ In verse 13, Naomi mentions *הִנָּה* ("hope"). Daniel Schibler explains that *הִנָּה* may signify a useless hope or pointless waiting because the situation has reached a point of no return and is pointless for Naomi.¹⁶ The *NASB Exhaustive Concordance* notes thirty-two instances of *הִנָּה*: expectation (three times), hope (twenty-eight times), longing (one time).¹⁷ Ruth's probably refusing Naomi's instructions or discipline points to a future hope for Naomi, a future marriage with an heir.¹⁸ This future hope is realized through Boaz's discipline and the family's hope in Ruth 4:1–17.

Ruth 4 begins with Boaz going up to the city gate. The discipline and hope seen in this biblical text are not viewed as Boaz giving discipline and receiving hope but practicing discipline and providing hope. Boaz displays discipline by upholding the legal responsibilities of a kinsman-redeemer (Ruth 4:1–12).¹⁹ His meticulous adherence to the legal procedures required

¹⁵ Dell, 175.

¹⁶ Daniel Schibler, "הִנָּה," in *NIDOTTE Vol. 3*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 891. Adam Howell notes that the use of *הִנָּה* in v. 12 indicates that Naomi is so bitter that she does not want to instill a false sense of hope in Ruth and Oprah.

¹⁷ *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, "הִנָּה," 1491.

¹⁸ Hubbard, 111.

¹⁹ Frederick Bush comments that the resolution of death and emptiness inflicted on Naomi and Ruth now lays in Boaz's hands. Boaz displays discipline to the legal tradition system by convening a legal hearing at the city gate with the nearer kinsman, witnesses, and the public. He lays out the facts before the assembly: the redemption of family property, care for Naomi, and marry Ruth, which would raise up an heir to inherit the family property. See Frederic Bush, *WBC Vol. 9: Ruth* (Dallas: Word, Inc., 1996), 243–5.

for Ruth's redemption showcases discipline in fulfilling one's obligations, even when it involves personal sacrifice. Whether the nearer relative or Boaz takes the kinsman redeemer role and marries Ruth²⁰, the hope for the family remains. Boaz plays a pivotal role in nurturing hope. His kindness, generosity, and willingness to act as the kinsman-redeemer, the moral and ethical obligations outlined in the Mosaic Law, offer Ruth and Naomi a renewed sense of hope, realized through the redemption of the family property²¹, taking care of Naomi, marrying Ruth, and providing a son (Obed). Bush comments that Yahweh's blessing of a son to Ruth fulfills Boaz's petition in Ruth 2:11–12.²²

The Book of Ruth begins with Naomi's erroneous discipline or instruction of Ruth and Oprah to return to Moab and the dismal hope she harbors. Ruth ends with Boaz's diligent discipline in the Israelite legal customs and compassion for Ruth. The dismal hope turns to hope, then realization as Boaz redeems property and family. At the end of Ruth, Naomi is with Obed, surrounded by a female chorus, who realize Yahweh's providence in Naomi's situation.²³

²⁰ In this situation, Elimelech did not have any brothers to marry Ruth. Therefore, it could have been an Israelite custom that if the levirate marriage (Deut. 25:5–10) could not be satisfied then the nearest kinsman redeemer could satisfy the requirement (Num. 27:9–11). See Block, 708.

²¹ According to the Mosaic Law, property was not to leave the family and one of the kinsman redeemer's functions was to prevent it from happening (Lev. 25:25–30).

²² Bush, 263.

²³ The female chorus sees the meaning of this child not in his identity as the heir of Elimelech and all his property but in his role as the restorer of Naomi to life who will support her in her old age. See Bush, 264.

Friendship and Family Loyalty—Ruth 1:14, 16–17; 2:20; 3:10

Friendship is a topic that has generally been passed over in OT ethics; however, it is a topic for classical scholars, philosophers, and theologians.²⁴ However, friendship has a significant ethical impact in Wisdom literature and the Book of Ruth. Sometimes in the OT, רֵעַ is used to mean “companion.”²⁵ J. Kühlewein notes that רֵעַ is used 187 times²⁶ in the OT and has the limited meaning of “(personal) friend, confidant, companion, colleague.”²⁷ The term רֵעַ can additionally be used in association with relatives (Ex. 32:27, Deut. 13:7; 1 Kings 16:11; Prov. 17:17, 27). In some proverbial wisdom (Prov. 17:17, 27), רֵעַ is strengthened by noting ‘love’ with the word.²⁸ Determining the intended meaning of רֵעַ depends on the context in which it is

²⁴ Katharine Dell, *Ethical and Unethical in the Old Testament: God and Humans in Dialogue* (New York: T & T Clark, 2010), 135. Scholars that overlook friendship are Christopher Wright, Eckart Otto, C. S. Rodd, H. W. Wolff, and R. E. Clements. Scholars that address friendship are E. D. H. Carmichael, David Konstan, and Janet M. Soskice.

²⁵ J. Kühlewein, “רֵעַ,” in *TLOT Vol.3*, ed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 1243.

²⁶ The *NASB Exhaustive Concordance* specifies that רֵעַ is used as another (twenty-seven times), another’s (five times), another (one time), companion (three times), fellow (one time), friend (thirty times), friend’s (one time), friends (eighteen times), husband (one time), kind (one time), lover (one time), lovers (one time), mate (one time), neighbor (sixty-four times), neighbor’s (twenty-three times), neighbors (three times), neighbors’ (one time), opponent (one time), opponent’s (one time), other (six times), and together (one time). H7462b, H7462c, H7463b, and H7464 are derivatives of רֵעַ that mean associate (one time), companion (two times), cultivate (one time), keeps company (one time), a special friend (one time), companion (three times). See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, “רֵעַ,” 1472.

²⁷ Kühlewein, 1244.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

being used.²⁹ For example, in Leviticus 19:18, Yahweh instructs that a person “shall love their neighbor as yourself.”³⁰

In the Book of Ruth, family duty is a visible theme, whether it is Ruth’s and Naomi’s relationship or Boaz’s kinsman relationship with the family. Michelle Morris comments that ‘family’ is an emotionally and stressful situation in the Book of Ruth. Ruth leaves her homeland, traditions, and religion to join Naomi to Bethlehem, where she vows devotion to Naomi, Israel, and Yahweh. Ruth transitions from a foreigner to a community member through the marriage to Boaz and Obed's birth.³¹ A sense of family duty is revealed in Ruth 1:14, where Ruth does not leave Naomi but clings to her. The Hebrew term קָבַץ means to "stick, cling, cleave to."³² In the Ruthan context, קָבַץ is metaphorically used to express loyalty, affection, and close proximity.³³ Block notes that Ruth’s actions demonstrate courage and faith, which will become more apparent during the third interchange.³⁴

²⁹ There are different usages, the instances where a “friend” is essential and need to be identified with conclusions based on the other uses of the word. See Dell, *Ethical and Unethical in the OT*, 137.

³⁰ Unless otherwise noted, all biblical passages referenced are in the *Ryrie Study Bible: New American Standard Bible*, 3rd ed. (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2012).

³¹ Michelle Morris, “Family,” in *LBD*, ed. John Barry et al. (Bellingham: Lexham Press, 2016), “Family in the Bible: The Writings (Histories, Proverbs, Wisdom Literature).”

³² George Brook, “קָבַץ,” in *NIDOTTE Vol. 1*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 893.

³³ *Ibid.*, 894; E. Jenni, “קָבַץ,” in *TLOT Vol. 1*, ed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 324; Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles Briggs, “קָבַץ,” *BDB* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1996), 179.

³⁴ Block, 638. André LaCocque comments that קָבַץ is normally associated with a devotion to Yahweh. However, in this context, it defines an interpersonal relationship akin to the religious vocabulary used in the Song of Songs. Therefore, Ruth’s actions instill a sense of intimacy. See André LaCocque, *CC: Ruth* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014), 50.

Ruth's sense of family duty reaches new heights in Ruth 1:16–17. Bush comments that Ruth's vow to Naomi goes beyond racial origins and national religion by abandoning her homeland to embracing Naomi's people and Yahweh. Ruth further solidifies this commitment by mentioning Yahweh's name, that if she does not keep her solemn oath, she will accept divine punishment.³⁵ To signify the importance of her decision, Ruth states in verse 17 that where Naomi dies, she will die and be buried. Including a burial area solidifies her devotion to Naomi, Israel, and Yahweh.³⁶ Choices have consequences. In the case of Ruth, she chooses to be with Naomi (family duty), Israel (community duty), and Yahweh (religious duty). Proverbial wisdom teaches that wise choices yield Yahweh's blessings, and foolish choices result in Yahweh's curses.³⁷

Friendship and family duty is revealed in Ruth 2:20. Boaz's compassion towards Ruth indicates a warm friendship because, at this point, she does not know that he is a relative.³⁸ It is not until Naomi reveals to Ruth that he is a relative (the beginning of family duty) that Boaz's and Ruth's relationship changes. Bush comments that Naomi's recognition of Boaz's kindness reflects that he is a relative, it concerns a pressing need from Naomi and Ruth, it is a willful act

³⁵ Bush, 87.

³⁶ De Waard and Nida explain that for Ruth to make this expression it reinforces her loyalty to family, land, and Yahweh. See De Waard, and Nida, 18. LaCocque notes that the grave was significantly important for a person because they would want to be buried in ancestral ground (Gen. 29:29–31; 50:13, 24–26; Josh. 24:32). It was believed that when a person was buried in their ancestral ground that they would “sleep with the fathers” (1 Kgs 2:10; 11:43; 14:31). Therefore, Ruth chooses to be with Naomi, Israel, Yahweh, and be buried with Naomi's family. See LaCocque, 54.

³⁷ Dell, *The Solomonic Corpus of 'Wisdom' and Its Influence*, 176.

³⁸ Ruth may or may not have known that Boaz was a relative. Ruth 2:2 does not reveal a familial bond but a hope that Ruth finds someone who would support her while gleaning out in the field. However, in Ruth 2:20, Boaz's distant relationship is revealed and is seen carrying out the familial duties. See Dell, *The Solomonic Corpus of 'Wisdom' and Its Influence*, 176.

on Boaz's part, and it involves Boaz going beyond a legal duty because of the kindness he has shown to Ruth.³⁹ 'Redeem' or 'redeemer' is used twenty-one times in the Book of Ruth regarding Naomi's property and Ruth.⁴⁰ Boaz further signifies the kinsman redeemer role by marrying Ruth and providing an heir to Elimelech's property.

In Ruth 3:10, Ruth's kindness has evolved from being kind to her mother-in-law to extending kindness to Boaz, revealed by wanting to marry him instead of another young man. In Ruth 2:20, בָּרַךְ ("to bless") is used as a qal passive participle; however, in 3:10, בָּרַךְ is still used as a passive participle but with an active form.⁴¹ Hence, an interpretation of בָּרַךְ would be "may you be (you are) blessed."⁴² C. A. Keller and G. Wehmeier comment that בָּרַךְ is an exclamation of thankfulness and admiration (the blessed person is the object of praise and thankfulness). When associated with Yahweh, בָּרַךְ means that Yahweh has given the blessed person benevolent

³⁹ Bush, 135. Adam Howell remarks that Boaz has shown lovingkindness to Ruth but will not demonstrate true lovingkindness to Ruth's dead husband until he marries her. Therefore, it is Yahweh that gives lovingkindness to both the living and the dead. See Adam Howell, *Ruth* (Bellingham: Lexham Academic, 2022), 176.

⁴⁰ N. T. Parker, and Amy Balogh, "Redeemer," in *LBD*, ed. John Barry et al. (Bellingham: Lexham Press, 2016), "Old Testament."

⁴¹ A Hebrew volitional jussive. Waltke and O'Connor explains that a volitional jussive (in the third person) is a directive from a superior to an inferior or vice versa: a pragmatic force. The implicit or explicit direction to the divine realm in a benediction or malediction is a jussive. See Waltke, and O'Connor, 568. Therefore, in Ruth 3:10, Boaz is entreating Yahweh to bless Ruth for her kindness. Michael Brown states, "To pronounce someone as בָּרַךְ or to admit that someone is בָּרַךְ can be: (a) an acknowledgment that God has specially favored and been gracious to that individual, as if to say, "You are loved by the LORD!" or, (b) a prayer or desire that the individual might receive special blessing from God in light of their special acts, equivalent to our, "God bless you!" See Michael Brown, "בָּרַךְ," in *NIDOTTE Vol. 1*, ed. Willem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 749.

⁴² Koehler, and Baumgartner, "בָּרַךְ," 159.

power.⁴³ Dell comments that Boaz is praising Ruth's loyalty by her loyalty to Naomi and him by proposing marriage instead of going after younger men.⁴⁴

The Book of Ruth reveals a friendship beyond cultural and familial boundaries. Selflessness, loyalty, and mutual care are the hallmarks of Ruth's and Naomi's friendship that stand the test of time. In Wisdom literature, friendship is a theme that indicates its significance for human life. Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Job, and the Song of Songs highlight the importance of selecting friends who align with a person's ethical and spiritual values. Ruth's friendship with Naomi is viewed as a family duty. Even though they are not blood relatives, Ruth sees her mother-in-law's care as exemplified in Exodus 20:12 (the Fifth Commandment) and Proverbs 23:22.

Hard Work—Ruth 2:2–3, 7, 17, 23

In Wisdom literature, hard work is a character trait that leads to prosperity and a good life. In Proverbs, there are contrasts between the wise people who work hard and the foolish who are lazy (Prov. 12:24; 13:4; 20:4). Additionally, Proverbs 12:24 teaches that the diligent person will rule while the “slack hand” will be put to “forced labor.” Hard work is crucial and a practical necessity. Proverbs 6:6–11 uses the image of an ant to indicate how hard work benefits the ant and its community. In Ecclesiastes, the meaning of life is questioned by Qoheleth. In Ecclesiastes 9:10, Qoheleth acknowledges hard work's importance but notes it is meaningless if

⁴³ C. A. Keller, and G. Wehmeier, “ברך,” in *TLOT Vol.1*, ed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 269. Michael Brown denotes that ברך was pronounced on a person who was acting in harmony with Yahweh. See Brown, “ברך,” 745–6.

⁴⁴ Dell, *The Solomonic Corpus of 'Wisdom' and Its Influence*, 176.

it does not relate to life's understanding and purpose. Qoheleth reveals that hard work does not guarantee a meaningful life when viewed as an end unto itself.

The Book of Ruth has hard work play a crucial function in developing the narrative. It is the basis for change, social mobility, and reveals a characteristic of Ruth and Boaz. The multifaceted view of hard work includes how it addresses the rights of foreign workers and the poor. Four biblical passages from the Book of Ruth will be examined to indicate how it can function as a vehicle for change and moral good.

In Ruth 2:2–3, Ruth asks Naomi to let her go to the field to glean grain to provide for Naomi and herself. The nature of Ruth's gleaning is realized in Ruth 2:7, where the servant tells Boaz that Ruth has been gleaning from morning time, and in Ruth 2:19, where Ruth answers Naomi's question about where she worked. In biblical Hebrew, עָשָׂה is the primitive root⁴⁵ ("to do, make") for which the meaning 'work' comes from. *HALOT* notes that it is used 2,627 times (thirteen times in the Book of Ruth) in the OT.⁴⁶ The Strong's designation for עָשָׂה in Ruth 2:19 is H6213a.⁴⁷ In the Ruthan context, it means "to work, toil." The idea is that Ruth was not passive in gathering grain but 'toiled' to gather enough grain to keep Naomi and her from going hungry.⁴⁸ Another clue to Ruth's hard work is noting the location of her gathering grain. Howell

⁴⁵ A primitive root is a word that cannot be derived from any other known word in the Hebrew language.

⁴⁶ Koehler, and Baumgartner, "עָשָׂה," 890.

⁴⁷ *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, "עָשָׂה," 1452.

⁴⁸ Ruth takes the initiative to glean grain from the field and the amount that she gleans draws Naomi's interest in 2:19 when she the quantity that has been gleaned. This implies that Ruth was very active in acquiring grain for them. See Bush, 105.

comments that gleaners gleaned from the edges of the field, not where the sheaves had already been cut and stacked.⁴⁹

Ruth 2:7 reveals the intensity of Ruth's gleaning. Boaz's servant tells him that Ruth has been gleaning in the field from morning until she is in the shelter for rest.⁵⁰ The exact nature of Ruth's work is revealed by the word קָטַף ("gather, harvest, take (in, away), exterminate, unite against, conspire against, withdraw").⁵¹ However, an interpretive challenge is associated with "gleaning and gathering." If the phrase is taken literally, it implies that Ruth is doing all the work to gather the grain. Bush comments that harvesting grain involved a reaper using a sickle to cut the grain stalks, the bundlers grabbed a handful of stalks to bind them into sheaves, and the gleaners would glean the grain.⁵² However, the literal interpretation would imply that Ruth is taking advantage of a privilege not afforded to the stranger, poor, or widow.⁵³ It is noted that the compound prepositional article בְּ provides the clue to the phrase's probable meaning, "to glean and gather in bundles."⁵⁴ Regardless of the interpretive challenge, it is seen that Ruth is not functioning in an idle capacity but is active in securing grain.

⁴⁹ Howell, 109. The provision for gleaners is mandated in Lev. 19:9–10; 23:22. Since Ruth was gleaning from the edges of the field where the sheaves had not been cut implies that additional work had to take place to secure the grain.

⁵⁰ Ruth's work began in the morning and lasted until the evening (Ruth 2:17). Not only did she glean the barley harvest, but she worked in the wheat fields as well. See Ruth 2:17, 23 and Dell, *The Solomonic Corpus of 'Wisdom' and Its Influence*, 177.

⁵¹ I. Cornelius, Andrew Hill, and Cleon Rogers, Jr., "קָטַף," in *NIDOTTE Vol. 1*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 462. The term קָטַף comes from the primitive root "to gather, remove." See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, "קָטַף," 1363.

⁵² Bush, 114.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ Bush, 117. Howell remarks that it is a better interpretation to understand that Ruth is asking to glean and gather *into* sheaves, rather than gather *in* sheaves (italicized words are emphasized). See Howell, 126–7; Block, 656.

Ruth 2:17 reveals the length and amount of Ruth's work; it lasted until evening and yielded an ephah of barley. De Waard and Nida comment that until evening refers to sunset or when the sun can no longer be seen.⁵⁵ Besides taking a break (Ruth 2:7), Ruth has completed a full day's work, gleaning and gathering. However, the biblical author indicates another clue about the extent of her work: "She beat out what she had gleaned." Hence, not only did she gather into sheaves the grain stalks and glean the grain, but she also took the sheaves to the threshing floor to beat out the grain from the stalks. It is impressive, not only the length and type of work that Ruth performed but also the amount she gathered, an ephah. An ephah is a capacity of measure that had a quantity of ten liters in the pre-exilic period or thirty-six liters in the post-exilic period.⁵⁶ Block notes that at Tell Beit, a marked container measured twenty-two liters.⁵⁷ Whether twenty-two or thirty-six liters is of little consequence, the amount Ruth gathered was astonishing. She would have to carry approximately thirty to fifty pounds of grain home to Naomi.⁵⁸

Ruth 2:23 summarizes the chapter and reveals the longevity of Ruth's gleaning and gathering, including the barley and wheat harvest. Ruth's work would have been approximately six to seven weeks from late April to early June.⁵⁹ The ancient readers would have appreciated the length of work due to its nature: physical activity. Ruth worked for a considerable time and did not stop until both crops were harvested.⁶⁰ Ruth 2 reveals the nature and extent of Ruth's

⁵⁵ De Waard, and Nida, 37.

⁵⁶ Russell Fuller, "אֶפְהָה," in *NIDOTTE Vol. 1*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 378.

⁵⁷ Block, 670.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*; Bush, 133.

⁵⁹ Block, 677; Bush, 140.

⁶⁰ Bush, 140.

work and her willingness to do so. It is a pivotal element of the biblical narrative that reinforces Wisdom literature's understanding of hard work. Ruth's work provides a provisional purpose for Naomi and herself but also serves a transformative purpose by gaining Boaz's attention. Hence, in the Book of Ruth, hard work is a way to improve one's life condition.

Entreaty—Ruth 2:7

In Wisdom literature, a recurring theme is entreaty, an earnest request or petition. It can serve many functions, such as a request for wisdom, being involved in a social justice conversation, or an inquiry into the limitations of human understanding. Proverbs 4:7 and 8:17 are a petition for the search of wisdom or an entreaty for Yahweh's guidance. In a dialogue setting, Job 13:3 and 31:35 are instances where Job pleads to Yahweh to explain his suffering and even asks for an audience. In Ecclesiastes 3:11 and 8:17, the Teacher uses an entreaty to explore the limitations of human wisdom and the difficulty of discerning Yahweh's purposes.

In Ruth 2:7, the concept of entreaty is revealed.⁶¹ In verse 7, entreaty is indicated by the biblical Hebrew אַיִן, a particle of injection. Its use in verse 7 is associated with a piel cohortative. Howell explains that this construction is the same for 2:2, where Ruth politely asks to glean in the field.⁶² HALOT explains that אַיִן is a particle giving emphasis, which means “entreaty or exhortation.”⁶³ In this verse, Ruth's use of entreaty recognizes that she is a stranger, newcomer, and poor, and the emphatic particle acknowledges her place behind everyone else in the field.⁶⁴

⁶¹ Other instances of the entreaty concept are seen in Ruth 1:16–17, in Ruth 3 where she presents herself at the threshing floor, and indirectly by Naomi when she advises Ruth on how to approach Boaz.

⁶² Howell, 125.

⁶³ Koehler, and Baumgartner, “אַיִן,” 656; Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “אַיִן,” 609.

⁶⁴ Dell, *The Solomonic Corpus of 'Wisdom' and Its Influence*, 178.

Hubbard notes that the distinction between the entreaty in 2:2 and 2:7 is that the first instance declares Ruth's intention while the second is a permissive request.⁶⁵ Ruth's request in 2:7 indicates that she relies on Boaz's generosity.⁶⁶ While the entreaty in the Book of Ruth is not seeking wisdom, per se, it is aligned with handling social justice. Specifically, how Ruth, a stranger, poor, and a widow, will survive concerning the Mosaic Law.

Inappropriate Touching—Ruth 2:9, 22

Inappropriate touching is not an explicit theme taught in Wisdom literature or the Book of Ruth. However, both allude to the concept and how avoiding sexual misconduct leads to a moral character. For example, Proverbs 6:29 implies an adulterous affair with the neighbor's wife. This sin is used as an example to indicate that there are consequences of inappropriate actions. Ecclesiastes 7:26 tells how an immoral woman is a trap and worse than death. Finally, in Job 31:9–12, Job states how an adulterous affair is a crime, punishable by judges, and leads to his demise.

In the Book of Ruth, just like in Wisdom literature, there are no explicit references to or guidance on inappropriate touching. However, two verses hint that Ruth is receiving unwanted attention. In Ruth 2:9, Boaz tells Ruth that he has commanded the servants not to touch her. The crucial word in this verse is נגע (“touch, reach, strike”).⁶⁷ Michael Grisanti notes that נגע occurs

⁶⁵ Hubbard, 147.

⁶⁶ Here Ruth presents a hermeneutical imperative. If a strict adherence to the Mosaic Law is presented by Boaz, then Ruth and Naomi are destined to die. If Boaz acts generously, then Ruth and Naomi will live. In view of this comprehension, a social justice is at stake. See LaCocque, 66.

⁶⁷ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “גע,” 619.

150 times in the OT, with 107 of those occurrences in the qal form.⁶⁸ It further explains that *לג* means to touch by some form of physical contact. However, Grisanti explains that in Ruth 2, Boaz is more concerned with emotional and physical abuse than sexual misconduct.⁶⁹ Due to Ruth's status as a foreigner, poor, and a widow, the young servants in the field would probably have been attracted to her. Because she is a widow, a sexual act between the young men and Ruth would not be considered as serious as an adulterous affair (Lev. 20:10; Deut. 22:22) or a sexual misconduct against a virgin (Ex. 22:16; Deut. 22:28–29).⁷⁰ Therefore, Boaz's command would ensure that Ruth could glean the field without fearing unwanted advances. De Waard and Nida have gone as far as to indicate that Boaz's command to the servants was not to molest Ruth.⁷¹ Hubbard tempers the situation by commenting that Boaz's command in 2:9 is an intention to the actual command given in 2:15–16. Therefore, *לג* in verse 9 means to bother, treat roughly, or rough up.⁷² Bush remarks that *לג* means to molest, trouble, or interfere. He

⁶⁸ Michael Grisanti, "לג," in *NIDOTTE Vol. 3*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 22. The *NASB Exhaustive Concordance* lists *לג* to mean add (one time), afford (one time), apply (one time), arrive (one time), arrived (four times), attained (one time), attains (one time), bring down (one time), brought down (one time), came (six times), cast (one time), casts (one time), close (two times), come (two times), draw near (one time), drawn near (one time), drew near (one time), follows (one time), happened (one time), happens (two times), plagued (one time), pretended to be beaten (one time), reach (four times), reached (six times), reaching (one time), smitten (one time), stricken (two times), strike (one time), strikes (one time), struck (three times), threw (one time), touch (twenty-two times), touched (twenty times), touches (forty-six times), touching (six times). See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, "לגע," 1432. As seen, the idea of 'touching' is the prominent meaning for *לג*, occurring ninety-four times.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 23.

⁷⁰ LaCocque, 68.

⁷¹ De Waard, and Nida, 30.

⁷² Hubbard, Jr. 159. He explains that it might have been a common practice to physically subdue a gleaner who has overstepped the boundary by interfering with the reaper's work. Therefore, since Boaz is being generous to Ruth by allowing her to glean more than normal, the command would ensure her protection from the reapers.

points to 2 Samuel 4:10 and Jeremiah 12:14 to indicate how נגע is to be used in the Ruthan context.⁷³ Whether Boaz's command was to derail sexual misconduct or physical harm is debatable; however, both are inappropriate touching that is not tolerated.

In Ruth 2:22, Naomi advises Ruth to follow Boaz's maids into the other field so she would not be bothered. In this verse, the biblical Hebrew verb פגע is used. *HALOT* explains that פגע means to "fall upon someone with the intent to molest a woman."⁷⁴ The Strong designation for פגע is H6293 and has a range of potential meanings.⁷⁵ However, Grisanti comments that when פגע is used in conjunction with ק, it signifies an intentional encounter to kill someone or have the intent to kill someone.⁷⁶ De Waard and Nida comment that in this context (Ruth 2:22), פגע, which generally means to "meet," is used negatively to denote a hostile meeting with the intent of molesting or harming a person.⁷⁷

Whether the inappropriate touching was meant to be verbal, emotional, physical, or sexual abuse is not abundantly clear. However, steps were taken to prevent such an encounter between Ruth and the young men. Boaz issued a command, and Naomi's advice was to follow Boaz's maids. While the nature of the action may not be explicit, a wisdom teaching can be

⁷³ Bush, 122.

⁷⁴ Koehler, and Baumgartner, "פגע," 910.

⁷⁵ The *NASB Exhaustive Concordance* lists the probable meanings for פגע: approach (one time), attack (two times), attacked (one time), came (one time), cut him down (one time), entreat (two times), fall (seven times), fell (four times), happen (one time), intercede (two times), interceded (one time), kill (one time), make supplication (one time), meet (three times), meets (three times), met (two times), pleaded (one time), reached (six times), spare (one time), strike the mark (one time), touched (one time), touched and reached (one time), urge (one time). See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, "פגע," 1453.

⁷⁶ Michael Grisanti, "פגע," in *NIDOTTE Vol. 3*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 572.

⁷⁷ De Waard, and Nida, 43.

revealed. Wisdom involves cultivating and nurturing moral behavior and righteous living according to Yahweh's standards. A wise person will choose decisions that lead to both in their life. Ruth can be wise or foolish by accepting or rejecting advice concerning her encounters with the servants in the field. The consequence of her decisions would be either her safety or her harm. Her adherence to advice strengthens her character and leads to a transition when she marries Boaz and is blessed with a son.

True Reward—Ruth 2:12

In Wisdom literature, true reward is realized by how a person lives their life: morally, ethically, and according to Yahweh's standards. The Book of Proverbs is the most straightforward depiction of true rewards and the fool's consequences. For instance, Proverbs 11:18 and 13:21 touch on retributive theology by teaching how the righteous are rewarded and the wicked are punished. In Proverbs 3:13–18, it is noted how wisdom is more valuable than silver and precious jewels. In the Book of Job, Job's true reward comes from his restoration by Yahweh (Job 42:10–17). In Ecclesiastes, Qoheleth deals with the existential perspective by contesting the concept that the righteous are rewarded and the wicked punished (Eccl. 9:11; 8:14). The conclusion reached by Qoheleth (Eccl. 2:13) is that the true reward gained from wisdom is realizing order in a chaotic world.

True reward in the Book of Ruth stems from loving kindness, loyalty, and Yahweh's providence. Loyalty and family duty are revealed in Ruth's decision to accompany Naomi to Bethlehem, forsaking her homeland and religion (Ruth 1:16–17). This familial loyalty leads to Ruth's eventual encounter with Boaz, resulting in their marriage and the birth of their son. Boaz's kindness to Ruth (Ruth 2 and 3) involves a true reward by restoring and preserving the family line. Ruth's loving kindness reflects her loyalty to the family and Boaz and reveals her

virtuous character, which is rewarded by her place in the Davidic line. While Yahweh does not speak in the Book of Ruth, His work is seen throughout. His providence is the basis for Ruth's and Boaz's reward for their moral and ethical behavior. For instance, in Ruth 2:3, Yahweh's divine providence causes the initial encounter between Ruth and Boaz. Another Ruthan passage (Ruth 2:12) will be explored to reveal how true reward functions in the biblical text and its association with biblical wisdom's view of true reward.

In Ruth 2:12, Boaz entreats Yahweh to reward Ruth for her loyalty to Naomi, which includes leaving her homeland and forsaking the Moabite religion. He asks Yahweh to provide for and protect her. In verse 12, שָׁלַם is used to denote "recompense, reward."⁷⁸ Specifically, Boaz asks Yahweh to double reward her because of her devotion to Naomi. Another instance of the piel imperfect form of שָׁלַם revealing double payment is in Jeremiah 16:18, where Yahweh states that Judah's iniquity will be doubly repaid because of their sin. Philip Nel notes that the piel form of שָׁלַם does not necessarily indicate a legal usage⁷⁹ but can involve a larger

⁷⁸ Koehler, and Baumgartner, "שָׁלַם," 1535. The biblical Hebrew שָׁלַם can mean completed (one time), finished (three times), fulfill (one time), fully repay (one time), make (two times), make an end (two times), make it good (two times), make full restitution (one time), make restitution (nine times), over (one time), paid (one time), pay (nineteen times), pay back (one time), paying (one time), pays (one time), pays back (one time), perform (two times), performed (one time), performing (one time), performs (one time), present (one time), recompense (three times), recompenses (one time), render (two times), rendering (two times), repaid (three times), repay (nineteen times), repays (three times), restore (two times), reward (three times), rewarded (three times), surely make restitution (two times), surely pay (one time), without harm (one time). See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, "שָׁלַם," 1482.

⁷⁹ The piel form of שָׁלַם is emphasized in the Covenant Code (Ex. 20:22–23:19), which deals with civil compensation and criminal rulings. K. J. Illman states, "The Covenant Code uses the piel as a technical term in a series of legal precepts. These are formulated casuistically, with one or more conditional clauses followed by an apodosis stating punishment entailed. The *šlm* forms appear in the apodosis describing the punishment or the restitution to be made. K. J. Illman, "שָׁלַם," in *TDOT Vol. 15*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David Green (Grand Rapids.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 99. Philip Nel comments, "The verb שָׁלַם with Yahweh as subject is also used in a positive sense

comprehensive concept. Its twofold usage can be either positive (1 Sam. 24:20) or negative (Deut. 32:41). In Ruth 2:12, the shift in verbal usage of שָׁלַם indicates that deeds and behavior should be rewarded.⁸⁰ LaCocque comments that the use of שָׁלַם and שָׂלַמָּה indicates that it marks fullness.⁸¹

Another biblical Hebrew term to consider in Ruth 2:12 is מְשַׁכֵּרֶת. The basic meaning is the payment for services, labor, or any other benefit someone receives.⁸² However, when Yahweh gives שָׁכַר, it is a reward because He does not hire people or pay wages. What He does give is a gift⁸³, a true reward. Therefore, Boaz is not entreating Yahweh to pay Ruth in full with money but with a divine blessing greater than money. A part of the reward is the protection that Boaz prays for in the latter half of verse 12 and is realized in Ruth 3:9 when Boaz spreads his covering over Ruth as a pledge for marriage.

Wisdom literature shows how good and bad behaviors are rewarded positively or negatively. In the Book of Ruth, this reward concept is solidified through Ruth's familial

when referring to his reward/recompense of good deeds (1 Sam 24:20; Prov 13:21; 25:22).” See Philip Nel, “שָׁלַם,” in *NIDOTTE Vol. 4*, ed. Wilem VanGemerem (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 130–1.

⁸⁰ G. Gerleman, “שָׁלַם,” in *TLOT Vol.3*, ed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 1341. When Yahweh is the subject and good deeds or behaviors are involved, the piel שָׁלַם is used to indicate a positive sense that reflects reward or recompense (Prov. 13:21; 19:17; 25:22). See Nel, “שָׁלַם,” 131.

⁸¹ LaCocque, 73.

⁸² Cornelis Van Dam, “מְשַׁכֵּרֶת,” in *NIDOTTE Vol. 2*, ed. Wilem VanGemerem (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 1108.

⁸³ The free gift can come in the form of a great blessing(s) (Gen. 15:1, Yahweh blesses Abram for his rejection of the king's riches), blessing of a child (Ps. 27:3, which indicates that children are a blessing and true reward from Yahweh), and Yahweh blesses those who are faithful and obedient to Him (2 Chro. 15:7; Prov. 11:18). See Cornelis Van Dam, “שָׁכַר,” in *NIDOTTE Vol. 3*, ed. Wilem VanGemerem (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 1242.

devotion to Naomi, which included Ruth forsaking her homeland and religion to embrace Israel and Yahweh. Her devotion is further realized through her hard work to provide for Naomi and herself. Ruth's moral and ethical behavior is the basis for Boaz's entreaty to Yahweh to reward Ruth through blessings and protection.

Humility—Ruth 2:13

Humility is a vital wisdom theme found in Wisdom literature. A person who exercises humility exhibits the necessary moral standards that yield wisdom, understanding, and finding favor with Yahweh. In Proverbs, humility and wisdom go together. Proverbs 11:2; 15:33; 18:12 reveal that humility is a source of wisdom and that Yahweh rewards humble persons. In the Book of Job, humility is indicated through Job's responses to his suffering. While he maintains a humble stance with Yahweh, it is in Job 42:1–6 that humility enables Job to realize the limitations of his knowledge about Yahweh's divine purpose. In Ecclesiastes, the book stresses human limitations and life's chaotic order. In this view, humility is supported as a crucial approach to existence (Eccl. 3:19–21).

The Book of Ruth displays humility through Ruth's, Naomi's, and Boaz's actions. Naomi's humility is revealed through her acknowledgment of personal vulnerability and the necessity to submit to Yahweh's purpose in her life (Ruth 1:20–21). His interactions with Ruth reflect Boaz's humility. His provisions and protection, while a necessary fulfillment of the law and responsibility as a kinsman redeemer, is a humble response to Ruth, a foreigner, poor, and a widow. The apex of his humility is exhibited by his marriage to Ruth, redeeming the family property, and providing an heir to the family line (Ruth 4:1–12). The focal passage to be evaluated for humility pertains to Ruth and is revealed in Ruth 2:13.

Ruth 2:13 records Ruth's response to Boaz after his entreaty to Yahweh. She acknowledges Boaz's favor towards her and that he speaks to her like one of his maidservants even though she is not like one of his maidservants. Her telling Boaz that she is not equal to one of his maidservants emphasizes her humbleness.⁸⁴ Ruth's use of *הַתְּפִלָּה* ("maidservant") is a self-designation of deferential respect when addressing a man of higher social status; it reveals a willingness to serve and obey instructions.⁸⁵ A maidservant's lowly status meant a humble social position.⁸⁶ A synonym to *הַתְּפִלָּה* is *הַמְּלָכָה*, used in Ruth 3:9. There are some semantic distinctions between the two nouns used for 'female slave, maidservant.'⁸⁷ The term *הַתְּפִלָּה*, used in Ruth

⁸⁴ De Waard, and Nida, 34. James McKeown comments that Ruth was bewildered and amazed at Boaz's kindness towards her. The biblical author is painting a portrait of Ruth as a hard-working woman who takes nothing for granted and appreciates the acts of kindness given to her. Ruth's response is wrapped with gratitude and humility. Her humility is indicated in her response to Boaz in that she realizes she is below his maidservants, yet she is humbled because what he has granted her is greater than someone of her low status would have expected. See James McKeown, *Ruth* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2015), "2:18 The First Conversation between Boaz and Ruth."

⁸⁵ Richard Schultz, "הַתְּפִלָּה," in *NIDOTTE Vol. 4*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 212.

⁸⁶ Warren Baker, and Eugene Carpenter, "הַתְּפִלָּה," in *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: OT* (Chattanooga: AMG Publishers, 2003), 1186.

⁸⁷ Both *הַתְּפִלָּה* and *הַמְּלָכָה* are used interchangeably to render "female slave;" *הַמְּלָכָה* is less common (only fifty-four times in the OT, primarily in the legal texts). The *NASB Exhaustive Concordance* provides the following possible renderings for *הַתְּפִלָּה*: female (nine times), female servant (three times), female servants (five times), maid (twenty times), maids (five times), maidservant (fifteen times), maidservants (one time), servants (six times), slave (one time), slave girl (one time), slaves (four times), women (one time). See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, "הַתְּפִלָּה," 1485. The possible renderings for *הַמְּלָכָה* are female (fifteen times), female servant (four times), female slave (two times), handmaid (one time), maid (eight times), maids (five times), maidservant (nineteen times), servant (one time), servants (six times), slave (four times), slaves (four times). See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, "הַמְּלָכָה," 1362. Just from looking at the renderings, not a noticeable distinction can be seen. However, E. Reuter notes that in Ruth 2:13 "she is asking a favor and therefore refers to herself submissively as *šiphâ*; in 3:9 she is more demanding and therefore calls herself *'āmâ*." E. Reuter, "הַתְּפִלָּה," in *TDOT Vol. 15*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David Green (Grand Rapids.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 409. All other ordinances dealing with

2:13, implies an unmarried woman who has a lower social status and is viewed as a laborer or possession. *הַמָּלָא*, used in Ruth 3:9, designates a female servant eligible to be married, has a higher social status, and is viewed as a person, not an object.⁸⁸ Hubbard remarks that Ruth's use of *הַמָּלָא* in 3:9 indicates that Ruth views herself in an improved social status and a woman eligible for marriage.⁸⁹ Therefore, Ruth's use of *הַתַּפְּזֵשׁ* in 2:13 reveals her humility towards Boaz.

Ruth shows humility outwardly as she does not expect anything from Boaz. The interaction between Boaz and Ruth happens before it is made known to her that Boaz is a relative. Ruth is a stranger, widow, and poor and willingly succumbs to a lower social status than Boaz's maidservants. Her humility is characterized by loyalty, service, and a respectful acknowledgment of social order. It is because of Ruth's virtuous characteristics that lead her to family continuity, social integration, and Yahweh's blessings.

Generosity of Spirit—Ruth 2:14–16

In the OT, *חַנּוּן* is used to note a person's graciousness or generosity.⁹⁰ In interhuman activities, 'finding favor' is the reality of an ongoing relationship (Ruth 2:13) and is a description

unfree females speak of the *'āmâ*. Unlike the *'ebed*, the female slave had no chance to regain her freedom. See Reuter, "*הַתַּפְּזֵשׁ*," 409–10. Richard Schultz remarks that *הַמָּלָא* designates the slave when emphasizing her feminine qualities (need for protection, weakness, sexual attractiveness) while *הַתַּפְּזֵשׁ* is used when the female slave is viewed as a possession or a laborer. See Richard Schultz, "*הַמָּלָא*," in *NIDOTTE Vol. 1*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 413. Therefore, in Ruth 2:12, Ruth is designating herself as someone who is below Boaz's female laborers. However, in Ruth 3:9, Ruth has redesignated herself as a person who needs Boaz's protection because of her weak status in Bethlehem.

⁸⁸ Schultz, "*הַמָּלָא*," 413.

⁸⁹ Hubbard, 211.

⁹⁰ Koehler, and Baumgartner, "*חַנּוּן*," 334. Terence Fretheim goes further by defining *חַנּוּן* as "favor, be gracious to, generous toward, take pity on, be favored, have pity, plead for grace." See Terence Fretheim, "*חַנּוּן*," in *NIDOTTE Vol. 2*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 198. The *NASB Exhaustive Concordance* provides the following range for *חַנּוּן*:

of beneficial actions freely given to help another person or further a relationship; it is a generosity extended to those who are in need, poor, widowed, disadvantaged, or undergoing suffering.⁹¹ In Wisdom literature, generosity is observed in Proverbs 11:25, which speaks about how a generous person will be rewarded; generosity benefits the recipient and the giver. In the Book of Job, Job's characterization as "blameless, upright, fearing *Yahweh* and turning away from evil" (Job 1:1) is a depiction of his generous nature that is further highlighted in Job 1:3, which states that Job "was the greatest of all the men in of the east." A designation that indicates his moral and spiritual qualities.

The Book of Ruth is permeated with this didactic wisdom theme, and generosity is easily recognized through the character's actions. These characterizations illustrate the moral and ethical qualities that ensure survival, the well-being of others, a sense of community, and restoration. Examples include Ruth 1:16, where Ruth chooses to leave her homeland to go with Naomi to Bethlehem, which indicates a selfless commitment that points to a generosity of spirit. While Naomi might not be associated with generosity of spirit, it is indicated that she possesses this quality in Ruth 1:8–13. Naomi implores Ruth and Oprah to return to Moab for a better life (marital prospects). Her generosity of spirit comes from guidance rooted in love and

begged (one time), dealt graciously (one time), favor (one time), feel pity (one time), finds...favor (one time), give them to us voluntarily (one time), gracious (forty-five times), graciously (one time), graciously given (one time), graciously grant (one time), groan (one time), implore (one time), implore his favor (one time), implore the compassion (one time), implore the mercy (one time), implored (one time), made (one time), made supplication (two times), make supplication (five times), pity (two times), pleaded (two times), show favor (one time), show...favor (one time), shown favor (one time), sought his favor (one time), surely be gracious (one time). See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, "הָנִיחַ," 1394.

⁹¹ Fretheim, "הָנִיחַ," 199.

consideration for Ruth's and Oprah's wellbeing, which would lead to a lonely trip for Naomi. Another example is the focus of this discussion, which is indicated in Ruth 2:14

Boaz's generosity of spirit is revealed through his invitation to Ruth to eat a meal with him and the reapers, and his command to allow Ruth to glean from the sheaves and leave extra grain for her to gather (Ruth 2:14–16). The allowance of additional grain for Ruth to gather exceeded her legal rights. In verse 14, *צָרַט* is used to mean “give, pass.” Grisanti notes that *צָרַט* is challenging to define, with suggestions coming from Koine Greek, Akkadian, Ugaritic, and late Hebrew.⁹² The Ugaritic and late Hebrew seem to have a better grasp of the meaning by defining *צָרַט* as to “seize, grasp.”⁹³ *HALOT* remarks that the qal form of *צָרַט* in Ruth 2:14 means “to pick up and offer to someone.”⁹⁴ Bush explains that “to heap up” is preferable because it supports the biblical statement that Ruth had a surplus of food she took home to Naomi.⁹⁵ This explanation affirms Boaz's generosity of spirit towards Ruth. The biblical author shows how Boaz took a simple meal and turned it into an extraordinary act of generosity, compassion, and acceptance.⁹⁶

Boaz's generosity of spirit is tied closely to his lovingkindness. It reflects a moral and ethical behavior befitting Yahweh's standards concerning treating a foreigner, widowed, and poor woman. His actions go beyond those required by the Mosaic Law and reflect positively upon himself and Yahweh. This example of generosity of spirit reflects what is presented in Wisdom literature.

⁹² Michael Grisanti, “*צָרַט*,” in *NIDOTTE Vol. 3*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 735.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ Koehler, and Baumgartner, “*צָרַט*,” 997.

⁹⁵ Bush, 126.

⁹⁶ Block, 667. Boaz's generosity exemplifies his racial and religious tolerance which is indicative of a generous Israelite. See Hubbard, 173.

Kindness—Ruth 2:13, 16

Related to generosity of spirit is kindness. Kindness is a quality frequently addressed in Wisdom literature. While it is morally necessary for righteous living, it is crucial for a harmonious and productive life. Proverbs 19:22 states that kindness is a desirable trait in a person, and in Proverbs 31:26, kindness is admired in various roles and genders. In Job 31:16–22, Job defends his righteousness by noting his acts of kindness and hospitality. Ecclesiastes 4:9–12, while not explicitly stating kindness, infers kindness when it is better to have a partner or friend who can assist and protect.

The Book of Ruth handles different types of kindness: family devotion, loyalty, friendship, compassion, and grace. Specifically, kindness is used as a catalyst for transformation, i.e., in Ruth 1:16–17, Ruth shows a selfless concern, a type of kindness, to leave her homeland to accompany Naomi to Bethlehem, where Ruth will accept Israel as her people and Yahweh as her God. Boaz’s kindness is reflected in Ruth 2:14–16, where he invites Ruth to eat with him and the reapers, ‘heaping up’ the food to the point that she is satisfied and able to take the leftovers to Naomi and commands the reapers to allow Ruth to glean grain from the bundles and leave extra grain for her to gather. Prominently, רַחֵם is used to refer to ‘kindness’ in the Book of Ruth. However, there is another biblical Hebrew term for ‘kindness,’ רַב (Ruth 2:13), and the command “do not rebuke” in Ruth 2:16. The following discussion will concentrate on the last two designations for ‘kindness.’⁹⁷

⁹⁷ The term *hesed* will be detailed in Chapter Seven.

In Ruth 2:13, Ruth acknowledges that Boaz has spoken kindly, לָב, to her. *BDB* defines לָב as “inner man, mind, will, heart.”⁹⁸ Additionally, לָב is understood to be “the seat of the emotions and passions.”⁹⁹ Within the Ruthan context, לָב indicates that a person is “speaking unto the heart (kindly).”¹⁰⁰ *HALOT* comprehends לָב, in the Ruthan context, as “attention [*speaks kindly to*], consideration, reason.”¹⁰¹ Howell comments that עֲלֵ-לָב is an idiomatic phrase found also in Genesis 34:3; 50:21; Judges 19:3; 2 Samuel 19:8; Isaiah 40:2; Hosea 2:16.¹⁰² Bush explains that עֲלֵ-לָב should be understood in conjunction with נָחַם (“to console”) to illicit a meaning of “to speak reassuringly or encouragingly to those who for various reasons need such.”¹⁰³ Initially, the phrase meant speaking tenderly while leaning on someone’s breast, expressing sweet and caressing words. However, when combined with נָחַם, the sweet caressing words are used to reassure someone in distress.¹⁰⁴

In Ruth 2:16, individualistic kindness is changed to group kindness and is reflected in the biblical Hebrew phrase וְלֹא תִגְעַר־בָּהּ (“do not rebuke her”). The term גַּעַר means “to rebuke, to

⁹⁸ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “לָב,” 524. The *NASB Exhaustive Concordance* lists a wide range of probable meanings for לָב, sixty-seven entries. See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, “לָב,” 1413. F. Stolz, “לָב,” in *TLOT Vol. 2*, ed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 638–42. See Alex Luc, “לָב,” in *NIDOTTE Vol. 2*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 742–7.

⁹⁹ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “לָב,” 525.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ Koehler, and Baumgartner, “לָב,” 515. Luc, “לָב,” 745.

¹⁰² Howell, 153–4.

¹⁰³ Bush, 124. Block states that it is interpreted to mean “to speak compassionately and sympathetically.” See Block, 665.

¹⁰⁴ Hubbard, 169.

roar with laughter, speak insultingly to.”¹⁰⁵ G. Liedke explains that גער can sometimes mean to scold someone with the cause of hindering them (Jer. 29:27).¹⁰⁶ In the case of Ruth 2:16, Boaz is commanding the reapers לֹא תִגְעְרוּ־בָהּ, or do not scold Ruth by hindering her from gleaning and gathering extra grain.¹⁰⁷ Boaz’s imposed restriction on the reapers against verbal censure reinforces his virtue of generosity and protection by treating Ruth kindly as Yahweh treated Israel.¹⁰⁸

Kindness stems from generosity, revealed in Wisdom literature and as a didactic wisdom theme in the Book of Ruth. Both are concerned with how the poor are treated. Just like generosity, the giver of kindness will receive a true reward from Yahweh, and those who hold back kindness will receive what is due to them. From a theological perspective, the kindness exhibited by the characters in the Book of Ruth indicates Yahweh’s kindness extended toward people. Human kindness reflects an ethical action that builds relationships and the community.

Redemption—Ruth 2:20

Redemption in the OT has a theological dimension of a redeemer—redeemed relationship grounded in a social and legal context (i.e., the rescue of a person from a difficult situation through a monetary payment).¹⁰⁹ Things that could be redeemed were houses (Lev. 25:8–23),

¹⁰⁵ Koehler, and Baumgartner, “גער,” 199. The *NASB Exhaustive Concordance* lists the following for גער: rebuke (nine times), rebuked (four times), rebukes (one time). See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, “גער,” 1378.

¹⁰⁶ G. Liedke, “גער,” in *TLOT Vol. 1*, ed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 323.

¹⁰⁷ John Hartley, “גער,” in *NIDOTTE Vol. 1*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 869.

¹⁰⁸ Hubbard, 178.

¹⁰⁹ Gary Shogren, “Redemption,” *AYBD*, ed. David Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 650.

land (Jer. 32:6–15), indentured servants (Lev. 25:53), cultic offerings (Lev. 27:9–13, 27), firstborns (Ex. 13:13, 15; 34:20; Num. 18:15–16), the wife of a deceased relative (Deut. 25:5–10), blood redeemer (Num. 35:12–28; Deut. 19:4–6, 11–13; Josh. 20:2; 2 Sam. 14:11), and ransom (Ex. 21:29–30; 30:12). Yahweh is the redeemer—rescuer of people and communities from adversity and or destruction. This is seen in Exodus 6:6, where Yahweh tells the Hebrews that He will bring them out from under Egyptian rule and redeem them. Therefore, since Yahweh redeemed His people from Egypt, He expected His people to redeem others according to the Mosaic Law.¹¹⁰ In Wisdom literature, themes related to redemption—such as divine justice, retribution, and moral order—are present and engage with the idea in various ways. For example, in Proverbs 11:4, righteousness can be seen as redemption from harmful consequences. The Book of Job questions the retributive theology and human suffering. Redemption’s final act is Job’s restoration by Yahweh in Job 42:10–17. In Ecclesiastes 12:13, fearing Yahweh and keeping His commandments cultivates and nurtures a righteous living, resulting in redemption for adverse outcomes.

In the Book of Ruth, readers are drawn to Boaz as the kinsman-redeemer, *go’el*, who redeems Ruth and secures her place in the Israelite community and history.¹¹¹ Besides קָרוֹב, גֹּאֵל (Ruth 2:20) is used to designate a person as a relative or redeemer. Naomi reveals to Ruth that Boaz is one of the nearest kin who can redeem the family property and the family. It is the use of קָרוֹב in 2:20 that will be the focus of this discussion.

¹¹⁰ Shogren., 652.

¹¹¹ The term *go’el* will be treated in Chapter Seven.

The biblical Hebrew קָרוֹב, in *BDB*, means “near.”¹¹² In the context of Ruth 2:20, קָרוֹב specifies a near relationship. The Strong's designation for קָרוֹב is H7138, and the *NASB Exhaustive Concordance* lists twenty-one possible meanings for קָרוֹב.¹¹³ *HALOT* provides a more concise definition by defining קָרוֹב as “close (as a relative, in kinship), being close to, closest.”¹¹⁴ De Waard and Nida explain that קָרוֹב is a highly technical term that could be rendered “one of our redeemers” or “one who has the right of redemption over us.” This ‘redeemer’ was a relative obliged to protect the family’s interest.¹¹⁵ When levirate marriage is involved, a fully dynamic rendering would be “he is one of those who can take care of us as widows,” which involves the obligations and responsibilities attached to levirate marriage.¹¹⁶ Howell points out an interesting observation: גַּאֵל is not used in Ruth 2:20 because Boaz has not

¹¹² Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “קָרוֹב,” 898.

¹¹³ The possible meanings are: about (one time), close (two times), close relative (one time), closer (one time), draws near (one time), hand (one time), kinsmen (one time), lately (one time), near (forty-seven times), nearby (one time), nearest (six times), neighbors (two times), ones near (one time), related (one time), relative (one time), relatives (one time), short (one time), shortly (one time), soon (two times), who are near (two times), who is near (one time). See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, “קָרוֹב,” 1466–7.

¹¹⁴ Koehler, and Baumgartner, “קָרוֹב,” 1139. The adjectival form of קָרוֹב indicates a nearness of relationship either between humans or between Yahweh and people. See Bill Arnold, “קָרוֹב,” in *NIDOTTE Vol. 3*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 974. The term קָרוֹב is formed from the verb קָרַב which is rendered “to come near, approach.” See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, “קָרַב,” 1466. Waltke and O’Connor explain that an adjective can be used as a substantive. They state, “Because the boundary between adjectives and substantives is not fixed or rigid, it is common to find nouns that are most often used as adjectives in substantive slots.” See Waltke, and O’Connor, 261. Additionally, קָרוֹב can be used as a predicate. A predicate adjective serves in a verbless clause to make an assertion about the subject of the clause. See Waltke, and O’Connor, 260. Therefore, קָרוֹב is making an assertion about לֵוִי (“to us”), he is a קָרוֹב (“a near relative”).

¹¹⁵ De Waard, and Nida, 41.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*; Bush, 135

shown תָּקַד to Ruth's dead husband, Mahlon. Boaz will transition to גַּאֵל when he marries and redeems Ruth and the family property.¹¹⁷ However, at this point, Naomi sees Boaz no longer as a generous and prominent Israelite but as a near relative who can help Ruth and her by fulfilling the obliged duties.¹¹⁸ LaCocque remarks that an anonymous rabbi in *Ruth Rabbah* notes that Naomi immediately notices Boaz is a near relative due to his kindness and generosity towards Ruth, the heaping up of roasted grain, and the leftovers she brought home.¹¹⁹ Because there is not a legal issue involved yet, גַּאֵל is not used in favor of קָרֹב which denotes a general familial relationship.

Redemption is crucial in the Book of Ruth, serving as a socio-legal and theological function. From a socio-legal angle, Boaz redeems the two widows by marrying Ruth, securing the family property through levirate marriage, and acting as the גַּאֵל. By her marriage to Boaz, Ruth's social status was elevated; she was no longer considered a foreigner, poor, or a widow. On a theological level, Boaz's generosity, kindness, and actions as a kinsman-redeemer reflect Yahweh's providence and care for His people. Much of the Book of Ruth revolves around redemption, how a Moabite foreigner who has forsaken her homeland and religion to embrace Israel and Yahweh finds favor with Boaz and Yahweh. Her commitment to both secures her social status within Israel and Israel's history and securing divine blessings from Yahweh.

¹¹⁷ Howell, 176.

¹¹⁸ Hubbard, 189.

¹¹⁹ LaCocque, 78.

Obeying Instructions—Ruth 3:6

In the OT, there are a couple of biblical Hebrew words that indicate obedience, שָׁמַר and שָׁמַע. In Ezekiel 36:27, Yahweh's new covenant with Israel includes obeying His statutes. The biblical Hebrew term שָׁמַר generally means "keep, watch, preserve."¹²⁰ HALOT specifies that one instance of the qal form of שָׁמַר can be defined as "take care of, preserve, protect (the instructions of one's parents)."¹²¹ G. Sauer explains that שָׁמַר is widely used in religious statements, especially concerning the commandments, statutes, and Yahweh's instructions (Gen. 26:5, Prov. 4:4).¹²² In Psalm 18:45, שָׁמַע is used. According to the *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, there is a wide semantic range for שָׁמַע.¹²³ The niph'al form of שָׁמַע can be defined sometimes as "to be heard (to be, become obedient)."¹²⁴ K. T. Aitken notes that in Proverbs, שָׁמַע is used for "heeding advice, rebuke, correction, and instruction (Prov 12:15; 13:1; 15:31–32; 19:27; 25:12)."¹²⁵ Concerning Woman Wisdom, the wise who listen and keep her ways are rewarded (Prov. 8:32–

¹²⁰ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, "שָׁמַר," 1036. The *NASB Exhaustive Concordance* provides an extensive list for שָׁמַר which is too long to note here. However, "obey (one time)" is a probable meaning for שָׁמַר. See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, "שָׁמַר," 1452.

¹²¹ Koehler, and Baumgartner, "שָׁמַר," 1852. Keith Schoville states that the qal form of שָׁמַר is frequently used in admonitions to be careful and diligent with respect to religious and spiritual responsibilities. See Keith Schoville, "שָׁמַר," in *NIDOTTE Vol. 4*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 183.

¹²² G. Sauer, "שָׁמַר," in *TLOT Vol.3*, ed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 1382.

¹²³ *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, "שָׁמַע," 1483. There are seven forms of 'obey' listed that account for eighty uses of שָׁמַע.

¹²⁴ Koehler, and Baumgartner, "שָׁמַע," 1573.

¹²⁵ K. T. Aitken, "שָׁמַע," in *NIDOTTE Vol. 4*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 178.

34) while the foolish face adverse consequences for not obeying instructions (Prov. 5:12–13).¹²⁶ Obedience in the OT is realized in the following areas: between master and servant, between parents and children, between the monarchy and foreigners, and between Yahweh and people.¹²⁷ In Wisdom literature, obeying instructions enabled moral and ethical behavior and guided living a practical life, whether with another person or Yahweh. Following instructions contributes to the well-being of a person, whereas forsaking instructions could lead to detrimental consequences.

In the Book of Ruth, neither שמר nor שמע is used in the biblical narrative because it is not viewed as instructional, legalistic in nature, or contains explicit commands or laws to obey. However, obedience is indicated and guides living a moral, ethical, and practical life. An example of obeying instructions in the Book of Ruth is Ruth 3:6, where Ruth obeys Naomi's instructions concerning the threshing floor. The first biblical Hebrew word for evaluation is עשה. The biblical Hebrew עשה uses the same Strong's designation as שמר, H6213a.¹²⁸ The term עשה is generally defined as "to do, make."¹²⁹ However, associated meanings include obedience and observation. *HALOT* defines עשה in the obedience context as "to carry out, perform (ordinance, law, proscribed action)."¹³⁰ Tyler Williams explains that עשה is used frequently to note the fulfillment or performance of a law or command, either between Yahweh and people or between

¹²⁶ Aitken, "שמע," 178.

¹²⁷ G. A. Lee, "Hear," in *ISBE Vol. 2*, revised, ed. Geoffrey Bromiley (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, Co., 1979–1988), 649.

¹²⁸ As noted with שמר, the *NASB Exhaustive Concordance* provides an extensive list for עשה, which is too long to note here. See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, "עשה," 1452.

¹²⁹ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, "עשה," 793.

¹³⁰ Koehler, and Baumgartner, "עשה," 891.

two people.¹³¹ By understanding the semantic and lexical background for עֲשֵׂה, in Ruth 3:6 is revealed that Ruth carries out, performs, and obeys Naomi's instructions. The second biblical Hebrew word for evaluation in Ruth 3:6 is צוה. *BDB* provides a basic definition for צוה as to "lay charge (upon), give charge (to), charge, command, order."¹³² In the Ruthan context, צוה means to "command."¹³³ It is additionally a part of a fulfillment formula, where there is a structure of an order-execution of order pattern.¹³⁴ Therefore, since Naomi is Ruth's mother-in-law and superior (familial matriarch), she commands Ruth what action to perform on the threshing floor towards Boaz. Her command to Ruth constitutes a course of action to help Ruth gain a husband and a home.¹³⁵ Hubbard explains that Ruth entirely performed Naomi's command, which shows unwavering obedience and indicates Ruth's loyalty to Naomi (an exemplification of *hesed*).¹³⁶

Wisdom literature uses obedience of instruction to reveal order in a chaotic world, to cultivate and nurture moral and ethical behavior, and to indicate adherence to Yahweh's standards (His commands, instructions, and orders). Yahweh will bless a person who chooses to obey; however, those who choose not to obey face adverse consequences. Likewise, this is the same in the Book of Ruth. In Ruth 3:6, Ruth fully obeys Naomi's command, ultimately leading

¹³¹ Tyler Williams, "עֲשֵׂה," in *NIDOTTE Vol. 3*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 546.

¹³² Brown, Driver, and Briggs, "צוה," 845.

¹³³ *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, "צוה," 1459; Koehler, and Baumgartner, "צוה," 1010–1.

¹³⁴ G. Liedke, "צוה," in *TLOT Vol.2*, ed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 1063. Both order and command produce a unique action in a particular situation and are given by a superior. The superiors who can give an order or kings, fathers, mothers, brothers, military, and master to servant relationships. *Ibid*.

¹³⁵ Bush, 155.

¹³⁶ Hubbard, 206.

Ruth to get a husband and a home. Moreover, her steadfast obedience reveals moral and ethical behavior through family devotion and loyalty to Naomi. While the Book of Ruth is not instructional, per se, it does contain didactic wisdom (obedience) that applies to a person's life.

Worthy Woman/Wife—Ruth 3:11; 4:11

In Proverbs 31:10a, the biblical author asks, “An excellent wife, who can find?” He then answers his question in verses 10b–31. It is a wife who exalts honor and dignity, takes care of the family (Prov. 31:25), is energetic and stays busy (Prov. 31:27), and fears Yahweh (Prov. 31:30). Proverbs 19:14 states that a good wife is a gift from Yahweh. The behavior of one family member reflects the relationship with the other members.¹³⁷ In the OT, it is understood that a good wife was a blessing from Yahweh (Prov. 18:22). The Book of Ruth answers the question posed in Proverbs 31:10. Laura Quick explains that there is an intertextual link between the Book of Ruth and the worthy wife in Proverbs. When placed with Wisdom literature, Ruth's canonical context recognizes the intertextual link between Proverbs and Ruth.¹³⁸ Two verses will be explored to reveal how Ruth portrays a worthy woman: Ruth 3:11 and 4:11.

In Ruth 3:11, Boaz calls Ruth a “woman of excellence.” The biblical Hebrew לְיָדָה is used for “excellence” in Ruth 3:11. *HALOT* notes that it can mean a “capable wife.”¹³⁹ Robin Wakely

¹³⁷ Dell, *The Solomonic Corpus of 'Wisdom' and Its Influence*, 181. As a good wife is known for her worth, devotion, and loyalty to the family, a bad wife causes stress for the husband and chaos in the family.

¹³⁸ Laura Quick, “The Book of Ruth and the Limits of Proverbial Wisdom,” *JBL* 139, no. 1 (2020): 47.

¹³⁹ Koehler, and Baumgartner, “לְיָדָה,” 312. The *NASB Exhaustive Concordance* provides the following list for לְיָדָה: able (five times), armies (three times), army (eighty-two times), army (one time), capability (one time), capable (three times), elite army (one time), excellence (one time), excellent (two times), forces (twelve times), full (one time), goods (one time), great (one time), might (one time), mighty (one time), nobly (one time), power (two times), retinue (two times), riches (nine times), strength (ten times), strong (two times), substance (one time), troops

explains that לַיִת indicates a quality of character; a capable or good wife is one of sterling quality who helps her husband become successful, cultivate a good reputation, respect, and acquire an influential position in the community (Prov. 31:10; Ruth 3:11).”¹⁴⁰ Boaz tells Ruth that the community thinks she is an excellent woman because of her loyalty, lovingkindness, and humility that she has exhibited to Naomi and not because of her social and economic status.¹⁴¹ Ruth has proven that she is devoted, humble, and hard-working to the community, which outshines her politeness. Her exemplary conduct has elevated her status to a woman worthy of marrying Boaz.¹⁴² Quick notes that the Valiant Woman in Proverbs and Ruth are the only women to receive the “woman of excellence” designation in the OT.¹⁴³ Ruth 4:11 extends back to Ruth’s designation in 3:11. The reference to Rachel and Leah, two idolators converted by Jacob, loosely parallels Ruth’s Moabite ancestry converted to Israel and Yahweh. Rachel and Leah were the matriarchs of the twelve tribes of Israel; the reference attached to Ruth may show that the community hopes that Boaz and Ruth will have many children or that their children will play a significant role in Israel’s future.¹⁴⁴ Ruth needs a good character reference from the community

(two times), valiant (forty-one times), valiant (four times), valiantly (six times), valor (eighteen times), very powerful (one time), warriors (one time), wealth (twenty-five times), wealthy (one time), worthy (one time). See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, “לַיִת,” 1391.

¹⁴⁰ Robin Wakely, “לַיִת,” in *NIDOTTE Vol. 2*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 117.

¹⁴¹ LaCocque, 99. A special honor reserved in Wisdom literature for an ideal wife.

¹⁴² Hubbard, 216.

¹⁴³ Quick, 55.

¹⁴⁴ LaCocque, 138. As history has shown, Ruth is the great-grandmother to David, the father of Solomon and ancestor to Jesus. See Hubbard, 258.

to solidify her position. The social distinction between foreigner and native, outsider to insider, was challenged by Ruth the Moabitess, who became an equal to Israel's ancestors.¹⁴⁵

Theological and ethical topics are not addressed through wise sayings, tragic suffering, or through questioning life's meaning in the Book of Ruth. However, these topics are embedded within the narrative fabric, requiring an interpretive engagement with the text. A caveat is how the Book of Ruth indicates what a worthy woman or wife entails, which resonates with Proverbs. The ethical qualities of loyalty, kindness, and integrity are revealed in Ruth's character, and theologically, those character traits reflect Yahweh's moral and righteous standards that evoke His blessings on Boaz and Ruth.

City Gate—Ruth 4:1–2

B. S. Easton and R. W. Vunderink explain that a city's gate had double doors that pivoted on projections within sockets in the sill and lintel. The gates were typically constructed out of wood, sometimes plated with metal for greater strength and protection, and secured with bars when closed. Sometimes, there was an inner gate.¹⁴⁶ The city gate was a place of meeting. It was where decisions were made, social and justice events took place, and it is considered the most vulnerable spot of defense¹⁴⁷. Amihai Mazar calls the gate complex "one of the most imposing

¹⁴⁵ Quick, 61.

¹⁴⁶ B. Easton, and R. Vunderink, "Gate," in *ISBE Vol. 2*, revised, ed. Geoffrey Bromiley (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, Co., 1979–1988), 408. Cat Quine notes that the שַׁעַר ("gate") can refer to the area inside the gate building, the area between the outer and inner gates, a gathering place just outside the city, or a specific gate inside the city. See Cat Quine, "On Dying in a City Gate: Implications in the Deaths of Eli, Abner, and Jezebel." *JSOT* 40, no. 4 (2016): 400.

¹⁴⁷ The city gate was at the strategic center of the city, and its possession meant the conquest of the city. When a city was captured, the king and judges would place chairs at the gate to judge the city. See Russell Fuller, "שַׁעַר," in *NIDOTTE Vol. 4*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 209.

features of Israelite cities.”¹⁴⁸ Wisdom’s invitation is made at the gate, signifying that it applies to all people (Job 29:7; Prov. 1:21; 8:3; 22:22; 24:7; 31:23; Ruth 4:1–2).¹⁴⁹ The term שַׁעַר biblical Hebrew meaning “gate,” “as the place of censure and judgment.”¹⁵⁰ It is the space inside the gate where elders, judges, and kings officially sit to officiate social and judicial matters.¹⁵¹

In Ruth 4:1, the biblical author not only provides the location where Boaz was going but in what direction. Verse 1 states that “Boaz went up to the gate.” *HALOT* explains that it was a link between the city and an elevated position, such as a hilltop or a mountain ledge in this context.¹⁵² The significance is the meeting space behind the gate, which was the center of social life in the city. De Waard and Nida explain that using the term ‘gate’ is insufficient in 4:1; therefore, ‘a meeting place’ should be attached to ‘gate’ to yield a rendering of “the meeting place at the town gate.”¹⁵³ Their reason is that mentioning the gate is not enough for the reader to

¹⁴⁸ Amihai Mazar, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible: 10,000–586 B.C.E.* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 467. Natalie May comments that city gates were a complex that have an inner space. The inner area was used for a gatehouse and for various purposes: installation of royal monuments (ancient Israelite steles), military and ritual public performances, public appearance of the king, public assemblies, judicial activities, public executions (not only of legal character), marketplace, and security. See Natalie May, and Ulrike Steinert, *The Fabric of the Cities: Aspects of Urbanism, Urban Topography and Society in Mesopotamia, Greece, and Rome* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 78.

¹⁴⁹ Tremper Longman III, and Peter Enns, “Architectural Imagery,” in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Wisdom, Poetry, & Writings* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 23. See also May, and Steinert, 94.

¹⁵⁰ Koehler, and Baumgartner, “שַׁעַר,” 1616. The Strong’s designation for שַׁעַר is H8179, and the *NASB Exhaustive Concordance* lists the following potential meanings: cities (two times), city (two times), court (two times), courts (one time), each gate (one time), every gate (one time), Gate (forty-nine times), gate (one hundred ninety-five times), gatekeepers (one time), gates (eighty-eight times), gateway (four times), town (six times), towns (thirteen times). See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, “שַׁעַר,” 1485.

¹⁵¹ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “שַׁעַר,” 1045.

¹⁵² Koehler, and Baumgartner, “שַׁעַר,” 1615.

¹⁵³ De Waard, and Nida, 61. Hubbard calls it the “gate area.” See Hubbard, 232.

visualize where Boaz was going, but adding ‘the meeting place’ to the town gate provides a better comprehension of where legal decisions were made. The added gate descriptor also helps the reader understand that it was more likely to meet a nearer relative in this area than anywhere else in the city.¹⁵⁴ However, it seems too easy for Boaz to sit down and immediately recognize the nearer relative. While it may have been coincidental, the more probable reason is that Yahweh’s providence was at play.¹⁵⁵

The city gate in Ruth serves as a setting that confers legitimacy on the transaction between Boaz and the unnamed relative.¹⁵⁶ The elders serve as witnesses to ensure the legality and social acceptance of Boaz's redemption of the land and his marriage to Ruth. Besides the legal and social ramifications of the city gate in Ruth 4:1, Boaz’s actions further highlight his *hesed* for Ruth. Boaz models this divine characteristic of covenant loyalty by committing to Ruth and Naomi in a public and legally binding setting. The city gate is where Ruth’s fate will be decided and the survival of the family lineage.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁴ Hubbard, 232. The reason for the likelihood is because people had to travel through the meeting place and the gate to go to the fields, the threshing floor, or to other cities.

¹⁵⁵ Block, 705.

¹⁵⁶ The biblical Hebrew מוֹכִיחַ בַּשַּׁעַר denotes the person requesting or demanding a litigation at the gate to prove his case. The range of judicial activities at the city gate include litigation, court of justice, witness testimonies or oaths, and a place of legal transactions and contracts signed. See May, and Steinert, 96–6.

¹⁵⁷ Dell, *The Solomonic Corpus of ‘Wisdom’ and Its Influence*, 181. The city gate was where the civic litigation process took place, that involved ten elders whom Boaz called to witness the proceedings. After the nearer relative declines redeeming family and property, Boaz buys Naomi’s field and announces that Ruth will be his wife. It was at the city gate that the people gave their blessing on Boaz’s and Ruth’s wedding contract. See May, and Steinert, 98–9.

Building Up a House—Ruth 1:16; 2:19; 4:11

In the OT, building a house means more than just a dwelling place for a person or a family. The biblical Hebrew term *בַּיִת* is commonly used for “house.”¹⁵⁸ The *NASB Exhaustive Concordance* lists fifty-three probable meanings for *בַּיִת*.¹⁵⁹ ‘House’ is the primary meaning occurring 1,564 times in the OT. The term *בַּיִת* can refer to a king's palace, an idea borrowed from the Mesopotamian *é-gal* describing the center of social and political power.¹⁶⁰ Therefore, the king’s house, or palace, became the administrative center of the kingdom. ‘House’ can additionally be referred to as familial relationships: extended family, clan or tribe, dynasties, or descendants.¹⁶¹ In Wisdom literature, ‘building up a house’ has cultural, ethical, and theological significance. In Proverbs 14:1, a wise woman builds her house. Wisdom building a house is reflected in Proverbs 9:1; 24:3–4.¹⁶² Proverbs 3:19 reveals that wisdom played a role in the universe’s creation. By wisdom, Yahweh changed chaos to order.

In Ruth 1:16, Ruth vows to “lodge” wherever Naomi lodges. In the biblical Hebrew text, *לִי* is used to define “to lodge, pass the night, abide.”¹⁶³ Robert Hubbard explains that *לִי* is used for “to remain, abide.” Therefore, in 1:16, Ruth promises Naomi that she will reside wherever

¹⁵⁸ Gerald Wilson, “*בַּיִת*,” in *NIDOTTE Vol. 1*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 644.

¹⁵⁹ *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, “*בַּיִת*,” 1369.

¹⁶⁰ Wilson, “*בַּיִת*,” 644.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 645.

¹⁶² Proverbs 24:3–4 notes that wisdom builds a house, understanding establishes it, and knowledge fills the rooms with riches.

¹⁶³ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “*לִי*,” 533.

Naomi calls home.¹⁶⁴ The significance of ‘house’ in this context is that Ruth has forsaken her homeland and religion. Therefore, she vows loyalty and devotion to Naomi’s homeland, the Israelite community, and Yahweh.¹⁶⁵ Hubbard explains that the nuance of לִי is at play here to emphasize Ruth’s lifelong commitment to Naomi.¹⁶⁶ The devotion to Naomi leads to a devotion to Israel. A commitment to Israel is necessary before devotion to Yahweh can happen (Zech. 8:23).¹⁶⁷

Ruth 2:19 relays a message presented in Proverbs 5:18: "Let your fountain be blessed." In Ruth 2:19, Naomi says, “he who took notice of you be blessed.” The concept presented in Proverbs 5:18 concerns vitality and fruitfulness, or the abundance of offspring.¹⁶⁸ The biblical Hebrew counterpart to ‘bless’ is בָּרַךְ. *BDB* states that בָּרַךְ, in this context, is the “blessing of men (blessed be the one blessing thee (Ruth 2:19)).”¹⁶⁹ Keller and Wehmeier note that בָּרַךְ can be used in a formulaic manner (Prov. 5:18; Ruth 2:19).¹⁷⁰ Naomi’s expression of blessing reveals

¹⁶⁴ Robert Hubbard, Jr., “לִי,” in *NIDOTTE Vol. 2*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 790.

¹⁶⁵ Block writes that with radical self-sacrifice, Ruth abandons all sense of security in Moab to travel with Naomi to Bethlehem. By going with Naomi, Ruth is willing to accept a new people, Yahweh, and commit to enduring Naomi’s life experiences alongside her. See Block, 641.

¹⁶⁶ Hubbard, 117.

¹⁶⁷ LaCocque, 52.

¹⁶⁸ Dell, *The Solomonic Corpus of ‘Wisdom’ and Its Influence*, 182.

¹⁶⁹ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “בָּרַךְ,” 138. Edward Campbell comments, “A highly interesting variant, almost certainly an expansion but a rather early one, is attested by the Lucianic family with Theodoret; literally it reads at the conclusion of the brief blessing, “for he has satisfied a hungry soul, as he has done with that which he has done.” The first part of this is a quotation from Ps 107:9, and one LXX witness, not usually found with the Lucianic family, stopped with the quotation only.” See Edward Campbell Jr., *AYB Vol. 7: Ruth* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 106.

¹⁷⁰ Keller, and Wehmeier, “בָּרַךְ,” 268.

that she is asking Yahweh to look favorably upon Boaz, which does not include material prosperity.¹⁷¹ Jeremy Schipper comments that Naomi's blessing suggests that Yahweh's blessing has not forsaken her home, which includes past and present members (and includes Ruth as a member of the household).¹⁷² Naomi issues a second blessing in Ruth 2:20 after she is made known who the generous person is, Boaz. This blessing stems from Boaz's *hesed* and the realization that he is a family member who can redeem Ruth and Naomi. Therefore, Naomi's excitement comes from the possibility that Boaz is a potential husband for Ruth. Hubbard remarks that Boaz's and Ruth's dialogue in 2:8–17 reflects a common Hebrew literary convention, the "betrothal-type scene" (Gen. 24).¹⁷³ Ruth's life revealed the outworking of the covenant to the patriarchs, which would tie her destiny to theirs. Thus, it is possible to infer that *תָּרַב* can mean Ruth's association with a family (with Boaz as the kinsman redeemer) and dynasty (Ruth is the great-grandmother to David). In Ruth 4:11, the use of *תָּרַב* focuses on a dynasty. The Bethlehem women pray for Ruth's destiny to parallel that of Rachel and Leah, who built up the house of Israel.¹⁷⁴ The women's statement in 4:11 signifies that Ruth was elevated from a foreigner (a Moabitess) to a citizen of Israel, had a home and a husband, and wished that the family would be more significant than Rachel and Leah's.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷¹ De Waard, and Nida, 40. Block comments that *תָּרַב* is an appeal to Yahweh to bless someone by conferring good upon them (a blessing can take the form of land, offspring, food, clothing, and health). See Block, 612.

¹⁷² Jeremy Schipper, *AYB Vol. 7d: Ruth* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 139.

¹⁷³ Hubbard, 187.

¹⁷⁴ Dell, *The Solomonic Corpus of 'Wisdom' and Its Influence*, 182. 'Building up a house' is a perpetuating or establishing of a family line. See De Waard, and Nida, 71.

¹⁷⁵ Hubbard, 258–9.

The Book of Ruth focuses on ‘building up a house’ through the actions of Ruth and Boaz. In Wisdom literature, ‘building up a house’ teaches the wisdom of establishing and maintaining a stable family (Prov. 24:3–4), it reflects the family member’s integrity, life, and reputation (Prov. 15:6), and emphasizes Yahweh’s providence and fearing Yahweh (Prov. 3:19; 9:1). In Ruth, a stable family is established through the levirate marriage between Boaz and Ruth, both Ruth and Boaz exhibit *hesed* (going above and beyond typical kindness, devotion, loyalty, and generosity), and both fear Yahweh (Ruth forsaking her homeland and religion to embrace Israel and Yahweh and through Boaz’s *hesed* towards Ruth and his strict adherence to the Hebrew legal practices).

Chapter 4

The Book of Proverbs is a collection of concise observations, admonitions, and prohibitions.¹ Proverbs responds to life's unpleasant surprises by giving precepts, norms, and guidelines for living a well-being, decent, and dignified life.² Proverbs teaches wisdom stems from the fear of Yahweh, taught by traditional teachings, the foundation for moral behavior, and is essential for creating a socially, physically, materially, and morally successful life.³ The Book of Proverbs can be divided into two sections: Proverbs 1–9 deal with the emphatic address from the teacher to the student through instructions and personified Wisdom, and Proverbs 10–31 is a succession of short stories.⁴ Crucial for wisdom is the theology of creation (Gen. 1:1). Because of sin, humans fight against the divinely created order of the cosmos. Proverbs explains that wisdom is not a separate entity but stems from Yahweh's pattern of creation.⁵

In chapter three, the Book of Ruth was explored to indicate how fifteen topics⁶ applied to didactic wisdom. Chapters four through six will explore how the same fifteen topics are

¹ Paul Koptak comments that the Book of Proverbs can be frustrating to read by some readers because it seems to have outdated monotonous advice, mystical riddles, and cosmic symbolism. See Paul Koptak, *NIVAC: Proverbs* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 19.

² Michael Fox, *AYB Vol. 18A: Proverbs 1–9* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 3. He further explains that wisdom, in Proverbs, is the human mind's power intellectually and by knowledge. It transcends the human mind, resides in it, and Yahweh possesses it.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Roland Murphy, *WBC Vol. 22: Proverbs* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1998), xix.

⁵ Duane Garrett, *NAC Vol. 14: Proverbs* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1993), 53.

⁶ Proper portion, discipline and hope, friendship and family loyalty, hard work, entreaty, inappropriate touching, true reward, humility, generosity of spirit, kindness, redemption, obeying instructions, worthy woman/wife, city gate, and building up a house will be analyzed.

addressed by Wisdom literature (Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Job). The approach is to indicate how each Wisdom book treats the topic and correlate the findings with the Book of Ruth.

Proper Portion—Proverbs 10:19; 13:11; 23:20–21; 30:8

The concept of a proper portion involves the idea of moderation, balance, and equitable distribution grounded in ethical living and fearing Yahweh.⁷ The Book of Proverbs provides a variety of attitudes towards comprehending a proper portion. Four social environments are identified in Proverbs: the judicial, the educated, prosperous farmers, and small farmers on a tight budget.⁸ The Proverbial proper portion is revealed through temperance of speech (Prov. 10:19), financial prudence (Prov. 13:11), and restraint in desires (Prov. 23:20–21).

Proverbs 10:19 states that many words lead to unavoidable transgression, and the wise person restrains their speech. The biblical Hebrew word חָשַׁב means "to hold on to, to save, spare."⁹ The term חָשַׁב is not to be confused with סָפַח in Proverbs 27:16, which means "to hide,

⁷ Anthony Harvey notes that Ex. 16:4 provides the authority for proper portion. The manna that Yahweh provided was to be shared equally and never hoarded. See Anthony Harvey, "Daily Bread," *JTS* 69, no. 1 (April 2018): 29. Ex. 16:4 states that Yahweh supplied enough manna only for each day except on Friday, when twice as much was to be gathered to provide enough for that day and the Sabbath.

⁸ R. N. Whybray, *Wealth and Poverty in the Book of Proverbs* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990), 116. While the economic situation between the four social groups can be divided between wealthy and precarious living, the attitudes were not dependent on economic status but on mentality. Many wealthy people, but not all, are concerned with securing more wealth and the social success that it brings. Therefore, most of the wealthy are not too concerned with the poor or their suffering. The precarious small farmers do not negatively view wealth if it is gained through honesty and innocently. Additionally, they recognize that they have a duty to help the less fortunate out without respect of the causes for poverty.

⁹ Ludwig Koehler, and Walter Baumgartner, "חָשַׁב," *HALOT*, 5th ed. (Leiden: Brill Publishing, 2000), 359. The *NASB Exhaustive Concordance* lists the following potential meanings for חָשַׁב : hold them back (one time), hold back (two times), keep back (one time), keeps back (one time), kept (one time), kept their in check (one time), kept back (one time), lessen (one time), lessened (one time), refrain (one time), requited (one time), reserved (one time), restrain (one time), restrained (one time), restrains (two times), spare (two times), spared

shelter.”¹⁰ Elmer Martens explains that אָשַׁר is used as a verb, with humans as a subject, when self-control is intended. Ronald Clements notes that אָשַׁר is a wise person who restrains their lips. He states, “The underlying notion is that the talkative person readily falls into any of a number of sins by revealing thoughts and feelings that are best concealed. Speech, like emotions, must be controlled; failure to do so quickly arouses hostility and resentment.”¹¹ In Proverbs 10:19, the sage says that a wise man will hold his tongue to restrict sin from infecting the moral life; it is an economy of words.¹² It constitutes a failure to associate with other people in a sensical manner. Garrett notes that “verse 19 is an ironic heading to vv. 20–21,”¹³ although a wise person knows when and how to provide sound advice, they do so in a manner that is not wordy. A wise person will know how and when to properly portion the words they use.

(one time), unrestrained (one time), withheld (three times), withholds (two times). See “אָשַׁר,” *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, 2nd ed., ed. The Lockman Foundation (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 1456.

¹⁰ Koehler, and Baumgartner, “אָשַׁר,” 1049. The Strong's designation for אָשַׁר is H6845. Concerning Prov. 27:16, Siegfried Wagner explains “From the perspective of v. 15, v. 16 must refer back to the “contentious woman” mentioned there (cf. the suffix) who can be restrained as little as can the wind itself (*šōp^enēhā* would have to be read as sg.). One might also understand the stich as a paronomasia in which the suffix refers to the following *rūah* in the sense, “those who try to conceal it [must know what they are doing, they] conceal wind.”” See Siegfried Wagner, “אָשַׁר,” in *TDOT Vol. 12*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David Green (Grand Rapids.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 452.

¹¹ Ronald Clements, “אָשַׁר,” in *TDOT Vol. 5*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David Green (Grand Rapids.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 225.

¹² Elmer Martens, “אָשַׁר,” in *NIDOTTE Vol. 2*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 295. Murphy comments that the sages were alert to the dangers associated with wordiness and knew silence’s value. A person who loves to talk, or wordiness, make hasty, ill-considered, and iniquitous statements. See Murphy, 75. Slander is considered one way that an imprudent person would not hold back on their words. See Koptak, 294.

¹³ Garrett, 121; Tremper Longman III, *BCOT: Proverbs* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 238.

Proverbs. 13:11 focuses on financial prudence, how ill-gained wealth diminishes, and how the person who works hard will increase wealth. A wise person who practices proper portion will know how to apply that concept to financial matters. In verse 11, רָבָה is used to indicate how a wise person will gain wealth.¹⁴ In *BDB*, רָבָה means to “be, or become, much, many, great (the hiphil form of the verb means “to make much, or many objects”).”¹⁵ Andrew Hill states that רָבָה, in the hiphil form, means to “make numerous, or multiply.”¹⁶ In Proverbs 13:11, רָבָה means as “a gradual or steady increase, or larger sums compared to multitudes.”¹⁷ Wealth is not forbidden in the OT or Proverbs. It is seen as a blessing from Yahweh. However, the sage advises against obtaining wealth from immoral means.¹⁸ The arrogant wealthy have lives filled with conflict, and their lack of wisdom is like a diminishing light.¹⁹ Therefore, considering a proper portion, financial prudence involves steadily acquiring wealth through honest hard work.

¹⁴ Fox defines wealth as a movable asset that is not a stable form of property, unlike farming or herding. See Fox, *AYB Vol. 18A*, 565.

¹⁵ Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles Briggs, “רָבָה,” *BDB* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1996), 915. *HALOT* uses “to increase” to define רָבָה. See Koehler, and Baumgartner, “רָבָה,” 1177.

¹⁶ Andrew Hill “רָבָה,” in *NIDOTTE Vol. 3*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 1035. The term רָבָה (*rābā*, *I*), qal: become numerous, increase, multiply; piel., hiphil: increase. Heinz-Josef Fabry notes that the hiphil construction conveys a comparative sense. He states, “This verb is especially common combined with other verbs, with the meaning “do something frequently,” “do something more than,” thus becoming simply an auxiliary verb.” See Heinz-Josef Fabry, “רָבָה,” in *TDOT Vol. 15*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David Green (Grand Rapids.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 277.

¹⁷ Hill, “רָבָה,” 1035.

¹⁸ William Reyburn, and Euan McG. Fry, *UBS: A Handbook on Proverbs* (New York: United Bible Societies, 2000), 291.

¹⁹ Garrett, 136.

Proverbs 23:20–21 teaches against gluttony and drunkenness, which leads to poverty. In the biblical Hebrew text, זָלַל is used to denote gluttonous. The *NASB Exhaustive Concordance* has six probable meanings for זָלַל: despise (one time), despised (one time), glutton (two times), gluttonous eaters (one time), gluttons (one time), worthless (one time).²⁰ Michael Grisanti explains that זָלַל, in the qal form, is used only four times to describe gluttony, a practice where someone wastes food and does not appreciate its value (Deut. 21:20; Prov. 23:20–21). It is a reckless behavior that leads to poverty.²¹ Warren Baker and Eugene Carpenter explain that זָלַל describes a severe and corrupt character closely linked to someone who drinks too much (Deut. 21:20; Prov. 23:20–21).²² In this Proverbial context, סָבַח (Prov. 23:21) is used along with זָלַל (Prov. 23:20). The term סָבַח means "to be addicted to liquor, or to be given to drink."²³

Kalman Kaplan et al. comment that in the Hebrew Scriptures, eating and drinking were sanctimonious and an expression of thanks to Yahweh. The Israelite festivals were ways for people to celebrate and remember Yahweh's blessings and providence throughout Israel's history.²⁴ Excessive eating and drinking create temptations, and remembering Yahweh is

²⁰ *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, "זָלַל," 1387. *HALOT* provides "gluttonous meat eaters" as an interpretation regarding Prov. 23:20. See Koehler, and Baumgartner, "זָלַל," 272.

²¹ Michael Grisanti, "זָלַל," in *NIDOTTE Vol. 1*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 1084. The term זָלַל (*zālāl* I), qal: be frivolous, be despised; hiphil: treat lightly; זָלַל (zullūt I), nominative: vileness.

²² Warren Baker, and Eugene Carpenter, "זָלַל," in *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: OT* (Chattanooga: AMG Publishers, 2003), 293.

²³ Koehler, and Baumgartner, "סָבַח," 738. The *NASB Exhaustive Concordance* lists the following probable meanings for סָבַח: drink heavily (one time), drunkard (one time), drunken (one time), heavy drinker (one time), heavy drinkers (one time). See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, "סָבַח," 1439.

²⁴ Kalman Kaplan et al., "Eating and Drinking Narratives in Biblical-Rabbinic Versus Graeco-Roman Writings," *Journal of Religion and Health* 62, no. 1 (2023): 348. A meal was

forsaken—eating and drinking too much clouds the mind, emotions, and the ability to use wisdom.²⁵ It is a disruption of someone's moral character that can lead to laziness and poverty (Prov. 23:21).²⁶ As with other areas of life, discipline is crucial for a person to exercise because it conveys life; it is the essence of self-control.²⁷ A method used to highlight the importance of self-control was through acts and consequences, which help to lay a foundation for moral living.²⁸ It does not lead to the extent of a doctrine of retribution but can be used similarly to aid in evaluating a moral life.²⁹ Gerhard von Rad comments, "The law of cause and effect is traced right into the hidden regions of the soul."³⁰ A person's goodness includes personal excellence, righteousness, success, and fulfillment in life. This goodness is seen by exercising a proper portion involving self-control or the discipline to restrain oneself from overindulging in food and drink that leads away from Yahweh.³¹

both nutritional, pleasurable, and provided an opportunity for people to enjoy and sanctify Yahweh's creation and Israel's role in it.

²⁵ Longman III, 428.

²⁶ Ibid.; Deut. 21:20. Paul Koptak notes that Prov. 23:20–21 recalls the same prohibitions mentioned in the table scenes of Prov. 23:1–11, that calls for restraint when eating or drinking that otherwise would lead to an inability to nourish or satisfy. See Koptak, 548.

²⁷ James Crenshaw, *Old Testament Wisdom: An Introduction* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998), 69.

²⁸ The main characters involved with the acts and consequences are the wise and the foolish, the righteous and the wicked, the lazy and the diligent, and the rich and the poor. The primary goal of the pithy statements is not to motivate the foolish but to motivate the virtuous. See Richard Clifford, *The Wisdom Literature* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998), 54.

²⁹ Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Wisdom and Law in the OT* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 46.

³⁰ Gerhard von Rad, *Wisdom in Israel* (Great Britain: SCM Press Ltd., 1972), 127. It is the causal connection that allowed the biblical author to realize that every good and evil deed had an effect. These experiences had either a righteous effect that promoted the community or a negative effect that was detrimental to the community. Therefore, what affected the community, affected the biblical author. Ibid., 130.

³¹ Rad, 131.

In Proverbs 30:8, Agur prays for a good character and circumstances that will not endanger that character.³² He is praying for Yahweh’s providence for life’s necessities, nothing more or less. Agur does not want to do anything that will offend Yahweh or become an incentive towards immoral behavior.³³ Such prayers are uncommon in the Hebrew Scriptures because they potentially indicate a lack of faith in Yahweh to provide life’s necessities; however, it was acceptable to pray for food that would be enough.³⁴ The term **לֶחֶם** is used in verse 8 to denote “food.”³⁵ *HALOT* interprets **לֶחֶם** as “bread that is my share.”³⁶ “My share” is reinforced with the next biblical Hebrew word **חֵלֶק**. *HALOT* comments that **חֵלֶק** means “my fair portion of food.”³⁷ The *NASB Exhaustive Concordance* notes twenty-three probable meanings for **חֵלֶק**.³⁸ “Bread that is my

³² Specifically, Agur prays that Yahweh keeps him from being untruthful and protect him against the temptations associated with poverty and wealth (stealing, pride, forsaking Yahweh).

³³ Katherine Dell, *The Solomonic Corpus of ‘Wisdom’ and Its Influence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, Inc., 2020), 174.

³⁴ Harvey, 29–30.

³⁵ The range of potential meanings for **לֶחֶם** are bread (188 times), food (eighty-seven times), fruit (one time), loaves (three times), meal (seven times), meals (two times), prey (one time), provision (one time), showbread (four times), something (one time). See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, “**לֶחֶם**,” 1414.

³⁶ Koehler, and Baumgartner, “**לֶחֶם**,” 527. A proper portion that carries the understanding that Yahweh provides according to an immediate need without excess. See Harvey, 34. W. Dommershausen and Heinz-Josef Fabry comment that **לֶחֶם חֵלֶק** is an idiom that conveys the sense that a person should be satisfied with the “needful bread” that Yahweh has provided. See W. Dommershausen, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, “**לֶחֶם**,” in *TDOT Vol. 7*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David Green (Grand Rapids.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 525.

³⁷ Koehler, and Baumgartner, “**חֵלֶק**,” 347; Peter Enns, “**חֵלֶק**,” in *NIDOTTE Vol. 2*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 245.

³⁸ *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, “**חֵלֶק**,” 1395. The probable meanings for **חֵלֶק** are allotment (five times), boundaries (one time), boundary (two times), conditions (one time), custom (one time), decree (five times), due (five times), fixed order (one time), limit (two times), limits (one time), measure (one time), necessary food (one time), ordinance (four times), portion (three times), portions (one time), prescribed portion (one time), rations (one time), required

share [*portion*]” is often called daily bread because it indicates the food that a person needs, a proper portion.³⁹

In these Proverbial texts, a proper portion involving temperance in speech, financial prudence, moderation in eating and drinking, and the entreaty for “bread that is my share” have been evaluated. However, how does the Book of Ruth coincide with Proverb’s view? In Ruth 1:1, Elimelech and his family left Bethlehem to travel to Moab for food. There was not enough food due to the famine, but there was enough food in Moab to sustain the family—famines, although tragic events, were used by Yahweh to serve His will and purpose.⁴⁰ Therefore, Yahweh uses the famine to curse Bethlehem, ensure that Elimelech and his family get their proper portion, and advance His purpose by introducing the family to Ruth. Continuing to Ruth 1:6–7, Yahweh has blessed Bethlehem by ending the famine and allowing crops to grow, precipitating Naomi’s return to the homeland. As a possible play on words, בֵּית לֶחֶם could be translated in these verses to highlight its use in the Bethlehem name (“house of bread”). Hence, the notion that Yahweh has returned the proper portion to Bethlehem.⁴¹ Ruth 1:1, 6–7 and Proverbs 23:20–21; 30:8 involve a proper portion through getting the necessities for life and not indulging in a gluttonous manner.

amount (one time), resolves (one time), statute (nine times), statutes (seventy-nine times), thing...due (one time), what is appointed (one time).

³⁹ Murphy, 230.

⁴⁰ Robert Hubbard, Jr., *NICOT: Ruth* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1988), 84.

⁴¹ Daniel Block, *NAC Vol. 6: Judges, Ruth* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1999), 631.

Discipline and Hope—Proverbs 1:8–9; 3:11–12; 13:24; 19:18; 29:15

Discipline and hope are interwoven throughout Wisdom literature, revealing a moral, ethical, and spiritual development to live a successful life. The Book of Proverbs emphasizes the educational system instructing discipline, correction, and reproof.⁴² Proverbs 1:8–9 begins a section of wise discourses that teach the student to compare the ways between the wise and foolish. The first word that is attached to the discipline concept is read in Proverbs 1:8, שָׁמַעַי. The biblical Hebrew שָׁמַעַי means “to hear > to listen to, meaning to harken > obey.”⁴³ K. T. Aitken notes that the qal form of שָׁמַעַי is defined as “hear, listen, listen to, pay attention, perceive, understand, heed, obey, grant, examine (legal).”⁴⁴ It is a summons to pay attention when used in the wisdom sphere. U. Rütterswörden notes that consistent wisdom instruction proper should begin with the exhortation שָׁמַעַי.⁴⁵ Specifically, the son/pupil must listen and accept the instructions of the father/teacher.⁴⁶ The father was the primary moral teacher in the family setting

⁴² Discipline functions as a prominent theme in Proverbs, that takes the form of a father and son relationship (Deut. 8:5). In Prov. 1:8–9, there is a father to a son and a mother to a son relationship. The familial metaphors serve to remind Israel of its relationship to Yahweh. See D. P. Kingdon, “Discipline,” in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. T. Alexander, and Brian Rosner (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 449.

⁴³ Koehler, and Baumgartner, “שָׁמַעַי,” 1572. Strong’s designation is H8085 for שָׁמַעַי.

⁴⁴ K. T. Aitken, “שָׁמַעַי,” in *NIDOTTE Vol. 4*, ed. Willem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 175 The term. שָׁמַעַי (*šāma*), qal: hear, listen, listen to, pay attention, perceive, understand, heed, obey, grant, examine (legal); niphal: be heard, obedient, granted; piel: summon; hiphil: cause someone to hear, proclaim, announce, summon, sound aloud (music).

⁴⁵ U. Rütterswörden, “שָׁמַעַי,” in *TDOT Vol. 15*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David Green (Grand Rapids.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 275. “Hearing” such discipline means that *šāma* “must involve, over and above purely auditory perception, the aspect of *obedience*. Not, of course, in the sense of subjection to an alien norm, whether or not it benefits the learner. This obedience presupposes insightful comprehension, discerning openness; it functions as a kind of perpetual internalization process.” *Ibid.*, 276.

⁴⁶ Aitken, 177. Thus, the teacher (“father”) tirelessly challenges the student (“son”) to hear—hearing is not inconsequential, it is intended to produce wisdom (Prov 23:19)—and thus

that involved general instructions or teachings about the Law of Moses.⁴⁷ The second word in verse 8 is שמע. The son is told to שמע ("listen and obey") his father and not to אשמע ("ignore") his mother. HALOT defines שמע in this context as "to leave unheeded."⁴⁸ Koptak comments that the second part of verse 8, the son and mother, echoes the wisdom and discipline despised in verse 7. Therefore, verse 8 instructs on whom to listen to and what to listen and obey, wisdom taught by the parents.⁴⁹

In Proverbs 3:11–12, a comparison is made between Yahweh's love and His discipline and a father's correction to the son he loves. The biblical Hebrew term for discipline in verse 12 is יכה. HALOT explains that the verb יכה in verse 12 is interpreted as "to chasten, punish only by Yahweh."⁵⁰ G. Liedke comments that Yahweh's יכה is instructional and is a reprimand stemming from His love, and those that He reprimands out of love are blessed.⁵¹ John Hartley adds that the student is strongly encouraged not to be weary of discipline; anyone who disdains correction is

the one who "listens" (8:34) or who has "a listening ear" is praised; students are warned against relaxing their attention (19:27). See H. Schult "שמע," in *TLOT Vol. 3*, ed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 1377.

⁴⁷ Reyburn, and McG. Fry, 34.

⁴⁸ Koehler, and Baumgartner, "שמע," 695. The *NASB Exhaustive Concordance* lists the following for שמע: abandon (seven times), abandoned (five times), allow (one time), cast away (one time), ceased (one time), drawn (one time), fall (one time), forego (one time), forsake (three times), forsaken (two times), forsook (one time), hangs slack (one time), leave (two times), left (five times), lie fallow (one time), neglected (one time), spread (six times), See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, "שמע," 1435.

⁴⁹ Koptak, 73. Fox notes that vv. 8–9 is just not an admonition to listen to one's parents but a warning to heed the instructions given in Prov. 1:10–19. See Fox, *AYB Vol. 18A*, 79.

⁵⁰ Koehler, and Baumgartner, "יכה," 410; Brown, Driver, and Briggs, "יכה," 407. The distinction between the two lexicons is that *BDB* notes that Yahweh's is through love and not anger.

⁵¹ G. Liedke, "יכה," in *TLOT Vol. 2*, ed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 543.

on a path to ruin (Prov. 5:12–14).⁵² Murphy remarks that in Proverbs 3:11–12, this is the only place in Proverbs where the problem of suffering is addressed. It focuses on human discipline and applies it to Yahweh’s reprove.⁵³ The concept of Yahweh’s discipline can be understood through Job 5:17–18, which Job’s friends used against him. The comprehension is that Yahweh gives discipline to spare a person a greater punishment.⁵⁴

Another biblical Hebrew term for discipline can be read in Proverbs 13:24, מוֹסֵר. The term מוֹסֵר has the following possible meanings: chastening (three times), chastise (one time), correction (three times), discipline (eighteen times), disciplines (one time), instruction (twenty times), punishment (two times), reproof (one time), warning (one time).⁵⁵ The term מוֹסֵר is a common deverbals⁵⁶ and is used thirty times in Proverbs. As a nominative noun⁵⁷, it means discipline and chastisement for those who do not respond positively to instruction.⁵⁸ Unlike the

⁵² John Hartley, “יכח,” in *NIDOTTE Vol. 2*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 436.

⁵³ Murphy, 21. Günter Mayer and Heinz-Josef Fabry comment that in a pedagogical usage, תּוֹכַחָהּ with מוֹסֵר denotes “reproof, rebuke, censure,” and it belongs to the genre of threat and invective (1:23, 25, 30; 5:12) addressed by the teacher (5:13). See Günter Mayer, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, “יכח,” in *TDOT Vol. 6*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David Green (Grand Rapids.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 70.

⁵⁴ Michael Fox, *AYB Vol. 18B: Proverbs 10–31* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 152. The basis is that Yahweh corrects out of love and does not want His people to keep engaging in life-damaging behaviors that would separate them from Him. See Longman III, 134.

⁵⁵ *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, “מוֹסֵר,” 1418.

⁵⁶ A noun derived from a verb, “denominalia are formed from *deverbalia*.” See E. Kautzsch, “§ 83d,” in *Gesenius’ Hebrew Grammar*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1909), 227.

⁵⁷ E. H. Merrill, “מוֹסֵר,” in *NIDOTTE Vol. 2*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 471. The term מוֹסֵר (*mūsār*), nominative: correction, chastisement, discipline.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.* Discipline, however, has a beneficent, restorative end. It issues from true love (13:24) even though the disobedient hate it (5:12). Those who truly love will not withhold it (23:13). The disciplined life is the ideal, one that seeks after Yahweh and upholds standards of

discipline in Proverbs 3:11–12, the father is the subject of Proverbs 13:24. It is the father's responsibility to discipline⁵⁹ the child. A father who loves his child will discipline them; however, a father who hates his child will not.⁶⁰ Discipline's purpose in Proverbs was to shape a moral and ethical character befitting Yahweh's wisdom and righteousness; therefore, it was performed through instruction with correction as needed.⁶¹

While Proverbs 13:24 uses a deverbal form of יסר (מוֹסֵר), Proverbs 19:18 uses the piel imperative of יסר, which means "to chastise, rebuke."⁶² Merrill explains that the term יסר can mean either "chastisement or punishment;" however, there is a fine line between coercive discipline and correction.⁶³ Children are not naturally wise; therefore, it is necessary to discipline them so they can learn wisdom. In this verse, discipline carries a connotation of physical punishment; however, it is a punishment issued from love, not anger.⁶⁴ Like Proverbs 13:24, verse 18 reveals parental responsibility. The parents are responsible for disciplining the child and

justice and fairness (1:3). It takes the form of correction (6:23) or rebuke (3:11), whether by Yahweh or other people, and it may be administered through experience (24:32) or by the application of the rod, whether literal or figurative (Prov 22:15).

⁵⁹ Discipline is not to be construed for corporal punishment, even though corporal punishment was a common technique for unruly children in ancient Israel and Egypt. See Murphy, 98.

⁶⁰ Koptak, 362.

⁶¹ Kingdon, 449. Von Rad comments that מוֹסֵר is closely tied to wisdom. Both are used for the edification of a person. He proceeds to note that both are intertwined at times to the point that they are synonymous and difficult to comprehend. See Rad, 53.

⁶² Koehler, and Baumgartner, "יסר," 418. The term "יָסַר (yāsār I), qal: admonish; niphal: let oneself be admonished, corrected; piel: discipline, correct." See Merrill, "יסר," 471.

⁶³ Merrill, "יסר," 472. In Prov. 19:18, parents are exhorted to discipline their children if there is hope of delivering the children from death.

⁶⁴ Longman III, 369.

instructing them in wisdom's ways.⁶⁵ However, when a parent disciplines their child or children, then there is תִּקְוָה ("hope"). The *NASB Exhaustive Concordance* notes the possible meanings for תִּקְוָה: expectation (three times), hope (twenty-eight times), longing (one time).⁶⁶ The root קוה is one of the more prominent roots in poetic expression because of its use in the Latter Prophets (twenty-nine times) and the Writings (forty-seven times).⁶⁷ Schibler explains that hope is a disposition, state of mind, or attitude, and in Proverbs 19:18, hope seems to be an end in itself.⁶⁸ However, when hope is paired with discipline, it reveals that a child's discipline will possibly bring about a change, which results in hope for the child's future.⁶⁹ The concept of discipline is training, a practice wholeheartedly embraced by the wise teachers in Proverbs. With training came correction. The wise teachers used their knowledge of Yahweh's divine correction through suffering to apply it to instructing their students, which resulted in the students being able to bear life and persevere.⁷⁰

In Proverbs 29:15, תוֹכַחַת is used for "rebuke." *HALOT* comments that in verse 15, תוֹכַחַת is used to denote "reproach, blame (during instruction, upbringing)."⁷¹ *BDB* understands תוֹכַחַת as a "correction, rebuke,"⁷² Hartley explains that תוֹכַחַת, as a nominative, frequently parallels מוֹסֵר

⁶⁵ Fox, *AYB Vol. 18B*, 656.

⁶⁶ *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, "תִּקְוָה," 1491. *HALOT* adds "optimistic outlook" to the list of possible meanings. See Koehler, and Baumgartner, "תִּקְוָה," 1782.

⁶⁷ Daniel Schibler, "תִּקְוָה," in *NIDOTTE Vol. 3*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 890.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 890–1.

⁶⁹ Murphy, 144.

⁷⁰ Rad, 201–2.

⁷¹ Koehler, and Baumgartner, "תוֹכַחַת," 1699.

⁷² Brown, Driver, and Briggs, "תוֹכַחַת," 407. The *NASB Exhaustive Concordance* lists the following possible meanings for תוֹכַחַת: argument (one time), arguments (two times), chastened

(“discipline”). In other words, reproof is a form of discipline used as an integral educational tool.⁷³ Fox comments that an underlying metaphor of animals is used in verse 15. Children, like animals, are controlled and protected by the rod, while others are allowed to be let loose and go astray.⁷⁴ While discipline and educating the child is a major force in Proverbs 29:15, embarrassment is secondary. Parents who do not discipline their children will face grievous embarrassment and cannot trust their children.⁷⁵ A child’s wisdom or folly has consequences for the child and the parents, and, for the parents, those consequences can affect their quality of life in the world and reflect their parental qualities to the world.⁷⁶

A previous discussion involving Proverbs 19:18 revealed a bond between discipline and hope. The biblical Hebrew word תקנה represented hope in verse 18. However, in Proverbs 13:12, תוֹקֵן is used for “hope.” Even though the two verses use different biblical Hebrew words, תקנה,

(one time), rebuke (one time), rebukes (two times), reproof (fourteen times), reproofs (two times), reprovved (one time). See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, “תוֹכַחַת,” 1489.

⁷³ Hartley, “תוֹכַחַת,” 433. The term תוֹכַחַת (*tôkahat*), nominative: argument, reproof, rebuke, correction, punishment. “The rod reinforces the words (29:15). If the reproof is not heeded—cf. such expressions as “ignore” (*lō’ ’ābâ*; 1:25), “despise” (*nā’as*; 1:30; 5:12), “be weary of” (*qûš*; 3:11), “reject” (*’āzab*; 10:17), “hate” (*šānē*; 12:1; 15:10), “stiffen the neck” (*hiqšā ’ōrep*; 29:1)—the consequences are stupidity (12:1), error (10:17), misfortune (5:9–12), and death (15:10). Obedience, however—described by such terms as “return” (*šûb*; 1:23), “heed” (*šāmar*; 13:18; 15:5), and “hear” (*šāma*; 15:31)—brings wisdom (29:15).” See Mayer, and Fabry, “יִכַח,” 71.

⁷⁴ Fox, *AYB 18B*, 839. An interesting note is that in verse 15, the mother is being singled out. In this verse, she is the source of wisdom since the child is receiving his upbringing at home. The mother’s responsibility for imparting wisdom on the child is in tandem with the fathers. The exception is that when the father is away, the mother must step in. Therefore, there are two concerns in verse 15, the first is correcting and teaching wisdom to the child, and the second is the concern for the mother (i.e., how she is viewed if she does not discipline the child).

⁷⁵ Garrett, 231; Longman III, 505.

⁷⁶ Clifford, 64.

and תְּהוֹקֵלֶת are synonymous in their meaning of “expectation, hope.”⁷⁷ A distinction can be made between the terms used for “hope.” Schibler explains that תְּהוֹקֵלֶת is a nominative and particularly denoting endurance or being drawn out.⁷⁸ This is the comprehension of “hope deferred” (“hope long drawn out”). It is a psychological anguish, the idea of having one’s hopes drawn out or extinguished.⁷⁹ “Desire” in the second half of verse 12 parallels “hope” in the first half. Hope in the first half of the verse is drawn out; however, desire in the second half is realized in wisdom (tree of life).⁸⁰

A prominent theme handled by Proverbs is wisdom. It is revealed through the instructions, sayings, exhortations, and admonitions. An aspect of wisdom involves discipline. Previously evaluated from the preceding Proverbial texts, parents are tasked with educating and disciplining or correcting their child. One visible result is developing and cultivating a wise person who can bear life and persevere. However, there is an implied result: hope. The parent hopes their child will grow wise from their instruction and teaching. So, how does Proverb’s view of discipline and hope correspond with the Book of Ruth?

Ruth 1:12–13 involves instruction and הִנָּח ("hope"). Ruth refusing Naomi’s instructions or discipline points to a future hope for Naomi, a future marriage with an heir.⁸¹ This future hope is realized through Boaz’s discipline and the family’s hope in Ruth 4:1–17. In Ruth 4, discipline

⁷⁷ Koehler, and Baumgartner, “תְּהוֹקֵלֶת,” 1697. Strong's designation is H8431.

⁷⁸ Daniel Schibler, “תְּהוֹקֵלֶת,” in *NIDOTTE Vol. 2*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 427. The term תְּהוֹקֵלֶת (*tôhelet*), nominative: hope.

⁷⁹ Murphy, 97; Fox, *AYB Vol. 18B*, 566. Reyburn and McG. Fry call this a figurative expression that means “to be despaired or afflicted.” See Reyburn, and McG. Fry, 292.

⁸⁰ Reyburn, and McG. Fry, 292. Koptak comments that the tree of life in Proverbs is associated with wisdom (Prov. 3:18) and righteous speech (Prov. 11:30; 15:4). See Koptak, 358. Fox notes that it refers to health and vitality. See Fox, *AYB Vol. 18B*, 566.

⁸¹ Hubbard, Jr., 111.

is indicated by how Boaz conducts a meeting at the city gate. He has learned to convene a meeting and the legal traditions of announcing his willingness to accept the kinsman redeemer responsibilities. Frederick Bush comments that the resolution of death and emptiness inflicted on Naomi and Ruth now lays in Boaz's hands. Boaz displays discipline in the legal tradition system by convening a legal hearing with the nearer relative, witnesses, and the public at the city gate. He lays out the facts before the assembly: the redemption of family property, care for Naomi, and marry Ruth, which would raise an heir to inherit the family property.⁸² The discipline displayed by Boaz is the impetus for Ruth's and Naomi's hope that they will be able to bear life and persevere.

Friendship and Family Loyalty—Proverbs 17:17; 18:24; 23:22

Friendship and familial loyalty are recurring themes in Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Job. Wisdom literature guides how to navigate complex social relationships. Friendship is a necessary element of social and personal well-being. Family loyalty is represented in responsibilities associated with the immediate family and ancestors. While friendship and family loyalty are integral in an individualistic viewpoint, maintaining healthy friendships and family loyalties contribute to the moral fabric of the community. In the Book of Proverbs, several passages will be evaluated to reveal their contribution to friendship and family loyalty's didactic wisdom.

Proverbs 17:17 mentions a friend and a brother. The biblical Hebrew אָרֵךְ is used for "friend" in verse 17; however, the biblical Hebrew term has a wide range of potential meanings.⁸³

⁸² Frederic Bush, *WBC Vol. 9: Ruth* (Dallas: Word, Inc., 1996), 243–5.

⁸³ The *NASB Exhaustive Concordance* lists a multitude of meanings for אָרֵךְ: another (twenty-seven times), another's (five times), companion (three times), fellow (one time), friend (thirty times), friend's (one time), friends (eighteen times), husband (one time), kind (one time), lover (one time), lovers (one time), mate (one time), neighbors (sixty-four times), neighbor's (twenty-three times), neighbors (three times), neighbors' (one time), opponent (one time),

J. Kühlewein describes עֵר as a “personal friend, confidant, companion, colleague.”⁸⁴ Most notably, Kühlewein remarks that עֵר can be associated with “brother.”⁸⁵ Raymond Van Leeuwen comments that the עֵר is compared to a brother who is obligated to his family. Alternatively, the word עֵר denotes a friend that has become close like a family member.⁸⁶ In the latter half of verse 17, the biblical Hebrew term אָח is used for “brother.” The term אָח has twenty-three potential meanings.⁸⁷ While “brother” is the dominant meaning (218 times), אָח can describe a close friend outside the family.⁸⁸

opponent’s (one time), other (six times), together (one time). See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, “עֵר,” 1472. *HALOT* comments that עֵר, when not used in a legal context, means those persons who are brought into contact with another person and with whom one must live on account of life’s circumstances. See Koehler, and Baumgartner, “עֵר,” 1254.

⁸⁴ J. Kühlewein, “עֵר,” in *TLOT Vol. 3*, ed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 1243.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 1244. In Proverbs, עֵר conveys the sense of “friend;” however, in generically, it can denote “neighbor.” Diether Kellermann comments that the friend relationship can be treated variously. On the one hand, a עֵר sticks closer than a brother (Prov. 18:24), and, on the other hand, a עֵר cannot be distinguished from a brother (Prov. 17:17). See Diether Kellermann, “עֵר,” in *TDOT Vol. 13*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David Green (Grand Rapids.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 527.

⁸⁶ Raymond Van Leeuwen, “The Book of Proverbs,” in *NIB Vol. 5* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994), “Proverbs 17:1–28 Better a Dry Crust with Peace and Quiet.” Leeuwen understandably sees an antithetical and a synonymous relationship between the ‘friend’ and the ‘brother.’ Crawford Toy comments that ‘friend’ and ‘brother’ are the same in respect of faithfulness. See Crawford Toy, *ICC: The Book of Proverbs* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1899), 346. Richard Clifford notes that loyalty is a trademark for a friend and a relative. He posits that ‘friend’ and ‘brother’ are synonymous, especially during challenging times. See Richard Clifford, and Jennifer Cox, *Proverbs: A Commentary* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999), 166.

⁸⁷ See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, “אָח,” 1358. The range of meanings can be generalized to “brother,” “companion,” or tribal affiliations.

⁸⁸ Baker, and Carpenter, “אָח,” 32.

Given the potential meanings for אָרֵךְ and אָסֵף, Proverbs 17:17 refers to a friend who is loyal during good and bad times. Fox remarks that a friend’s love always resembles a brother’s love, including during challenging times.⁸⁹ A friend’s love is exhibited during adverse times, and the brother does not cause difficulties but exemplifies the loyalty needed during difficult times, manifested in the friend.⁹⁰ Whether the relationship between the friend and brother is antithetical or synonymous, Proverbs 17:17 indicates the depth of the friendship and family loyalty required in the personal or communal setting. A wise person will cherish a friend, like a brother, who will provide encouragement and support during life’s difficulties.⁹¹

Proverbs 18:24 builds on the friendship concept established in 17:17. This verse illustrates that having one true friend is better than having a group of acquaintances. A quality of true friendship is indicated in the biblical Hebrew term אָרֵךְ (“sticks”). *HALOT* defines this term as “touching, clinging to.”⁹² E. Jenni refines the definition by noting that the adjectival form of אָרֵךְ means “adhering, attached.”⁹³ The message indicated by Proverbs 18:24 is that too many friends may bring trouble, but a genuine friend is a person who will stay through the good and

⁸⁹ Fox, *AYB Vol. 18B*, 633.

⁹⁰ Longman III, 348.

⁹¹ Garrett, 162. Garrett additionally comments that prudence is balanced with kindness and with a willingness to help above and beyond what is necessary.

⁹² Koehler, and Baumgartner, “אָרֵךְ,” 209.

⁹³ E. Jenni, “אָרֵךְ,” in *TLOT Vol. 1*, ed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 324. ‘Attached’ is included in the range of meanings for אָרֵךְ contained in the *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*. The following potential meanings are listed for אָרֵךְ: attached (one time), held fast (one time), who sticks (one time). See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, “אָרֵךְ,” 1379.

bad times.⁹⁴ This friend will not walk away during adversity, and the textual setting is reminiscent of Proverbs 17:17, where the brother is a metaphor for a true friend who is considered like family. True friendship is a singular loyalty when describing one person's relationship to another.⁹⁵ Gerhard Wallis explains that קִרְבָּן can be used figuratively in interpersonal relationships to convey the sense of a strong erotic or friendly affection towards someone else; however, קִרְבָּן does not denote a sexual union between two people.⁹⁶ Longman comments that the first half of verse 17 denotes a person just wanting to spend time with another person, hence the conglomeration of friends. However, the friend in the latter half of verse 17 shows greater intimacy and intensity, closer than a brother or sister.⁹⁷

Proverbs 23:22 reveals familial loyalty. While it seems that Proverbs 23:22 is like Proverbs 1:8, it is not. Proverbs 1:8 involves the child listening to and obeying the father's and mother's instructions; it is discipline-tinged.⁹⁸ However, Proverbs 23:22 concerns the child's responsibility to listen to the father and not despise the mother. Like in 1:8, the biblical Hebrew term שָׁמַע is used for "to listen." *HALOT* explains that שָׁמַע yields a comprehension of a person who "attends to someone's words carefully, or to [*willingly*] hearken to someone."⁹⁹ Schult

⁹⁴ Dell comments that some acquaintances are temporary who are full of talk. However, a true friend is gained for life, who does not walk away, and is closer than a brother or sister. See Dell, 175, Reyburn, and McG. Fry, 395.

⁹⁵ George Brooke, "קִרְבָּן," in *NIDOTTE Vol. 1*, ed. Willem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 894; Fox, *AYB Vol. 18B*, 647.

⁹⁶ Gerhard Wallis, "קִרְבָּן," in *TDOT Vol. 3*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David Green (Grand Rapids.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 80.

⁹⁷ Longman III, 361.

⁹⁸ Murphy remarks that Proverbs 23:22 falls outside the parent/teacher theme and is instead attitude focused. See Murphy, 176.

⁹⁹ Koehler, and Baumgartner, "שָׁמַע," 1571.

explains that hearing, per se, is not separate from attitudes and actions revealed in thought, action, word, and deed.¹⁰⁰ It all begins with a child willing [*familial duty*] to listen and hearken to his father's and mother's instructions. Kidner comments that family duty directly implies the Fifth Commandment (Ex. 20:12), "Honor your father and your mother."¹⁰¹ Proverbs 23:22 strengthens the child's accountability to the parents by stating that the father begot the child and for the child not to despise the mother in old age. Including the mother's age, the proverbial text tells the reader that a child's wisdom instruction goes into adulthood, and regardless of the parent's age, the adult son or daughter should still be willing to listen and hearken to their parent's wisdom.¹⁰²

Friendship is a crucial aspect of social and personal well-being. It may involve constructive criticism and challenges; however, a true friend is seen much like a brother. Family loyalty revolves around the obligations a person honors to their immediate or ancestral family. Specifically, in Proverbs, the family is the context where wisdom is taught, learned, and practiced, giving the parent joy and hope. The Book of Ruth, additionally, contributes to the didactic wisdom of friendship and family loyalty.

A sense of family duty is revealed in Ruth 1:14, where Ruth does not leave Naomi but clings to her. The Hebrew term קִבְּרָה means to "stick, cling, cleave to."¹⁰³ In the Ruthan context,

¹⁰⁰ Schult, "שמע," 1376.

¹⁰¹ Derek Kidner, *Proverbs* (Downers Grove: IVP Books, 2018), "23:22–25. A son to be proud of."

¹⁰² Longman III, 429. Dell writes that Proverbs 23:22 is concerned with a child's duty to the family and are clearly expected to take care of their aging parents. Children are not to forsake their parents in their later years because they still have wisdom to teach. See Dell, 175. Also, Reyburn, and McG. Fry, 501.

¹⁰³ Brooke, "קִבְּרָה," 893.

דָּבַק is metaphorically used to express loyalty, affection, and close proximity.¹⁰⁴ In Ruth 1:16–17, Ruth heightens her family duty by forsaking her homeland and religion to accompany Naomi to Bethlehem, where Ruth will accept Israel as her people and Yahweh as her God. Ruth’s vow is made more serious by including the divine punishment clause. If she breaks her vow, she will accept Yahweh’s punishment.¹⁰⁵ Even though they are not blood relatives, Ruth sees her mother-in-law’s care as exemplified in Exodus 20:12 (the Fifth Commandment) and Proverbs 23:22. As seen in some of the Proverbial texts, a true friend is a brother in all aspects of life. In Ruth 2:20, Ruth considers Boaz to be a generous, compassionate, and kind person. However, this was before she knew that he was a relative. The scope of Boaz’s treatment towards Ruth is indicative of a true friend, possibly the actions of a concerned family member. The actual relationship between Boaz and Ruth is made known to Naomi; however, this does not change how Boaz treats Ruth. For the reader, it becomes clearer that Boaz is transitioning from a concerned friend to a concerned family member carrying out his familial obligations.¹⁰⁶

Hard Work—Proverbs 6:6–11; 10:4; 13:4; 16:3

In Genesis 2, the concept of work is introduced. In 2:5, the rain had not fallen to cause plant life to grow, and man had not been created yet to cultivate the plants. In 2:15, Yahweh created man and placed him in the Garden of Eden to cultivate and keep it. The nature of work changed after the first sin in Eden. Genesis 3:17–19 records how Yahweh condemned people to

¹⁰⁴ Brooke, “דָּבַק,” 894; Jenni, “דָּבַק,” 324; Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “דָּבַק,” 179; Wallis, “דָּבַק,” 81.

¹⁰⁵ Bush, 87.

¹⁰⁶ Dell, 176; Bush, 135.

exhausting labor to make a living because of the curse on the ground.¹⁰⁷ In Wisdom literature, the notion of hard work is taught to indicate that it is a virtue linked to prosperity and reward. David Atkinson comments that people work because Yahweh has bestowed gifts to use in His world. It is a human activity related to Yahweh's providence for the cosmos.¹⁰⁸ In the Book of Proverbs, Israel's sages emphasized hard work over laziness.

Guidance against laziness is shown in Proverbs 6:6–11 by the telling of an industrious ant.¹⁰⁹ The sage instructs that a person should witness the ant's work and use it as an impetus against laziness. The teacher calls the lazy person a sluggard (Prov. 6:6, לַעֲצָל). *HALOT* describes לַעֲצָל as "slow, idle."¹¹⁰ The *NASB* uses "sluggard."¹¹¹ Thompson and Martens explain that the

¹⁰⁷ Opportunities for and the need of work is read throughout the OT. Gen. 1–2 and Ps. 104:23 reveal that work was a part of Yahweh's creativity, and Gen. 3:19 and Eccl. 2:19–23 show that work has become exhausting, laborious, and a toil because of the first sin and Yahweh's curse on the ground. Therefore, work is viewed with both positive and negative aspects. See David Atkinson, *The Message of Proverbs: Wisdom for Life* (Leicester; Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 124. J. C. Laansma comments that manual labor is not an evil and the enjoyment of work cannot be denied. However, it is a bitter-sweet reminder of Adam's and Eve's sin in the Garden of the Eden and the fallout caused by it. See J. C. Laansma, "Rest," in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. T. Alexander, and Brian Rosner (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 728.

¹⁰⁸ Atkinson, 124.

¹⁰⁹ Making provisions for food is a vital concern. People who prefer to "sleep" are at risk of losing their possessions and the ability to satisfy the basic nourishment requirements for living. "The *'āšēl* could observe this fact in the animal kingdom and learn from the example. He should go to the ant (6:6). The advice is not meant as a subtle parable; it presents a straightforward didactic analogy: among the ants, the *'āšēl* will find a "people" without administrative officials (6:7); nevertheless, in the summer they gather the food they need (6:8). The accent is more on diligent preparedness than on "the ceaseless activity that is especially characteristic of the ant." Instead, the *'āšēl* lies abed and sleeps (6:9), and poverty is suddenly at hand (6:10–11)." See F. V. Reiterer, "לַעֲצָל," in *TDOT Vol. 11*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David Green (Grand Rapids.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 287.

¹¹⁰ Koehler, and Baumgartner, "לַעֲצָל," 868.

¹¹¹ The *NASB Exhaustive Concordance* translates לַעֲצָל as "sluggard." The other potential meanings for לַעֲצָל are lazy (one time), lazy one (one time), sluggard (twelve times). See *NASB*

poor (one time).¹¹⁶ The concept is that a sluggard will have no means to support themselves and that procrastination will bring disaster.¹¹⁷ A vagrant is not an idle threat but an unpredictable and potentially dangerous wanderer. Fox notes that power, hostility, and unpredictability are in mind with the vagabond in verse 11.¹¹⁸ Laziness brings about poverty, which does not beg or ask nicely but suddenly appears like a highway robber.¹¹⁹

Proverbs 10:4 is the first proverb concerning laziness versus hard work in Proverbs 10–31.¹²⁰ The biblical Hebrew term for ‘lazy’ in verse 4 is רַמְיָהּ. However, the *NASB* translates רַמְיָהּ as “negligent.” This interpretation is affirmed by the *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*. It states that רַמְיָהּ comes from an unused word meaning “laxness, slackness” and provides the following probable meanings: idle (one time), lazy man (one time), negligent (one time), negligently (one time), slack (one time).¹²¹ *HALOT* notes that it is an adjectival and means “a slack, idle hand.”¹²² Eugene Carpenter and Michael Grisanti explain that רַמְיָהּ involves “deceit, treachery.” Therefore, the nominative form describes a person’s untrustworthy and lazy nature.¹²³ Whybray comments

¹¹⁶ *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, “רַמְיָהּ,” 1470.

¹¹⁷ Reyburn, and McG. Fry, 141.

¹¹⁸ Fox, *AYB Vol. 18A*, 217–8.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 218; Reyburn, and McG. Fry, 141.

¹²⁰ Longman III, 231.

¹²¹ *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, “רַמְיָהּ,” 1471.

¹²² Koehler, and Baumgartner, “רַמְיָהּ,” 1243. M. Kartveit comments that through a syntagmatic analysis, the word group for רַמְיָהּ reveals that a person is always a subject of the verb. However, רַמְיָהּ is a noun that can be associated with animate and inanimate objects. Thus, in Prov. 6:11, כַּף־רַמְיָהּ denotes “a slack hand (the hand does not live up to expectations).” See M. Kartveit, “רַמְיָהּ,” in *TDOT Vol. 13*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David Green (Grand Rapids.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 501.

¹²³ Eugene Carpenter, and Michael Grisanti, “רַמְיָהּ,” in *NIDOTTE Vol. 3*, ed. Willem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 1119–20. The term רַמְיָהּ (*rēmîyâ II*),

that poverty and destitution are inevitable for lazy or improvident people.¹²⁴ A significant aspect of Proverbs 10:4 is that it implies a refusal to do manual labor, such as agricultural work, which becomes a disgrace to the community.¹²⁵

Therefore, diligent hands are necessary to bring profit and food to stave off poverty. In *BHS*, קָרוֹן is used for “diligent.” The *NASB Exhaustive Concordance* notes that קָרוֹן can mean diligence (one time), diligent (four times), sharp (two times), threshing sledge (two times).¹²⁶ The biblical Hebrew קָרוֹן, in its adjectival form, means “sharp, diligent.” It refers to an industrious and diligent person who will succeed.¹²⁷ Proverbs 10:4 has the small farmer in mind. Thus, laziness would result in no harvest or food, which leads to poverty and destitution. However, the riches gained from working a small farm would be the contentment of a simple life with a slightly ambitious attitude towards economic security.¹²⁸ Property is not accidental; it requires

nominative: deceit, treachery. Fox comments that he interprets רַמְיָהּ to mean “deceitful.” However, he notes that “slackness” is apparent when comprehended with Prov. 12:24, 27. Deceit and laziness, as Fox explains, is integral in the Proverbial value-system that tends to join intellectual and moral qualities. See Fox, *AYB Vol. 18B*, 512.

¹²⁴ Whybray, 30.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

¹²⁶ *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, “קָרוֹן,” 1396.

¹²⁷ Baker, and Carpenter, “קָרוֹן,” 377. Fox comments that while קָרוֹן is generally understood to mean “diligent,” its exact sense is uncertain, and it could mean “honest.” If it is to be taken as “diligent,” then it would contrast the “sluggard;” however, if it is to be comprehended as “honest,” then it would contrast the “deceitful” and not the “sluggard.” See Fox, *AYB Vol. 18B*, 513. The term קָרוֹן can convey the sense that an individual is “sharp,” which is the common usage in Proverbs. The biblical Hebrew קָרוֹן can additionally denote someone who is “diligent;” however, it could mean more like “alert, thoughtful, and discerning.” See David Freedman, J. R. Lundbom, and G. Johannes Botterweck, “קָרוֹן,” in *TDOT Vol. 5*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David Green (Grand Rapids.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 217. In Prov. 10:4, קָרוֹן is a sharp individual who accumulates great wealth and is contrasted by the slothful person reduced to poverty. *Ibid.*, 218.

¹²⁸ Whybray, 32–33.

hard work to secure. Therefore, self-discipline, foresight, and industry are necessary to achieve riches.¹²⁹

Proverbs 13:4 contrasts the soul of the sluggard and the diligent. The biblical Hebrew term for “soul” is *שֹׁפֵט*. *BDB* states that *שֹׁפֵט* can mean “soul, living being, life, self, person, desire, appetite, emotion, and passion.”¹³⁰ C. Westermann explains that “desire and longing” could refer to the longing of the hungry; therefore, *שֹׁפֵט* is either hungered or satisfied (i.e., Ps. 107:9).¹³¹ However, Longman remarks that while ‘desire’s’ meaning may be food, there is more in thought than merely food.¹³² It may be best to comprehend 13:4 by paralleling the verse with 13:2. Verses 2a and 4b can have a metaphorical and a literal rendering. Literally, by the fruit, a person eats and is satisfied. Metaphorically, a person’s suitable words cause their life to be complete.¹³³

Whereas the previous Proverbial texts dealt with the diligent contrasted with the lazy, Proverbs 16:3 teaches that a wise person will commit their works to Yahweh. The biblical Hebrew term *לָלַג* is used to denote “commit.” *BDB* notes that the qal form of *לָלַג* means “to roll, roll away.”¹³⁴ *HALOT* provides a more concise rendering by stating that *לָלַג* means “to roll away,

¹²⁹ Rad, 125.

¹³⁰ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “*שֹׁפֵט*,” 659.

¹³¹ C. Westermann, “*שֹׁפֵט*,” in *TLOT Vol.2*, ed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 747. Dell remarks that the lazy live frustrated lives because they are not willing to work to achieve their goals; therefore, their desires remain unsatisfied. On the other hand, diligent people work hard and can, eventually, rest and enjoy the fruits of their labor. See Dell, 177.

¹³² Fox, 284. Horst Seebass comments that *שֹׁפֵט*, when there is an object or no object at all (Prov. 13:4, 19), can take on the nuance of “longing per se,” which conveys that the human urge is the author of longing. See Horst Seebass, “*שֹׁפֵט*,” in *TDOT Vol. 9*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David Green (Grand Rapids.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 507.

¹³³ Garrett, 134–5.

¹³⁴ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “*לָלַג*,” 164.

to God [*Yahweh*]: a need, distress.”¹³⁵ A. H. Konkel comments that גַּלַּל meaning is identical in thought to Psalm 37:5, a metaphor for trust.¹³⁶ Garrett joins biblical righteousness with גַּלַּל “trust” in verse 3 as an attitude demanded in 16:1, 3.¹³⁷ However, it seems more feasible that what the biblical author had in mind was that if a person places their trust in *Yahweh*, and if a humanly devised action plan fails, His divine action plan is working in their life.¹³⁸ What are “works” mentioned in verse 3?

The biblical Hebrew term for “works” is מַעֲשֵׂה. *HALOT* notes that מַעֲשֵׂה, as a nominative in Proverbs 16:3, means "his [*human*] achievement, business."¹³⁹ Averbeck explains that מַעֲשֵׂה can mean “work, deed, product, power, act.”¹⁴⁰ The “works” in 16:3 refer to human deeds, burdens, plans, and achievements.¹⁴¹ When this comprehension is paired with “commit,” then the

¹³⁵ Koehler, and Baumgartner, “גַּלַּל,” 193. The term “גַּלַּל (*gālal* I), qal: roll, roll away; flow down; drag; wallow,” see A. H. Konkel, “גַּלַּל,” in *NIDOTTE Vol. 1*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 851.

¹³⁶ Konkel, “גַּלַּל,” 852. Therefore, Konkel notes a broader range of probable meanings: roll, roll away; flow down; drag; wallow. The *NASB Exhaustive Concordance* lists the following probable meanings for גַּלַּל: commit (three times), lay wallowing (one time), roll (five times), roll you down (one time), roll down (one time), rolled (three times), rolled away (one time), rolls (one time), seek occasion (one time), take away (one time). See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, “גַּלַּל,” 1376. Weyburn and McG. Fry choose “to trust, confide in, or rely on.” See Reyburn, and McG. Fry, “גַּלַּל,” 347.

¹³⁷ Garrett, 152.

¹³⁸ Longman III, 328; Fox, *AYB Vol. 18B*, 609.

¹³⁹ Koehler, and Baumgartner, “מַעֲשֵׂה,” 617.

¹⁴⁰ Richard Averbeck, “מַעֲשֵׂה,” in *NIDOTTE Vol. 2*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 543. The *NASB Exhaustive Concordance* lists forty probable meanings for מַעֲשֵׂה with work (ninety-nine times) and works (forty-seven times) as the two primary uses. See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, “מַעֲשֵׂה,” 1426.

¹⁴¹ Helmer Ringgren notes that when מַעֲשֵׂה refers to “deeds” or “actions,” it occasionally conveys human conduct and its manner. However, in Prov. 16:3, מַעֲשֵׂה denotes a general activity. See Helmer Ringgren, “מַעֲשֵׂה,” in *TDOT Vol. 11*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer

centrality of Yahweh is revealed. Humans are limited, and Yahweh is in control.¹⁴² The wise teachers taught that a person could only navigate life's challenges through complete trust. Trust resonates through the wise teachers' instructions and sayings throughout the Book of Proverbs. Behind the didactic wisdom teachings was an understanding that Yahweh resisted evil and defended goodness. He gives order to the universe and provides stability to life.¹⁴³ Therefore, "Commit [roll] your works [burdens] to the Lord [Yahweh]."

The Book of Ruth's biblical narrative entails didactic wisdom about hard work. Hard work is seen through the characters of Ruth and Boaz. Ruth did not take providing for Naomi and herself lightly. After asking Naomi's permission to glean from a field, Ruth 2:7, 19 indicates the longevity and level of her gleaning. Ruth's work began in the morning and lasted until the evening (Ruth 2:17). She gleaned the barley harvest and worked in the wheat fields. Additionally, she was not passive in her gleaning but toiled. In 2:17, it is revealed that she has gleaned and gathered an ephah of barley. Fuller comments that the length and amount of Ruth's work is impressive. She gathered grain stalks and gleaned the grain by going to the threshing floor to separate it from the stalks. She collected between thirty to fifty pounds of grain from her hard work.¹⁴⁴

Proverbs motivate a person not to be lazy by contrasting the lazy person's consequences to those of a wise person. Therefore, Ruth epitomizes the didactic wisdom instructions and

Ringren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David Green (Grand Rapids.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 400.

¹⁴² Fox, *AYB Vol. 18B*, 609. Fox further comments that when a person has accomplished their work and applied wisdom, then they should not hasten to accomplish further goals but to trust Yahweh that He will provide the appropriate outcomes.

¹⁴³ Rad, 190–2.

¹⁴⁴ Russell Fuller, "הָאֵלֹהִים," in *NIDOTTE Vol. 1*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 378; Bush, 133.

sayings offered in Proverbs. She is self-disciplined, has foresight, and is industrious without needing someone to tell her what to do or how to do it. Ruth's hard work improves Naomi's and her quality of life by providing necessary food and, eventually, through Boaz's kinsman redeemership.

Entreaty—Proverbs 2:3; 8:17; 18:23

In the Book of Proverbs, entreaty often takes the form of a proactive search for wisdom or an appeal for Yahweh's guidance. It is an earnest request or petition sometimes seen in the instructions and sayings involving the wealthy and the poor. A few examples will be gleaned from the Book of Proverbs to illustrate how entreaty is employed.

In Proverbs 2:3, the wise teacher instructs the student to “cry for discernment” and “lift your voice for understanding.” The biblical Hebrew verb קרא is used to denote “to cry.” According to *BDB*, the qal form of קרא means “call, cry, utter a loud sound, call unto someone, proclaim, read aloud, summon, call by name.”¹⁴⁵ Jonder adds “appeal to” to the list of possible meanings.¹⁴⁶ The *NASB Exhaustive Concordance* lists forty-four potential meanings for קרא.¹⁴⁷ The student must go beyond desiring wisdom by calling out to it or making an appeal for it. Fox notes that in 2:3, wisdom is viewed as an animate object the student needs to call out to.¹⁴⁸ An active appeal plays a pivotal role in the student's education; they are to call out to wisdom as if their life depended on it.¹⁴⁹ Reyburn and McG. Fry comment that קרא in verse 3 is nuanced to

¹⁴⁵ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “קרא,” 895–6.

¹⁴⁶ Louis Jonker, “קרא,” in *NIDOTTE Vol. 1*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 968.

¹⁴⁷ See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, “קרא,” 1466.

¹⁴⁸ Fox, *AYB Vol. 18A*, 110.

¹⁴⁹ Koptak, 98.

include “beg for, plea, ask for help from.”¹⁵⁰ The following statement reinforces this comprehension: “Lift your voice for understanding.” The force of the student’s plea should parallel that of pleading to Yahweh or the king for deliverance from trouble.¹⁵¹ The petition is an aggressive quest for wisdom intensified by “lift your voice,” highlighting אָרָק emotional plea.¹⁵²

Proverbs 8:17 states that a person who loves wisdom will diligently seek it. The biblical Hebrew verb אָרָק is used to denote “to seek.” *BDB* notes that the qal form of אָרָק in Proverbs 8:17 means to “find words of wisdom, wisdom, wisdom (personified).”¹⁵³ Michael Grisanti attributes “reach, suffice; meet by chance, find” to the qal form of אָרָק.¹⁵⁴ It additionally explains that at times אָרָק is synonymous with שָׁאַרַק (“to seek”).¹⁵⁵ Toy explains that people who earnestly seek wisdom can have it; he calls it the natural law of the mind.¹⁵⁶ Therefore, the relationship between both halves of Proverbs 8:17 reveals a type of entreaty in which a person who loves wisdom actively seeks it: a petition. Wisdom cannot be found by a cynical person, someone who haphazardly looks for it, cannot be bought, and cannot be found by someone who looks for it too

¹⁵⁰ Reyburn, and McG. Fry, 55.

¹⁵¹ Garrett, 74.

¹⁵² Bruce Waltke, *NICOT: The Book of Proverbs, Chapters 1:1–15:29* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2004), 221.

¹⁵³ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “אָרָק,” 592–3.

¹⁵⁴ Michael Grisanti, “אָרָק,” in *NIDOTTE Vol. 2*, ed. Willem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 1053. The term אָרָק (*māšā’*), qal: reach, suffice; meet by chance, find; niphal: be found; hiphil: present something; make something befall.

¹⁵⁵ Grisanti, 1054. The *NASB Exhaustive Concordance* notes forty-eight probable meanings for אָרָק, which includes “seeking.” See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, “אָרָק,” 1427.

¹⁵⁶ Toy, 168. He comments that the first half of Prov. 8:17 indicates a state of mind, and the second half is the effort performed to acquire wisdom.

late. It can only be found with the right attitude and a willingness to pursue it actively.¹⁵⁷

Therefore, נִצְּדָה can be seen as an entreaty because it involves pleading to obtain wisdom with a humble and loving heart. Siegfried Wagner and Heinz-Josef Fabry explain that in Wisdom literature, various figures of speech extol the wisdom and understanding that a person seeks and finds.¹⁵⁸ Much like in Proverbs 2:5, the beginning of wisdom is fearing Yahweh, and only by that approach can wisdom be found.

Proverbs 18:23 encompasses a different type of entreaty: the poor pleading with the wealthy. This proverb shows the world's harshness at times. The poor petition; however, the rich answer roughly. Dell remarks that the proverb could be a statement about the wealthy's arrogance or a truism that the destitute must resort to pleadings more so than others.¹⁵⁹ The biblical Hebrew noun תְּהַנִּיחַ¹⁶⁰ is used to denote "pleading." As a plural abstract, it is a supplication for favor made to people.¹⁶¹ "Favor" can be sought, found, or withheld and demands a peculiar stance from the seeker, mainly subordination. In Proverbs 18:23, deferential language

¹⁵⁷ Fox, *AYB Vol. 18A*, 276. Waltke comments that wisdom is offered to everyone; however, it is only obtainable by a person with the right attitude and state-of-mind. See Waltke, *Proverbs 1–15*, 404.

¹⁵⁸ Siegfried Wagner, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, "נִצְּדָה," in *TDOT Vol. 8*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David Green (Grand Rapids.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 468. Righteousness and truth are promised to those who find wisdom (8:9,12, 17). Wisdom will open the future and grant well-being to a person, but that person must first seek her diligently (8:17) and "find" her (24:14).

¹⁵⁹ Dell, 177–8.

¹⁶⁰ The *NASB Exhaustive Concordance* states that תְּהַנִּיחַ comes from the primitive root meaning "supplication for favor." It lists supplication (three times) and supplications (fifteen times) as the probable meanings. See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, "תְּהַנִּיחַ," 1489.

¹⁶¹ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, "תְּהַנִּיחַ," 337; Terence Fretheim, "הַנִּיחַ," in *NIDOTTE Vol. 2*, ed. Willem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 199.

is employed to denote a lower-class person speaking to a higher-class person.¹⁶² *HALOT* states that תְּהַנִּיחַ “can be distinguished from the more regularly prepared תְּפַלֵּא in that תְּהַנִּיחַ are the expressions of a mind beset with terror which do not have established formulations.”¹⁶³

Fox remarks that Proverbs 18:23 does not attack the ancient Israelite social structure; however, it illustrates an ethical problem that wise people will admonish.¹⁶⁴ The image of the wealthy is not a sympathetic view. The wealthy believe they have many friends due to their prosperity, and this is the basis for their friends’ love. The wealthy exercise power and authority over the poor, so there is a constant division between the two social classes. However, since the wealthy and the poor share the same Creator, Yahweh, there is not approval or disapproval for the social distinctions or the higher-class exercising authority over the lower class.¹⁶⁵ A different approach to this proverb is that it sheds light on the positivity of being wealthy. A wise person who is diligent, self-disciplined, has foresight, and industrious will be prosperous; however, a sluggard is reduced to poverty.¹⁶⁶ Alternatively, a stance can be made that a negative light is shed on the wealthy and the poor, and Agur’s prayer in Proverbs 30:7–9 is the answer to wealth and

¹⁶² David Freedman, J. R. Lundbom, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, “הַנִּיחַ,” in *TDOT Vol. 5*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David Green (Grand Rapids.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 27.

¹⁶³ Koehler, and Baumgartner, “תְּהַנִּיחַ,” 1719, Bruce Waltke, *NICOT: The Book of Proverbs, Chapters 15:30–31:31* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2005), 95.

¹⁶⁴ Fox, *AYB Vol. 18B*, 646. Reyburn and McG. Fry note that the contrasting manners (the wealthy’s rudeness and the poor’s humility) could be a testimony to the Greek period. See Reyburn, and McG. Fry, 366.

¹⁶⁵ Whybray, 22. The poor, being Yahweh’s creatures, should not be subjected to exploitation degradation. Yahweh is deeply involved with the poor and is angered when they are mistreated or humiliated. *Ibid.*, 42.

¹⁶⁶ Longman III, 360.

poverty.¹⁶⁷ Regardless of the reader's position with Proverbs 18:23, it still highlights an entreaty that the poor make to the wealthy.

The three examples from Proverbs (2:3; 8:17; 18:23) indicate the different biblical Hebrew verbs and nouns used for entreaty and their various contexts. Proverbs 2:3 instructs students to actively plea for wisdom like they would plea to Yahweh for deliverance from trouble. In 8:17, the petition for wisdom is a product of having the right attitude and state of mind: love and humility. The right attitude results from fearing Yahweh, the beginning of wisdom (Prov. 2:5). In Proverbs 18:23, it is revealed that the poor make a compassionate plea to the wealthy. A dilemma revealed in this verse is the wealthy's ethical treatment of the poor, which is counterintuitive to Yahweh's standards for caring for the poor.

Therefore, with Proverbs' view of entreaty established, how can the Book of Ruth add to the didactic comprehension of entreaty? A prime example is indicated in Ruth 2:7, where the servant gives an account of Ruth to Boaz. In this verse, the particle of injection ¹⁶⁸אֲנִי is used to highlight the nature of Ruth's entreaty to glean in the field. Ruth's use of entreaty recognizes that she is a stranger, newcomer, and poor, and the emphatic particle acknowledges her place behind everyone else in the field.¹⁶⁹ It is an entreaty that is dependent on Boaz's generosity. The Book of Proverbs handles entreaty by using it to obtain wisdom or the poor seeking generosity from the wealthy. In Ruth, entreaty is used as a passionate and humble plea to glean in the field, governed by Boaz's generosity.

¹⁶⁷ Longman III, 360.

¹⁶⁸ The biblical Hebrew "אֲנִי particle. of entreaty or exhortation, I (we) pray, now (enclitic)," see Brown, Driver, and Briggs, "אֲנִי," 609.

¹⁶⁹ Dell, *The Solomonic Corpus of 'Wisdom' and Its Influence*, 178.

Inappropriate Touching—Proverbs 5:15–23; 6:29–32

Inappropriate touching or sexual misconduct is not explicitly and directly addressed; however, there are some admonitions against improper relationship conduct. The Book of Proverbs warns young men against the tendencies of the immoral woman. Two Proverbial texts address the act-consequence of adultery, Proverbs 5:18–23 and 6:29–32. Adultery is a severe sin that presupposes marriage's existence (Gen. 2:24). Therefore, adultery is a sexual behavior engaged with a third party outside of the marriage.¹⁷⁰ The sexual sin can take the form of a physical act or the heart's intent. For example, Proverbs 6:23–29 involves the eyes and imagination taking in another person's sexual attractiveness. Adultery is an attack against Yahweh's divine decree for a family (Gen. 2:18, 24); it is seen as treachery (Ps. 50:18) and is sometimes linked with murder (Job 24:14–15).¹⁷¹

In Proverbs 5:15–23, the wise teacher uses figurative language to express a marital sexual relationship with the lawful wife. Yahweh provides for sexual relations in marriage as an expression of love between the married couple and for having children. A violation of Yahweh's marriage decree will result in the fool's destruction (Prov. 5:23). The figurative language begins with the teacher's use of בּוֹר ("cistern") in verse 15. The *NASB Exhaustive Concordance* denotes that בּוֹר is used as "cistern;" however, there are other potential meanings.¹⁷² *HALOT* comments

¹⁷⁰ B. W. Powers, "Adultery," in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. T. Alexander, and Brian Rosner (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 378.

¹⁷¹ Elaine Goodfriend, "Adultery," *AYBD*, ed. David Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 82.

¹⁷² The term בּוֹר: cistern (fourteen times), cisterns (three times), death (one time), dungeon (three times), pit (thirty-five times), pits (two times), quarry (one time), well (five times). See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, "בּוֹר," 1368.

that בֹּרַר is an erotic metaphor for a wife or woman.¹⁷³ Jean-Georges Heintz comments that בֹּרַר, in the sexual realm, is used figuratively for “a sweetheart and wife.”¹⁷⁴ Thus, the instruction is that the young man is to ‘quench’ his sexual thirst from the cistern, well, or fountain, which is the metaphorical language for his wife. Waltke remarks that satisfying a sexual desire is like eating food (Prov. 30:20) and water (Prov. 9:17).¹⁷⁵ If the wife is metaphorically seen as a ‘cistern’ and a ‘well’ in verse 15, what is the purpose of using ‘springs’ in verse 16?

The biblical Hebrew noun מְעַיִן is used for “springs.” According to *HALOT*, it is the “place of origin, source, headwaters.”¹⁷⁶ Metaphorically, it pertains to “sexual life.”¹⁷⁷ Bryan Beyer explains that מְעַיִן is used figuratively to indicate a bride's love that is not to be shared with anyone else.¹⁷⁸ A few interpretations have been proposed for the meaning of verse 16. Garrett comments that one possibility is that the verse represents the adulterer's wife, who is having adulterous affairs herself. It seems this possibility is initially supported by Proverbs 5:17; however, the suggestion counters the focus of verses 16–17, which indicates a situation the man

¹⁷³ Koehler, and Baumgartner, “בֹּרַר,” 116.

¹⁷⁴ Jean-Georges Heintz, “בְּאֵר,” in *TDOT Vol. 1*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David Green (Grand Rapids.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 465.

¹⁷⁵ Waltke, *NICOT: Proverbs 1–15*, 317; Fox, *AYB Vol. 18A*, 199. Fox explains that the figurative language used reveals that the wife is a cool, refreshing drink that satisfies the husband's thirst, his sexual desire (lovemaking).

¹⁷⁶ Koehler, and Baumgartner, “מְעַיִן,” 612. The *NASB Exhaustive Concordance* lists the following probable meanings for מְעַיִן: fountain (two times), fountains (two times), spring (eight times), springs (one time). See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, “מְעַיִן,” 1425.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁸ Bryan Beyer, “מְעַיִן,” in *NIDOTTE Vol. 2*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 1010.

has control over.¹⁷⁹ McKane posits a second possibility. He suggests that the springs refer to the father's semen, and the streams are his children outside the marital home.¹⁸⁰ A third possibility is offered by Toy, who proposes that springs are a reference to prostitutes. The prostitutes are seen rummaging through the streets, and the teacher is advising the young man not to go to them but to remain faithful to his wife.¹⁸¹ However, the noun in verse 16 is plural, which renders מְעִינֹתַיְךָ "your springs." Therefore, the husband could not have control over the prostitutes on the streets. The plausible possibility is maintaining the figurative language of verse 15 by revealing that the husband is to retain his love "springs" at home with his wife versus fulfilling a sexual desire on the streets. The theme is expanded in verse 17 by indicating that a husband should not be willing to subject his wife to prostitution by another man.¹⁸²

A block against the husband's potential sexual promiscuity is his wife, as revealed in verses 18–19. Here, the young man is to rejoice in his wife's youth and sexual attractiveness, which will bless his fountain.¹⁸³ This is the proper marital relationship decreed by Yahweh, a healthy and sensuous sexual relationship with one's spouse. The biblical Hebrew verb נָשַׁךְ is used towards the end of verse 19. *HALOT* notes that נָשַׁךְ, in the qal form, means "to lose one's

¹⁷⁹ Garrett, 92.

¹⁸⁰ William McKane, *Proverbs* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1970), 318–9. Crawford Toy opposes this suggestion because the metaphorical use of water concerns sexual pleasure and not focused on the reproductive aspect of marital intercourse. See Toy, 113. Von Rad comments that the springs and streams refer to procreation and children. See Rad, 44.

¹⁸¹ Toy, 113.

¹⁸² Garrett, 93. Fox explains that verse 16 in conjunction with verse 17 is a threat because if a husband sleeps with another man's wife, then other men will sleep with the husband's wife. This explanation is supported by the water metaphor in verses 15 and 17 which indicates a wife's love at home and the uncontrollable dispersal of her affections through the streets. See Fox, *AYB Vol. 18A*, 200–1.

¹⁸³ Murphy, 32.

ability to walk straight, stagger because of passion” in Proverbs 5:19.¹⁸⁴ Andrew Hill explains that it means to “stray or wander.”¹⁸⁵ Therefore, used in conjunction with verse 20, נָגַהּ is used as part of an exhortation for the young man to remain faithful to his wife and not to go wandering off with an adulteress. Proverbs 5:20–23 is the act-consequence of the husband straying to another woman. Yahweh sees all people, their actions, and what is in their hearts. Thus, the consequences of an adulterous affair are not by chance, but a certainty assured by Yahweh.¹⁸⁶ In this context, the punishment is destruction.¹⁸⁷

Proverbs 6:29–32 is an additional passage noting adultery’s immorality. The father is advising the young man to adhere to the Seventh Commandment (Ex. 20:14) and avoid the consequences incurred by the sin of adultery. In a broader context, Proverbs 6:20–35, adultery is shown to be a part of the wicked man’s character. In verse 29, the biblical Hebrew verb בֹּא is used. The verb denotes “come in, come, go in, go.”¹⁸⁸ Bill Arnold states that בֹּא occurs over 2,500 times in the OT and is the most common for “motion,” a physical movement toward a specific goal.¹⁸⁹ One goal is entering into something or someone (Gen. 39:14), which is a sexual

¹⁸⁴ Koehler, and Baumgartner, “נָגַהּ,” 1413.

¹⁸⁵ Andrew Hill, “נָגַהּ,” in *NIDOTTE Vol. 4*, ed. Wilem VanGemen (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 43.

¹⁸⁶ Longman III, 163.

¹⁸⁷ Reyburn and McG. Fry remark that a lack of self-discipline, self-control, and the ability to say no to harmful sexual desires, results in a shortened life and premature death. See Reyburn, and McG. Fry, 131–2.

¹⁸⁸ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “בֹּא,” 97.

¹⁸⁹ Bill Arnold, “בֹּא,” in *NIDOTTE Vol. 1*, ed. Wilem VanGemen (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 605. The *NASB Exhaustive Concordance* lists numerous probable meanings for בֹּא, too long to list here. See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, “בֹּא,” 1368.

relation between a man and a woman; this is especially relevant when coupled with לָאָה.¹⁹⁰ “The one who goes in” is a powerful substitution for a man engaging in intercourse with a woman, akin to someone walking on “hot coals” (Prov. 6:27).¹⁹¹ Waltke comments that adultery, and not prostitution, is indicated in verse 29 and is enforced by the phrase “who touches her.”¹⁹² Adultery does not only ruin one marriage; it ruins two marriages and is, therefore, punishable. The end of verse 29 states that the man will be dealt with an inevitable and deserving punishment.¹⁹³ Longman remarks that nothing is repayable with adultery, unlike stealing, which can be repaid. Thus, the punishment is deserving on a person who shows no character, is not shameful, has contentment, and lacks a heart.¹⁹⁴

The punishment for such a crime is death. Proverbs 6:30–35 notes the punishment and who will administer it. Leviticus 10:20 states that the punishment for adultery is death. However, even if death is not imminent, humiliation and beatings are exacted.¹⁹⁵ The depth of the humiliation and punishment is revealed when it is explained that a thief who steals to satisfy

¹⁹⁰ Baker, and Carpenter, “בָּוֹא,” 122.

¹⁹¹ Waltke, *NICOT: Proverbs 1–15*, 357.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*

¹⁹³ Horst Dietrich Preuss explains that in Wisdom literature, order is conceptualized, and wisdom tries to understand the world as order and strives to give guidance for life in that order. Therefore, conduct and consequence is integral to the concept of order and בָּוֹא is used to establish the connection between act and consequence. Additionally, this wisdom concept plays into the “coming” of calamity on a person (Gen. 42:21; Jer. 2:3; Dnl. 9:13; Job 42:11; Jgs. 9:23). See Horst Dietrich Preuss, “בָּוֹא,” in *TDOT Vol. 2*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David Green (Grand Rapids.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 25–6.

¹⁹⁴ Longman III, 180.

¹⁹⁵ Garrett, 100.

hunger is not despised but sentenced to repay sevenfold what was stolen. However, adultery is not repayable, and the accused will endure blows and social shame on the path to death.¹⁹⁶

As previously stated, adultery is not explicitly or directly addressed in the Book of Proverbs.¹⁹⁷ However, the consequences are addressed, which shows the characteristics of a wicked and foolish person. Adultery is an act that is inconsistent with Yahweh's intention that a physical relationship is restricted to the marriage, and it is a violation of trust.¹⁹⁸ While such a despicable image of adultery is painted in Proverbs, how can the love story in the Book of Ruth relate to this didactic wisdom theme?

Just like Proverbs, the Book of Ruth does not explicitly or directly address inappropriate touching or sexual misconduct. However, it is implied through Naomi's instructions to Ruth concerning gleaning and Boaz's commands to his servants. In Ruth 2:9, Boaz commands the servants not to touch Ruth. *HALOT* explains that נגנ is used with an accusative; therefore, it means sexually touching a woman.¹⁹⁹ While any inappropriate act towards Ruth by the servants would not constitute adultery, it is still seen as inappropriate touching, which Boaz was attempting to avoid.²⁰⁰ In Ruth 2:22, Naomi instructs Ruth to follow Boaz's maids to avoid

¹⁹⁶ Koptak, 193. Fox notes that the fornicator will be thrashed by the offended husband and others, and publicly and eternally shamed. The "wounds" in verse 33 do not indicate corporal or capital punishment; however, they indicate health afflictions suffered by the accused. See Fox, *AYB Vol. 18A*, 235. Additionally, see Goodfriend, 83.

¹⁹⁷ Koptak explains that the Book of Proverbs' take on adultery should not hinge on the individual texts but the broader context. Therefore, he comments that Proverbs 1–9 shed light on the emphasis of 5:15–23; 6:29–32, which is a contrast between the wise and the folly concerning wisdom. He notes that the word "embrace" is used for wisdom in 3:18 and 4:8. See Koptak, 169.

¹⁹⁸ Powers, 378.

¹⁹⁹ Koehler, and Baumgartner, "נגנ," 668. This comprehension is the same for the euphemism in Prov. 6:29.

²⁰⁰ Münster Schwienhorst explains that נגנ is an infringement on a person's or a group's legal rights, even those rights guaranteed by a treaty. This usage of נגנ has negative connotations

confrontation with the servants. The biblical Hebrew verb פגע is used, which *HALOT* explains means to "fall upon someone with the intent to molest a woman."²⁰¹ Proverbs and Ruth take a different approach to handling inappropriate touching. Proverbs indicate the folly of an adulterous affair with its consequences, and the Book of Ruth reveals it as a possible confrontational act against Ruth. However different the approach, both are considered intolerable and to be avoided.

True Reward—Proverbs 11:18; 13:21

In the OT, numerous biblical Hebrew terms denote ‘reward.’²⁰² A reward can be an unmerited blessing or a justified penalty for a corrupt dealing. A reward is sometimes figuratively illustrated as a piece of fruit (Prov. 8:18–19). Like a reward, a piece of fruit can be good or bad (Ps. 1:3). The biblical Hebrew שָׂכָר is frequently used in the OT for ‘reward.’ Retribution is the concept that people get what they deserve, divinely or humanly.²⁰³ The Book of Proverbs handles retribution in this manner; everyone gets what they deserve; however, Proverbs

and conveys the sense of harm or affliction. In Ruth 2:9, נגע is associated with a vulnerable or defenseless person: a stranger and widow. See Münster Schwienhorst, “נגע,” in *TDOT Vol. 9*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David Green (Grand Rapids.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 205.

²⁰¹ Koehler, and Baumgartner, “פגע,” 910. Jan de Waard and Eugene Nida explain that the verb’s negative connotation supports an interpretation of a hostile meeting with the intent to harm or molest a person. See Jan de Waard, and Eugene Nida, *UBS: Ruth*, 2nd ed. (New York: United Bible Societies, 1992), 43.

²⁰² ‘Reward’ or the concept of a ‘reward,’ either good or bad, are often included as a probable meaning for the following biblical Hebrew terms: שָׂכָר, נְבִיזָה, גָּמֵל, פְּעֵלָה, גָּמֵל, יַעֲקֹב, שְׁלֵמֹן, פְּעֵלָה, גָּמֵל, נְבִיזָה, שָׂכָר, מְחִיר, שָׂכָר, שְׁלֹם, מְשַׁכְּרֵת, גָּמוּל, גְּמוּלָה, מִתָּת, שְׁלֹם, אֶתְנֵן, בְּשׁוּרָה, שְׂחָד, בְּשֵׁת, מִתְּנָא, פְּרִי, תְּמוּרָה, שָׂכָר, מְחִיר, שָׂכָר, שְׁלֹם, מְשַׁכְּרֵת, גָּמוּל, גְּמוּלָה, מִתָּת, שְׁלֹם, אֶתְנֵן, בְּשׁוּרָה, שְׂחָד, פְּעֵל, שְׁטֵן, and שְׂחָד.

²⁰³ Marc Jolley, “Retribution,” *EDB*, ed. David Freedman (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2000), 1122.

approaches it from an individualistic view. Proverbs' theology is that the universe is correct, and people that do right will get blessed. In contrast, the people who do wrong will be cursed.²⁰⁴

In Proverbs 11:18, the reward for the wicked and righteous is indicated. The wicked's labor is deceptive, temporary, and brings no blessing. On the other hand, the righteous will receive an enduring blessing. The biblical Hebrew noun used for "reward, wages" in 11:18 is שָׂכָר.²⁰⁵ The appropriate meaning of שָׂכָר is "reward" because Yahweh does not hire or fire people; therefore, He does not pay wages. Yahweh's rewards are gifts bestowed on people who are obedient to Him.²⁰⁶ Yahweh's rewards may include blessings, prosperity, sustenance, children, and marriage. Waltke comments that the righteousness in verse 18 is illustrated as a sower who scatters seeds (seen as performing many acts of kindness) and depending on Yahweh for the harvest (implies a time of waiting for his just true reward).²⁰⁷ The reward for the wicked and the righteous have eschatological implications. Righteousness leads to life, and wickedness leads to death (Prov. 11:19).²⁰⁸ The wise seek to win or preserve life in an absolute and general sense. This is indicated in how a wise person chooses their words when associating with other

²⁰⁴ Jolley, 1122.

²⁰⁵ The term שָׂכָר is only used twice in the OT (Isa. 19:10 and Prov. 11:18). It denotes "reward, wage." However, both שָׂכָר and שָׂכָר are rendered by Koine Greek as "wage" (Gen. 15:1; 30:18, 28, 32, 33; 31:8; Ex. 2:9; 22:14; Nu. 18:31; Dt. 15:18; 24:15; 1 K. 5:20; 2 Ch. 15:7; Ps. 127:3; Prov. 11:18; Eccl. 4:9; 9:5; Isa. 40:10; 62:11; Jer. 31:16; Ezk. 29:18, 19; Zech. 8:10; 11:12; Mal. 3:5). See E. Lipiński, "שָׂכָר," in *TDOT Vol. 14*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David Green (Grand Rapids.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 133.

²⁰⁶ Cornelis Van Dam, "שָׂכָר," in *NIDOTTE Vol. 3*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 1242.

²⁰⁷ Waltke, *NICOT: Proverbs 1–15*, 501.

²⁰⁸ Garrett, 126. Life would also include emotional health and posterity, while death would include the demise of oneself, family, and estate.

people; the power of the tongue determines life or death (Prov. 18:21).²⁰⁹ Likewise, a person's actions can dictate life or death (deceitful rewards versus true rewards).

In Proverbs 13:21, another biblical Hebrew term is used for “reward,” שָׁלוֹם.²¹⁰ HALOT explains that שָׁלוֹם is a “recompense, reward.”²¹¹ The concept is that it is an opinion of the human condition influenced by destiny and what is pertinent.²¹² Gerleman discusses that the piel form of שָׁלוֹם has in view “to pay,” a satisfaction of obligations, claims, and promises.²¹³ Nel, additionally, states that Yahweh is the subject of the piel verb; it is used in a positive sense to reward good deeds.²¹⁴ However, there are many instances when Yahweh is the verb's subject that retribution and revenge are exacted.²¹⁵ In verse 21, the wickedness that sinners subject people to turns on them, and prosperity is rewarded to the righteousness that bestows the same to others. The biblical Hebrew adjective טוֹב is used to denote “good, prosperity.”²¹⁶ Gordon explains that

²⁰⁹ Rad, 172.

²¹⁰ The piel form of שָׁלוֹם dominates the overall view of the verb. In Prov. 13:21, it is Yahweh who "rewards" the righteous with prosperity. See K.-J. Illman, “שָׁלוֹם,” in *TDOT Vol. 15*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David Green (Grand Rapids.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 100.

²¹¹ The *NASB Exhaustive Concordance* lists thirty-four probable meanings for שָׁלוֹם. See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, “שָׁלוֹם,” 1482.

²¹² Koehler, and Baumgartner, “שָׁלוֹם,” 1534.

²¹³ G. Gerleman, “שָׁלוֹם,” in *TLOT Vol.3*, ed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 1341. Only two passages in the OT have a person as the direct object as the recipient of a substitution or requital (Prov. 13:21; Ps. 31:24).

²¹⁴ Philip Nel, “שָׁלוֹם,” in *NIDOTTE Vol. 4*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 131.

²¹⁵ Isaiah 65:6; 59:18; 66:6; Jer 16:18; 25:14.

²¹⁶ I. Höver-Johag states, “As “the good” par excellence, the noun *tûb* or *tôbâ* (as well as the neuter use of the adj. *tôb*) has two senses in religious contexts, related as cause and effect, as an abstract concept and its (collective) concrete manifestation. As an abstraction, *tûb/tôb(â)*, that which is good in itself, refers to Yahweh; it is personified and identified with him, no longer meaning “the good” but rather “the good one” (Ps. 16:2; 119:122; cf. 104:28; Prov. 13:21). In

Proverbs and Ecclesiastes are focused on what is ‘good’ in life. In Proverbs, טוב is sometimes known as the "way of the good" (Prov. 2:20) and the "way of life" (Prov. 5:6; 6:23).²¹⁷

Proverbs often equate an individual's reward with their moral and ethical behavior. For instance, Proverbs 11:18 suggests a direct correlation between doing what is right and receiving a sure reward and contrasts the outcomes of the righteous and the wicked, suggesting that while the wicked may seem to prosper temporarily, their reward is not lasting, unlike the enduring reward of the righteous. Proverbs must be read within the broader context of the wisdom tradition and Hebrew thought, which recognized that the truest reward is found in a life lived per divine wisdom and in the fear of Yahweh, which ultimately leads to one's well-being and fulfillment, both in this life and beyond. This understanding of reward is not merely transactional but is deeply rooted in a covenantal relationship with Yahweh, where the ultimate reward transcends material gains and is bound up with the individual's relationship with the divine.

Ruth 2:12 uses שלם just like Proverbs 13:21. In the Ruthan text, שלם carries the same semantic range and comprehension that were recognized in the Proverbial text. However, unlike Proverbs 13:21, שלם is a divine response to Boaz's entreaty for Ruth. In Ruth 2:12, the shift in verbal usage of שלם indicates that deeds and behavior should be rewarded.²¹⁸ Boaz is not

this sense *tûb* in Ex. 33:19 should be taken as a theophanic term parallel to the → פנים *pānîm*, *kābôd* (→ כבוד *kābôd*), or *nô'am* (→ נעם *nā'am*) of Yahweh. The notion of Yahweh as the source of human well-being and prosperity is developed most extensively in the thanksgiving and historical psalms, as well as Jeremiah (Jer. 15:11; 17:6; 33:11; 44:17)." See I. Höver-Johag, "טוב," in *TDOT Vol. 5*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David Green (Grand Rapids.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 314.

²¹⁷ Robert Gordon, "טוב," in *NIDOTTE Vol. 2*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 347. Fox remarks that in Prov. 13:21, goodness is the source of the reward and not the reward itself. See Fox, *AYB Vol. 18B*, 569.

²¹⁸ Gerleman, "שלם," 1341.

entreating Yahweh to pay Ruth in whole with money but with a divine blessing greater than money. A part of the reward is the protection that Boaz prays for in the latter half of verse 12 and is realized in Ruth 3:9 when Boaz spreads his covering over Ruth as a pledge for marriage. Yahweh rewards Boaz's and Ruth's righteousness and loyalty. While He is not actively participating in the biblical narrative, His providential care is apparent. In Ruth 4:1–37, Ruth is rewarded with a husband, a son, and a lineage. Therefore, the reward is immediate and eternal.

Humility—Proverbs 3:34; 11:2; 12:15; 15:33; 22:4

Humility is a prominent theme in Wisdom literature. It is significant because it lays the bedrock for wisdom, knowledge, and fear of Yahweh. In the Book of Proverbs, humility is highly praised as a crucial trait for gaining wisdom. Afflicted, needy, and poor are words associated with humility in the OT and are derived from humanity's anthropocentric view that weakness is caused by oppression and mismanagement of certain people.²¹⁹ However, a theocentric view comprehends humility as a proper response to Yahweh, submission to Him, and cultivating an attitude essential to receiving His grace.²²⁰ A few examples from Proverbs are evaluated to indicate humility's necessity for obtaining wisdom.

In Proverbs 3:34, the scoffers are contrasted with the afflicted. The biblical Hebrew adjective עָנִי is used to describe this class of people.²²¹ *BDB* defines עָנִי as the “poor, afflicted,

²¹⁹ D. C. Searle, “Humility,” in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. T. Alexander, and Brian Rosner (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 567. Dell comments that humility is usually associated with the poor. See Dell, 179.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*

²²¹ In some wisdom texts, the system of societal norms is supported and integrated by groups of people. The awareness of different social classes is indicated by the exhortations and admonitions of conduct towards the different social strata. Therefore, עָנִי is used to represent a social class and not for an individual. In most cases, the עָנִי is a socially and economically deprived and vulnerable person seeking human and or divine help. See E. Gerstenberger, “עָנִי,”

humble, meek.”²²² *HALOT* explains that “crouching, bowing” comes close to the meaning for עָנָו, with reference to (or in front of) Yahweh.²²³ In Wisdom literature, the humble or needy revere Yahweh by recognizing their place in the cosmic order, which is obtainable by a proper acquisition of self-estimation. Therefore, in Proverbs, humility is joined with righteousness, a part of the cosmic ordering and an essential factor in life through which Yahweh’s creation proceeds.²²⁴ The עָנָו are exploited people and not the recipients of deserved poverty. Moreover, they are paralleled with upright, righteous, and wise, which reveals their spiritual disposition and external affliction.²²⁵ Yahweh treats people according to their actions. To the wicked, He responds negatively by cursing them (“scoffs at the scoffers”), and to the humble or afflicted, Yahweh responds positively (“gives grace to the afflicted”).

Proverbs 11:2 reinforces the truth that the humble are wise (“But with the humble is wisdom”). *HALOT* explains that עָנָוִי is an adjective used to describe a chaste and modest person (a person that can control themselves and cultivates reasonable behavior).²²⁶ The *NASB Exhaustive Concordance* reveals that עָנָוִי comes from עָנָה “to be modest or humble.”²²⁷

in *TDOT Vol. 11*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David Green (Grand Rapids.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 243.

²²² Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “עָנָו,” 776. The *NASB Exhaustive Concordance* lists the following for עָנָו: afflicted (eight times), afflicted ones (one time), humble (ten times), poor (one time). See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, “עָנָו,” 1449.

²²³ Koehler, and Baumgartner, “עָנָו,” 855. See also Reyburn, and McG. Fry, 94.

²²⁴ W. J. Dumbrell, “עָנָו,” in *NIDOTTE Vol. 3*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 459. Garrett comments that wisdom, righteousness, and devotion to Yahweh are inseparable. Therefore, the humble are viewed as wise people who earn respect from others and partake of Yahweh’s glory. See Garrett, 84.

²²⁵ Waltke, *NICOT: Proverbs 1–15*, 273.

²²⁶ Koehler, and Baumgartner, “עָנָוִי,” 1037.

²²⁷ *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, “עָנָוִי,” 1461. Helmer Ringgren states that Prov. 11:2 “is revealing in its assertion that “when pride [‘presumption,’ *zādôn*] comes, then comes disgrace

Therefore, the modest receive wisdom and will enjoy honor, something the wise did not ask for.²²⁸ Von Rad comments that caution in action is valued more than an overenthusiastic person, i.e., avoiding useless engagements, unnecessary conflicts, anything not honorable, and not desiring anything beyond the necessities of life.²²⁹ The modest or humble person exhibits characteristics of what Yahweh requires (walking humbly, acting justly, and loving mercy). The humble person accepts criticism and knows how to change their behavior to have it pleasing to Yahweh.²³⁰

The humble person who accepts criticism or counsel is highlighted in Proverbs 12:15, “a wise man is he who listens to counsel.” Taking advice also involves using other people’s opinions about what could be done about something and using that information wisely.²³¹ Not all opinions are beneficial; a wise person must discern what is valuable and negligent. The biblical Hebrew noun מַצָּע is used to denote “counsel, advice.” The *NASB Exhaustive Concordance* provides advice (eleven times), consultation (two times), counsel (fifty-two times), counselor (one time), counselors (one time), counsels (one time), designs (one time), plan (eight times),

(*qālôn*); but wisdom is with the *šēnû ‘îm*.” Although the passage does not fully implement the antithetical parallelism, it is clear that *zādôn* and *šēnû ‘îm* are antitheses. A *šānûa* ‘ is apparently someone who is conscious of human limitations and is thus “modest and in control of oneself” (cf. LXX *tapeinós*), characteristics well suited to the wisdom ideal of the person with self-control. The word’s association with “wisdom,” however, may also suggest the translation “thoughtful.”” See Helmer Ringgren, “צַנֵּעַ,” in *TDOT Vol. 12*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David Green (Grand Rapids.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 420.

²²⁸ Fox, *AYB Vol. 18B*, 531. Reyburn and McG. Fry comment that humility is exhibited by a person who does not overestimate himself or herself, that is, does not pretend to be more important than he or she is. See Reyburn, and McG. Fry, 241.

²²⁹ Rad, 85.

²³⁰ Longman III, 249. Longman additionally notes that the biblical Hebrew root word for “modesty” is only used once elsewhere in the OT, Micah 6:8.

²³¹ Reyburn, and McG. Fry, 274.

plans (two times), purpose (six times), scheme (one time), schemes (one time), and strategy (one time) as probable meanings for **הִצָּעָה**.²³² The biblical Hebrew noun **הִצָּעָה** occurs eighty percent in 2 Samuel, 1 Kings, 2 Chronicles, Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Isaiah, and Jeremiah. Seventeen percent of these occurrences are found in Proverbs and Job.²³³ The term **הִצָּעָה** is comprehended as an action plan conceived in the mind and spoken to other people. Therefore, a wise person will heed the advice given and apply it appropriately. A foolish person does not listen to advice and boasts that he or she is correct; a prideful attitude.²³⁴

Proverbs 2:5 teaches that fearing Yahweh is the beginning of wisdom. In Proverbs 15:33, humility is added to the equation. Before wisdom, there is the fear of Yahweh, and before honor, there is humility. Humility in 15:33 is derived from the biblical Hebrew nominative **עֲנָוָה** (“humility”).²³⁵ *BDB* attaches “meekness” to the interpretative meaning.²³⁶ Before honor can be bestowed, a person must relinquish their self-sufficiency for life and trust Yahweh to instruct life.²³⁷ The biblical Hebrew **עֲנָוָה** is not an exclusive psychological or ethical attitude because it

²³² *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, “**הִצָּעָה**,” 1450. *HALOT* notes that **הִצָּעָה** refers to a person who receives advice. See Koehler, and Baumgartner, “**הִצָּעָה**,” 867.

²³³ Al Wolters, “**הִצָּעָה**,” in *NIDOTTE Vol. 2*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 482.

²³⁴ Waltke, *NICOT: Proverbs 1–15*, 532.

²³⁵ Koehler, and Baumgartner, “**עֲנָוָה**,” 855.

²³⁶ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “**עֲנָוָה**,” 776. *BDB* points to Ps. 45:5 as to better comprehend **עֲנָוָה**. However, the Dumbrell explains that the noun is used as a *hapax legomenon* that only occurs in Ps. 45:5, and the verse may be incorrectly pointing to “humility.” See Dumbrell, “**עֲנָוָה**,” 448. The *NASB Exhaustive Concordance* lists gentleness (one time), help (one time), humility (four times), meekness (one time) applicable to **עֲנָוָה**. However, Ps. 45:5 is not included in the list of verses that uses **עֲנָוָה**. See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, “**עֲנָוָה**,” 542, 1449.

²³⁷ Waltke, *NICOT: Proverbs 15–31*, 8. He comments that this is the religious aspect of humility (Prov. 3:5–7).

has practical consequences for one's conduct. Humility leads to true life and is essential for wisdom thinking (Prov. 15:14; 21:21).²³⁸ Biblical righteousness is the ability and attitude to have an explicit and implicit trust in Yahweh (Prov. 16:1, 3). It is the fear of Yahweh, humility, and distances itself from self-justification.²³⁹ Righteousness, or humility, is the opposite of pride because a humble person is open and willing to accept correction.

The true reward for fearing Yahweh and humility is riches, honor, and life (Prov. 22:4). Waltke comments that riches and honor are intrinsically linked to life. Without life, riches and honor are meaningless, a vapor.²⁴⁰ A person's awareness of their life not being the center of the universe is recognizing Yahweh's creative process for life and subjecting themselves to His purpose. Therefore, through His instruction, wisdom is gained (the true reward) along with other rewards (wealth, prosperity, honor, and life).²⁴¹

The Book of Proverbs greatly emphasizes humility and its relationship to wisdom. It is intrinsically entwined with fearing Yahweh, which allows a person to accept correction and advice. Wisdom, wealth, honor, and life are rewarded to the wise person through the release of self-sufficiency by dependence and trust in Yahweh.²⁴² Humility's concept is revealed in the Book of Ruth by Naomi's submission to Yahweh's will (Ruth 1:20–21) and Ruth's gratitude towards Boaz's generosity (Ruth 2:13). McKeown comments that Ruth was bewildered and amazed at Boaz's kindness towards her. The biblical author is painting a portrait of Ruth as a hard-working woman who takes nothing for granted and appreciates the acts of kindness given to

²³⁸ Gerstenberger, "עֲנִי," 241.

²³⁹ Garrett, 152.

²⁴⁰ Waltke, *NICOT: Proverbs 15–31*, 202.

²⁴¹ Longman III, 403.

²⁴² Dell, 179.

her. Ruth's response is wrapped with gratitude and humility. Her humility is indicated in her response to Boaz in that she realizes she is below his maidservants, yet she is humbled because what he has granted her is more significant than someone of her low status would have expected.²⁴³ Ruth's use of *הִשְׁפָּקָה* in verse 13 indicates a self-designation of deferential respect when she compares herself to Boaz's other female servants (Ruth states that she is not like the other maidservants, implying that she sees herself below them).²⁴⁴ A significant aspect of Ruth's humility is that she shows no self-sufficiency. She relies on Boaz's generosity, instructions, and commands to the servants. Her humility is reminiscent of a wise person in Proverbs. It is a virtuous characteristic that is pleasing to Yahweh and rewarded (Ruth 4).

Generosity of Spirit—Proverbs 11:24; 19:17; 22:9

The Book of Proverbs provides insight into the nature of generosity and the rewards associated with being generous. Instructions and sayings that deal with generosity contrast the generous and ungenerous person. The reward that is given to a generous person is human and divine.²⁴⁵ In this section, four examples are gleaned from Proverbs and evaluated for their contribution to the concept of generosity of spirit (Prov. 11:24; 19:17; 21:13; 22:9).

Proverbs 11:24 contrasts the person who scatters and withholds. In the *BHS*, *מְפַזֵּר* is used in 11:24 to denote a person who "scatters." *BDB* explains that the piel form of *פָּזַר* means "of

²⁴³ James McKeown, *Ruth* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2015), "2:18 The First Conversation between Boaz and Ruth."

²⁴⁴ Richard Schultz, "*הִשְׁפָּקָה*," in *NIDOTTE Vol. 4*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 212.

²⁴⁵ Dell states that a generous person is a source of blessing to others; therefore, their reward is prosperity. See Dell, 179. Fox comments that Prov. 11:24 is better understood when read with Prov. 11:25. Therefore, the verses' message is that a person who bestows blessings on others will "be fattened" (prosperity). See Fox, *AYB Vol. 18B*, 543.

spending money.”²⁴⁶ The *NASB Exhaustive Concordance* states that פִּזַּר can mean freely (one time), scattered (seven times), scatters (two times).²⁴⁷ The piel of פִּזַּר denotes a sense of lavishness contrasted with the stingy nature of the ungenerous person.²⁴⁸ Ringgren comments that פִּזַּר can denote “distribute,” conveying the sense of “give abundantly” by a person.²⁴⁹ The scope of פִּזַּר is reflected in the biblical Hebrew term עוֹד ("all"). The *NASB Exhaustive Concordance* defines עוֹד in a basic sense of “a going around, continuance, still, yet, again, beside.”²⁵⁰ Baker and Carpenter comment that עוֹד indicates a repetition or continuance of something continually happening.²⁵¹

Waltke explains that 11:24 presents a paradox.²⁵² The מְפִיזֵר, in the context of scattering, is a person who throws widely, loosely, and freely about. It is used nine times in the OT and never means to scatter grain.²⁵³ The פִּזַּר represents a character trait and not a self-serving purpose.

²⁴⁶ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “פִּזַּר,” 808. Therefore, 11:24 could be read, “One gives freely, yet grows all the richer.”

²⁴⁷ *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, “פִּזַּר,” 1454.

²⁴⁸ Koehler, and Baumgartner, “פִּזַּר,” 921. Here, פִּזַּר denotes “to spread around, in the sense of to distribute freely, lavish.” M. Daniel Carroll R. comments that פִּזַּר conveys the meaning of a wise person who distributes goods to others. See M. Daniel Carroll R., “פִּזַּר,” in *NIDOTTE Vol. 1*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 592.

²⁴⁹ Helmer Ringgren, “פִּזַּר,” in *TDOT Vol. 12*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David Green (Grand Rapids.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 512.

²⁵⁰ *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, “עוֹד,” 1444. It lists forty-eight possible meanings for עוֹד.

²⁵¹ Baker, and Carpenter, “עוֹד,” 811.

²⁵² A paradox is when actions, people, are situations are contradictory but used to clarify a subject matter. See Waltke, *NICOT: Prov. 1–15*, 506.

²⁵³ Its objects include Israel as a flock (Joel 3[4]:2; cf. Esth. 3:8; Jer. 50:17), bones (Ps. 53:5[6]; cf. 141:7), (sexual) favors (Jer. 3:13), frost (Ps. 147:16), and gifts (Ps. 112:9). See Waltke, *NICOT: Proverbs 1–15*, 506–7.

Therefore, the advice given in 11:24 could be that a person who gives humbly and compassionately to others in need will become prosperous over someone who gives for a self-serving purpose.²⁵⁴ Another possible inference is that a generous person gives freely what they have to another person in need versus the stingy person who hoards what they have.²⁵⁵ Proverbs 11:24 reveals the nature and reward of a generous person; additionally, it contributes to the cultivation and nurturing of wisdom. The paradox requires considerable consideration, and a wise person accepts the opportunity to gain more knowledge. Thus, what seems chaotic on the surface reveals a deeper pattern of gaining wisdom.²⁵⁶ A wise person will generously give to others, whereas a foolish person will squander and hoard their possessions.

Deuteronomy 15:7 and 11 are Yahwistic commands to the Hebrews to care for the poor and needy in their land with an open heart and hand. Proverbs 19:17 indicates that Yahweh will repay a generous person for their kindness to the poor. The person's nature in verse 17 is חַנּוּן ("gracious"). *HALOT* notes that the qal participle verb, when used with an accusative, can sometimes mean "to favor someone, Yahweh."²⁵⁷ Proverbs 19:17 uses words that describe actions that reveal a generosity that contributes to another person's well-being. Benevolence is a

²⁵⁴ Keyburn and McG. Fry note that the French Common Language Version interprets Prov. 11:24 in this manner, "Some give generously and increase their fortune. Some save more than necessary and become poor." See Keyburn, and McG. Fry, 256.

²⁵⁵ Longman accepts this inference. He comments that the consequences between philanthropy and miserliness are that the generous person gets richer, and the stingy person gets poorer. See Longman III, 262.

²⁵⁶ Rad, 127.

²⁵⁷ Koehler, and Baumgartner, "חַנּוּן," 334. The *NASB Exhaustive Concordance* lists several potential meanings for חַנּוּן, which imply a sense of to show favor or to be gracious. See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, "חַנּוּן," 1394. H. J. Stoebe states that Prov. 14:31; 19:17 indicates a behavior towards one neighbor an obligation to Yahweh. See H. J. Stoebe, "חַנּוּן," in *TLOT Vol.1*, ed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 443.

virtue handled by Wisdom literature. It is an act of grace shown by one person to another who has little or no means. The concept of חַנּוּן is expected towards a friend or a neighbor.²⁵⁸ Not only is it an act of kindness to someone else, but it is pleasing to Yahweh, and the acts are considered done to Yahweh Himself, therefore deserving of a reward.²⁵⁹ The kindness and generosity extended to people experiencing poverty cannot be repaid by them; however, Yahweh recompenses for righteousness and kindness extended to them, and He adds to a person's wisdom.²⁶⁰

The association of generosity and blessings is continued in Proverbs 22:9. The biblical Hebrew term טוֹב-עֵין indicates the concept of generosity. Separately, טוֹב means to be “good,” and עֵין means “eye.” The ethical sense that may be attached to טוֹב is that it represents what Yahweh expects in a person's behavior.²⁶¹ E. Jenni and D. Vetter comment that when עֵין is used in a phrase, it denotes an expression of psychic emotion. עֵין can be a locus of personality revealing personal perception and knowledge; thus, עֵין reveals the human soul. In Proverbs 22:9, a טוֹב-עֵין (“good eye”) is spoken about.²⁶² Therefore, in Proverbs 22:9, עֵין denotes “kindness.”²⁶³ The semantic ranges for טוֹב and עֵין are extensive.²⁶⁴ However, one term common to both is

²⁵⁸ Freedman, Lundbom, and Fabry, “חַנּוּן,” 36.

²⁵⁹ Fretheim, “חַנּוּן,” 199.

²⁶⁰ Koptak, 471.

²⁶¹ Gordon, “טוֹב,” 347.

²⁶² F. J. Stendebach, “עֵין,” in *TDOT Vol. 11*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David Green (Grand Rapids.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 34.

²⁶³ E. Jenni, and D. Vetter, “עֵין,” in *TLOT Vol.2*, ed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 877.

²⁶⁴ See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, “טוֹב,” 1398; *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, “עֵין,” 1446.

“generous.” Generosity is a wise person’s active interest in the poor, and Proverbs instructs the intelligent appropriation of what is right.²⁶⁵ Thus, the generous person has a good eye and is blessed by the poor and Yahweh.²⁶⁶ Waltke comments that the generous person shares food with the poor; additionally, this generosity entails the giver’s hard work in the field, harvesting the crops, caring for animals, and slaughtering them for food. Therefore, generosity does not come from wealth or an overabundance of food but is confined to the giver’s economic setting.²⁶⁷

Proverbs is a rich source of wisdom regarding moral and ethical living, including generosity of spirit. This collection of sayings and instructions highlights the importance of generosity as an integral virtue to a righteous and wise life. The treatment of generosity in Proverbs is multifaceted, encompassing material giving and a broader disposition towards kindness, benevolence, and moral integrity.

The Book of Ruth teaches how generosity of spirit is indicated by the treatment of less fortunate people or the willingness to help others in need. Ruth demonstrates generosity of spirit when she forsakes her homeland to go with Naomi to Bethlehem (Ruth 1:16). Her decision involves sacrifice and pain. A sacrifice of renouncing her homeland and the pain of going to a new land as a foreigner, widow, and had few legal rights.²⁶⁸ Her actions envisage generosity.²⁶⁹ In Ruth 2, Boaz’s actions reflect a generosity of spirit. In 2:14, Boaz “heaps up” food on Ruth’s plate. Bush explains that “to heap up” is preferable because it supports the biblical statement that

²⁶⁵ Rad, 93.

²⁶⁶ Murphy, 165; Fox, *AYB Vol. 18B*, 699.

²⁶⁷ Garrett, 209.

²⁶⁸ Hubbard, 118.

²⁶⁹ André LaCocque, *CC: Ruth* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014), 52.

Ruth had a surplus of food she took home to Naomi.²⁷⁰ This explanation affirms Boaz's generosity of spirit towards Ruth. The biblical author shows how Boaz took a simple meal and turned it into an extraordinary act of generosity, compassion, and acceptance.²⁷¹ Boaz's generosity of spirit reflects a moral and ethical behavior befitting Yahweh's standards concerning treating a foreign, widowed, and poor woman. His actions go beyond those required by law and reflect positively upon himself and Yahweh.

Kindness—Proverbs 11:24; 19:17; 21:21; 31:26

An essential prerequisite to generosity is kindness. The Book of Proverbs contrasts righteous and wicked behavior. A characteristic of righteous behavior is the kindness of the righteous, which is revealed through compassion, truth, and faithfulness. Proverbs provides guidance on the practical use of kindness towards others and in social relationships, and it portrays kindness as an attribute of Yahweh and the rewards He bestows on those who show kindness. Four examples of kindness will be explored in the Book of Proverbs to indicate how the wise teachers understood kindness (Prov. 11:24; 19:17; 21:21; 31:26).

With Proverbs 11:24, פָּזַר was evaluated to indicate how a wise person distributes freely and abundantly what he or she has to help out the poor and needy willingly. A reflection of this generosity is found in kindness. While verse 24 does not explicitly state kindness, it is inferred from the wise person's actions. Kindness is revealed through faithfulness to obligations towards friends, family, society, and even enslaved people.²⁷² It was exhibited in marriages and kind

²⁷⁰ Bush, 126.

²⁷¹ Block, 667. Boaz's generosity exemplifies his racial and religious tolerance which is indicative of a generous Israelite. See Hubbard, 173.

²⁷² Joe Cathey, "Kindness," in *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, ed. Chad Brand et al. (Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers, 2003), 984.

deeds done to other people. Kindness is an ethical behavior taught in Micah 6:8 (to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with Yahweh). The *NIV* does not use “scatter” for פָּזַר but to “give freely.” Carroll comments that this indicates a wise person’s generosity.²⁷³ Toy comments that Proverbs 11:24 reveals a man of liberal means prospers and is rewarded by Yahweh; this person does not care for themselves but for others.²⁷⁴ Koptak notes that the piel participle form of פָּזַר places emphasis on the generous and kind nature of the person.²⁷⁵

Proverbs 19:17 states that Yahweh will repay a person who shows kindness to the poor. Baker and Carpenter explain that חָנַן (“gracious”) is a verb, primarily with human relations, used to show graciousness, favor, or mercy toward another person, usually the poor.²⁷⁶ Stoebe comments that the weak and the suffering are the usual recipients of a person’s חָנַן.²⁷⁷ Fretheim explains that חָנַן is active kindness or generosity exhibited towards people in need (i.e., Prov. 28:8; Deut. 28:50; Job 19:21; Dan.4:27). The attitude of kindness is characteristic of the righteous.²⁷⁸ The ethical basis for Proverbs 11:24 is the natural duty to do right to the poor. The reward for righteousness motivates a wise person to be kind and generous, not a moral obligation.²⁷⁹

²⁷³ Carroll R., “פָּזַר,” 592.

²⁷⁴ Toy, 234. Waltke remarks that this person is someone who willingly depletes themselves. See Waltke, *NICOT: Proverbs 1–15*, 507.

²⁷⁵ Koptak, 323.

²⁷⁶ Baker, and Carpenter, “חָנַן,” 357.

²⁷⁷ Stoebe, “חָנַן,” 443.

²⁷⁸ Fretheim, “חָנַן,” 199.

²⁷⁹ Toy, 375.

Proverbs 21:21 contains the recognizable biblical Hebrew term for “kindness,” חסד.²⁸⁰

The semantic range includes nineteen probable meanings.²⁸¹ The *NASB* uses “loyalty” for חסד in verse 21. The term חסד is a mode of behavior defined by rights and obligations in a relationship.²⁸² In 21:21, חסד involves an active nature; it includes an element of action, רָדַף (“he who pursues righteousness and loyalty”).²⁸³ Waltke remarks that “righteousness” in verse 21 highlights the spiritual value’s cause with the material benefit’s consequences. It is the pursuit of kindness and righteousness that results in honor.²⁸⁴ Life, prosperity, and honor (Prov. 3:16; 22:4) are the rewards bestowed due to the faithful obligations shown by a wise person who pleases Yahweh. Therefore, longevity, enough wealth to share freely, and an honorable name are the goals of a wise person.²⁸⁵

²⁸⁰ The biblical Hebrew חסד will be fully treated in Chapter Seven. Its evaluation here is to show relevance to wisdom in the Book of Proverbs and how the Book of Ruth indicates the same didactic wisdom.

²⁸¹ The list of meanings for חסד: deeds of devotion (two times), devotion (one time), devout (one time), faithfulness (one time), favor (two times), good (one time), kindly (seven times), kindness (thirty-two times), kindnesses (one tome), loveliness (one time), lovingkindness (176 times), lovingkindnesses (seven times), loyal deeds (one time), loyalty (six times), mercies (one time), merciful (two times), mercy (one time), righteousness (one time), unchanging love (two times). See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, “חסד,” 1394.

²⁸² H. J. Stoebe, “חסד,” in *TLOT Vol.2*, ed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 451.

²⁸³ Hans-Jürgen Zobel, “חסד,” in *TDOT Vol. 5*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David Green (Grand Rapids.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 48.

²⁸⁴ Waltke, *NICOT: Proverbs 15–31*, 184. Toy explains that “justice” and “kindness” are in view with verse 21 because “righteousness” would make “kindness” unnecessary. See Toy, 406. According to Fox, the active pursuit of kindness and justice yields Yahweh’s blessing (“reward”). See Fox, *AYB Vol. 18B*, 161.

²⁸⁵ Koptak, 504. Garrett comments that life can be either a long life, eternal life, or the inner life of emotional health. See Garrett, 183.

The biblical Hebrew רָחֵם is reencountered in Proverbs 31:26. Verse 26 is contained within the context concerning the capable wife. Here, it teaches that a capable wife speaks wisely and teaches kindness. The clever wife is exhibiting a self-denying generosity of speech.²⁸⁶ Therefore, the capable wife is not showing kindness or generosity with material possessions or finances; however, she is generous with her wise instructions on kindness. Toy explains that her wisdom is derived from common sense, good judgment, and discretion, which she freely shares with family, servants, and friends (instruction of kindness).²⁸⁷ “Opens her mouth” means speaking at great length or with freedom. Coupled with “wisdom,” the capable wife has wisdom that she wants to speak about correctly and carefully.²⁸⁸ One interpretive view is that the kind instructions spoken by the wise wife come from Yahweh’s covenant with His people.²⁸⁹

The Book of Proverbs is grounded in the fear of Yahweh, the beginning of wisdom. As such, it is revealed that Yahweh is the divine source of kindness, a model for human behavior. The act-consequence aspect of Proverbs shows that acts of kindness lead to positive outcomes (Prov. 11:17) both from a human and divine source. The word רָחֵם is an OT term that carries a sense of steadfast and covenantal love linked, in Proverbs, with compassion, truth, and faithfulness. The Book of Ruth exudes kindness as a teachable wisdom theme contributing to Proverbs' comprehension of kindness.

Chapter Three explained that Ruth handles different types of kindness: family devotion, loyalty, friendship, compassion, and grace. Specifically, kindness is used as a catalyst for

²⁸⁶ Stoebe, “ רָחֵם ,” 455.

²⁸⁷ Toy, 547. Reyburn and McG. Fry add that the capable wife may be giving faithful instruction or instruction that is sound. See Reyburn, and McG. Fry, 662.

²⁸⁸ Waltke, *NICOT: Proverbs 15–31*, 532.

²⁸⁹ Longman III, 547.

transformation, i.e., in Ruth 1:16–17, Ruth shows a selfless concern, a type of kindness, to leave her homeland to accompany Naomi to Bethlehem, where Ruth will accept Israel as her people and Yahweh as her God. Boaz’s kindness is reflected in Ruth 2:14–16, where he invites Ruth to eat with him and the reapers, ‘heaping up’ the food to the point that she is satisfied and able to take the leftovers to Naomi and commands the reapers to allow Ruth to glean grain from the bundles and leave extra grain for her to gather. Ruth 2:13, Ruth acknowledges that Boaz has spoken kindly, לָב, to her. *HALOT* defines לָב, in the Ruthan context, as “attention [*speaks kindly to*], consideration, reason.”²⁹⁰ The biblical Hebrew לָב elicits a meaning of “to speak reassuringly or encouragingly to those who for various reasons need such.”²⁹¹ In Ruth 2:16, Boaz is commanding the reapers וְלֹא תִגְעְרוּ-בָהּ or do not scold Ruth by hindering her from gleaning and gathering extra grain.²⁹² Boaz’s imposed restriction on the reapers against verbal censure reinforces his virtue of generosity and protection by treating Ruth kindly as Yahweh treated Israel.²⁹³ The term גַּעַר means “to rebuke, to roar with laughter, speak insultingly to.”²⁹⁴ Kindness

²⁹⁰ Koehler, and Baumgartner, “לָב,” 515. See also Alex Luc, “לָב,” in *NIDOTTE Vol. 2*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 745. The phrase דַּבַּרְתָּ עַל-לֵב is a common idiom for wooing affection (“speaking to someone’s heart”), also for comforting and cheering. See Heinz-Josef Fabry, “לָב,” in *TDOT Vol. 7*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David Green (Grand Rapids.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 417.

²⁹¹ Bush, 124. Block states that it is interpreted to mean “to speak compassionately and sympathetically.” See Block, 665.

²⁹² John Hartley, “גַּעַר,” in *NIDOTTE Vol. 1*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 869.

²⁹³ Hubbard, 178.

²⁹⁴ Koehler, and Baumgartner, “גַּעַר,” 199. The *NASB Exhaustive Concordance* lists the following for גַּעַר: rebuke (nine times), rebuked (four times), rebukes (one time). See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, “גַּעַר,” 1378. A. Caquot states, “Ruth 2:16 is particularly enlightening, because it seems to reflect daily usage. The reapers are instructed by Boaz not “to rebuke Ruth” when she joins them to pluck ears of grain. Here *ga’ar* conveys more the idea of “rebuff” than

from generosity is a didactic wisdom theme in the Book of Ruth. From a theological perspective, the kindness exhibited by the characters in the Book of Ruth indicates Yahweh’s kindness extended toward people.

Redemption—Proverbs 23:10–11

Redemption in the OT involves releasing people, property, or animals from bondage through outside help. The concern for a person’s social, physical, and spiritual welfare makes redemption necessary.²⁹⁵ In the Book of Proverbs, redemption is sensed in terms of moral and practical deliverance from foolishness, danger, and misfortune. This section will focus on redeeming people and property because the guidance parallels the Book of Ruth’s didactic theme of redemption. Therefore, Proverbs 23:10–11 will be evaluated.

Proverbs 23:10–11 warns against the exploitation of the needy and poor. Verse 10 provides admonition, and verse 11 introduces the redeemer who will provide the protection. The biblical Hebrew verb ²⁹⁶ לָאָג is used to describe the person’s actions that will plead the poor person’s case. *HALOT* explains that לָאָג, in verse 11, means “to claim for oneself, redeems orphans and widows.”²⁹⁷ However, *BDB* specifies that Yahweh is the verb's subject and implies a

“reproof”; the reapers are more inclined to drive Ruth away with their cries than to reprove her because of her behavior.” See A. Caquot, “לָעַר,” in *TDOT Vol. 3*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David Green (Grand Rapids.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 50. The LXX renders לָעַר as “to reprimand.”

²⁹⁵ R. L. Hubbard, Jr., “Redemption,” in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. T. Alexander, and Brian Rosner (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 716.

²⁹⁶ The term לָאָג will receive a full treatment in Chapter Seven. However, it will be evaluated in this section to indicate how the Book of Proverbs provides guidance on redemption and how it associates with the Book of Ruth.

²⁹⁷ Koehler, and Baumgartner, “לָאָג, 169. The *NASB Exhaustive Concordance* provides the following probable meanings for לָאָג: avenger (thirteen times), bought back (one time), buy back (one time), claim (one time), close relative (three times), closest relative (three times),

personal relationship with orphans.²⁹⁸ Leviticus 25:25–28; 29–34; 47–49 deals with the poor and needy, who must sell themselves or their property to a wealthy person or neighbor. The גאֵל is a family member responsible for redeeming lost property or the enslaved individual.²⁹⁹ The theological implication of גאֵל is that Yahweh possesses land, and the Israelites have temporary custody of it; therefore, if it is lost, it must be redeemed. The land cannot be entirely sold and must be available for repurchase. Additionally, an enslaved Israelite is a descendant of the people freed from slavery in Egypt (Ex. 6:6); therefore, they cannot continue to be enslaved.³⁰⁰ The probable view in Proverbs 23:11 is that Yahweh is performing the role of a kinsman redeemer by protecting those who cannot protect themselves. Therefore, Yahweh is defending His people like

closest relatives (one time), ever wish to redeem (two times), kinsman (two times), redeem (twenty-two times), redeemed (twenty-five times), redeemer (one time), Redeemer (eighteen times), redeems (one time), relative (two times), relatives (one time), rescue (one time), wishes to redeem (one time). See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, "גאֵל," 1374.

²⁹⁸ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, "גאֵל," 145. J. J. Stamm comments that Proverbs 23:10 applies to Yahweh because He is the protector of the weak against mighty opponents. See J. J. Stamm, "גאֵל," in *TLOT Vol. 1*, ed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 292. Robert Hubbard states that Yahweh is the Redeemer that protects an orphan's property from illegal encroachment. See Robert Hubbard, Jr., "גאֵל," in *NIDOTTE Vol. 1*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 778.

²⁹⁹ The term גאֵל "is used of a man's nearest relative at a particular time. In Lev. 25:48f., it refers to a man's brother, uncle, cousin, or some other kinsman who is responsible for standing up for him and maintaining his rights. Behind this usage stands the strong feeling of tribal solidarity: not only the members of a clan, but also their possessions, form an organic unity, and every disruption of this unity is regarded as intolerable and as something which must be restored or repaired." See Helmer Ringgren, "גאֵל," in *TDOT Vol. 2*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David Green (Grand Rapids.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 351.

³⁰⁰ Stamm, "גאֵל," 289–90. The qal participle form of גאֵל is substantivized in verse 11. See Stamm, "גאֵל," 288.

a human לָאֵל would protect a family member.³⁰¹ Dell remarks that in the case of the orphan, widow, or poor, the stronger redeemer is often the savior from adversity.³⁰²

The “He” in verse 11 indicates Yahweh as the Redeemer.³⁰³ He will “plead their case” at the time of judgment. The Father of the fatherless and the Defender of the poor and needy will condemn those who exploit the defenseless people.³⁰⁴ Fox comments that Proverbs 23:11 is reminiscent of an Egyptian text (Amenemope 7.19 and 8.14, divine punishment), which provides clues to how the ancient Israelite’s comprehension of redeemership possibly evolved from.³⁰⁵ The divine punishment language used in verse 11 is based on the legal system created to protect the poor and defenseless. Therefore, anyone caught breaking the protection laws was subject to punishment. As a Redeemer, Yahweh will use the same tactics against the people who used them against the poor and defenseless.³⁰⁶

In this biblical passage (Prov.23:10–11), it is revealed how a לָאֵל (“to redeem”) is used as a nominative to describe a person’s action of redeeming a person and property, albeit divinely. Yahweh’s actions as a redeemer follow closely to the legal system established for the Israelites in Leviticus to release taken property and enslaved people just as Yahweh did for them in

³⁰¹ Hubbard, Jr., “לָאֵל,” 778.

³⁰² Dell, 180.

³⁰³ Ringgren, “לָאֵל,” 352.

³⁰⁴ Waltke, *NICOT: Proverbs 15–31*, 245. He; additionally, states “As verse 23:10 uses a metonymy of effect, 23:11 uses a metonym of cause. The moving of the boundary stones resulted from corrupt legislation and sharp legal practices by powerful and influential neighbors, and the *Yahweh* leaping to the defense of the helpless guarantees that the oppressors are evicted, punished and their victims reinstated on their fields.” Ibid.

³⁰⁵ Fox, *AYB Vol. 18B*, 732.

³⁰⁶ Koptak, 546. Garrett explains that Proverbs 23:10–11 envisages a courtroom scene where Yahweh is portrayed as an attorney defending the oppressed party against the wrongdoers, who have no hope in winning. See Garrett, 196.

Exodus. Proverbs 23:10–11 acknowledges Yahweh’s divine providence in protecting the defenseless against mighty oppressors.

The Book of Ruth provides a couple of prominent examples of redemption. In Ruth 2:20, Boaz is called a קָרוֹב. *HALOT* defines קָרוֹב as “close (as a relative, in kinship), being close to, closest.”³⁰⁷ It is a revelation to Naomi that Boaz is a relative; however, at this point, he is not a גֹּאֵל but a קָרוֹב because he has not legally married Ruth, which allows him to redeem people and property. It is in Ruth 4 that Boaz becomes the גֹּאֵל (Ruth 4:9–10) after the nearest relative will not obligate all the responsibilities (Ruth 4:6). The inseparable redemption of family and property is unique to the Book of Ruth because it aims to restore the unity of descendants and ancestral property.³⁰⁸ The designation גֹּאֵל is additionally only used with a firstborn (Ruth 4:16) and includes the redemption and care of the elderly (Ruth 4:14–15).³⁰⁹ While the גֹּאֵל was not obligated to marry the widow, he could prevent the end of the family line by producing an heir (Ruth 4:13).³¹⁰ Thus, the actions of a גֹּאֵל in Proverbs are not distinct from those in Ruth. Both cover the redemption of persons and property, pleasing to Yahweh, who redeemed Israel from Egypt.

³⁰⁷ Koehler, and Baumgartner, “קָרוֹב,” 1139. The adjectival form of קָרוֹב indicates a nearness of relationship either between humans or between Yahweh and people. See VanGemenen, “קָרוֹב,” 974. De Waard and Nida explain that קָרוֹב is a highly technical term that could be rendered “one of our redeemers” or “one who has the right of redemption over us.” This ‘redeemer’ was a relative obliged to protect the family’s interest. See De Waard, and Nida, 41.

³⁰⁸ Hubbard, Jr., “גֹּאֵל,” 776.

³⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

³¹⁰ Hubbard, “Redemption,” 717.

Obedying Instructions—Proverbs 1:8; 6:20; 7:1; 30:17

Obedience is hearing someone, understanding what they are saying, and acting on those words. Any of these is missing, and a person is guilty of not listening.³¹¹ It is a responsive action because Yahweh has already acted on behalf of the people; therefore, it is necessary to obey Yahweh concerning His will. Obedience is a general call to follow Yahweh; however, the visual biblical Hebrew words are used to denote following individual statutes.³¹² From the Book of Proverbs, a few examples of obedience will be evaluated to reveal how the wise make practical use of it in daily life.

Proverbs 1:8 begins the first significant section of Proverbs, where the son/student is encouraged to consider and compare the ways of the wise versus the foolish. The father tells the son to “hear” his instructions. The biblical Hebrew verb used for “to hear” is שָׁמַע. Gabrielson comments that שָׁמַע primarily means “to hear” but can additionally mean “to obey.”³¹³ HALOT explains that שָׁמַע means “to attend to someone's words carefully, or alternatively to hearken to someone.”³¹⁴ Hearing is not inconsequential; it produces wisdom. Therefore, the son/student is praised for hearing and warned against having a short attention span.³¹⁵ Aitken states that the qal imperative form of שָׁמַע in wisdom teaching is a summons to listen attentively to instruction on wisdom.³¹⁶ The semantic field for שָׁמַע is broad, with most of its renderings dealing with

³¹¹ J. I. Packer, “Obedience,” in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. T. Alexander, and Brian Rosner (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 680.

³¹² Timothy Gabrielson, “Obedience,” in *The Lexham Theological Wordbook*, ed. Douglas Magnum (Bellingham: Lexham Press, 2014).

³¹³ Gabrielson, “Obedience.”

³¹⁴ Koehler, and Baumgartner, “שָׁמַע,” 1571.

³¹⁵ Schult, “שָׁמַע,” 1377.

³¹⁶ Aitken, “שָׁמַע,” 177.

hearing.³¹⁷ The father's heed in verse 8 follows Gabrielson's explanation that the son is to listen to the father (hear) actively, understand the father's words, and act accordingly (obey).³¹⁸

Proverbs 6:20 encompasses the Seventh Commandment (Ex. 20:14), not committing adultery. In verse 20, the father exhorts his son to keep the commandment. The biblical Hebrew verb used for "keep" is נָצַר. The word נָצַר is similar to שָׁמַר but is less common than שָׁמַע and שָׁמַר.³¹⁹ The verb נָצַר indicates being faithful and obedient.³²⁰ The qal imperative verb נָצַר means "to observe, comply with."³²¹ In Wisdom literature, an instruction may be accepted and guarded; therefore, the heart remains guarded (Prov. 4:23).³²² The objects governed by נָצַר are instructive

³¹⁷ See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance* for שָׁמַע. *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, "שָׁמַע," 1483.

³¹⁸ Longman comments that the son is not only to learn the instruction as a brute act but act on it. See Longman III, 105. Koptak notes that verse 8 is a simple lesson of listen to the parents and wisdom and not to greedy (foolish) people. Therefore, learn how and to whom to listen. See Koptak, 73.

³¹⁹ G. Sauer states that OT Hebrew clearly establishes נָצַר to mean "to protect, guard, preserve," and is close to שָׁמַר in meaning. See G. Sauer, "נָצַר," in *TLOT Vol.2*, ed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 762.

³²⁰ Gabrielson, "Obedience." Siegfried Wagner explains that נָצַר is "used to express the exhortation to take to heart and observe the admonition or instruction. Observance of the commandments must be such as to take on decisive significance for all of life—indeed, it must be the guiding principle for action and conduct. In this context *nṣr* refers not simply to sensory perception (including "hearing") of the commandments to be kept but also to doing what they require. The meaning of *nṣr* demands that the injunction be observed effectually." See Siegfried Wagner, "נָצַר," in *TDOT Vol. 9*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David Green (Grand Rapids.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 542.

³²¹ Koehler, and Baumgartner, "נָצַר," 718. The *NASB Exhaustive Concordance* lists several interpretive meanings for נָצַר: besieged (two times), Besiegers (one time), cunning (one time), guard (two times), guarding (one time), guards (two times), hidden things (one time), keep (seven times), keep watch (one time), keeper (one time), keeps (three times), kept (one time), man (one time), observe (ten times), observed (one time), observes (one time), preserve (ten times), preserves (one time), reserve (one time), secret places (one time), tends (one time), watch (four times), watcher (one time), watches (one time), watchman (one time), watchmen (one time). See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, "נָצַר," 1437.

³²² Sauer, "נָצַר," 763.

and pertain to people keeping the commandments and Yahweh's protection.³²³ Toy remarks that the instruction the father is exhorting his son to keep is the law.³²⁴ However, von Rad states this cannot be because, even though adultery, theft, false witness, and other unethical acts are despicable, the Law's focus is handled throughout the OT. Though these are considered reprehensible evil in Yahweh's eyes, in Proverbs, they are the focus for instructions between man and man, not between man and Yahweh.³²⁵ Similar to Proverbs 3:1–3; 7:1–3, Proverbs 6:21 urges the son to keep the commandment bound to his heart, tied to his neck, and written on the tablet of the heart (Prov. 3:3; 7:3).³²⁶

Proverbs 7:1 continues with the obedience theme; however, using שָׁמַר ("to keep") instead of שָׁמַע ("to hear"). The biblical Hebrew שָׁמַר is the second most common way to express obedience.³²⁷ It is conceptually based on seeing ("to watch").³²⁸ HALOT renders שָׁמַר in 7:1 as "to

³²³ Keith Schoville, "נֹצֵר," in *NIDOTTE Vol. 3*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 148.

³²⁴ Toy, 133.

³²⁵ Rad, 87–8.

³²⁶ Murphy, 38. The reader is reminded of Deut. 6:4–9 where a demand is made to bind something to one's heart. Prov. 3:3 states that the wise person is to tie covenant love and faithfulness to his neck. Prov. 7:3 instructs the son is to bind the father's instruction on his fingers. See Longman III, 177.

³²⁷ The term שָׁמַר displays a semantic element of precautionary defense. One of the characteristic features of wisdom literature consists in the interweaving of ethical and religious values with existential and sapiential values. Therefore, the person who keeps the commandments demonstrates strict discipline. See Garcia López, "שָׁמַר," in *TDOT Vol. 15*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David Green (Grand Rapids.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 300.

³²⁸ Gabrielson, "Obedience." The *NASB Exhaustive Concordance* provides a wide semantic range for שָׁמַר with a basic meaning of "to keep, watch, preserve." See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, "שָׁמַר," 1484.

take care of, preserve, protect” a parent’s instructions (Prov. 6:22).³²⁹ Wisdom preserves a person, and the wise accept advice and critique.³³⁰ Keith Schoville explains that the root meaning of שמר is “to pay careful attention to.”³³¹ The son/student who pays attention to his father’s/teacher’s instruction and heeds to self-discipline will find life (Prov. 7:2; 10:17).³³² Von Rad comments that Proverbs 7 indicates how a woman will entice a young man to themselves, which leads to death (Prov. 9:19–18).³³³ The thrust of Proverbs 7:1 is that the son/student already possesses the instruction (an internal characteristic of the young man’s personality); therefore, a wise person should not be naïve about the instruction. The father’s/teacher’s role is to encourage the young man to remain diligent and guard the instruction.³³⁴

Proverbs 30:17 uses an obscure biblical Hebrew noun for obedience, יְקָהָה. Gabrielson comments that little nuance can be derived from this rarely used noun. Genesis 49:10 provides the most significance when Jacob predicts obedience will come to Judah.³³⁵ Both *BDB* and *HALOT* define the feminine noun יְקָהָה as “obedience.”³³⁶ Reyburn and McG. Fry explains that

³²⁹ Koehler, and Baumgartner, “שמר,” 1582.

³³⁰ G. Sauer “שמר,” in *TLOT Vol.3*, ed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 1381.

³³¹ Keith Schoville, “שמר,” in *NIDOTTE Vol. 4*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 182.

³³² *Ibid.*, 183.

³³³ Rad, 167. Koptak comments that keeping the instructions symbolizes keeping wisdom, which will keep the young man from the seductive women’s traps that leads a person astray. See Koptak, 206.

³³⁴ Fox, *AYB Vol. 18A*, 186.

³³⁵ Gabrielson, “Obedience.”

³³⁶ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “יְקָהָה,” 429; Koehler, and Westermann, “יְקָהָה,” 430. The *NASB Exhaustive Concordance* notes that יְקָהָה can be designated as H936 or H3349. As H936, יְקָהָה can mean despise (five time), despised (one time), despises (three times), scorns (one time), utterly despised (one time). See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, “יְקָהָה,” 1368. As H3349, יְקָהָה

obedience is the foci of verse 17 when the subject of the first two lines is personal (i.e., “do not make fun of your father or disobey your mother”; “a person who laughs at his father and mother and does not want to obey them”).³³⁷ Disobedient children were punished severely. Therefore, disobeying the father and the mother would result in nature punishing the child. Hence, Proverbs 30:17 serves as a motivator for children to obey their parents.³³⁸ Waltke remarks that the “eye” in verse 17 is representative of the inner mind.; thus, unruly children are represented by their eyes.³³⁹

The Book of Proverbs places a strong emphasis on parental instruction and discipline. The obedience of children to their parents is viewed as becoming morally and ethically wise and a safeguard against folly. Obedience encompasses honesty, integrity, and diligence, which, when violated, involves punishment. The obedience exhibited by a child to the parents reflects Israel’s obedience to Yahweh and is an integral part of Yahweh’s covenant with Israel. When Israel disobeys, the nation is punished by Yahweh. When a child disobeys, he or she is punished by the parents. The Book of Ruth reflects a didactic comprehension of obedience.

can mean obedience (one time), scorns (one time). See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, “הִקְלִי,” 1405. E. H. Merrill comments that הִקְלִי for obedience is questionable in Prov. 30:17. Due to the verse’s parallelism, a favored rendering would be “despises an aged mother.” This rendering would remove any possibility of obedience. See E. H. Merrill, “הִקְלִי,” in *NIDOTTE Vol. 2*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 512. This comprehension of Prov. 30:17 is favored by Toy. See Toy, 529. The basis for this comprehension is supported by the Greek rendering.

³³⁷ Reyburn, and McG. Fry, 634.

³³⁸ Longman III, 529.

³³⁹ Waltke, *NICOT: Proverbs 15–31*, 489. Fox calls the “eye” the organ of greed, which deserves to be plucked out (nature is revulsed by the violation of decency). See Fox, *AYB Vol. 18B*, 869.

Ruth acts on instruction by following Boaz’s and Naomi’s lead, listening to elders, and being attentive to her mother-in-law’s instruction (Ruth 3:6).³⁴⁰ The biblical Hebrew verb צוה is used for “to command.” *HALOT* explains that the piel form of צוה means “to give an order, command.”³⁴¹ A familial command is seen in Proverbs with the use of מְצַוֶּה. Here, מְצַוֶּה describes the content of human or fatherly instruction (Prov. 2:1; 3:1; 6:20; 7:1–2).³⁴² Hubbard explains that Ruth entirely performed Naomi’s command, which shows unwavering obedience and indicates Ruth’s loyalty to Naomi (an exemplification of *hesed*).³⁴³ Ruth’s unquestioning obedience to Naomi’s command is an aspect of kindness remembered by Boaz in Ruth 3:10. The scope of Ruth’s obedience is indicated by the phrase וַתַּעַשׂ כְּכֹל (“and she did all”). Adam Howell explains that the preposition כ attached to כֹּל indicates how Ruth obeyed Naomi (“she did all according to”), which reveals complete adherence to Naomi’s instruction.³⁴⁴

Therefore, just as Proverbs teaches obedience through שָׁמַע, שָׁמַר, נָצַר, and יִקְהֶה, the piel perfect of צוה in Ruth conveys the exact rendering. In Proverbs, the father instructs his son, which requires paying attention to what is being said, understanding the words, and acting on them. Ruth, in 3:6, וַתַּעַשׂ כְּכֹל (“she did all according to”) what Naomi commanded her to do on

³⁴⁰ Dell, 180–1.

³⁴¹ Koehler, and Baumgartner, “צוה,” 1010. G. Liedke elaborates further by stating that the piel form of צוה is a verb of speech that describes a superior’s command, or order, to a subordinate. See G. Liedke, “צוה,” in *TLOT Vol.2*, ed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 1062–3. In the case of Ruth 3:6, it is the family matriarch giving the command in the form of a fulfillment formula.

³⁴² Peter Enns, “מְצַוֶּה,” in *NIDOTTE Vol. 2*, ed. Willem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 1062.

³⁴³ Hubbard, *NICOT: Ruth*, 206.

³⁴⁴ Adam Howell, *Ruth* (Bellingham: Lexham Academic, 2022), 200.

the threshing floor. It is an example of unquestioning obedience reflected in the Book of Proverbs.

Worthy Woman/Wife—Proverbs 31:10–15, 20, 26, 30

Proverbs 31:10–31 is an acrostic poem³⁴⁵ describing the worthy woman, exalting the honor and dignity of womanhood. She is a capable wife who sees to her husband’s needs, the family, and the household, is a hard worker to maintain and increase the family’s wealth, and exhibits qualities that bring honor and status to her husband.³⁴⁶ Longman comments that Proverbs 31:10–31 does not describe one capable wife but is a collection of desired traits to be found in a capable wife.³⁴⁷ This section will evaluate a few characteristics of the capable wife and then compare them to how the Book of Ruth describes a capable wife.³⁴⁸

The first characteristic is read in Proverbs 31:10, which denotes that the wife is “excellent” (לְיָדָא). *BDB* explains that לְיָדָא means “ability, efficiency, often involving moral worth” of a woman (Prov. 31:10).³⁴⁹ Robin Wakely states that לְיָדָא signifies efficiency, capability, and is

³⁴⁵ Clifford and Cox explain that Prov. 31:10–31 is an acrostic poem of twenty-two lines, each beginning with a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet. It is a unique poem structured similarly to a hymn. See Clifford, and Cox, 272–3. The complete use of the Hebrew alphabet emphasizes totality in describing the capable wife. See Fox, *AYB Vol. 18B*, 890. Koptak remarks that the acrostic poem is a literary artistry reflecting the setting of the home and the world seen through wisdom. See Koptak, 674.

³⁴⁶ R. N. Whybray, *The Composition of the Book of Proverbs* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1994), 153. Michelle Eastwood comments that Prov. 31:10–31 could have been written by a husband about his wife and who uses Lady Wisdom’s characteristics to describe how wonderful the wife is to him. See Michelle Eastwood, “Reading Proverbs 31:10–31 from a Literary Perspective,” *Lutheran Theological Journal* 55, no. 3 (Dec. 2021): 140. The capable wife is illustrated with almost superhuman traits. Her husband, family, and household are recipients of her extraordinary capacities. See Clifford, and Cox, 273.

³⁴⁷ Longman III, 540.

³⁴⁸ The descriptors in Prov. 31:10–16 will be examined.

³⁴⁹ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “לְיָדָא,” 298.

character quality, one of sterling character.³⁵⁰ The wife's chief strength is her character because her practical competencies are derived from her concentration, concern for others above her own concern, and determination.³⁵¹ The traits exhibited by the excellent wife are described as פְּנִינִים ("jewels"). *HALOT* defines פְּנִינִים as "pearls of coral," and *BDB* defines פְּנִינִים as just "all of value," denoting that all jewels are in mind and their worth.³⁵² The *NASB Exhaustive Concordance* states that פְּנִינִים can be interpreted as corals (one time), jewels (four times), pearls (one time).³⁵³ Reyburn and McG. Fry comments that the Hebrew term rendered for "jewels" is uncertain because it can mean corals, pearls, rubies, or jewels. Therefore, the general meaning of "jewels" is the preferential use in verse 10.³⁵⁴ Some scholars have attempted to posit that "worth" is understood as a bride price or a dowry.³⁵⁵ However, Fox explains that neither can be in view because there is no virtue in costing much money. Her character is genuinely priceless, which stems from her excellent judgment.³⁵⁶

³⁵⁰ Robin Wakely, "הַיִּל," in *NIDOTTE Vol. 2*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 117. The *NASB Exhaustive Concordance* provides thirty-two probable meanings for הַיִּל with a basic meaning of "strength, efficiency, wealth, army." See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, "הַיִּל," 1391. Waltke prefers to use "valiant" because it satisfies the notions of competent strength, wealth, membership in a select group, and includes a warrior class. See Waltke, *NICOT: Proverbs 15–31*, 520. Samuel Goh comments that הַיִּל refers to the wife's moral, mental, physical, and spiritual qualities. See Samuel Goh, "Ruth as a Superior Woman of הַיִּל? A Comparison between Ruth and the 'Capable' Woman in Proverbs 31:10–31." *JSOT* 38, no. 4 (2014): 489.

³⁵¹ Fox, *AYB Vol. 18B*, 891.

³⁵² Koehler, and Baumgartner, "פְּנִינִים," 946; Brown, Driver, and Briggs, "פְּנִינִים," 819.

³⁵³ *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, "פְּנִינִים," 1456.

³⁵⁴ Reyburn, and McG. Fry, "פְּנִינִים," 654.

³⁵⁵ See Christine Yoder, *Proverbs* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2009), "The Woman of Substance (31:10–31): 31:10," and Raymond Westbrook, *Property and the Family in Biblical Law* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991), 146–7.

³⁵⁶ Fox, *AYB Vol. 18B*, 892.

The second characteristic is trust. Proverbs 31:11 states that her husband trusts her. The biblical Hebrew verb בָּטַח is used to denote “trust” in verse 11. *HALOT* renders בָּטַח as “to feel secure, to trust.”³⁵⁷ E. Gerstenberger explains that the piel perfect form of בָּטַח refers “to the already proved, significant ‘entrusting of oneself.’”³⁵⁸ However, if a person does not place trust in another person or thing before Yahweh, then trust can be placed in a wife (Prov. 31:11).³⁵⁹ The husband’s trust is not an emotion but having a secure sense that his wife can handle the household affairs and acquire gains when the opportunity arises.³⁶⁰ Additionally, the husband’s trust goes beyond practical matters and implies trust in his wife’s moral and ethical decisions.³⁶¹

Proverbs 31:12 states that the wife does good (“טוֹב”). *BDB* states that it can be hard to differentiate between the verbal and adjectival use of טוֹב. To avoid the challenge, *BDB* states that טוֹב is a nominative masculine singular absolute meaning “good as a benefit.”³⁶² The wife’s

³⁵⁷ Koehler, and Baumgartner, “בָּטַח,” 120.

³⁵⁸ E. Gerstenberger, “בָּטַח,” in *TLOT Vol. 1*, ed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 228.

³⁵⁹ R. W. L. Moberly, “בָּטַח,” in *NIDOTTE Vol. 1*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 636. The *NASB Exhaustive Concordance* renders בָּטַח as the following: bold (one time), careless (one time), complacent (three times), confident (two times), fall down (one time), felt secure (one time), have (two times), have confidence (one time), put my trust (three times), put their trust (two times), put your trust (one time), relied (one time), rely (eight times), secure (five times), trust (fifty-one times), trusted (fifteen times), trusting (three times), trusts (nine times). See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, “בָּטַח,” 1369. Waltke comments that the wife fears Yahweh (Prov. 31:30) and because of this, both her husband and she enjoy a robust spiritual relationship. See Waltke, *NICOT: Proverbs 15–31*, 521.

³⁶⁰ Toy, 543. Longman remarks that the husband entrusts his wife so much as to make himself vulnerable to her (i.e., to take care of her and the household). See Longman III, 543.

³⁶¹ Fox, *AYB Vol. 18B*, 892.

³⁶² Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “טוֹב,” 375. The *NASB Exhaustive Concordance* renders טוֹב basically as “a good thing, benefit, and welfare.” The other probable renderings for טוֹב are enjoy (one time), good (sixty-six times), good thing (three times), good things (two times), goodness (one time), graciously (one time), happiness (one time), happy (one time), pleasant

goodness results in the household's economic success through seeking wool and flax to make linen and considering a field before buying it.³⁶³ Since Proverbs 31:10–31 is concerned with the capable wife's virtues, the good she brings to her husband and the household extends beyond the financial contributions but encompasses the entirety of her life.³⁶⁴

Proverbs 31:13 states that she works with her hands. Not only did she secure the resources of wool and flax, but she also manufactured linen with delight (Prov. 31:24). Yoder remarks that a woman making textiles was symbolic throughout the ANE. It was seen with queens and wealthy women using a spindle to make various textiles (Judg. 16:14; *ANEP* 43, pl. 144).³⁶⁵ "Works with her hands in delight" reinforces the concept in verse 12 that the wife brings the husband good and not evil. The biblical Hebrew verb עָשָׂה is used for "to do, make." *HALOT* specifies that עָשָׂה means to be an active laborer.³⁶⁶ Eugene Carpenter provides the following general meanings for the qal form of עָשָׂה: to make, do, prepare, set up, create, deal, effect, bring about, obtain, complete, execute, to commit (something), perform work, service; deal with, act, inflect, serve."³⁶⁷ The semantic range for עָשָׂה is enormous; therefore, the English word field "to

(one time), prosperity (eight times), richer (one time), well (one time), what is good (four times). See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, "טוֹב," 1398.

³⁶³ David Zucker, "Esther: Subverting the 'Capable Wife'," *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 48, no. 4 (2018): 174. Yoder remarks that the capable wife is strong, resourceful, and persistent in her life; therefore, she guarantees the husband's resources. See Yoder, "31:13."

³⁶⁴ Toy comments that the good or harm that the wife can do to the husband is in the realm of finances. See Toy, 543. However, Fox agrees that there are more than finances involved with the wife's goodness. See Fox, *AYB Vol. 18B*, 893; Longman III, 543.

³⁶⁵ Yoder, "31:13."

³⁶⁶ Koehler, and Baumgartner, "עָשָׂה," 891.

³⁶⁷ Eugene Carpenter, "עָשָׂה," in *NIDOTTE Vol. 3*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 543.

do, make” sufficiently encompasses the primary meaning for עָשָׂה.³⁶⁸ Garrett remarks that the wife working with eager hands is a semi-personification of taking pleasure in going about her work and creating materials for family and household.³⁶⁹

Proverbs 31:20 reveals the capable wife’s generosity; she extends her hand to the poor and needy.³⁷⁰ The biblical Hebrew verb פָּרַשׁ is used to denote "to stretch out the hand (almsgiving)."³⁷¹ Victor Hamilton comments that there are four objects associated with פָּרַשׁ: an article of clothing spread over an object (Num. 4), a net spread by Yahweh (Ezek 12:13; 17:20; 32:3; Hos 7:12) or a person (Prov. 29:5), a skirt (Ruth 3:9), or the hand (as in a prayer to Yahweh).³⁷² The nature of her help is either inviting someone to her home or giving material aid.³⁷³ When comprehended with 30:19, the capable wife works vigorously to make textiles on the spindle. She may distribute the materials she produces to the poor and needy. Therefore, she closes her hand to work and opens her hand to the destitute (Deut. 15:7–8).³⁷⁴

³⁶⁸ See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, “עָשָׂה,” 1452 for the wide semantic range for עָשָׂה; J. Vollmer, “עָשָׂה,” in *TLOT Vol.2*, ed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 945.

³⁶⁹ Garrett, 249.

³⁷⁰ The concern for the poor and needy is a fundamental virtue of Wisdom literature. Therefore, the capable wife’s generosity is her performing wisdom. See Garrett, 250. See also Helmer Ringgren, “פָּרַשׁ,” in *TDOT Vol. 12*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David Green (Grand Rapids.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 122.

³⁷¹ Koehler, and Baumgartner, “פָּרַשׁ,” 976.

³⁷² Victor Hamilton, “פָּרַשׁ,” in *NIDOTTE Vol. 3*, ed. Willem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 696–7. Baker and Carpenter note that פָּרַשׁ indicates "helping someone." See Baker, and Carpenter, "פָּרַשׁ," 924.

³⁷³ Waltke, *NICOT: Proverbs 15–31*, 529.

³⁷⁴ Koptak, 676.

Proverbs 31:26 reveals that the wife speaks wisely and teaches kindness. Waltke comments that for the capable wife to speak wisdom, she must already possess it and use it to craft and deliver her words.³⁷⁵ Her wise words would be Godly, righteous, and involve practical advice for successful living (through common sense, good judgment, and discretion).³⁷⁶ Her instruction of kindness can either be kindly instruction or faithful instruction.³⁷⁷

Proverbs 31:30 states that the woman fears (“אָרַתְּ”) Yahweh. *BDB* states that the adjectival use of אָרַתְּ with an accusative means “fear, reverence, honor.” In the context of verse 30, it is a reverence for Yahweh.³⁷⁸ The fear associated with Yahweh in 31:30 is associated with the worship of Yahweh. It is a crucial OT theme central to the life of the faithful Israelite (Deut. 10:12–13) and the beginning of wisdom (Prov. 1:7; 2:5).³⁷⁹ Fearing Yahweh is characterized by obedience, involves proper moral conduct (Lev. 25), the response to Yahweh’s redemptive acts (Ex. 14:31; 1 Sam. 12:24), and it is something learned (Deut. 4:10; 14:23).³⁸⁰ In the Book of

³⁷⁵ Waltke, *NICOT: Proverbs 15–31*, 532.

³⁷⁶ Yoder comments that the wife’s speech is like that of personified wisdom (Woman Wisdom in Prov. 8:6–9), it is informed, trustworthy, and disciplined. See Yoder, “31:26.” Eastwood states that verse 26 can be seen as a chiasm with metonymic references to the wife’s voice, which indicates the virtues of wisdom and love. See Eastwood, 147.

³⁷⁷ Reyburn, and McG. Fry, 662. Longman prefers to comprehend “instructions of kindness” with its association with covenant. Therefore, the phrase represents a covenantal relationship between covenant partners. See Longman III, 547.

³⁷⁸ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “אָרַתְּ,” 431. The *NASB Exhaustive Concordance* gives several possible renderings for אָרַתְּ, which generally indicate fearfulness and reverence. See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, “אָרַתְּ,” 1406.

³⁷⁹ The fear of Yahweh is a central OT concept and is tantamount to religion and spirituality. Therefore, the fear of Yahweh is synonymous with reverence, worship, and obedience to Yahweh’s command. See. H. F. Fuhs, “אָרַתְּ,” in *TDOT Vol. 6*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David Green (Grand Rapids.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 297–8.

³⁸⁰ M. C. Van Pelt, and W. C. Kaiser, Jr., “אָרַתְּ,” in *NIDOTTE Vol. 1*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 521–2.

Proverbs, the fear of Yahweh and wisdom are integral themes throughout the work. The biblical Hebrew אֵלֶּיךָ is an acquisition of knowledge, the turning away from evil, associated with long life, humility, and caution. The rewards for fearing Yahweh and obtaining wisdom are wealth, prosperity, and honor.³⁸¹ While charm and beauty are admirable qualities in a woman, they are meaningless if she does not fear Yahweh. The young man who fears Yahweh must choose a woman who fears Yahweh and exhibits wise virtues. Just as fearing Yahweh yields the beginning wisdom, fearing Yahweh will reap the blessing of a capable wife.³⁸²

The capable wife in Proverbs 31:10–31 exhibits the virtues of trustworthiness, goodness, laboriousness (hard worker), resourcefulness, generosity, speaking wisely, kindness, and fear. Yahweh. How are these various traits indicated in the Book of Ruth? A few will be examined for relevance to didactic wisdom.

In Ruth 3:11, Boaz calls Ruth a “woman of excellence.” The biblical Hebrew noun used for “excellence” is תֵּיִל. The Hebrew noun has the same meaning associated with Proverbs 31:10, “capable wife.”³⁸³ The same characteristic qualities attributed to the capable wife are applied to Ruth (“woman of noble character” *NIV*).³⁸⁴ The phrase אִשָּׁת תֵּיִל occurs only three times in the OT (Prov. 12:4; 31:10; Ruth 3:11). In the Megilloth, Ruth follows Proverbs; therefore, the characteristic qualities shared between the two women lends credence to the concept that Ruth is the answer to the question asked in Proverbs 31:10, “An excellent wife, who can find?”³⁸⁵ Boaz

³⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 523.

³⁸² Garrett, 252.

³⁸³ Koehler, and Baumgartner, “תֵּיִל,” 312.

³⁸⁴ Wakely, “תֵּיִל,” 117.

³⁸⁵ Goh, 488. The qualities shared are hardworking, loyalty to family, kindness, marriage, resourcefulness, and praises from others. Marriage pertains to Ruth as a capable woman is

tells Ruth that the community thinks she is an excellent woman because of her loyalty, lovingkindness, and humility that she has exhibited to Naomi and not because of her social and economic status.³⁸⁶ Ruth has proven that she is devoted, humble, and hard-working to the community, which outshines her politeness. Her exemplary conduct has elevated her status to a woman worthy of marrying Boaz.³⁸⁷

The theme of trust can be seen in Ruth's decision to forsake her homeland and accompany Naomi to Bethlehem (Ruth 1:16) and acknowledged by Boaz in Ruth 2:11. In 2:11, Boaz acknowledges that Ruth left her parents and homeland to come to Bethlehem (Ruth 1:16–17). Verses 16–17 indicate Ruth's commitment to Naomi by leaving what she knows to travel to an uncertain life.³⁸⁸ Ruth is exhibiting an indirect character of faith (loyalty and trust).³⁸⁹ Ruth 3:11 reveals how the townspeople have recognized Ruth's loyalty and kindness to Naomi and reciprocated that knowledge into trust. Their acknowledgment that she is a worthy woman which includes trustworthiness.³⁹⁰ Thus, while trust is not explicitly stated in the Book of Ruth, unlike Proverbs, the theme of trustworthiness is indicated. It is a virtue seen in Ruth towards following Naomi from Moab to Bethlehem and is cultivated by Boaz and the townspeople (Ruth 2:11; 3:11).

reflected in 3:10–11, where Boaz praises her for her willingness to marry him (i.e., it is a kindness extended to Boaz from Ruth). See Goh, 491.

³⁸⁶ LaCocque, 99. A special honor reserved in Wisdom literature for an ideal wife.

³⁸⁷ Hubbard, *NICOT: Ruth*, 216.

³⁸⁸ Hubbard comments that Ruth willingly chose an uncertain future as a foreign widow, in a strange land, hardly any legal rights, and facing possible racial prejudice. See Hubbard, *NICOT: Ruth*, 118.

³⁸⁹ LaCocque, 54.

³⁹⁰ Hubbard, *NICOT: Ruth*, 216. Bush comments that the virtues revealed in Prov. 31:10–31 are realized in Ruth: her faithfulness to the social, family, and religious responsibilities. See Bush, 173.

Ruth's goodness, or righteousness, is viewed in 1:16 when she forsakes her religion to embrace Yahweh, Naomi's God. Furthering her devotion is the invoking of a formula that includes divine punishment for breaking her oath (Ruth 1:17). The oath formula with a divine punishment indicates a total and dedicated commitment on Ruth's part. Her decision to accompany Naomi and remain by her side reflects a life-changing event. It marks a new direction in her life, home, people, and toward a new God, Yahweh.³⁹¹ Ruth's acceptance of Yahweh is responsible for the turn of events when Ruth and Naomi reach Bethlehem (Yahweh's redemption).³⁹² In Ruth 2:18, Ruth carries home and gives Naomi the leftovers from the meal with Boaz. While this may be considered a requirement, the act better indicates Ruth's generosity. Her kindness towards Naomi reveals that Ruth is a source of abundance and a well of hope.³⁹³ Whereas the capable wife supplies her family's and the household's needs (Prov. 31:15), Ruth provides for Naomi. Ruth's actions reveal that she is doing good to Naomi and not evil.

The capable wife and Ruth fear Yahweh (Prov. 31:30; Ruth 1:16–17, respectively). In Proverbs 31:30, it is clearly stated that the woman fears Yahweh. However, in Ruth 1:16–17, it is implied. Her willingness to forsake her religion to accept Naomi's God, Yahweh, and to invoke the divine punishment in her oath formula illustrates her fear of Yahweh. Hubbard remarks that Ruth 1:16–17 is a conversion to Yahwism because the marked difference in tone and style indicates a confession.³⁹⁴ Ruth's use of Yahweh (God's covenant name) instead of Elohim reveals a personal nature to her commitment. Ruth 2:12 contains Boaz's entreaty for Ruth, which

³⁹¹ Ibid., 120.

³⁹² LaCocque, 54.

³⁹³ LaCocque, 76. Hubbard calls this a "loyal, affectionate care of Naomi." See Hubbard, *NICOT: Ruth*, 181.

³⁹⁴ Hubbard, *NICOT: Ruth*, 120, M. D. Gow, "Ruth," in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. T. Alexander, and Brian Rosner (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 177.

includes protection, “under whose wings you have come to seek refuge.” In 1:16–17, Ruth converts to Yahweh, which includes entry into His protective realm. Boaz’s prayer in 2:12 acknowledges her conversion by entreating Yahweh to protect her like a mother bird, spreading her wings over the defenseless young.³⁹⁵

Ruth 3:10 reveals the kindness extended to Boaz by Ruth through wanting to marry him. Her kindness is an act of dedicated love.³⁹⁶ If Boaz’s entreaty in 2:12 were for Ruth to be rewarded by Yahweh for her kindness to Naomi, then her רָחַם in 3:10 would merit additional rewards.³⁹⁷ Ruth’s רָחַם towards Boaz is from a lasting relationship, satisfies Ruth’s and Naomi’s redemption needs, a willing act based on moral grounds, and indicates an extraordinary level of generosity.³⁹⁸

As indicated, there are several similarities between the capable wife in Proverbs 31:10–30 and Ruth in the Book of Ruth. The Proverbial portrayal reveals essential virtues exhibited by a capable woman that a young man should strive to seek before settling down. The root of the capable wife’s virtues is her fear of Yahweh. Likewise, Ruth portrays the same virtues through her loyalty, generosity, kindness, trustworthiness, hard work, and family devotion. Therefore, Ruth exemplifies the Proverbial wisdom revealed in 31:10–31. “An excellent woman, who can find?” (Prov. 31:10) “You are a woman of excellence.” (Ruth 3:11)

³⁹⁵ Hubbard, *NICOT: Ruth*, 167, Goh, 492.

³⁹⁶ Stoebe, “ רָחַם ,” 455.

³⁹⁷ Those additional rewards would be the blessings of marriage, offspring, and a part of Israel’s history. Hubbard believes all of these are true; however, the role of founding mother of the Davidic dynasty seems to bear more weight. See Hubbard, *NICOT: Ruth*, 215.

³⁹⁸ Bush, 170.

City Gate—Proverbs 1:21; 8:3; 22:22; 31:23

The city gate was an opening in the wall surrounding a city where most people went through to access the fields or to travel to another city. Not only did the gate serve as the main entry and exit point, but it was also the city's security system. The gate was a lookout post because most cities were on top of mounds.³⁹⁹ Significantly, the city gate had to be spacious enough to accommodate various civil and judicial needs.⁴⁰⁰ During peacetime, the gate was the center of city life; it was where people met, talked, made announcements and demonstrations, elders sat to oversee judicial business, and prominent business and government officials sat to meet the people.⁴⁰¹ Legal activities were conducted at the city gate, especially legal negotiations between two people.

Proverbs 1:21 personifies wisdom and places her at the entrance of the city gates to utter her wisdom sayings. The setting for wisdom's sayings indicates where business, court, and government could not function unless wisdom was used.⁴⁰² Men mainly frequented the city gate; therefore, it would have been daring for Woman Wisdom to walk and cry through the streets and at the gate, especially since this was the realm of Lady Folly.⁴⁰³ However, Woman Wisdom is not content with teaching wisdom at home; she must seek out people who will listen to her.⁴⁰⁴

³⁹⁹ Carey Walsh, "Testing Entry: The Social Functions of City Gates in Biblical Memory," in *Memory and the City in Ancient Israel*, ed. Ehud Ben Zvi and Dima Edelman (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2014), 44.

⁴⁰⁰ James Moyer, "Gate," in *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. David Freedman (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, Co., 2000), 483.

⁴⁰¹ "Gate," in *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, ed. Leland Ryken, James Wilhoit, and Tremper Longman III (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 321.

⁴⁰² Waltke, *NICOT: Proverbs 1–15*, 202.

⁴⁰³ Fox, *AYB Vol. 18A*, 97. Longman compares Woman Wisdom to a street evangelist or prophet. See Longman III, 111.

⁴⁰⁴ Toy, 22.

Wisdom is available to everywhere and to everyone (Prov. 8:3–5). Wisdom can be found in the heights, paths, city gates, and door entrances.⁴⁰⁵

In Proverbs 22:22, the gate (“שַׁעַר”) is a place of censure and judgment.⁴⁰⁶ However, the poor and needy are a group of people that can be taken advantage of by the wealthy and powerful. They lack the financial resources to protect their rights or themselves from exploitation by others.⁴⁰⁷ The gate points to a legal setting, and it is the place where justice is dispensed. However, some people would take advantage of the defenseless even though OT law prevented mistreating the poor (Ex. 22:21–23; 23; Deut. 24:14–15), which would make exploiting the poor an especially heinous act.⁴⁰⁸

Proverbs 31:23 states that the capable wife’s husband is known at the gates and sits with the elders. Like Proverbs 22:22, the gate was a place where legal proceedings occurred to bring about a resolution between two parties. The elders, who oversaw the proceedings, would sit. Amihai Mazar notes that the city gate was one of the most impressive features of Israelite cities.⁴⁰⁹ Therefore, the husband would have been respectable in the community, highly honored,

⁴⁰⁵ Katharine Dell comments that Woman Wisdom’s urban credentials are displayed and established. The personification of wisdom indicates that it is the center of human activity in the city. Her rewards of wealth, prosperity, and good fortune mirror the city’s associated financial success and power. See Katharine Dell, “Wisdom and Folly in the City: Exploring Urban Contexts in the Book of Proverbs,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 69, no. 4 (Nov. 2016): 396–7.

⁴⁰⁶ Koehler, and Baumgartner, “שַׁעַר,” 1616. Walsh comments that the city gate was a place of legal resolution with the goal of preserving community peace. See Walsh, 49.

⁴⁰⁷ Waltke, *NICOT: Proverbs 15–31*, 229. The poor are prey for the economic predator.

⁴⁰⁸ Fox, *AYB Vol. 18B*, 714.

⁴⁰⁹ Amihai Mazar, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible: 10,000–586 B.C.E.* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 467. The gate would have either six or four chambers used for gate keepers, trade, cultic practices, and judicial and civil functions. Inside the chambers would have been seats for prominent people or government officials to sit. See Mazar, 469.

and allowed to sit with the elders.⁴¹⁰ The primary function of the elders was to provide counsel. Hence, the husband would have been a person who was authoritative in counseling and teaching.⁴¹¹

The city gates in the Book of Ruth (Ruth 4:1) served the same function indicated in Proverbs 22:22 and 31:23; the location will decide Ruth's fate. However, unlike Proverbs 22:22 and 31:23, Ruth 4:11 involves a second group of people, the citizens' assembly. Eissfeldt Otto comments that this group was distinct from the council of elders, but they participated in the administration of civic concerns.⁴¹² Ben Zvi and Edelman remark that the city gate is the place for deciding the social status of three people in the Book of Ruth: Ruth, Boaz, and the unnamed relative.⁴¹³ For Boaz, his roles at the gate shift from a negotiator (Ruth 4:2–6) to a legal representative (Ruth 4:7–11a) and finally to a kinsman redeemer (Ruth 4:11b–13).⁴¹⁴ Boaz's actions further highlight his *hesed* for Ruth. Boaz models this divine characteristic of covenant loyalty by committing to Ruth and Naomi in a public and legally binding setting. The city gate is where Ruth's fate will be decided and the survival of the family lineage.⁴¹⁵

⁴¹⁰ Reyburn, and McG. Fry, 660; Murphy, 247. Fox comments that the husband's respect and honor are the result of his wife's virtues and achievements. See Fox, *AYB Vol. 18B*, 896.

⁴¹¹ Waltke, *NICOT: Proverbs 15–31*, 530. The capable wife spoke wisdom and instructed kindness at home (Prov. 31:26), and her husband is known at the gates and sits with the elders because of his wise counsel and instruction in public affairs (Prov. 31:23).

⁴¹² Eissfeldt Otto, "שַׁעַר," in *TDOT Vol. 15*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David Green (Grand Rapids.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 397.

⁴¹³ Walsh, 55.

⁴¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 55–6.

⁴¹⁵ Dell, *The Solomonic Corpus of 'Wisdom' and Its Influence*, 181.

Building Up a House—Proverbs 9:1; 14:1; 24:3–4

Houses in ancient Israel were commonly four-room pillared homes and met the basic shelter needs and material storage.⁴¹⁶ The home was commonly referred to as the father's house because it was the husband's house and where the family resided. The family consisted of the nuclear and, sometimes, the extended family.⁴¹⁷ Deuteronomy 6:7 tasks a child's instruction (law and wisdom) to the parents. Raymond Van Leeuwen explains that house building in the Bible is used to help comprehend wisdom and Yahweh's creation and activity.⁴¹⁸ Three examples from the Book of Proverbs indicate how the biblical author uses building up a house: Proverbs 9:1, 14:1, and 24:3–4.

Proverbs 9:1 states that Wisdom has built a house. *BDB* states the בָּנָה ("to build") is used in 9:1 to refer to wisdom's house.⁴¹⁹ Proverbs 9:1 refers to Lady Wisdom, who builds her house

⁴¹⁶ G. Vincent Medina, and Stacy Knuth, "House, Ancient Near East," in *LBD*, ed. John Barry et al. (Bellingham: Lexham Press, 2016), "Family Dwelling." Mazar explains that there were a couple of variations to the four-room pillared home. Some homes were completely roofed on the first floor allowing space for storage, workshops, and livestock. The second floor was accessed either by stone steps or a wooden ladder and it was the area where the living quarters were located. The second variation, and the prominent one in ancient Israel, was everything was located on the ground floor. A person would walk into a pillared courtyard with open spaces on either side for storage, shops, and animals. The living quarters would have been located toward the back of the courtyard. The courtyard was the primary space where cooking, grinding grain, wine and olive oil presses, and various other household duties were performed. See Mazar, 485–8.

⁴¹⁷ Medina, and Knuth, "Kinship Relations." Dell comments that the home could be the parental home or a new residence that a woman makes with her husband. Sometimes, the house can refer to a family or a dynasty. See Dell, *The Solomonic Corpus of 'Wisdom'*, 182.

⁴¹⁸ Raymon Van Leeuwen, "Cosmos, Temple, House: Building and Wisdom in Mesopotamia and Israel," in *Wisdom Literature in Mesopotamia and Israel*, ed. Richard Clifford (Atlanta: SBL, 2007), 72.

⁴¹⁹ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, "בָּנָה," 124. The *NASB Exhaustive Concordance* lists the following possible renderings for בָּנָה: besieged (one time), build (112 times), builders (ten times), building (sixteen times), builds (eight times), built (177 times), construct (one time), constructed (one time), fashioned (one time), fortified (three times), fortifying (two times), have children (one time), made (one time), obtain children (one time), rebuild (thirteen times),

through wisdom and good sense. This house is figuratively used to denote an ideally created home that invites all people.⁴²⁰ Building and creating involves bringing something into existence; therefore, Wisdom brings wisdom to all who will accept her invitation.⁴²¹ Murphy comments that Wisdom's house is the Book of Proverbs and that the seven pillars refer to Proverbs 1–8.⁴²²

A contrast between wisdom and foolishness is indicated in Proverbs 14:1. A wise woman builds up a house, but foolish hands tear it down. Like in Proverbs 9:1, בָּנָה is used to denote “to build.” The biblical Hebrew בָּנָה yields a comprehension of cultivation and nurturing; the wise woman builds up her home.⁴²³ The dissimilarity is that Proverbs 9:1 is a personification of wisdom; however, 14:1 talks about an actual woman (Prov. 11:16; 12:4). Proverbs 31:10–31 reveals how a worthy woman builds up her home. In 14:1, the woman cultivates and nurtures the material and spiritual aspects of the house.⁴²⁴ Thus, it would be wise for a young man to seek a

rebuilding (three times), rebuilt (seventeen times), restored (one time), set (one time), surely built (one time). See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, “בָּנָה,” 1371.

⁴²⁰ Fox, *AYB Vol. 18A*, 297. Fox; additionally, comments that there is an interesting parallel to the Assyro-Babylonian designation for Apsu (sweet water mass under the earth) as “the house of wisdom.” It is where Ea-Enki resides and is known as the Lord of Wisdom. The biblical author of Prov. 9:1 could have used this ANE myth to create the illustration of wisdom building her house. Longman remarks that an actual magnificent and solid construction is meant in 9:1. It is perfect and complete because of the seven pillars. See Longman III, 216.

⁴²¹ Waltke, *NICOT: Proverbs 1–15*, 431. Toy comments that Wisdom has come and set up her permanent establishment, which is always ready to entertain the people who come to her. See Toy, 184. See also Crenshaw, 81.

⁴²² Murphy, 58. The number seven is significant because it denotes perfection. Therefore, Wisdom's house is perfect to entertain people who come to it. See Waltke, *NICOT: Proverbs 1–15*, 433. Garrett comments that the seven pillars refer to the seven days of creation because Wisdom herself was involved in the creation with Yahweh. See Garrett, 115.

⁴²³ David Fouts, “בָּנָה,” in *NIDOTTE Vol. 1*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 666. The verb is used to refer to building or establishing people into homes or families.

⁴²⁴ Waltke, *NICOT: Proverbs 1–15*, 584. Fox comments that the woman is not literally building a house but is giving birth to children and raising a family while managing the economy involved with a household. Both here and in Prov. 31, the husband's prosperity is in view. See

wife who exhibits the wisdom and virtues noted in 14:1 versus a woman who will destroy the home and family through an unwise and unvirtuous character.⁴²⁵ Von Rad comments, "The teachers developed this remarkable allegorization as a contrast to and a defence against customs which had appeared in Israel."⁴²⁶

Like the previous two biblical examples, בנה is used in Proverbs 24:3. Unlike the previous examples, בנה takes the niph'al form, whereas the other two took the qal form.⁴²⁷ HALOT comments that בנה, in verse 3, means "to be built (house)."⁴²⁸ Toy notes that wisdom is used for practical wisdom and skill in 24:3. If the verse is to be understood by building a family and not a literal structure, then verse 3 includes a moral element not seen in 9:1; 14:1.⁴²⁹ Wisdom enables a person to say and act the right way to build up a family or community.⁴³⁰ Wisdom's practical and ethical use is necessary for the establishment and cohesion of the family unit. 24:4 provides the motivation to establish such a family, which includes understanding and knowledge ("all precious and pleasant treasures").⁴³¹

Fox, *AYB Vol. 18B*, 572. Longman understands Prov. 14:1 as referring to an actual woman. See Longman III, 296. However, Murphy contends that the personification of wisdom and folly are still in view here like in Prov. 9:1. He comments that the house must mean more than a literal building because of the contrastive nature between Wisdom and Folly. See Murphy, 102. Toy leans to the same comprehension (Wisdom builds the house and Folly tears it down); however, he notes that wisdom is not personified anywhere else in Prov. 10–29. See Toy, 280.

⁴²⁵ Longman III, 296.

⁴²⁶ Rad, 167.

⁴²⁷ Qal: build, fortify, rebuild, work on; niph'al: be built, rebuilt, established. See Fouts, 665.

⁴²⁸ Koehler, and Baumgartner, "בנה," 139.

⁴²⁹ Toy, 513. Koptak notes that understanding and knowledge are contributed to Prov. 24:3. See Koptak, 561.

⁴³⁰ Longman III, 436.

⁴³¹ Murphy, 180.

The Book of Proverbs illustrates how wisdom is essential for building a home, literally, or establishing a family. In the Book of Ruth, a literal house is not mentioned; however, the establishment of a family is indicated in 4:11. Therefore, Ruth 4:11 will be considered to see how it contributes to didactic wisdom.

In Ruth 4:11, the use of בָּיִת focuses on a dynasty. The Bethlehem women pray for Ruth's destiny to parallel that of Rachel and Leah, who built up the house of Israel.⁴³² Wagner notes that building up a dynasty in 4:11 is reflective of Nathan's expression concerning the dynastic promise to David (2 Sam. 7).⁴³³ The women's statement in 4:11 signifies that Ruth was elevated from a foreigner (a Moabitess) to a citizen of Israel, had a home and a husband, and wished that the family would be more significant than Rachel and Leah's.⁴³⁴ Thus, in 4:11, a metaphorical use of בָּנָה to denote "to found a family, beget descendants."⁴³⁵ The concept of Ruth building up a house or a future dynasty is revealed in the phrase "become famous," which denotes the future fame of Boaz's and Ruth's house.⁴³⁶ Deuteronomy 25:9 is the basis for a levirate marriage, to build up or establish a family of the deceased man. The woman's role was significant (Gen. 16:3); therefore, the blessing that compared Ruth to Rachel and Leah (the women who built up

⁴³² Dell, *The Solomonic Corpus of 'Wisdom' and Its Influence*, 182. 'Building up a house' is a perpetuating or establishing of a family line. See De Waard, and Nida, 71.

⁴³³ Siegfried Wagner, "בָּנָה," in *TDOT Vol. 2*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David Green (Grand Rapids.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 172.

⁴³⁴ Hubbard, 258–9.

⁴³⁵ A. R. Hulst, "בָּנָה," in *TLOT Vol. 1*, ed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 246.

⁴³⁶ Gregory Goswell, "The Book of Ruth and the House of David," *The Evangelical Quarterly* 86, no. 2 (Apr 2014): 122. Goswell also comments that the future fame is realized through the blessing of multiple offspring, which is fulfilled in the genealogy leading to David.

Israel) is tantamount to building up the house of David.⁴³⁷ The women's statement in 4:11 signifies that Ruth was elevated from a foreigner to a citizen of Israel; she now had a home and a husband.⁴³⁸

⁴³⁷ Fouts, "בְּנֵה," 666.

⁴³⁸ Hubbard, 258–9.

Chapter 5

The Book of Proverbs instructs the reader how to cultivate and nurture wisdom to allow it to give meaning to life (Prov. 1:2–4). The fear of Yahweh is at the core of Proverbs’ wisdom; it is the beginning of wisdom (Prov. 1:7; 2:5). Therefore, Proverbs provides instruction on how the wise live a life that encompasses moral, ethical, and righteous behavior that aligns with Yahweh’s standards and pleases Him. However, the Book of Ecclesiastes contends that life is meaningless (Eccl. 1:2–3). It is a problematic book to interpret and apply to one’s life.¹ Despite Ecclesiastes’ challenges, it is an integral part of Wisdom literature. It is read during the Festival of Booths due to its invitation to rejoice.² As previously noted, a challenge to overcome with Ecclesiastes is comprehending “meaningless,” *hevel*, *הֶבֶל*.

Qoheleth searches all areas of life to comprehend life’s meaning but comes up empty.³

Douglas Miller notes, “It [*הֶבֶל*] occurs some thirty-eight times, often in crucial locations, serving both as motto and as refrain.”⁴ *BDB* notes that when *הֶבֶל* is nominative, it is translated as

¹ Duane Garrett calls Ecclesiastes the Bible’s resident alien. See Duane Garrett, *NAC Vol. 14: Ecclesiastes* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1993), 253. Tremper Longman calls it an enigmatic book that places an emphasis on the meaningless of life. See Tremper Longman III, *CBC Vol. 6: Ecclesiastes*, ed. Philip Comfort (Carol Stream: Tyndale House Publishers, 2006), 253. Iain Provan notes that Ecclesiastes is a difficult book because the interpretation of common words in the text yields unclear and disputable matters. See Iain Provan, *NIVAC: Ecclesiastes* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 23. Chloe Sun notes the distinction between Proverbs and Ecclesiastes by commenting that Proverbs belongs to didactic wisdom and Ecclesiastes belongs to reflective wisdom. Reflective wisdom has many conflicting voices. See Chloe Sun, “Ecclesiastes among the Megilloth: Death as a Interthematic Link,” *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 27, no. 2 (2017): 187.

² Norbert Lohfink, *CC: Qoheleth* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 1. See also George Barton, *ICC: Ecclesiastes* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark Ltd., 1908), 1.

³ Longman III, 257. He notes that *הֶבֶל* is used metaphorically to denote meaningless.

⁴ Douglas Miller, “Qohelet’s Symbolic Use of HBL,” *JBL* 117, no. 3 (Fall 1998): 437. Thirty-eight instances with only five possible interpretations from the noun’s lexical meaning of “breath, vanity, idols.” Twenty-two times, it is interpreted as “vanities, vanity” (1:2 [used four times]; 1:14; 2:11; 2:15; 2:19; 2:21; 2:23; 2:26; 3:19; 4:4; 4:16; 5:10; 6:2; 12:8 [used three

“vapour, breath” with a figurative meaning of “of what is evanescent, unsubstantial, worthless, vanity.”⁵ *HALOT* states that the Middle Hebrew translates the noun as “warm breath, vapour,” and the Jewish Aramaic (Targumic tradition) supports “breath, vanity.”⁶ R. Albertz cautions that interpreting *hevel* as “nothing, nothingness” is too general, and the term’s meaning is influenced contextually.⁷ The term הֶבֶל, comprehended uniformly, is problematic because it is not viewed contextually. The term’s Ecclesiastical nuances require a contextual awareness that specifies its understanding. Miller concurs by noting that “no proposal to date has been completely successful

times], twelve times as “futile, futility” (2:1; 2:17; 6:4; 6:9; 6:11; 6:12; 7:6; 7:15; 8:10; 8:14 [used two times]; 11:8, two times as “fleeting” (9:9; 11:10), once as “emptiness” (5:7), and once as “useless” (4:17).

⁵ Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, “הֶבֶל,” *BDB* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1996), 210.

⁶ Ludwig Koehler, and Walter Baumgartner, “הֶבֶל,” *HALOT*, 5th ed. (Leiden: Brill Publishing, 2000), 236.

⁷ R. Albertz, “הֶבֶל,” in *TLOT Vol.1*, ed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 351–2. Albertz further explains, “For Qohelet, hebel refers not simply to everything, but to three specific complexes: (1) his efforts, indeed, human work in general, are unproductive, useless, and vain (2:1, 11, 19, 21, 23; 4:4, 8; 5:9; 6:2); here hebel is an exact antonym for *yitrôn* “use” (cf. 2:11; so also Ellermeier, op. cit. 38). Work is senseless, because God capriciously allows one to enjoy the fruits of one’s work but denies them to another (2:24–26); finally, however, because humans are mortal and must leave their possessions to another (2:18–21; 6:1f.). (2) The wisdom mastery of life, which seeks to order human behavior and actions, is senseless, for, as it happens, the righteous have the fate of the godless (8:10–14); in the final analysis, the wise die like the foolish (2:15; 6:7–9). (3) Behind these judgments stands Qohelet’s insight into human transience (6:12; 11:8, 10; cf. 7:15; 9:9), which makes humanity equal to all creation (3:19). In the light of the impending fate of death, all the future (11:8), all events whatsoever, are incomprehensible and senseless (1:14; 2:17). God is certainly not subject to the hebel verdict, but neither is he a savior from that verdict (thus Hertzberg, *KAT* 17/4, 222ff.; Loretz, op. cit. 234ff.); rather, in his incomprehensible actions he is the final cause for human finitude.” See Albertz, 352.

in its attempt to translate הֶבֶל by one abstract concept.”⁸ H. J. Fabray explains that הֶבֶל serves the purpose of valuation or devaluation when in a nominal statement.⁹

To comprehend Qohelet’s use of הֶבֶל is to understand how the Hebrew term functions in Ecclesiastes. Miller argues that instead of interpreting הֶבֶל with a specific meaning(s), it should be viewed symbolically. He argues “that the author of Ecclesiastes adopted הֶבֶל, “vapor,” as a symbol by which to represent the entirety of human experience. On the one hand Qohelet has taken הֶבֶל in three different directions, so that three senses, or “Referents,” of the term may be discerned, each of which happens to be metaphorical. The three Referents of הֶבֶל are: “Insubstantiality,” “Transience,” and “Foulness.””¹⁰ Insubstantiality involves reality versus expectation. Insubstantiality is the intended metaphorical use when Qohelet “evaluates toil (1:2–11; 1:12–15; 2:24–26), wisdom (2:12–17; 4:13–16), pleasure (2:1–11), and all three (6:7–9) as things that accomplish nothing of substantial or significant benefit.”¹¹ This symbolic use is attached to 4:17–5:6 (a fool’s talkativeness), 6:10–12, wealth in 5:7–11, and 3:16–22 (the human condition). Transient use is the least of the three but is noticeable. Concerning 6:12, Miller writes, “Such a meaning is established here by the reference to “few days” and by the synonym

⁸ Miller, 439.

⁹ H.-J. Fabray, “הֶבֶל,” in *TDOT Vol. 15*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David Green (Grand Rapids.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 319. The total equalization of all earthly, human activity in 1:14 runs contrary to a sapiential value system; such a radical disqualification is directed against the norm of yithron thinking which underlies this system. hakkol, “all,” is the subject of hebhel in the predicate nominative in several passages. In 1:13f. and 2:17 it denotes the totality of human activity, in 2:11 the speaker’s own work as “king over Israel in Jerusalem,” in 3:19 all living things, and in 11:8 the future. In 1:2 and 12:8 it is used in a universal sense. The reference, then, is to creaturely, breathing, working life

¹⁰ Miller, 443.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 447.

“shadow” (צל), a common metaphor for brevity. Like a short-lived shadow, a vapor quickly dissipates.”¹² Brevity is revealed in 11:7–10 through the period of youth and the enjoyment of life before evil comes. Finally, Foulness is metaphorically considered. Miller comments, “This use of הבל is frequent and important, describing realities that, for example, are an affront to Qohelet’s sense of justice. In this case, vapor has become “bad air.””¹³ This Referent is distinguishable when רע is found with הבל. Hebrew and Aramaic texts, *hevel* “designates a kind of vapor that carries life-threatening properties within itself.”¹⁴ Therefore, Qohelet uses this metaphorical sense of the term to denote negative valuations. 2:18–19, 21; 4:7–12; 6:1–6; 9:1–3 are things found unacceptable and repugnant. Qohelet’s Hebrew term is not a cold, rigid, and pessimistic term; it is a spice that clarifies his message, whether good or bad. Graham Ogden and Lynell Zogbo comment that Ecclesiastes 1:2–4 is better to be comprehended as “There is so much that is beyond our understanding!” or “It seems as though so much is beyond our grasp!”¹⁵ Therefore, Qoheleth’s wisdom may seem cold and daunting on the surface; however, the wisdom provides invaluable instruction for a person’s life.¹⁶

¹² Miller, 448.

¹³ Ibid., 449.

¹⁴ Ibid., 450.

¹⁵ Graham Ogden, and Lynell Zogbo, *A Handbook on Ecclesiastes* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1998), 23.

¹⁶ Like with Chapters Three and Four, the topics of proper portion, discipline and hope, friendship and family loyalty, hard work, entreaty, inappropriate touching, true reward, humility, generosity of spirit, kindness, redemption, obeying instructions, worthy woman/wife, city gate, and building up a house will be analyzed.

Proper Portion— Ecclesiastes. 5:17–19 (18–20)

Ecclesiastes 5:18–20 counters the meaningless of life by revealing that a person can enjoy life by being occupied with Yahweh’s gifts.¹⁷ Lohfink comments that death is in view here. When someone enjoys life and is happy, then the thought of death retreats into the subconscious and is no longer a burden.¹⁸ Qoheleth’s engrossment with death is indicated in his view of how death crushes human merit and hope and puts to an end one’s memory.¹⁹ Therefore, Ecclesiastes’ concept of death is an aspect of reflective wisdom that counters death’s traditional beliefs.²⁰ Ecclesiastes 5:17 (18) tells the reader that they are to eat, drink, and enjoy what is good and proper that Yahweh has bestowed on them during their life. The biblical Hebrew term *הֵפֶז* is used for “fitting [*proper*].” *BDB* explains that the adjective²¹ *הֵפֶז* means “fair, beautiful; of various

¹⁷ Garrett, 314. Those who accept Yahweh’s gifts are free from the subjection of mortality’s pain.

¹⁸ Lohfink, 85.

¹⁹ James Crenshaw remarks that Qoheleth does state that the living have hope. “For the living know that they will die, but the dead know nothing, and have no more reward, since memory of them is forgotten” (9:5). In addition, “their love, their hate, and their passions have already perished, and they no longer have any portion ever in all that is done on earth” (9:6).” See James Crenshaw, *Old Testament Wisdom* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998), 120.

²⁰ Sun, 206. As a wisdom genre, Ecclesiastes challenges, dialogues, widens, and counters the other Wisdom book’s view on death. This countering effect causes the reader to think about human dilemma’s complexity.

²¹ Bruce Waltke and Michael O’Connor explain that an attributive adjective modifies the noun(s) in a comparison of capability function. The subject is compared with an object or goal to be attained, in which case the subject may be more than equal to the challenge or less than equal to it. See Bruce Waltke, and Michael O’Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 266.

acts.”²² W. Williams explains that *הַיָּשׁוּר* takes on the sense of good and proper.²³ Using *הַיָּשׁוּר* as a comparison is a frequent phenomenon in Wisdom literature because of the goal to instruct on correct decision-making, evaluating life’s choices, and rating life’s values. Therefore, in 5:18, to eat, drink, and enjoy are good and proper values.²⁴

Qoheleth states that eating, drinking, and enjoying is the perfect good, or what is proper. Therefore, this results from a divine action, which is hidden from people but can be experienced by them.²⁵ Work is to be enjoyable; eating and drinking are profitable when comprehended expressively through companionship, a religious celebration, and symbolically as contentment and happiness in life.²⁶ However, the phrase “under the sun” might conjure up unsettling thoughts of hard work in intense heat. Tremper Longman comments that the phrase means work

²² Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “*הַיָּשׁוּר*,” 421. *NASB Exhaustive Concordance* notes the following probable renderings for *הַיָּשׁוּר*: appropriate (one time), beautiful (twenty-eight times), beautiful one (two times), fair (one time), fitting (one time), handsome (four times), sleek (three times). See “*הַיָּשׁוּר*,” *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, 2nd ed., ed. The Lockman Foundation (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 1404.

²³ William Williams, “*הַיָּשׁוּר*,” in *NIDOTTE Vol. 2*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 487.

²⁴ H. J. Stoebe, “*הַיָּשׁוּר*,” in *TLOT Vol.2*, ed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 490. The same reasoning applies to *הַיָּשׁוּר* in Eccl. 3:11, “He has made everything appropriate [*proper*] in its time.” Unless otherwise noted, all biblical passages referenced are in the *Ryrie Study Bible: New American Standard Bible*, 3rd ed. (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2012).

²⁵ Lohfink, 84. Davis Hankins states, “In 5.17–19, if the person who enjoys ‘does not remember much of the days of his life’, it is because he is so mindfully immersed in his commitment to ‘see the good in his toil’ that he is willing to overlook much of what would otherwise dictate the value of his life to him. Qohelet advocates a passionate immersion in one’s life-world that requires some disregard of much of that world in the interest of what attaches one to it. Qohelet does not commend a total immersion in one’s present, but a singular commitment to one’s passions.” See Davis Hankins, “The Internal Infinite: Deleuze, Subjectivity, and Moral Agency in Ecclesiastes,” *JOST* 40, no. 1 (2015): “5. Qohelet’s Ethic of Excessive Enjoyment and the Internal Infinite.”

²⁶ Michael Eaton, *TOTC Vol. 18: Ecclesiastes*, ed. Donald Wiseman (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1983), 119.

“on this earth” and implies horizontal thinking.²⁷ Therefore, Qoheleth believes that toil “under the sun” embodies reflective wisdom because hard work satisfies pleasurable appetites, and employment allows for pleasurable things.²⁸ Gerhard von Rad remarks that the exhortation to be happy and enjoy life and the things that enhance life should not be confused with a zest for life. Ecclesiastes 5:17 (18) is a divine intention for human life, which is directed to be good, including work.²⁹

In 5:18 (19), *חלק* is used for “reward.”³⁰ H. H. Schmid explains that *חלק* involves Qoheleth’s question of what his portion or reward will be or his place in this world.³¹ *HALOT*

²⁷ Longman III, 290. Richard Fuhr explains that “under the sun” reflects a horizontal observation and not a theological one. He states, “As a sage, Qohelet's perspective would have naturally been a horizontal one, reflecting upon the world through the lens of wisdom, not speaking forth via the direct revelation of God. Writing from the "under the sun" perspective, Qohelet's words must be considered within the context from which they came. Although perhaps secondary to the aspect of describing the scope of Qohelet's inquiry, the "under the sun" phrase, repeated throughout the text and taking on the role of motif, nevertheless implies that Qohelet's perspective too is framed within the confines of a horizontal grid, an "under the sun" perspective that limits his assessment of reality.” See Richard Fuhr, Jr., “An Analysis of the Inter-Dependency of the Prominent Motifs within the Book of Qohelet,” Ph.D. Diss., Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2008, EBSCO (F6C663770DFD78AD), 91.

²⁸ Crenshaw, 127. “The advice invariably occurs within contexts that emphasize life’s absurdity and attendant inequities, as well as those which stress God’s control over human ability to enjoy life. Qoheleth’s concept of divine gift is an expression for human limitation rather than an extolling of a generous God. The sources of pleasure—woman, wine, food, clothes, ointment, toil, and youth—are empty like life itself. In the end none accompanies the dead to Sheol. In spite of the limited satisfaction such pleasure affords, it does amount to something. Like breath, which cannot be seen but makes life possible, such enjoyment renders existence endurable.” See Crenshaw, 128.

²⁹ Gerhard von Rad, *Wisdom in Israel* (Great Britain: SCM Press, Ltd., 1972), 231.

³⁰ The *NASB Exhaustive Concordance* notes that *חלק* can mean associate (one time), catch (one time), divisions (two times), equal portions (one time), farm land (one time), inheritance (one time), land (one time), legacy (one time), lot (one time), portion (thirty-six times), portions (four times), property (two times), reward (four times), share (nine times), territory (one time). See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, “חלק,” 1392.

³¹ H. H. Schmid, “חלק,” in *TLOT Vol.1*, ed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 432.

notes that חֵלֶק means a “share of possession; profit.”³² Wealth and power are seen as a singular goal for most people in this world. With more wealth comes more power. However, Qoheleth sees wealth and power as distinct and dependent on Yahweh. Yahweh portions wealth and power to a person based on His will. Therefore, both are a portion given by Yahweh to be enjoyed.³³ The wisdom is in a person’s acceptance of what Yahweh bestows on them. A person must have the mindset of controlling wealth and not let wealth control them.³⁴

Not only are wealth and power portioned out by Yahweh, but they are seen as a gift to be enjoyed. The biblical Hebrew term מַתָּה is used for “gift.” Michael Grisanti notes that מַתָּה comes from the verb נָתַן (“give, present, offer, allow, permit, surrender, deliver, set, put, place”). The derivative מַתָּה can refer to a “gift” or an “abundance.”³⁵ Therefore, a theocentric view and not an anthropocentric one is essential for a person to enjoy what has been obtained. Without a theocentric view, life is miserable and meaningless.³⁶ Qoheleth motivates in 5:20 by stating that

³² Ludwig Koehler, and Walter Baumgartner, “חֵלֶק,” *HALOT*, 5th ed. (Leiden: Brill Publishing, 2000), 324. Warren Baker and Eugene Carpenter note that חֵלֶק involves receiving a portion or share of a fortune given to persons by Yahweh. See Warren Baker, and Eugene Carpenter, “חֵלֶק,” in *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: OT* (Chattanooga: AMG Publishers, 2003), 345.

³³ Garrett, 119.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ Michael Grisanti, “מַתָּה,” in *NIDOTTE Vol. 3*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 208. The *NASB Exhaustive Concordance* lists gift (two times), gifts (one time), give (two times), reward (one time) as renderings for מַתָּה. See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, “מַתָּה,” 1431.

³⁶ Philip Ryken, and R. Hughes, *Ecclesiastes: Why Everything Matters* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2010), “12. Satisfaction Sold Separately.” The authors state, “This profound insight helps us have a balanced view of our earthly possessions. The world that *Yahweh* created is full of many rich gifts, but the power to enjoy them does not lie in the gifts themselves. This is why it is always useless to worship the gifts instead of the Giver. The ability to enjoy wealth or family or friendship or food or work or sex or any other good gift comes only from *Yahweh*.”

Yahweh will keep a person occupied with enjoyment in their heart. Focusing on Yahweh and His blessings will occupy a person's mind and force the dreariness and meaninglessness of life in the background.³⁷ Roland Murphy comments that Yahweh uses joy and pleasure to distract people from their short, miserable lives.³⁸ Therefore, Yahweh properly portions wealth and possessions to a person so they can enjoy life and reflect on His divine actions, which provides happiness in a meaningless life.

Ecclesiastes 5:17–19 (18–20) teaches that a person should enjoy what Yahweh has properly portioned. The contentment is not in the blessings but in Yahweh, who bestows the gifts according to His will and purpose. Therefore, concentrating on enjoyment refocuses a person's mindset on pleasurable things versus life's shortness and meaninglessness. In Ruth 1:1–3, Yahweh has removed Bethlehem's proper portion, which forced Elimelech to relocate his family to Moab to secure essential sustenance. What is unknown to the family is Yahweh's will and purpose. The family's relocation allowed the inclusion of Ruth through the marriage with Mahlon (Ruth 1:4). After the deaths of Elimelech, Mahlon, and Chilion, Naomi receives word that Yahweh has blessed Bethlehem with harvestable crops (Ruth 1:5–6). The famine's end caused Naomi to return to Bethlehem. While Orpah chose to remain in Moab, Ruth forsook her homeland and religion to join Naomi. Therefore, in the first chapter of Ruth, a proper portion is revealed through Yahweh's curse and blessing on Bethlehem. In Ecclesiastes 5:17 (18), it was noted that $\eta\eta\eta$ is used concerning making correct decisions, evaluating life choices, and rating

³⁷ George Barton, *ICC: Ecclesiastes* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark Limited, 1908), 126. Lohfink notes that this preoccupation of enjoyment is a revelation. It is by the quest for happiness that a person sees Yahweh's perfect actions in all events. See Lohfink, 85.

³⁸ Roland Murphy, *WBC Vol. 23A: Ecclesiastes* (Dallas: Word Books, 1992), 56.

life's values.³⁹ While $\pi\epsilon\eta$ is not used in Ruth 1:1, 5–6, the concept is that it was proper and fitting for Elimelech to leave Bethlehem with his family to find food (a correct decision). Ruth's refusal to leave Naomi but accompany her to Bethlehem reveals an evaluation of life choices and the rating of life's values (Ruth 1:16–17). Hence, the curse and blessing in Bethlehem revealed a hidden divine action of getting Ruth out of Moab and into Bethlehem.

Discipline and Hope— Ecclesiastes 3:12–14; 9:4; 12:13

Compared with other Wisdom literature, Ecclesiastes' approach to discipline is unique. It does not straightforwardly endorse the strict moral discipline found in Proverbs. Instead, it presents a more nuanced view that intertwines discipline with a realistic acceptance of life's enigmas and Yahweh's sovereignty.⁴⁰ The term "discipline" in Ecclesiastes often aligns with self-restraint or moderation in pursuing pleasure, wealth, or wisdom. The book acknowledges the limitations of human efforts and understanding, emphasizing that certain aspects of life are beyond human control.⁴¹ Therefore, Ecclesiastes encourages a disciplined acceptance of what cannot be changed and a focus on fearing Yahweh and keeping His commandments as the ultimate purpose of life (Ecclesiastes 12:13).

³⁹ Williams, 487.

⁴⁰ Ecclesiastes is concerned with righteousness. "The wisdom teachers' goal is to promote a life of righteous wisdom which is pleasing to *Yahweh*. They know that wise living does not guarantee a life free from poverty or suffering: 'Better is a little with righteousness than large income with injustice' (Prov. 16:8; cf. 15:16; 28:6; Eccles. 4:13; 9:15)." See E. Schnabel, "Wisdom," in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander and Brian Rosner (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 844.

⁴¹ Crenshaw comments that because everyone lacks important knowledge about admissible and inadmissible deeds at any given moment, society suffers from lack of vision. Therefore, humans share the responsibility for perverting the world, not a single individual does good always and escapes sin's clutches (7:20). See Crenshaw, 126.

In Ecclesiastes 3:12–13, Qoheleth uses טוב ("good") in verse 12. *HALOT* defines טוב, in the context of verse 12, as "morally good; to enjoy oneself."⁴² *NASB Exhaustive Concordance* notes that טוב (H2896b) derives from טוב (H2895), which means "to be pleasing, or good."⁴³ Robert Gordon comments that טוב in Wisdom literature (especially Prov. and Eccl.) is more associated with what is good in life, sometimes typified as a comparison and contrast statement.⁴⁴ Ecclesiastes 3:12 held out hope for a better-than-good life provided by Yahweh and bestowed as a person's privilege.⁴⁵ The good life is an embracement of joy, happiness, and willingness to be good. Provan remarks that "doing good" is consistent with the "doings" of Yahweh.⁴⁶ Thus, there

⁴² Koehler, and Baumgartner, "טוב," 371. *BDB* notes that טוב is rendered "better" in Eccl. 3:12. See Brown, Driver, and Briggs, "טוב," 374.

⁴³ *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, "טוב," 1398. The term טוב can be rendered as enjoy (one time), good (sixty-six times), good thing (three times), good things (two times), goodness (one time), graciously (one time), happiness (one time), happy (one time), pleasant (one time), prosperity (eight times), richer (one time), well (one time), what is good (five times). See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, "טוב," 1398.

⁴⁴ Robert Gordon, "טוב," in *NIDOTTE Vol. 2*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 347. The term טוב in verse 12 is used as an adjective. Waltke and O'Connor explain that an adjective used in this way functions in a comparative degree, specifically as a positive comparison. Positive comparisons are frequently identifiable with the מן; however, in verse 12 the מן is missing and must be supplied from the context. See Waltke, and O'Connor, 264–5. I. Höver-Johag comments that the comparative use of טוב "applies only to cases involving human norms, determining what is good or evil, advantageous or disadvantageous, on the basis of human preferences; the ethical claim is not ethical but pragmatic (cf. 2 K. 10:3). In this context we may speak of a scale of values within Wisdom Literature." See I. Höver-Johag, "טוב," in *TDOT Vol. 5*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David Green (Grand Rapids.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 313.

⁴⁵ Eaton, 95. Qoheleth is not focusing on the well-being of others in this verse; however, he is stating that a person should actively pursue and enjoy a happy life.

⁴⁶ Provan, 91. H. Ewald, Hengstenberg, O. Zöckler, E. H. Plumtre, and C. H. H. Wright advocate an ethical sense in 3:12.

is a moral and ethical sense to verse 12, carried over into verse 13. “Doing good” is to be holy and pleasing to Yahweh.⁴⁷

Ecclesiastes 3:14 states Yahweh’s permanence and the fear of Yahweh. The biblical Hebrew term עוֹלָם denotes permanence. *HALOT* renders עוֹלָם as a “long time, duration (usually eternal, eternity).”⁴⁸ In verse 14, Qoheleth states that Yahweh’s actions are unchangeable, highlighted by the statement, “There is nothing to add to it and there is nothing to take from it.” The addition and subtraction phrase are reminiscent of Deuteronomy 4:1–2; 13::1; Proverbs 30:6. The distinction is that Qoheleth is referring to Yahweh’s actions and not the words.⁴⁹ The result is that people should fear Yahweh. Murphy notes that fearing Yahweh, in Ecclesiastes 3:14, emphasizes the action of fear, which constitutes a proper attitude that Yahweh wants His people to cultivate.⁵⁰ As explained in chapter four, fearing Yahweh involves a disciplined approach. It involves Yahweh’s love and discipline and for a person to hear, understand, and act on instructions or commands. H.-P. Stähli explains that Qoheleth uses אָרַךְ to mean “be afraid before Yahweh,” which points to a person’s awareness of dependency on Yahweh.⁵¹ The term אָרַךְ is not a terror to be experienced by a person; however, it is a reverence towards an awesome Yahweh. M. Van Pelt and Walter Kaiser explain that in Ecclesiastes, אָרַךְ is the result of

⁴⁷ Douglas O’Donnell, *Ecclesiastes* (Phillipsburg: P & R Publishing, 2014), “6. Holy and Happy.” Michael Fox comments that enjoyment is under Yahweh’s will, which stems from His control over everything. See Michael Fox, *Qoheleth and His Contradictions* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, Plc., 1989), 194.

⁴⁸ Koehler, and Baumgartner, “עוֹלָם,” 798.

⁴⁹ Murphy, 35.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ H.-P. Stähli, “אָרַךְ,” in *TLOT Vol.2*, ed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 577.

Yahweh’s absolute sovereignty, entailing wise decision-making and maintaining a moral conduct that coincides with Yahweh’s standards.⁵² Therefore, Qoheleth states that people are to enjoy eating, drinking, and life, which are gifts bestowed by Yahweh. The reciprocity of enjoyment and happiness is to know that Yahweh is unchangeable and, thus, the reality is that people should אִירָא ("revere") Him.⁵³

In Ecclesiastes 9:4, the biblical Hebrew term אִירָא is used for “hope” and “trust.” Qoheleth remarks that a person has hope when still alive. What is hope that Qoheleth is referencing? *BDB* renders אִירָא as “security.”⁵⁴ Alfred Jepsen notes that the derivatives of אִירָא can be rendered “to feel secure, be unconcerned,” or, specifying the reason for the security, “to rely on something or someone.”⁵⁵ The term אִירָא, in verse 9:4, comes from the root אִירָא. *NASB Exhaustive Concordance* states that אִירָא means “to trust.”⁵⁶ The term אִירָא; additionally, means “trust” with

⁵² M. Van Pelt, and Walter Kaiser, Jr. “אִירָא,” in *NIDOTTE Vol. 2*, ed. Willem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 523.

⁵³ Provan, 91. Garrett comments that people are contingent beings far from divine stature; therefore, the only proper response is to fear Yahweh. See Garrett, 300.

⁵⁴ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “אִירָא,” 105. E. Gerstenberger notes that אִירָא is used only in 2 Kgs. 18:19; Isa. 36:4; Eccl. 9:4, and that its nominative nuanced expression cannot be accurately determined. See E. Gerstenberger, “אִירָא,” in *TLOT Vol.1*, ed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 228.

⁵⁵ Alfred Jepsen, “אִירָא,” in *TDOT Vol. 2*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David Green (Grand Rapids.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 89. Jepsen additionally comments that certainly every living thing has hope. But the word used here is *bittachon*, and the context includes the idea that this “hope” also will be disappointed in the end, for all life ends in death, as the context states quite clearly. See Jepsen, 91–2.

⁵⁶ *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, “אִירָא,” 1369. The other possible meanings are bold (one time), careless (one time), complacent (three times), confident (two times), fall down (one time), felt secure (one time), have (two times), have confidence (one time), put my trust (three times), put their trust (two times), put your trust (one time), relied (one time), rely (eight times), secure (five times), trust (fifty-one times), trusted (fifteen times), trusting (three times), trusts (nineteen times).

other possible meanings such as confidence (two times) and hope (one time).⁵⁷ Specific desires and expectations do not define hope but spring forth from Yahweh's sovereignty and providence, moving towards a good that agrees with His power.⁵⁸ Without hope, people can do awful things; therefore, hope allows for confidence and trust in Yahweh's sovereignty and providence through His bestowal of gifts that cultivate and nurture enjoyment and happiness in life.⁵⁹ Lohfink posits that בְּטָחוֹן ("trust") is a new word used by Qoheleth for "fear" of Yahweh.⁶⁰ In verses 5 and 6, Qoheleth states what happens to those who are dead: the loss of memory, love, hate, zeal, and toil. However, in 9:9, Qoheleth tells the wise person to enjoy their "fleeting life" with the woman they love given by Yahweh. The person who enjoys their short life contemplates death, which leads to the fear of Yahweh and a trust in Him. Therefore, Ecclesiastes 9:4–6, 9 paints a potential illustration of how fearing Yahweh leads to wisdom, discipline, and hope.

Ecclesiastes 12:13 is the most evident call for discipline, stating, "Fear Yahweh and keep His commandments." The biblical Hebrew term יָרָא ("fear") has already been previously discussed. The term for "keep" is שָׁמַר. G. Sauer notes that שָׁמַר is used as a person's actions to

⁵⁷ NASB Exhaustive Concordance, "בְּטָחוֹן," 1369.

⁵⁸ P. Minear, "Hope," in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible E-J*, ed. George Buttrick (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962), 641. S. Smith writes about Jürgen Moltmann's *Theology of Hope* and how hope speaks about a Yahwistic comprehension that Yahweh knows all before anyone else does and that He is known by His promises. It speaks about a "not yet" situation of human and social existence and that hope, at the human level, is meaningful. Therefore, hope sustains confidence. See S. Smith, "Hope," in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 2nd ed., ed. Walter Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001), 577.

⁵⁹ Longman III, 311. Michael Fox counters by commenting that בְּטָחוֹן is not "hope" or "security." However, בְּטָחוֹן means something "to be relied on" or having a "certainty" about something. See Fox, 258.

⁶⁰ Lohfink, 112.

preserve and keep the commandments.⁶¹ Keith Schoville states that the qal form of שמר is used 370 times in the OT.⁶² He notes that the frequent use of שמר corresponds with religious and spiritual responsibilities, which include discipline.⁶³ Thus, Qoheleth's use of ירא and שמר indicates obedience and dependence on Yahweh. Everything that Qoheleth has observed "under the sun" and stated has asserted Yahweh's sovereignty, the limits of human wisdom, life's shortness, and enjoyment. The logical answer to life's meaninglessness is to obey and revere Yahweh.⁶⁴

The Book of Ecclesiastes deals primarily with life's meaninglessness and how wisdom can be gained from such a circumstance. Therefore, discipline and hope are not topics explicitly or directly addressed. On the other hand, the Book of Ruth deals with discipline and hope; however, it is not concerned with life's meaninglessness. A caveat to this statement is revealed in Ruth 1:11–13, 20–22. In Ruth 1:11–13, Naomi paints a bleak portrait for Ruth and Orpah by indicating the hopelessness of having sons and that she is too old to have additional children.

⁶¹ G. Sauer, "שמר," in *TLOT Vol.3*, ed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 1382.

⁶² Keith Schoville, "שמר," in *NIDOTTE Vol. 1*, ed. Willem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 182. *NASB Exhaustive Concordance* provides an extensive list for שמר (H8104). See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, "שמר," 1484. García López notes that שמר occurs 50 times in Wisdom literature (Job eleven times, Prov. thirty-one times, Eccl. eight times). See García López, "שמר," in *TDOT Vol. 15*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David Green (Grand Rapids.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 279.

⁶³ Schoville, 183.

⁶⁴ Garrett, 345. Longman comments that fearing Yahweh is maintaining a right relationship with Him (justification.) Keeping, or obeying, His commandments maintains that relationship in a pleasing manner (sanctification). See Longman III, 333. Craig Bartholomew remarks that fearing Yahweh is where Proverbs starts, the beginning of wisdom (Prov. 1:7; 2:5), and keeping His commandments is at the core of Israel's covenantal faith. See Craig Bartholomew, *BCOT: Ecclesiastes* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), "III. Frame Narrative: Epilogue (12:8–14), Theological Implications." See Eaton, 177.

Robert Hubbard comments that Naomi makes two improbable conditions. The first is to have a husband and consummate the marriage immediately. The second would be to have several sons. Therefore, Naomi has stated the impossibility of dissuading Ruth and Orpah from joining her travel to Bethlehem.⁶⁵ To further her resolve, Naomi point-blanked states that her life is hopeless because Yahweh has acted against her (Ruth. 1:13b).⁶⁶ Thus, from an Ecclesiastical perspective, Naomi's life is meaningless to the point that when she returns to Bethlehem, she tells the women to call her Mara. Mara, "מָרָא," is the figurative sense of bitterness associated with the perceived sense that Yahweh is responsible for Naomi's agony.⁶⁷ However, amid her agony, Naomi calls Yahweh, Shaddai. The term יְיָ is one of Yahweh's divine titles, meaning "Almighty." M. Weippert explains that יְיָ "should be divided into *še-* and *day* and means "who suffices.""⁶⁸ Within Ruth 1:20–21, Naomi starts with יְיָ, goes to Yahweh, and returns to יְיָ.⁶⁹ Despite her dire circumstances, Naomi does return to her homeland and people and does not forsake Yahweh. Albeit a weakened faith, she still acknowledges Yahweh's sovereignty, which reveals

⁶⁵ Robert Hubbard, Jr., *NICOT: Ruth* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1988), 110.

⁶⁶ Daniel Block, *NAC Vol. 6: Judges, Ruth* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1999), 637. Block remarks that Naomi feels that she is the target of Yahweh's power and wrath (Bethlehem's famine, relocation to Moab, the deaths of her husband and sons, and her daughter-in-law's inability to have children).

⁶⁷ Gary Smith, "מָרָא," in *NIDOTTE Vol. 2*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 1102.

⁶⁸ M. Weippert, "יְיָ," in *TLOT Vol.3*, ed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 1306. *NASB Exhaustive Concordance* notes that the forty-eight instances of יְיָ means "Almighty" ("the almighty," a title for Yahweh). See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, "יְיָ," 1476.

⁶⁹ André LaCocque comments that this is remarkable because Shadday gives and restores offspring, and Yahweh brings back Naomi. See André LaCocque, *CC: Ruth* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014), 57.

discipline, “Yahweh has caused me to return” (Ruth 1:21).⁷⁰ The term שׁוּב is used in verse 21 to mean “to bring back.” The hiphil verbal form denotes the cause of Naomi’s return.⁷¹ Naomi could have stayed in Moab; however, her fear of Yahweh dictated a disciplined response to returning to Bethlehem.

Friendship and Family Loyalty— Ecclesiastes 4:9–12

Ecclesiastes 4:9–12 reveals the favorable terms for companionship versus individuality. The proverbs could have resulted from the individual isolation felt during Qoheleth’s period. Even though social typification was falling apart during this time, the lower class was slower to come apart.⁷² In 4:9, Qoheleth states that two, “שְׁנַיִם,” is better than one. P. P. Jenson comments that שְׁנַיִם can be used in the context of companionship, which stresses a common will between two people.⁷³ Therefore, in verse 9, the emphasis is placed on two people complementing each other doing labor rather than labor’s wages.⁷⁴ Ogden and Zogbo comment that a person having

⁷⁰ Block remarks that “Naomi may have come back home in faith, but hers is a flawed faith. Unable to see human causation in Israel’s famine and in her own trials, the woman the neighbors greet is a bitter old woman. She does indeed ascribe sovereignty to God, but this is a sovereignty without grace, an omnipotent power without compassion, a judicial will without mercy.” See Block, 647. Hubbard explains that “It is theologically significant, however, that Naomi attributed nothing to chance but everything to Yahweh. In her view, there was no other force in the universe.” See Hubbard, Jr., 126.

⁷¹ Waltke and O’Connor explain that the hiphil verbal stem is the causative of the qal stem. Additionally, the hiphil verbal stem indicates the causing of an event and the object participates in the event expressed by the verb. See Waltke, and O’Connor, 433–4. Therefore, Yahweh caused Naomi to return to Bethlehem.

⁷² Lohfink, 71.

⁷³ P. P. Jenson, “שְׁנַיִם,” in *NIDOTTE Vol. 4*, ed. Willem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 194.

⁷⁴ Murphy, 42. However, the more two people work together to achieve a task the higher the reward.

one friend to help is better than doing the work alone.⁷⁵ Ecclesiastes 4:10 illustrates how two people can support each other. In this verse, the first mention of companionship is made with the biblical Hebrew term **חֵבֵר** (“companion”).⁷⁶ George Brooke notes that **חֵבֵר** is to be translated as “fellow worker” in the context of Ecclesiastes 4:10 (also seen in Isa. 44:11).⁷⁷ The act of falling by one person can be comprehended literally (a physical act) or figuratively (a difficulty or crisis). In either case, the other person is there to help the one who has fallen.⁷⁸ In 4:11, Qoheleth states that two people who lie together keep warm versus one person alone. The term **שָׁכַב** is used to denote two people laying down together to keep warm (1 Kgs. 1:2, the young girl that laid in David’s arms to keep him warm).⁷⁹ W. Beuken notes that the biblical Hebrew term is an antonym

⁷⁵ Ogden, and Zogbo, 137. Longman believes the relationship envisioned in 4:9–12 includes friendships, marriages, business associates, and more that would benefit from cooperation between two people. See Longman III, 281.

⁷⁶ Koehler, and Baumgartner, “חֵבֵר,” 288. *NASB Exhaustive Concordance* notes that **חֵבֵר** (H2270) stems from **חָבַר** (H2266) which means “to unite, be joined, to tie a magic knot or spell, to charm.” See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, “חֵבֵר (H2266), 1388. The term **חֵבֵר** (H2270) can mean companion (three times), companions (seven times), fellows (one time), united (one time). See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, “חֵבֵר (H2270), 1388.

⁷⁷ George Brooke, “חֵבֵר,” in *NIDOTTE Vol. 2*, ed. Willem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 17.

⁷⁸ Ogden, and Zogbo, 139. Garrett generalizes the circumstance by stating when one person is in need the other is there to help. See Garrett, 308. Murphy notes it as mutual support. See Murphy, 42.

⁷⁹ Koehler, and Baumgartner, “שָׁכַב,” 1487. *NASB Exhaustive Concordance* lists the following possible renderings for **שָׁכַב**: actually lies (one time), has (one time), laid (six times), laid low (one time), lain (three times), lain down (two times), lay (twenty-two times), lay down (fifteen times), lie (twenty-six times), lie down (thirty-one times), lie still (one time), lies (twenty-five times), lies down (ten times), lodged (one time), lying (seven times), lying down (four times), make your bed (one time), recline (one time), rest (four times), rested (one time), sleep (four times), sleeps (one time), slept (thirty-seven times), take...rest (one time), taking (one time), tip (one time). See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, “שָׁכַב,” 1480.

for קום ("get up, stand (there)), and the basic meaning for שכב is to "lie down, lie (there)."⁸⁰ The term שכב refers to people sleeping nearly twenty-five percent of the times the verb is used.⁸¹ Therefore, the idea in 4:12 is two people lying together for warmth.⁸² Moreover, the illustration of two people lying together for warmth indicates friendship.⁸³ While Qoheleth has provided examples of two people's strength, he strengthens the bond by indicating three friends in 4:12, "A cord of three strands is not quickly torn apart." The biblical Hebrew numeral שלש ("three") is used as a plural passive verb to describe the cord.⁸⁴ P. Jenson remarks that the numeral three is a specific number in the Bible. It represents a minimum unity with plurality; therefore, in Ecclesiastes 4:12, three constitutes completeness or adequacy.⁸⁵ Thus, while one cord is easily broken, two are more robust, and three are durable and contain excessive strength. In the context

⁸⁰ W. Beuken, "שכב," in *TDOT Vol. 14*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David Green (Grand Rapids.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 661.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² Garrett comments that Qoheleth has emotional comfort in mind with שכב in verse 11. The term שכב is used metaphorically for emotional comfort against the world's coldness. See Garrett, 308. Eaton states that the verse speaks of companionship during adversity, grief, or temptation. See Eaton, 109.

⁸³ Barton, 115.

⁸⁴ Waltke and O'Connor explain that in 4:12, שלש is a specialized multiplicative meaning "being done three times, having been done three times." See Waltke, and O'Connor, 422–3. *NASB Exhaustive Concordance* defines שלש as "to do a third time, divide into three parts." It provides the following possible renderings: did it a third time (one time), divide into three parts (one time), do it a third time (one time), stayed for three days (one time), third time (two times), three (two times), three days (one time), three parts (one time), three-year-old (three times). See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, "שלש," 1482.

⁸⁵ P. Jenson, "שלש," in *NIDOTTE Vol. 4*, ed. Willem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 144. However, Murphy comments that the number three only represents plurality and has no significance in verse 12 as opposed to two. See Murphy, 42.

of Ecclesiastes 4:9–12, three companions are stronger against the world and foes, more so than what two companions can achieve.⁸⁶

Ecclesiastes 4:9–12 reveals that friendship is desirable when dealing with life’s challenges, the world’s coldness, and for support. Ruth exemplifies these traits in the Book of Ruth when she willingly goes with Naomi from Moab to Bethlehem (Ruth 1:16–17). The prepositional phrase אֶל-אֹנֶשֶׁת־נָאוֹם indicates her willingness and governs the remainder of 1:16 and the first half of 1:17.⁸⁷ Ruth “will go,” “will lodge (stay),” and “will die” with Naomi. The prepositional phrase reveals that Ruth is willing to forsake her home and religion to accompany Naomi to Bethlehem (a new land), to Israel (a new people), and to accept Yahweh (a new God).⁸⁸ Her commitment was to be lifelong and permanent. While Ruth’s decisions could be considered

⁸⁶ John Jarick, “The Threefold Cord of Ecclesiastes,” *European Judaism* 54, no. 2 (Sept. 2021): 27. Longman comments that 4:12 is known as a number proverb in the ANE and means that having more friends is better than having one. See Longman III, 281. K.-M. Beyse and Helmer Ringgren remark that the pual participle שָׁלֵשׁ is a sign of strength indicating that people can prevail when they unify and help each other. See K.-M. Beyse, and Helmer Ringgren, “שָׁלֵשׁ,” in *TDOT Vol. 15*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David Green (Grand Rapids.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 124.

⁸⁷ Waltke and O’Connor explain that the preposition אֶל, in Ruth 1:16) belongs to a comitative group that signifies accompaniment and addition. See Waltke, and O’Connor, 193. Adam Howell states, “The initial ground clause fronts the prepositional phrase (אֶל-אֹנֶשֶׁת־נָאוֹם), perhaps emphasizing Ruth’s desire to follow Naomi to a particular place. The term אֹנֶשֶׁת־נָאוֹם is locative, “to where you go.” The verbs are both Qal imperfects of הָלַךְ. הָלַכְתִּי is the 2fs, and אֶלְכִּי is the 1cs. In both verbs, the first root letter (ה) drops and the preformative vowel lengthens from *hîreq* to *šērê* (אֶלְכִּי; הָלַכְתִּי). The 2fs form (הָלַכְתִּי) has the *hîreq-yôd* sufformative that is typical of the 2fs imperfectives, and thus reduces the thematic vowel to a vocal *shewa* under the ל. The 1cs form (אֶלְכִּי) is identifiable by the א preformative. The two verbs are translated as future. The action has not happened yet, but it is also not a request from Ruth. She says that she “will go” to the place where (אֶל-אֹנֶשֶׁת־נָאוֹם) Naomi goes (הָלַכְתִּי). See Adam Howell, *Ruth* (Bellingham: Lexham Press, 2022), 75–6.

⁸⁸ Hubbard, Jr., 118. She took on the uncertain future of a bitter widow in a land where she knew no one, enjoyed few legal rights, and—given the traditional Moabite-Israelite rivalry—faced possible ethnic prejudice.

a familial duty, they are also viewed as companionship. First, the travel conditions from Moab to Bethlehem are not revealed in the Ruthan context.⁸⁹ However, the trip would have been more favorable with two people versus Naomi, a single widow traveling alone. Second, Ruth's accompaniment with Naomi signals her willingness to face the challenges of being a widow and childlessness (her predicament being graver than Naomi's because Ruth was a Moabitess) with Naomi in Bethlehem. The challenges include shelter and provisions (Ruth 2:18) inside the city. Finally, Ruth's decision includes moral and emotional support. Ruth's actions encompass what Qoheleth states in Ecclesiastes 4:9–12: her loving and sacrificial loyalty to Naomi by accompanying her instead of returning to Moab.

Hard Work— Ecclesiastes 2:24–26; 9:10

In Ecclesiastes 2:24–26⁹⁰, Qoheleth provides a new meaning for life by revealing Yahweh's divine actions in human affairs; therefore, life is to be enjoyed (Eccl. 2:24). An aspect of this new perspective is that "labor is good." Ecclesiastes 2:24 concludes Qoheleth's observations in the previous six verses, which are a contrastive perspective on labor. Therefore, verse 24 provides a positive view of work in that the rewards are Yahweh's gifts.⁹¹ The biblical

⁸⁹ See Ruth 1:18. See also Frederic Bush, *WBC Vol. 9: Ruth* (Dallas: Word, Inc., 1996), 84.

⁹⁰ Eccl. 3:12–13; 5:17–18 restate a common theme for Qoheleth concerning toil and pleasure. However, the distinction is that Eccl. 2:24–26 is a plain statement, and 3:12–13 and 5:17–18 use an asseverative phrase ("So I realized that...") to increase the emphasis of the plain statement. See Whybray, 87–8.

⁹¹ Katharine Dell, and Tova Forti, "Enjoying the Tension: Reading Qoh 2:25 in the Context of Qoh 2:24–26," *Vetus Testamentum* 69, no. 3 (2019): 484. R. N. Whybray explains that Qoheleth is disillusioned by working hard to gain pleasure and wisdom but that it is meaningless. However, when Qoheleth realizes that a person can never achieve joy by their own means and that those things that bring joy come from Yahweh. See R. N. Whybray, "Qoheleth, Preacher of Joy," *JSOT* 7, no. 23 (1982): 88–9.

Hebrew term עָמַל is employed for “labor.” *NASB Exhaustive Concordance* states that עָמַל stems from עָמַל, meaning “to labor, toil.”⁹² However, עָמַל adds “trouble” to the list of meanings.⁹³ Thus, *HALOT* defines עָמַל as “trouble.”⁹⁴ *BDB* renders עָמַל as “labor, toil.”⁹⁵ The most common form of עָמַל is the nominative עָמַל. David Thompson explains that the nominative is found twenty-two times in Ecclesiastes with a primary meaning of “man’s work, his labor to support himself.”⁹⁶ Thus, the term עָמַל can be comprehended as “toil,” “to toil,” or “labor at,” which might be understood as a metonym for “earnings” or “to earn by toil.”⁹⁷

Ecclesiastes takes a different approach to work than Proverbs or Job. For Qoheleth, work is a ceaseless endeavor that explains his concept of human existence. When he views work “under the sun,” it is a meaningless and purposeless toil with a negative undertone despite the wisdom of working hard.⁹⁸ However, when Qoheleth looks beyond “under the sun,” he states that hard work and its rewards are gifts from Yahweh. He understands that the divinely bestowed

⁹² *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, “עָמַל,” 1449.

⁹³ *NASB Exhaustive Concordance* lists the following possible renderings for עָמַל: anguish (one time), fruit of his labor (one time), fruit of my labor (three times), labor (sixteen times), mischief (nine times), misery (one time), sorry (one time), toil (three times), toils (one time), troubled (thirteen times), troublesome (one time), unjust decisions (one time), wickedness (two times), work (one time). See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, “עָמַל,” 1449.

⁹⁴ Koehler, and Baumgartner, “עָמַל,” 845.

⁹⁵ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “עָמַל,” 765.

⁹⁶ David Thompson, “עָמַל,” in *NIDOTTE Vol. 3*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 434. See also S. Schwertner, “עָמַל,” in *TLOT Vol.2*, ed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 925.

⁹⁷ Fox, 55.

⁹⁸ Benedikt Otzen, “עָמַל,” in *TDOT Vol. 11*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David Green (Grand Rapids.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 200–1.

gifts are by Yahweh's sovereignty and providence.⁹⁹ The wisdom taught is that it is foolish to work hard for selfish gains; however, the wise person who works hard recognizes that the gains come from Yahweh. The recognition of Yahweh's sovereignty is to recognize one's limitations and the essential dependency on Yahweh, the path to enjoying life.¹⁰⁰

In Ecclesiastes 2:26, a different biblical Hebrew term is used for work, עֲמָלָה. Whereas verse 24 references "labor, toil," verse 26 means "occupation" or "task."¹⁰¹ The term עֲמָלָה is derived from עָמַל meaning "to be occupied, busied."¹⁰² HALOT renders עֲמָלָה as "business, affair."¹⁰³ A. R. Pete Diamond explains that עֲמָלָה contains the essential features Qoheleth evaluated in his perspective on reality in the realm of meaningless.¹⁰⁴ Qoheleth says, "This too is vanity and striving after wind." To toil in wisdom and labor, only to turn it over to another person who enjoys Yahweh's favor, is inconceivable, even if the toiler is offensive to Yahweh. Therefore, Qoheleth is frustrated by the meaningless of this and the perceived loss of justice.¹⁰⁵ However, the person who sins ("חַטָּא") is judged by Yahweh because they are living a life that is

⁹⁹ Otzen, "עֲמָלָה," 201.

¹⁰⁰ Provan, 77.

¹⁰¹ *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, "עֲמָלָה," 1449. The other possible meanings are effort (one time), investment (one time), task (six times).

¹⁰² *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, "עָמַל," 1449. Other possible renderings are afflicted (one time), keeps him occupied (one time), occupy (one time).

¹⁰³ Koehler, and Baumgartner, "עֲמָלָה," 857.

¹⁰⁴ A. R. Pete Diamond, "עֲמָלָה," in *NIDOTTE Vol. 3*, ed. Willem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 449.

¹⁰⁵ Michael Fox, "The Meaning of Hebel for Qoheleth," *JBL* 105, no. 3 (Sept. 1986): 418. Fox additionally comments that people cannot decide what happens to themselves. Their hard work cannot secure wealth, prosperity, long life, or righteousness. However, enjoyment can be self-started when people realize that Yahweh bestows divine gifts on them for pleasure. See Fox, *Qoheleth and His Contradictions*, 74–5.

apart from Yahweh. Thus, the sinner's hard work and results (wealth, friends, ideas, projects, prosperity, and more) are not to be enjoyed by themselves but by those who please Yahweh.¹⁰⁶

The preceding verses (Eccl. 9:7–9) to Ecclesiastes 9:10¹⁰⁷ are a restatement of 2:24–26 but in the imperative mood (determined by the biblical Hebrew verb לַלְלֵה in verse 9) positively urging the people to follow Qoheleth's advice.¹⁰⁸ Therefore, hard work is not a burden if the right attitude is adopted. The force of 9:10 is not only to do work but to do it with all of one's might. The biblical Hebrew term כֹּחַ denotes "power, ability (both physical and intellectual)."¹⁰⁹ Helmer Ringgren explains that כֹּחַ belongs to the semantic realm of strength and power and is associated

¹⁰⁶ Eaton, 89. Longman remarks that the sinner is a person who has offended Yahweh. Qoheleth perceives Yahweh's injustice because he is observing the effects from "under the sun." Therefore, Qoheleth thinks that Yahweh is playing favorites. See Longman III, 272. It should be noted that Qoheleth does not delve into righteousness and wickedness in Ecclesiastes; however, the distinctions he makes are between pleasing/not pleasing and lucky/not lucky. See Murphy, 26.

¹⁰⁷ Qoheleth's instruction in Eccl. 9:10 is reiterated in 11:6. The activity in 9:10 and the sowing in 11:6 should be done vigorously and continuously whether they succeed or fail. See Provan, 206.

¹⁰⁸ Whybray, 87–8. Waltke and O'Connor explain that the dominant use of imperatives is for direct commands. However, imperatives can be used to grant permission, convey requests, or signal a wish. See Waltke, and O'Connor, 571.

¹⁰⁹ Koehler, and Baumgartner, "כֹּחַ," 469. *BDB* states that כֹּחַ is generally comprehended as "ability" or "efficiency" in 9:10. See Brown, Driver, and Briggs, "כֹּחַ," 470. *NASB Exhaustive Concordance* notes that כֹּחַ is from an unused word with the possible meanings of ability (three times), able (three times), force (one time), fruit (one time), might (four times), mightily (one time), mighty (one time), power (forty times), powerful (one time), powerless (one time), strength (sixty-five times), strong (one time), wealth (one time). See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, "כֹּחַ," 1409.

with parallels with various words referencing strength.¹¹⁰ Wisdom and power are associated in Wisdom literature, primarily in the Book of Job.¹¹¹

The Book of Ruth is no stranger to hard work, as evidenced by Ruth's gleaning the fields for grain. Ruth 2:7 reveals the intensity of Ruth's gleaning. Boaz's servant tells him that Ruth has been gleaning in the field from morning until she is in the shelter for rest.¹¹² The exact nature of Ruth's work is revealed by the word רָצַף ("gather, harvest, take (in, away), exterminate, unite against, conspire against, withdraw").¹¹³ Ruth 2:7 implies that Ruth is doing all the work to gather the grain. Bush comments that harvesting grain involved a reaper using a sickle to cut the grain stalks, the bundlers grabbed a handful of stalks to bind them into sheaves, and the gleaners would glean the grain.¹¹⁴ It is noted that the compound prepositional article בְּ provides the clue to the phrase's probable meaning, "to glean and gather in bundles." Ruth is not functioning in an idle capacity but is active in securing grain.

¹¹⁰ Helmer Ringgren, "רָצַף," in *TDOT Vol. 7*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David Green (Grand Rapids.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 122. See also Robin Wakely, "רָצַף," in *NIDOTTE Vol. 2*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 613.

¹¹¹ Twenty-one of the 124 occurrences happen in Job, which handles רָצַף as a theme for Yahweh's omnipotence that transcends people's power. See A. S. van der Woude, "רָצַף," in *TLOT Vol.2*, ed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 610–1.

¹¹² Ruth's work began in the morning and lasted until the evening (Ruth 2:17). Not only did she glean the barley harvest, but she worked in the wheat fields as well. See Ruth 2:17, 23 and Katherine Dell, *The Solomonic Corpus of 'Wisdom' and Its Influence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, Inc., 2020), 177.

¹¹³ I. Cornelius, Andrew Hill, and Cleon Rogers, Jr., "רָצַף," in *NIDOTTE Vol. 1*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 462. The biblical Hebrew term רָצַף comes from the root "to gather, remove." See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, 1363.

¹¹⁴ Bush, 114.

Ruth 2:17 reveals the length and amount of Ruth's work; it lasted until evening and yielded an ephah of barley. De Waard and Nida comment that "until evening" refers to sunset or when the sun can no longer be seen.¹¹⁵ Besides taking a break (Ruth 2:7), Ruth has completed a full day's work, gleaning and gathering. However, the biblical author indicates another clue about the extent of her work: "She beat out what she had gleaned." Hence, not only did she gather into sheaves the grain stalks and glean the grain, but she also took the sheaves to the threshing floor to beat out the grain from the stalks.

Ruth's actions in 2:7 and 17 reveal she was not idle in her gleaning and gathering grain. She worked vigorously, continuously, and made the most of the opportunities available. Since her actions and character pleased Yahweh, He rewarded her with a marriage, children, and a place in Israelite history.

Entreaty— Ecclesiastes 12:12

Ecclesiastes 12:12 begins a section on caution. While the "one Shepherd" (Eccl. 12:11b) is the source of wisdom, secular literature is the source of folly.¹¹⁶ The academic pursuit for knowledge, or wisdom, is a commendable endeavor, although it can be very tasking on a person.

¹¹⁵ Jan de Waard, and Eugene Nida, *UBS: Ruth*, 2nd ed. (New York: United Bible Societies, 1992), 37.

¹¹⁶ Eaton explains that too much studying has a physical disability stipulation but, also, it takes away from discipleship. He notes that Israel knew at that time to rebuke human wisdom when it crowded out discipleship. See Eaton, 176. Daniel Estes explains the verse by noting, "Qohelet has demonstrated amply that understanding life entails the hard work of study, but he does not want his student to make it even harder by refusing to accept the truth that he has been taught. In a world in which there are so many books and so little time, Qohelet is urging his young student to learn to be a good steward of his study." See Daniel Estes, *Handbook on the Wisdom Books and Psalms* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 382. Ogden and Zogbo try to paint v. 12 with a positive overtone. They explain that what is construed as a warning is in fact a statement by the biblical author to his student informing them that searching for wisdom is hard work. "Wearying" is not a negative term but a fact of life. See Ogden and Zogbo, 441.

Many scholars¹¹⁷ take the position that Qohelet is providing a caution against overburdening oneself. Therefore, Qoheleth's entreaty is indicated by the biblical Hebrew verb *זָהַר*. *HALOT* defines the niph'al form of *זָהַר* as "to heed a warning."¹¹⁸ John Hartley comments that some interpretations take a lighter stance with *זָהַר* and render the verb as "be careful, be advised." However, the more robust sense of "warn" is warranted for *זָהַר* in 12:12.¹¹⁹

The warning in the Epilogue (Eccl. 12:12) is used as an entreaty against going above and beyond the statement made in 12:11. The use of *וְיִתֵּר* ("and beyond") with *זָהַר* has a reflexive force that means "take warning" or "admonish yourself." The entreaty is for the individual to exercise wise judgment and responsibility in handling wisdom.¹²⁰ Therefore, the entreaty is against adding words to what the wise have already stated previously, and it is not a warning against all wisdom teachings up to Qoheleth's time.¹²¹ However, Ogden and Zogbo comment that

¹¹⁷ Eaton, Ogden and Zogbo, Lohfink, and others.

¹¹⁸ Koehler, and Baumgartner, "זָהַר," 265. Waltke and O'Connor explain that *זָהַר* is used in a tolerative construction, which combines the reflexive notion with the notion of permission. Therefore, the subject of the niph'al verb is semi-willing to follow the action. Thus, Eccl. 12:12a can be translated as "Be warned, my son," or "Allow or suffer yourself to be warned." See Waltke, and O'Connor, 389. *NASB Exhaustive Concordance* notes that *זָהַר* comes from a root meaning "to warn." It lists the following renderings for *זָהַר*: give them warning (one time), receive instruction (one time), take warning (two times), taken warning (one time), teach (one time), took warning (one time), warn (six times), warned (seven times), warns (one time). See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, "זָהַר," 1386.

¹¹⁹ John Hartley, "זָהַר," in *NIDOTTE Vol. 1*, ed. Willem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 1061. M. Görg parses *זָהַר* differently by stating that the verb is a hiphil imperative and should be rendered "be advised." See M. Görg, "זָהַר," in *TDOT Vol. 4*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David Green (Grand Rapids.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 43.

¹²⁰ Eaton, 175. Garrett comments that the contrast is not between the study of canonical versus noncanonical wisdom but between failure to appreciate wisdom on the one hand and excessive zeal for study on the other. See Garrett, 344.

¹²¹ Martin Shields, "Re-examining the Warning of Eccl XII 12," *Vetus Testamentum* 50, no. 1 (2000): 125.

זהר should not be comprehended negatively but positively because of the nature of the call for the son to pay close attention to and learn from the wisdom instructions.¹²² Estes notes that it is an entreaty against undertaking additional investigations that would weary the student. Qoheleth has demonstrated a remarkable understanding of the hard work of comprehending life. Therefore, he does not want the student to burden himself with additional work by refusing what Qoheleth has already stated. Thus, the student should exercise humility and discernment when engaging in the rigorous learning task.¹²³

In Ruth 2:7, Ruth says, “וַתֹּאמֶר אֶלְקָטָהּ־נָא וְאָסַפְתִּי” (“And she said, Please let me glean and gather.”).” Waltke and O’Connor explain that this is a volitional form following a jussive.¹²⁴ They comment that the construction with אֶל tends to reflect urgency (“אֶלְקָטָהּ”).¹²⁵ In Ruth 2:2, Ruth’s use of entreaty recognizes that she is a stranger, newcomer, and poor, and the emphatic particle acknowledges her place behind everyone else in the field.¹²⁶ Hubbard notes that the distinction between the entreaty in 2:2 and 2:7 is that the first instance declares Ruth’s intention while the second is a permissive request.¹²⁷

Inappropriate Touching— Ecclesiastes 7:26

The Book of Ecclesiastes does not explicitly mention inappropriate touching or sexual misconduct. However, Ecclesiastes does broach the subject of physical pleasures, including

¹²² Ogden, and Zogbo, 440.

¹²³ Estes, 382.

¹²⁴ Waltke, and O’Connor, 530.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 567.

¹²⁶ Dell, *The Solomonic Corpus of ‘Wisdom’ and Its Influence*, 178.

¹²⁷ Hubbard, Jr., 147.

women's company. In Ecclesiastes 7:26, Qoheleth describes a “woman whose heart is snares and nets, whose hands are chains,” and that she will capture a sinner. Qoheleth uses the biblical Hebrew term מְצוֹד for “snares.” *NASB Exhaustive Concordance* comments that מְצוֹד is derived from the root צוּד, which means “to hunt.”¹²⁸ From the primitive root, מְצוֹד can mean “a hunting implement, net.”¹²⁹ *BDB* notes that מְצוֹד is defined explicitly as a “net;” however, in Ecclesiastes 7:26 it refers to a “woman.”¹³⁰ W. Domeris explains that צוּד comes to the front in Wisdom literature and is notable for “persistence” (Job 10:16) and “stalking” (Lam. 4:18).¹³¹ Metaphorically, צוּד can denote the unrighteous person who is hunting a life or soul (Mic.7:2), the false propheticess in Ezekiel 13:18 who hunts down the righteous, and Proverbs 6:26 speaks how an adulteress hunts for a man’s life.¹³² Therefore, in Ecclesiastes 7:26, the woman is a person who hunts and nets men who are not faithful to Yahweh.¹³³

¹²⁸ *NASB Exhaustive Concordance* lists the other possible renderings for צוּד: catches (one time), hunt (eight times), hunt down (two times), hunted (two times), hunted me down (one time), hunts (two times). See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, “צוּד,” 1459.

¹²⁹ *NASB Exhaustive Concordance* mentions booty (one time), net (one time), snares (one time) as the probable renderings for מְצוֹד. See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, “מְצוֹד,” 1427.

¹³⁰ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “מְצוֹד,” 844. Baker and Carpenter comments that מְצוֹד refers to a seductress throwing out nets to capture men. See Baker, and Carpenter, “מְצוֹד,” 653.

¹³¹ W. Domeris, “צוּד,” in *NIDOTTE Vol. 3*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 773.

¹³² M. Oeming, “צוּד,” in *TDOT Vol. 12*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David Green (Grand Rapids.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 273.

¹³³ Garrett; however, contends that the woman in Eccl. 7:26 is not a prostitute or Woman Folly but a wife who is trapping her husband via a domestic conflict. See Garrett, 324. Longman counters by commenting that the woman in view is a seductive woman, not a wife in a marital conflict. See Longman III, 302. Timothy Little comments that Qoheleth has Dame Folly envisioned in 7:26 because in 7:28 the one man out of the thousand has married Lady Wisdom, all others have found Dame Folly including himself. See Timothy Little, “Finding Lady

Through the wisdom lens, Qoheleth is observing that a person who is wise and pleasing to Yahweh will avoid the nets cast by a seductive woman; however, the sinner does not care and willingly succumbs to her “snares and nets.” The sexual battle is explored in Proverbs 2:12–19 when the young man is exhorted to stay away from the seductress and adulteress.¹³⁴ In keeping with the sexual morality teachings in Proverbs, Qoheleth shares the same traditional Israelite values that understood adultery as sinful and detrimental.¹³⁵ Kyle Dunham remarks that Proverbs warns about strange women, and 1 Kings 11 condemns marriages to foreign women; therefore, Qoheleth is instructing self-discipline against the attractiveness of illicit sexual relations.¹³⁶ A clue to the woman’s identity is revealed in the biblical Hebrew term מַר. *BDB* interprets מַר as “harlot.”¹³⁷ Gary Smith comments that in Ecclesiastes 7:26, מַר designates a solid emotional bond between a man and a woman, not bitterness.¹³⁸ However, the context encompassing מַר (death’s inescapability) suggests that the biblical Hebrew term should be interpreted as “bitter.”

Wisdom: The Excellent Woman (אֵשֶׁת חַיִל) as a Synecdoche for the Order of Creation and Interpreting Ecclesiastes 7:28,” *JETS* 66, no. 1 (Mar. 2023): 68–9.

¹³⁴ Provan, 154.

¹³⁵ A distinction should be made that Qoheleth is not referring to all women in general. Most Hebrews understood that the source of man’s sinful nature was the woman (Gen. 3:1–6; 6:1–5). However, Qoheleth only has a certain woman in mind in Eccl. 7:26, the one who intentionally seeks a man to seduce. See Barton, 146.

¹³⁶ Kyle Dunham, “The Woman Who Is a Snare: The Identity and Nature of the Female Figure in Ecclesiastes 7:25–29,” *Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal* 27 (2022): 31.

¹³⁷ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “מַר,” 600. *NASB Exhaustive Concordance* lists the following renderings for מַר: bitter (fifteen times), bitter thing (one time), bitterly (four times), bitterness (eleven times), discontented (one time), embittered (one time), fierce (three times), great bitterness (one time), greatly distressed (one time). See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, “מַר,” 1428.

¹³⁸ Gary Smith, “מַר,” in *NIDOTTE Vol. 2*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 1103. However, Dunham notes that מַר is used only twice in the OT to characterize people with a bitter harmful nature to hurt others, Prov. 5:4 and Eccl. 7:26. See Dunham, 38.

Ecclesiastes does not support the idea of מַר referring to a wife's physical or emotional grip over her husband.¹³⁹ The woman in 7:26 is a bad or loose person who is shameless and exhibits confidence in her ability to satisfy a man's desire; therefore, she is wicked in using her methods to control men.¹⁴⁰ Therefore, she is outside the family boundaries and poses a risk to men who should be faithful to their wives gifted by Yahweh.¹⁴¹ Thus, while inappropriate touching is not directly addressed in 7:26, there are apparent elements of sexual immorality or misconduct indicated by Qoheleth's words.

In the Book of Ruth, Boaz instructs Ruth to glean from his fields alongside the maidservants. Additionally, he informs her that the servants have been commanded not to touch her (Ruth 2:9). The biblical Hebrew verb used for "touch" is נָגַע. Baker and Carpenter explain that, in the Ruthan context, נָגַע means "to touch, to reach, to strike." However, in a more profound sense, it can refer to actual harm caused by one person to another.¹⁴² De Waard and Nida have gone as far as to indicate that Boaz's command to the servants was not to molest Ruth.¹⁴³ Bush remarks that נָגַע means to molest, trouble, or interfere. He points to 2 Samuel 4:10 and Jeremiah 12:14 to indicate how נָגַע is to be used in the Ruthan context.¹⁴⁴ Hubbard explains that it might have been common practice to physically subdue a gleaner who overstepped the boundary by interfering with the reaper's work. Therefore, since Boaz is generous to Ruth by

¹³⁹ Dunham, 39.

¹⁴⁰ Aron Pinker, "Qohelet's Views on Women—Misogyny or Standard Perceptions? An Analysis of Qohelet 7,23–29 and 9,9," *Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament* 26, no. 2 (2012): 185.

¹⁴¹ Dunham, 48–9.

¹⁴² Baker, and Carpenter, "נָגַע," 706.

¹⁴³ De Waard, and Nida, 30.

¹⁴⁴ Bush, 122.

allowing her to glean more than expected, the command would ensure her protection from the reapers.¹⁴⁵ Whether the inappropriate touching was meant to be verbal, emotional, physical, or sexual abuse is not abundantly clear. However, steps were taken to prevent such an encounter between Ruth and the young men.

True Reward— Ecclesiastes 2:24; 3:13, 22; 5:19; 9:7–9

Qoheleth in Ecclesiastes 2:24; 3:13, 22; 5:19; 8:15; 9:7–9 suggests that finding pleasure in one’s everyday activities and living life to its fullest is a gift from Yahweh, who has given life to people who are obedient to Him. In Ecclesiastes 2:24, enjoyment is seen as coming from the hand of Yahweh. The biblical Hebrew term for “hand” is yad .¹⁴⁶ *HALOT* indicates a metaphorical use of yad to denote the “hand of Yahweh.”¹⁴⁷ A. S. van der Woude comments that yad has over 1,600 occurrences in the OT, with thirteen occurring in Ecclesiastes.¹⁴⁸ It describes Yahweh’s irresistible might and His sovereignty and providence that extend from it. Manfred Dreytza explains that the theological metaphor of Yahweh’s yad finds root in Israel’s experience of redemption from slavery (Exod. 3:20) and is metonymically used to describe His mighty acts of salvation or judgment.¹⁴⁹ Here, Qoheleth comes face-to-face with a beneficent Yahweh by

¹⁴⁵ Hubbard, Jr., 159.

¹⁴⁶ *NASB Exhaustive Concordance* provides a lengthy list for yad that includes literal and metaphorical renderings. See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, “ yad ,” 1400.

¹⁴⁷ Koehler, and Baumgartner, “ yad ,” 387.

¹⁴⁸ A. S. van der Woude, “ yad ,” in *TLOT Vol.2*, ed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 497. Woude further notes that The OT discusses the hand of Yahweh anthropomorphically over 200 times either in the expression *yad yhw* or with a suffixed or an absolute *yad*. *Ibid.*, 501.

¹⁴⁹ Manfred Dreytza, “ yad ,” in *NIDOTTE Vol. 2*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 396.

exclaiming that life's enjoyment and pleasure result from Yahweh's divine acts.¹⁵⁰ For Qoheleth, the assertion that enjoyment amid work comes from Yahweh is an alternative to life's meaningless. Therefore, it is clear to Qoheleth that Yahweh inspires joy due to His approval of people who please Him.¹⁵¹ The means to pleasing Yahweh, according to Qoheleth, is by fearing Him and keeping His commandments (Eccl. 12:13). Fearing Yahweh is the beginning of wisdom (Prov. 1:7). Despite life's challenges, frustrations, and mysteriousness, the antidote for meaningless is pleasing Yahweh who reveals hope and contentment.¹⁵²

Qoheleth restates 2:24 in 3:13 and 5:19; however, he states that enjoyment is a "gift from Yahweh." The biblical Hebrew term used is מַתָּת. *BDB* interprets מַתָּת as "the gift of *Yahweh* (of the enjoyment of man)."¹⁵³ Michael Grisanti explains that in the descriptive semantic realm, נָתַן, in 3:13, refers to "gifts or abundance."¹⁵⁴ It is the fifth most common verb in the OT with over 2,000 occurrences (twenty-five in Eccl.).¹⁵⁵ Yahweh's giving and effecting indicates His control

¹⁵⁰ Rad, 231. When a person is enveloped with Yahweh's will, their outlook on life, work, play, and more are indicated by joy as a realization that their portion is gifted by Yahweh. See Eaton, 86.

¹⁵¹ Agustinus Gianto, "The Theme of Enjoyment in Qohelet," *Biblica* 73, no. 4 (1992): 530, 532.

¹⁵² Roy Zuck, "God and Man in Ecclesiastes," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 175, no. 700 (Oct. 2018): 391. The ways to please Yahweh is to be wise, worship Him, remember Him, fear Him, be diligent and not lazy, and enjoy life that Yahweh has provided. *Ibid.*, 396–7.

¹⁵³ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, "מַתָּת," 682. *NASB Exhaustive Concordance* notes that מַתָּת is derived from the root נָתַן, which means "to give, put, set." The other renderings for נָתַן are too extensive to list; however, the range of meanings is plentiful. See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, נָתַן, 1439. The term מַתָּת can be interpreted as gift (two times), gifts (one time), give (two times), reward (one time). See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, מַתָּת, 1431.

¹⁵⁴ Michael Grisanti, "נָתַן," in *NIDOTTE Vol. 3*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 208.

¹⁵⁵ C. Labuschagne, "נָתַן," in *TLOT Vol.2*, ed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 775–6.

over creation. He controls what happens both in creation and history; therefore, the giving and effecting can occur within humanity or the individual. In humanity, Yahweh's gifts involve the natural sphere and the human realm.¹⁵⁶ E. Lipinski and H. J. Fabry comment that נתן can mean "bestowing" or "granting a favor." In this perspective, eating, drinking, and enjoyment are gifts ("bestowments") of Yahweh.¹⁵⁷

In Ecclesiastes 3:1–11, Qoheleth explains how Yahweh gives life's order of events. He ponders Yahweh's sovereign design and realizes that everything is according to Yahweh's appointed time. However, due to people's finiteness, there is an inability to discern any plan or pattern to Yahweh's purposes.¹⁵⁸ Since people cannot fathom Yahweh's purposes, they should enjoy life through Yahweh's gifts. Eaton comments that what has changed for Qoheleth is that he realizes that secularism gives way to theism, pessimism to optimism, and autonomy to faith, which leads to fearing Yahweh.¹⁵⁹ In 5:18, Longman comments that Qoheleth realizes that life is short with limited enjoyment; however, Yahweh's gift to people is their acceptable portion in this life. Therefore, instead of trying to achieve something more significant, people should enjoy what has been given.¹⁶⁰ Enjoyment as a gift from Yahweh is described phenomenologically by

¹⁵⁶ Labuschagne, "נתן," 788–9.

¹⁵⁷ E. Lipinski, and H. J. Fabry, "נתן," in *TDOT Vol. 10*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David Green (Grand Rapids.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 92.

¹⁵⁸ Garrett, 299. Longman comments that not knowing the times paralyzes wisdom and renders it useless. Qoheleth views this as a burden placed on people, having a sense of something more going on but unable to determine what it is. See Longman III, 276. Barton remarks that Qoheleth thinks that Yahweh is being jealous least people should become equal to him. See Barton, 101.

¹⁵⁹ Eaton, 96. Murphy calls this a resigned conclusion by Qoheleth. See Murphy, 35.

¹⁶⁰ Longman III, 290. Murphy notes that the context could either mean that Yahweh's gifts are to be a distraction from life's meaningless and shortness or it is an affirmation of a

Qoheleth. When a person is happy, life's meaninglessness and brevity retreat into their subconscious; therefore, Yahweh's gift of enjoyment can be perceived as an ecstasy emanating from the heart.¹⁶¹

Qoheleth reiterates 2:24 in 9:7–9; however, he uses two distinct biblical Hebrew terms, רצה for “approved” (Eccl. 9:7 referring to Yahweh's approving a person's work) and תִּלְקַח for “reward” (Eccl. 9:9 referring to everything that Yahweh has bestowed on a person). 9:7 states that Yahweh has already רצה (“approved”) people's works. *BDB* defines רצה (a qal perfect verb) as “to be pleased with, accept favorably.”¹⁶² *HALOT* interprets רצה as “to take pleasure in, be favorable to someone, be well disposed.”¹⁶³ G. Gerleman explains that lexical evidence suggests that רצה was used positively.¹⁶⁴ Therefore, in theological language, רצה denotes divine pleasure. Murphy notes that רצה is often associated with divine pleasure with sacrifices (Deut 33:11; Amos 5:22). However, in Ecclesiastes 9:7, רצה is independent of human actions. Yahweh's gifts are not earned but determined by His will and purpose, and Qoheleth recommends that people

divine gift enabling people to positively endure life's brevity and challenges (Eccl. 3:13). See Murphy, 53.

¹⁶¹ Provan, 128.

¹⁶² Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “רצה,” 953. Waltke and O'Connor explain that רצה, in the Eccl. 9:7 context, is a qal stative verb that shows a characteristic whether it is inherent or achieved. See Waltke, and O'Connor, 371. With a perfect state, רצה indicates an action with a past, present, or future state related to a preceding situation or a past situation relevant to a continuing later state. The perfect state represents a state flowing from an earlier situation, and it therefore seems better to think of it as a nuance that may be related to aspect. *Ibid.*, 483–4. Therefore, Yahweh has already approved the people's works (a preceding circumstance continuing to the present).

¹⁶³ Koehler, and Baumgartner, “רצה,” 1281. *NASB Exhaustive Concordance* lists thirty-one probable renderings for רצה, which involve a form of “approval” or “acceptance.” See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, “רצה,” 1473.

¹⁶⁴ G. Gerleman, “רצה,” in *TLOT Vol.3*, ed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 1259.

enjoy them.¹⁶⁵ H. Barstad notes that in Wisdom literature, רצה is usually associated with human relationships. However, Yahweh can be indirectly or directly the subject of רצה when He extends רצה to individuals whom He calls or in everyday experiences.¹⁶⁶

In Ecclesiastes 9:9, Qoheleth summarizes verses 7–8, concluding that these are the “rewards in life.” The biblical Hebrew term חֶלֶק is used to denote “reward.” *NASB Exhaustive Concordance* states that חֶלֶק is derived from the root חָלַק, which means “to divide, share.”¹⁶⁷ The nominative חֶלֶק means “portion, tract, territory.”¹⁶⁸ Fox explains that using “portion” for חֶלֶק is allowable only when it is understood that the “portion” does not belong to a “whole,” which is the potential for experiencing pleasure. Experiencing pleasure is a חֶלֶק that Yahweh gives or takes away from a person.¹⁶⁹ Qoheleth’s use of חֶלֶק infers a meaning, unlike the rest of the OT. In Ecclesiastes, Qoheleth states that a person’s “reward” or “portion” is allotted to human life;

¹⁶⁵ Murphy, 92. Barton remarks that Yahweh has left these things for enjoyment since the time He created the world. See Barton, 162.

¹⁶⁶ H. Barstad, “רצה,” in *TDOT Vol. 13*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David Green (Grand Rapids.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 620. Thus, רצה is Yahweh’s mysterious approval and bestowal of gifts to individuals. See Murphy, 92. Eaton notes that verse 7 is the closest that Qoheleth has come to the doctrine of justification by faith. He states, “Man has but to receive contentment as *Yahweh’s* gift (cf. 3:13); *Yahweh* will approve of him and his works. The believer is not struggling for acceptance; he is ‘already’ accepted.” See Eaton, 145.

¹⁶⁷ *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, “חֶלֶק,” 1392.

¹⁶⁸ *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, “חֶלֶק,” 1392. The other possible renderings are associate (one time), catch (one time), divisions (two times), equal portions (one time), farmland (one time), inheritance (one time), land (one time), legacy (one time), lot (one time), portion (thirty-six times), portions (four times), property (two times), reward (four times), share (nine times), territory (one time). *HALOT* interprets חֶלֶק as “profit.” See Koehler, and Baumgartner, “חֶלֶק,” 324. Cornelius Van Dam remarks that חֶלֶק can also refer to a “share of booty.” See Cornelius Van Dam, “חֶלֶק,” in *NIDOTTE Vol. 2*, ed. Willem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 159.

¹⁶⁹ Fox, *Qoheleth and His Contradictions*, 58–9.

however, in the rest of the OT, חָלַק is something that a person can passively and actively receive.¹⁷⁰ Fuhr comments that Ecclesiastes 9:9 begins with the imperative רַאֲהֵן ("enjoy") and that enjoyment is a Yahwistic gift that cannot be pursued; however, it can be embraced.¹⁷¹

Those people who please Yahweh feel the “hand of Yahweh” (2:24) are to enjoy pleasures as a “gift of Yahweh” (3:13; 5:19) and receive their “reward” (9:9) because their toil has been “approved” (9:7). In the Book of Ruth, Boaz entreats Yahweh to “reward” Ruth’s work (Ruth 2:12). While Qoheleth used חָלַק, the biblical author in Ruth used שָׁלַם. K.-J. Illman explains that שָׁלַם usually refers to “peace;” however, it can denote “wholeness.”¹⁷² In the Ruthan context, שָׁלַם is used to denote “repayment” as a positive reward. Yahweh is referred to sometimes as a “repayer” (Deut. 5:9; 7:10; 2 Sam. 3:39), and Boaz entreats Yahweh to act in this capacity.¹⁷³ Boaz does not know that Yahweh’s providence has been with Ruth since she married Mahlon.¹⁷⁴ Yahweh’s redemptive and restorative plans are not always immediately known. In the

¹⁷⁰ M. Tsevat, “חָלַק,” in *TDOT Vol. 4*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David Green (Grand Rapids.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 451.

¹⁷¹ Fuhr, 194. Provan states, “It is in receiving life as a gift from *Yahweh* and in not striving to manipulate it and exploit it in order to arrive at some kind of “gain” that mortal beings can find contentment.” See Provan, 74.

¹⁷² K.-J. Illman, “שָׁלַם,” in *TDOT Vol. 15*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David Green (Grand Rapids.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 97.

¹⁷³ Illman, 100. Illman comments that Boaz expects Yahweh to repay Ruth because of her kindness. In Prov. 19:17, it is told that Yahweh repays those who show kindness to the poor.

¹⁷⁴ After the deaths of Elimelech, Mahlon, and Chilion, Naomi received word that the famine has ended in Bethlehem and there is now food. Therefore, she leaves Moab with Naomi to return to her homeland. Yahweh’s providence is indicated by the familial deaths that resulted in Ruth traveling to Bethlehem and eventually meeting Boaz. Because of her kindness, generosity, and compassion, Boaz becomes the kinsman redeemer by marrying Ruth, redeeming the family property, and providing an heir.

immediate setting of Ruth 2:12, Boaz invites Ruth to supper and generously heaps food onto her plate, which she carries the leftovers to Naomi (Ruth 2:18). However, Ruth and Naomi still face the difficulties associated with being poor and widowed. Unknowing to all the characters, Yahweh has already commenced a restorative plan, which will answer Boaz's entreaty for *שלום*.¹⁷⁵ During the time of Boaz's statement, he is striving to provide hope and comfort for Ruth in her current distress; she has acted righteously and is due future wages ("שלום").¹⁷⁶

Humility— Ecclesiastes 5:2, 13; 8:17

Qoheleth states in Ecclesiastes 5:2 that people should not make rash or ill-considered agreements with Yahweh that devolve into a demanding prayer. However, he advises to make words few and thoughtful. Humility is derived from humanity and is perceived as a weakness due to oppression or mismanagement, which can result from pride.¹⁷⁷ Qoheleth uses the biblical Hebrew term *מהר* to denote "impulse." *BDB* notes that the piel form of *מהר* means "to hasten."¹⁷⁸ Anthony Tomasino explains that when *מהר* is paired with another verb, in Ecclesiastes 5:2 *מהר* is paired with *בא* ("to bring") with the connective *ל*, then *מהר* inherits an adverbial quality meaning "quickly."¹⁷⁹ Qoheleth advises people to use self-control when they pray to Yahweh, which a

¹⁷⁵ Greg King, "Ruth 2:1–13," *Interpretation* 52, no. 2 (1998): 184. The realization of Boaz's entreaty is indicated in Ruth 4 through marriage, the redemption of family property, children, and a place in Israelite history.

¹⁷⁶ Tzvi Novick, "Wages from God: The Dynamics of a Biblical Metaphor," *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 73, no. 4 (Oct. 2011): 721.

¹⁷⁷ D. Searle, "Humility," in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander and Brian Rosner (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 567.

¹⁷⁸ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, "מהר," 555. *HALOT* adds that *מהר* with an infinitive refers to "why have you hurried so much?". See Koehler, and Baumgartner, "מהר," 554.

¹⁷⁹ Anthony Tomasino, "מהר," in *NIDOTTE Vol. 2*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 851. The term *מהר* in an infinitive construction is called an auxiliary

wise person exhibits.¹⁸⁰ In the following verses, Ecclesiastes 5:4–7, Qoheleth reveals how unkept vows, wordiness, and excuses displeases Yahweh are signs of futility (“for in many dreams and in many words there is emptiness.”). In these verses, Qoheleth is comparing the sinner to a fool. A fool who does not fulfill a vow (Deut. 23:22–24) is denied Yahweh’s approval, and wordiness can cause the fool to sin by trying to brush off past offenses.¹⁸¹ Such actions displease and angers Yahweh. However, Qoheleth states that fearing Yahweh guards against these follies (Eccl. 5:7). To restrain one’s speech is Qoheleth’s advice for wisdom. The beginning of wisdom is to fear Yahweh, which cultivates a behavior pleasing to Him. A mindful heart to Yahweh produces no wordiness or unnecessary work.¹⁸² Thus, Yahweh gives grace to the humble and opposes the proud (Prov. 3:34).

verb. See Helmer Ringgren, “מהר,” in *TDOT Vol. 8*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David Green (Grand Rapids.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 138.

¹⁸⁰ Tremper Longman explains that Qoheleth is talking about prayers in Eccl. 5:2. When talking about the impulsive person praying, Qoheleth is essentially saying that they are hallucinating when they draw similarities between working hard and speaking to Yahweh with many words. See Tremper Longman III, “The ‘Fear of God’ in the Book of Ecclesiastes,” *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 25, no. 1 (2015): 16.

¹⁸¹ Lohfink, 77. Barton calls hasty vows as a favorite resort for the foolish. See Barton, 123.

¹⁸² Garrett comments that a wise person knows that they have nothing to offer to Yahweh; therefore, the wise person is in no position to bargain, impress, or be equal with Yahweh. However, the fool seeks to glorify and advance themselves before Yahweh with lofty vows and words. See Garrett, 311. Longman posits that Qoheleth is advocating a healthy distance from Yahweh commenting that Qoheleth’s fear of Yahweh has more to do with being afraid than reverence. Therefore, the person who is fearing Yahweh knows when to keep their distance and not cross Yahweh. This comprehension is unlike the fear of Yahweh in Proverbs because in Proverbs reverence is highlighted to cultivate and nurture a healthy relationship with Yahweh. See Longman III, “The ‘Fear of God’ in the Book of Ecclesiastes,” 16.

Qoheleth observes that “riches hoarded by their owner to his hurt.” (Eccl. 5:13). The biblical Hebrew term שמר is used to denote “hoarding.”¹⁸³ López notes that שמר is used eight times in the qal form and one time as a nominalized participle in Ecclesiastes.¹⁸⁴ In 5:13, שמר represents the physical actions caused by the people who carry them out.¹⁸⁵ Sauer comments that שמר can be indicative of a person who protects (keeps) and maintains a good, such as wealth, material possessions, and more.¹⁸⁶ For some people, money is everything; however, money controls them instead of people controlling money. Therefore, Qoheleth states that hoarding riches can hurt someone in one of three ways. First, money can be lost (Eccl. 5:14). Second, a person cannot carry wealth with them when they die (Eccl. 5:15). Finally, if the person does not have Yahweh’s gift of enjoyment, then wealth is a miserable possession.¹⁸⁷ Qoheleth states that a person who loves money will not be satisfied (Eccl. 5:10). Amy Pauw remarks that happiness comes from holding lightly earthly goods and not from clinching them tightly; therefore, wealth’s benefit is what can be presently enjoyed and what the eye can see.¹⁸⁸ Agur prayed for a

¹⁸³ The term שמר is a root meaning “to keep, watch, preserve.” *NASB Exhaustive Concordance* provides a length list of possible renderings for שמר stemming from the root. See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, “שמר,” 1484.

¹⁸⁴ López, “שמר,” 283.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 287.

¹⁸⁶ Sauer, “שמר,” 1381. Provan comments that שמר is reflective of Eccl. 3:8 and 5:6, which Qoheleth indicates that the rich fool should had been more protective of his neighbor than his riches that resulted in his harm. See Provan, 127.

¹⁸⁷ O’Donnell, “10. Grievous Evils, Great Joys: A Bad Investment.”

¹⁸⁸ Amy Pauw, *Proverbs and Ecclesiastes* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2015), 168. Richard Denniss that the coveting of wealth and material possessions is called affluenza. He states, “Affluenza is the strange desire we feel to spend money we don’t have to buy things we don’t need to impress people we don’t know.” See Richard Denniss, *Curing Affluenza: How to Buy Less Stuff and Save the World* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2018), “Diagnosing the Disease.” Understandably, this is a secular statement however, Denniss’ words reflect Qoheleth’s advice against hoarding riches. W. Davis Folsom notes that affluenza is “the

good character in Proverbs 30:7–9 and for circumstances that would not endanger that character. The extremeness of being poor or wealthy results in a situation that can make it challenging to trust Yahweh. Therefore, Qoheleth observes the wealthy person’s anxiety because of their accumulated wealth (Eccl. 5:13–17).¹⁸⁹ Wisdom literature contains both blessings for people who take care of the impoverished person (Prov. 14:21, 31; 19:17; 22:9; 28:8; 31:20; Eccles. 11:1) and warnings against those who withhold extending a helping hand to the helpless (Prov. 21:13; 28:27).¹⁹⁰ The poor are not seen as immoral or a threat to society but as a societal class of people created by Yahweh (Prov. 22:2; Job 31:15) that need assistance. The righteous Israelite is a person who helps people experiencing poverty. The kindness and generosity extended to the poor reveals a sense of humility and a fear of Yahweh.¹⁹¹ While Qoheleth does not directly address

bloated, sluggish, and unfulfilled feeling that results from efforts to keep up with the Joneses.” See “Affluenza,” in *Encyclopedia of American Business*, Rev. ed., ed. W. Davis Folsom (New York: Facts on File, 2011), 10. Psychologist Oliver James suggests that affluenza contributes to a higher rate of mental disorders in wealth-seeking people. See Oliver James, *Affluenza: How to Be Successful and Stay Sane* (London: Vermilion, 2007). It is self-control issue that turns a blind eye to a necessary dependence on Yahweh. Jesus states in Matt. 6:24, “No one can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.”

¹⁸⁹ The rich fool can be either suffering from a moral decline due to over-indulgence or ill-gotten gain or a physical decline due to restlessness (Eccl. 5:12). See Eaton, 118. Garrett comments that the “harm” the rich fool experiences probably are failing to meet his own legitimate needs because he cannot bear to part with the money. See Garrett, 314.

¹⁹⁰ Yahweh is their protector and any person who mocks or mistreats the impoverished is seen as doing the same to Yahweh. See H. Kvalben, “Poor/Poverty,” in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander and Brian Rosner (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 688.

¹⁹¹ Searle, 567.

humility with the wealthy person's woes, it can be inferred that a sense of humility extends from a person's joy as a gift from Yahweh in Qoheleth's conclusion in Ecclesiastes 5:18–20.¹⁹²

In Ecclesiastes 8:17, Qoheleth observes that a person cannot discover the extent of Yahweh's divine plan even through hard work. The biblical Hebrew term for "discover" in 8:17 is נִצְּנָה. The term נִצְּנָה is a root denoting "to attain to, find."¹⁹³ The English equivalent to נִצְּנָה is "to find" and reveals an element of motion resulting from a conscious effort or an intentional endeavor.¹⁹⁴ *BDB* notes that נִצְּנָה, in 8:17, is used to "find out thoroughly, explore Yahweh's works."¹⁹⁵ G. Gerleman explains that Yahweh as the subject of נִצְּנָה is rare (twelve occasions; Gen 18:26, 28, 30; 44:16; Deut 32:10; Neh 9:8; Job 33:10; Ps 17:3; 89:20; Jer 23:11; Ezek 22:30; Hos 9:10) and attention must be given to the objects found in Wisdom literature that renders a cognitive sense of "to recognize," such as Yahweh's works in 8:17.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹² The idea presented in Eccl. 5:18 is that a rational good is a gift from Yahweh and is contrasted with the wealthy person's miserly self-denial resulting from hoarding their riches. See Barton, 128.

¹⁹³ The other renderings for נִצְּנָה are actually found (one time), afford (one time), befall (one time), befallen (two times), befell (one time), came (two times), caught (five times), come (six times), comes (one time), delivered (two times), discover (eight times), discovered (four times), discovery (one time), enough (one time), fall (one time), find (109 times), finding (two times), finds (seventeen times), found (231 times), going (one time), had (two times), handed (three times), happen (one time), happened (two times), has (one time), have (two times), here (one time), hit (one time), invents (one time), left (two times), located (two times), meet (two times), met (three times), overtake (two times), overtook (one time), pleases (one time), possessed (one time), present (fifteen times), reached (three times), reaped (one time), requires (one time), secured (one time), seeking (one time), spreads (one time), strikes (one time), sufficient (two times), there (one time), use (one time). See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, "נִצְּנָה," 1427.

¹⁹⁴ Siegfried Wagner, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, "נִצְּנָה," in *TDOT Vol. 8*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David Green (Grand Rapids.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 466.

¹⁹⁵ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, "נִצְּנָה," 593.

¹⁹⁶ G. Gerleman, "נִצְּנָה," in *TLOT Vol.2*, ed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 684. Michael Grisanti notes that Qoheleth exploits the ambiguity

Human knowledge limits prevent people from fully discovering or comprehending Yahweh's sovereignty. The result is that some people deny the existence of Yahweh, and some others claim that He does not know what He is doing. However, Qoheleth recognizes that what happens in the world is based on Yahweh's plan. Thus, a wise person will accept that they cannot know everything about Yahweh's works without doubting His existence or attaching any limitations to Him.¹⁹⁷ People place a monumental task on themselves, trying to acquire all the knowledge to comprehend Yahweh's purpose in this world. Like Qoheleth, these people will never accomplish their task; it is futile. Qoheleth points out that everyone is within Yahweh's control; however, people do not need to know His rationale fully.¹⁹⁸ The ability to recognize Yahweh's control without knowing the reasons why implies a sense of humility. The humble person recognizes their place in the cosmic order and acquires a proper self-estimation. Humility is the recognition of inadequacy, defined in terms of selflessness, and is the basis for all wisdom.¹⁹⁹ Possessing true humility is an enjoyment better than a rich fool's ill-gotten gain.

Ruth 2:13 is an example of humility. Ruth shows humility outwardly as she does not expect anything from Boaz. The interaction between Boaz and Ruth happens before it is made

of אֲנִי by means of an antanaclasis, which is the repetition of the same word with a different meaning. See Michael Grisanti, "אֲנִי," in *NIDOTTE Vol. 2*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 1054.

¹⁹⁷ Ryken, and Hughes, 133. The expression "work" must be taken in the broad sense of Yahweh's activity in nature, the cosmos, and history, activity that comes about unquestioned and uninterrupted according to its own plan and meaning. See Wagner, and Fabry, "אֲנִי," 478.

¹⁹⁸ John Goldingay, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Songs for Everyone* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2014), 210. Garrett comments that every wisdom endeavor to find out how to master life will fail. To know all things would yield the ability to control life and depend less on Yahweh. Therefore, people's limited knowledge and Yahweh's full control are essential for people's lives. See Garrett, 330.

¹⁹⁹ W. Dumbrell, "אֲנִי," in *NIDOTTE Vol. 3*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 459.

known to her that Boaz is a relative. Ruth's use of אֲמָתַי ("maidservant") is a self-designation of deferential respect when addressing a man of higher social status; it reveals a willingness to serve and obey instructions.²⁰⁰ A maidservant's lowly status meant a humble social position.²⁰¹ Ruth's humility put her at the bottom of society, which she did not resist. However, she worked the fields with thankfulness in her humble state.²⁰² Her humility, in Ruth 2:13, is based on her recognition as a foreigner (Ruth 2:10) and acknowledging Boaz's extraordinary measures to ensure that she gets as much grain as possible.²⁰³ Yahweh's activities are not known to Ruth, Boaz, and Naomi. From the first verse of the Book of Ruth, Yahweh's sovereignty and providence have been on display, which continues throughout Ruth. In 2:13, His providence is revealed through Boaz's generous actions that Ruth humbly accepts, which reciprocates her generosity and devotion to Naomi (Ruth 2:11).

Generosity of Spirit— Ecclesiastes 11:1–2

Ecclesiastes 11:1 is a figurative statement with various interpretations. The first is that Qoheleth refers to trading, which is sending merchandise overseas and waiting for the return.²⁰⁴

²⁰⁰ Richard Schultz, "אֲמָתַי," in *NIDOTTE Vol. 4*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 212.

²⁰¹ Baker, and Carpenter, "אֲמָתַי," 1186.

²⁰² Paul Miller, *A Loving Life: In a World of Broken Relationships* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2011), "13. Humility: The Path of Love." Edward Bridge refers humble speech as self-abasement and is used by Ruth to reject significance and to express thanks to Boaz. See Edward Bridge, "Self-Abasement as an Expression of Thanks in the Hebrew Bible," *Biblica* 92, no. 2 (2011): 255–6.

²⁰³ Boaz's "special" treatment of Ruth highlights his generosity, which is heightened by Ruth's willingness to lower her status below Boaz's maidservants. See Bridge, 262.

²⁰⁴ Geier, J. D. Michaelis, Döderlein, Mendelssohn, F. Hitzig, Franz Delitzsch, Wildeboer, P. Haupt, A. H. McNeile, E. Jones, I. Provan, Longman III, and D. Garrett support this interpretation.

The second interpretation denotes an agricultural meaning. Thus, casting seeds near water will ensure a rich harvest.²⁰⁵ The third interpretation involves the concept of sexuality. Graetz comprehends 11:1 as borderline licentious, where “bread” or “seed” is interpreted as the “seed of human life.”²⁰⁶ The fourth interpretation pertains to philanthropy and liberality, or generosity.²⁰⁷ Eaton offers a final interpretation that suggests that Qoheleth is referring to a venture of faith, which envisions trust and commitment to Yahweh.²⁰⁸ Qoheleth deals a lot with observations concerning wealth and possessions in Ecclesiastes and how to enjoy them as a gift from Yahweh, which lends credibility to the first translation. In keeping with wisdom teaching, the fourth interpretation fits with the didactic wisdom of charitable giving and helping those people in need. The fourth interpretation is adopted to illustrate Qoheleth’s perspective on generosity of spirit in this dissertation.²⁰⁹

²⁰⁵ Van der Palm and Bauer support this interpretation.

²⁰⁶ Barton, 181.

²⁰⁷ A. W. Knobel, Ginsburg, O. Zöckler, C. H. H. Wright, W. Nowack, D. C. Siegfried, Marshall, Barton, Fox, and Seow support this interpretation. Barton states, “In favor of the fourth explanation is an Arabic proverb, which Heiligstedt, Ginsburg, Plumtre and Wright quote from Diaz’ *Denkwürdigkeiten von Asien*. The proverb forms the culmination of a story which relates how Mohammed, son of Hassan, had been daily in the habit of throwing loaves into a river, how the life of an adopted son of Caliph Mutewekkel, who had escaped drowning by climbing upon a rock, was thus preserved, and how Mohammed saw in it the proof of the truth of a proverb he had learned as a boy, “Do good, cast thy bread upon the waters, and one day thou shalt be rewarded.” The story suggests that this proverb may be an echo of Qoheleth himself.” See Barton, 181.

²⁰⁸ Qoheleth “has called his readers to take life as from the hand of Yahweh, and to enjoy it despite its trials and perplexities. Such a life contains within it the elements of trust and adventure (*Cast*), demands total commitment (for *your bread* is used in the sense of ‘goods’, livelihood’, as in Deut. 8:3; Prov. 31:14), and has a forward look to it (*you will find*), a reward which requires patience (*after many days*).” See Eaton, 159.

²⁰⁹ Adopting the fourth interpretation not only provides engagement with the biblical text, but it is the personal reflection of the dissertation’s author comprehension of Eccl. 11:1–2 in line with Wisdom literature’s concern with generosity towards the impoverished and helping people who cannot help themselves, which stems from fearing Yahweh.

The first biblical Hebrew term to evaluate is the verb הָלַץ (“to cast”). According to the *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, הָלַץ is a root meaning “to send.”²¹⁰ John Collins comments that the piel form of הָלַץ is resultative, which is when the motion away is the prominent element.²¹¹ In the context of generosity, הָלַץ can have the sense of ‘giving something up’ without any expectations of a return or personal benefits.²¹² Qoheleth would have been aware of the symbolic use of bread and water. In the Law, bread and water are symbols of hospitality and benevolence.²¹³ The next biblical Hebrew term to consider is לֶחֶם (“bread”). Why would Qoheleth make an observation about bread on water? The term לֶחֶם is derived from the root חָלַם , denoting “to use as food, eat.”²¹⁴ The term לֶחֶם denotes “bread, food.”²¹⁵ In its general usage, לֶחֶם

²¹⁰ *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, “ הָלַץ ,” 1481. The concordance provides an extensive list of possible renderings for הָלַץ , which is too lengthy to note here.

²¹¹ John Collins, “ הָלַץ ,” in *NIDOTTE Vol. 4*, ed. Willem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 121. In Eccl. 11:1, הָלַץ can have the same meaning as observed in Neh. 8:12 where people sent portions of food.

²¹² Michael Fox, *Ecclesiastes: The Traditional Hebrew Text with the New JPS Translation*, 1st ed. (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2004), 72. Fox recalls a Midrashic short story about a man who was shipwrecked and rescued by Rabbi Bar Kappara, which included lodging, clothing, and food. The man that was rescued was a Roman proconsul, who showed mercy to some Jews upon the rabbi’s request. Ibid. In the Midrashic reading, 11:1 is a metaphor for kindness and is elaborated by sages who acted kindly and were rewarded. See Lary Magarik, “Bread on Water,” *Jewish Bible Quarterly* 28, no. 4 (Oct. 2000): 268–9. *HALOT* comprehends הָלַץ in Eccl. 11:1 as “to cast out bread over water,” a literal translation. See Koehler, and Baumgartner, “ הָלַץ ,” 1514.

²¹³ Aron Pinker, “A New Approach to Qohelet 11:1,” *Old Testament Essays (New Series)* 22, no. 3 (2009): 621.

²¹⁴ *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, “ לֶחֶם ,” 1414.

²¹⁵ *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, “ לֶחֶם ,” 1414. The other possible interpretations are bread (188 times), food (eighty-seven times), fruit (one time), loaves (three times), meal (eight times), meals (two times), prey (one time), provision (one time), showbread (four times), something (one time).

refers to anything that Yahweh has approved for nourishment (Gen. 3:19; 25:34, Ps. 147:9).²¹⁶ While making bread does involve grain, **לֶחֶם** does not support a rendering of “seed;” therefore, the idea of Qoheleth thinking about agriculture is not plausible. C. Seow notes that **לֶחֶם** was not a thick loaf of bread but a thin wafer typical in the Middle East.²¹⁷ A plausible interpretation of 11:1 is that Qoheleth has in mind that a wise person is charitable (“שֵׂחָה”) by assisting other people through food, provisions, or favors (“לְחֵם”—“something”).²¹⁸

The plausible interpretation of 11:1 directly affects the comprehension of 11:2 because the same interpretations of verse 1 apply to verse 2.²¹⁹ Like with verse 1, 11:2 will be approached through an understanding of charitable giving. Qoheleth states that a person should divide their portion seven or eight times. In biblical Hebrew, it is common to use numbers to represent a “few,” “some,” and “many.” Therefore, “divide your portion to seven, or even eight,” is a literary figurative for “many.”²²⁰ *HALOT* states that **לֶחֶם** denotes a “share of possession.”²²¹ *BDB* goes further by noting that **לֶחֶם** is a “portion; share of food so (of unrestricted charity).”²²² In

²¹⁶ Baker, and Carpenter, “לֶחֶם,” 548. Robert O’Connell comments that the basic meaning of the nominative **לֶחֶם** is “food” and is widely attested in the OT. See Robert O’Connell, “לֶחֶם,” in *NIDOTTE Vol. 2*, ed. Willem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 783.

²¹⁷ C. Seow, *Ecclesiastes: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, 1st ed. (New York: Doubleday, 1997), “11:1.”

²¹⁸ Fox, *Ecclesiastes*, 72.

²¹⁹ Barton notes that the two most popular explanations either reference commerce or charity. See Barton, 181.

²²⁰ Barton, 182.

²²¹ Koehler, and Baumgartner, “לֶחֶם,” 324.

²²² Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “לֶחֶם,” 324. Eaton notes that **לֶחֶם** can convey a sense of urgency or a full measure of enthusiasm like Amos 1:3–2:6. See Eaton, 160.

11:2, דָּן (“to divide”) is used in conjunction with חֶלֶק (“portion”).²²³ The qal imperative form of דָּן conveys a “request” (cf. 2 Kgs. 5:22).²²⁴ Therefore, דָּן חֶלֶק can denote an urgent or enthusiastic generosity given to the poor.²²⁵ The biblical Hebrew phrase לְשִׁבְעָה וְגַם לְשִׁמוֹנָה (“to seven and even to eight”) is a numerical saying and not to be taken literally, that signifies an indefinite amount.²²⁶

Boaz’s generosity of spirit is revealed through his actions towards Ruth in Ruth 2:14–16. In 2:14, Boaz tells Ruth to come to eat bread and dip it in vinegar, so she sits beside the reapers. The first sign of Boaz’s generosity is indicated by the qal imperative of the biblical Hebrew verb שָׁגַג (“to come”). *HALOT* notes that שָׁגַג, in 2:14, means “to step forward, approach.”²²⁷ Bill Arnold explains that שָׁגַג conveys a sense of being near or in proximity to an object.²²⁸ Thus, שָׁגַגְךָ conveys “draw near here.”²²⁹ The force of Boaz’s generous invitation is reflected by where

²²³ *NASB Exhaustive Concordance* notes that נתן is a root meaning “to give, put, set.” See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, “נתן,” 1439. The concordance provides an extensive list of possible renderings for נתן, which is too long to note here.

²²⁴ Waltke, and O’Connor, 571.

²²⁵ Eaton, 160. Fox notes that 11:2a indicates assisting several people in need for the practical value gained in case the generous person is ever in need of assistance. See Fox, *Ecclesiastes*, 72–3. The phrase דָּן חֶלֶק always means “give a portion to” (Josh. 14:4). However, דָּן חֶלֶק does not mean “to divide a portion among;” therefore, a charitable sense is indicated in 11:2a. See Seow, “11.2.”

²²⁶ Seow, “11.2.” Longman comments that לְשִׁבְעָה וְגַם לְשִׁמוֹנָה is a typical number parallelism seen in Canaanite poetry meaning “many.” See Longman III, 323.

²²⁷ Koehler, and Baumgartner, “שָׁגַג,” 670.

²²⁸ Bill Arnold, “שָׁגַג,” in *NIDOTTE Vol. 3*, ed. Willem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 29. Hubbard notes that a short distance is involved in 2:14 because the qal imperative שָׁגַגְךָ indicates that Boaz asked Ruth to come to where he and food were located. See Hubbard, Jr., 172.

²²⁹ Edward Campbell, *Ruth*, 1st ed. (Garden City: Doubleday, 1975), 102. Campbell further explains that שָׁגַגְךָ suggests a slight distance because Boaz is respecting Ruth’s deference and modesty.

Ruth sat; she sat **צָד** ("beside"). *HALOT* explains that together with the governed noun, **מִצַּד** means "at the side of, next to."²³⁰ Thus, Ruth did not sit separately from the reapers; however, beside them, implying at the same table. Boaz's generosity of spirit is not only through words but also by deeds. In 2:14, Boaz **צָבַט** ("served") Ruth her meal. *HALOT* remarks that the qal form of **צָבַט** in Ruth 2:14 means "to pick up and offer to someone."²³¹ Bush explains that "to heap up" is preferable because it supports the biblical statement that Ruth had a surplus of food she took home to Naomi.²³² Moreover, the phrase **צָבַטָהּ לָהּ** renders a comprehension of "he served to her," which suggests that Boaz served Ruth and not Ruth serving herself.²³³

Boaz furthers his generosity by commanding his servants to allow Ruth to "glean even among the sheaves" (Ruth 2:15). Boaz's command is unprecedented because it allows more grain for Ruth than was required by Mosaic Law. The piel form of **טָקַל** is used in verse 15,

²³⁰ Koehler, and Baumgartner, "צָד," 1000. Gordon Matties notes that **צָד** can refer to either the right or left side of a person. See Gordon Matties, "צָד," in *NIDOTTE Vol. 3*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 739. Howell states, "מִצַּד is the locative **מִן** preposition and the noun **צָד**. **צָד** is not locative in the sense of moving away from something but should be understood as a spatial relationship. To be "from the side of the reapers" is to be in their vicinity, or "beside" them. The accent (◌ֻ, *mūnāh*) on **מִצַּד** indicates a construct package with **הַקֹּצְרִים**, so Ruth sat "from the side of the reapers," or "beside the reapers." See Howell, 160.

²³¹ Koehler, and Baumgartner, "צָבַט," 997.

²³² Bush, 126.

²³³ Campbell notes that the Vulgate suggests that Ruth heaped up barley for herself and was not served by Boaz. See Campbell, 103. Boaz's invitation and serving the food to Ruth reveals that he does not think of her as a lowly servant but as a member of his group. See Hubbard, Jr., 173.

denoting “gleaning.”²³⁴ Specifically, it indicates a “complete gathering of grain or grapes.”²³⁵ Among the sheaves was a place where even the reapers could not glean grain. So, Boaz’s command to the reapers to allow Ruth in this area heightens the understanding concerning Boaz’s generosity.²³⁶ Finally, in 2:16, Boaz commands his servants to leave out some grain for Ruth purposely. The biblical Hebrew term used for “pull out” is שָׁלַל, which *HALOT* defines as “to slip out some stalks of wheat from the sheaves.”²³⁷ Robert Gordon comments that this occurrence of שָׁלַל only happens in Ruth 2:16, which denotes a humanitarian provision beyond what is required by law.²³⁸

Ecclesiastes 11:1–2 shows that a wise person is charitable with his provisions and that they will give to many people. Likewise, Boaz indicates his generosity by his actions and commands regarding Ruth. He places food on her plate and heaps it up; additionally, his

²³⁴ The term טָקַט is a root meaning “to pick” or “gather up, glean.” The other possible interpretations are gather (fifteen times), gathered (eight times), glean (eight times), gleaned (four times), gleaning (one time), picked (one time). See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, “טָקַט,” 1415.

²³⁵ Cleon Rogers, Jr., and I. Cornelius, “טָקַט,” in *NIDOTTE Vol. 2*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 811.

²³⁶ Hubbard notes that gleaners were presumably restricted from among the sheaves for two reasons: first, the owners’ desire to keep any dropped grain for themselves; and second, the temptation for unscrupulous gleaners secretly to take even piled sheaves. In essence, Boaz instructed, “She has my permission to glean there.” See Hubbard, Jr., 176.

²³⁷ Koehler, and Baumgartner, “שָׁלַל,” 1531. The verb is used to convey extracting some grain from a larger bundle of grain. See Baker, and Carpenter, “שָׁלַל,” 1151.

²³⁸ Robert Gordon, “שָׁלַל,” in *NIDOTTE Vol. 4*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 128. The emphatic nature of שָׁלַל־תָּשֵׁלֵי reveals the intentional act of pulling stalks from the bundle and leaving them for Ruth., which indicates that Ruth did not even have to work to get the stalks out; however, the reapers were commanded to do it by Boaz. See Block, 668.

command to the reapers reveals that they were to go above and beyond, leaving grain behind for Ruth to glean.

Kindness— Ecclesiastes 4:9–12

In Ecclesiastes 4:9-12, the value of companionship and mutual support is highlighted. This passage underscores the importance of kindness in relationships, as it talks about two being better than one and the advantages of companionship.

In 4:10, Qoheleth speaks about the *חֵבֵר* ("companion"). *BDB* notes that *חֵבֵר* is a "companion (particular time)."²³⁹ Provan explains that cooperation leads to a rewarding life because troubles can be faced together, assistance is available, and warmth is shared.²⁴⁰ Life is full of challenges and hidden dangers; therefore, having companions willing to share and assist in the daily conundrums is helpful. Moreover, the presence of companions can make life more enjoyable.²⁴¹ Qoheleth uses the biblical Hebrew term *שֶׁכָר* for "wages." However, *BDB* notes that

²³⁹ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, "חֵבֵר," 288. *NASB Exhaustive Concordance* notes that *חֵבֵר* is derived from the root *חֵבֵר* meaning "to unite, be joined, to tie a magic knot or spell, to charm." See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, *חֵבֵר*, 1388. Brooke explains that the verb can convey people joining together in an alliance. See Brooke, "חֵבֵר," 16. The possible meanings for *חֵבֵר* are companion (three times), companions (seven times), fellows (one time), united (one time). See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, *חֵבֵר*, 1388. The Hebrew terms denote relationships of varying degrees of closeness. The verb *rē 'â*, on which several terms are based, means to "have dealings with," while the verb *hāḇar* means to "be joined." See G. Wyper, "Companion; Companionship," in *ISBE Vol. 1*, Rev. ed., ed. Geoffrey Bromiley (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1979–1988), 754.

²⁴⁰ Provan, 106. See also Longman III, 281. Garrett comments that warmth, in 4:12, can be referred as "emotional comfort." See Garrett, 308.

²⁴¹ Life is not just about work and paying the bills, it is relational and designed to delight in the experiences of other people. Therefore, cultivate friendships through enjoyment and nurture them with courtesy and sensitivity. See Tommy Nelson, *A Life Well Lived: A Study of the Book of Ecclesiastes* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2005), "Chapter 4. Living in an Insane World: Things Over People."

the nominative שָׁכָר can convey “faithfulness.”²⁴² Loyalty is a characteristic of companionship or friendship involving longevity, protection, and participation.²⁴³ Qoheleth states in 4:10 that a companion will lift the other when they fall. Here, the biblical Hebrew term for “lift” is קוּם. J. Gamberoni comments that קוּם means to “help up” in 4:10; however, the physical aspect of קוּם can shift to convey moral and spiritual support or encouragement from one companion to another.²⁴⁴ Gamberoni’s interpretation can be better understood by how נָפַל (“to fall”) is comprehended. The biblical Hebrew term נָפַל is a root meaning “to fall, lie.” The biblical Hebrew verb has a range of possible renderings, from the physical act to a figurative meaning.²⁴⁵ *BDB* notes that נָפַל can be used figuratively to connote “calamity.”²⁴⁶ Qoheleth uses נָפַל in Ecclesiastes 9:12 to convey that disasters can fall unknowingly on the innocent instead of the wicked who deserve calamity.²⁴⁷ Thus, 4:10 can be understood literally when Qoheleth observes that when one person falls, they have a companion to help them stand back up. However, a figurative sense is possibly conveyed by Qoheleth when he observes that when one person endures challenges or disasters, they will have a friend who will help them through the hard

²⁴² Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “שָׁכָר,” 969. Barton remarks that 4:10 explains the meaning of 4:9, that companionship is the reward for united toil. See Barton, 115.

²⁴³ “Friend” has a broad semantic range from casual acquaintance to the most intimate of personal relationships. See G. A. Lee, “Friend,” in *ISBE Vol. 2*, Rev. ed., ed. Geoffrey Bromiley (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1979–1988), 361.

²⁴⁴ J. Gamberoni, “קוּם,” in *TDOT Vol. 12*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David Green (Grand Rapids.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 593.

²⁴⁵ *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, “נָפַל,” 1437.

²⁴⁶ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “נָפַל,” 657. See Prov. 24:16.

²⁴⁷ Horst Seebass, “נָפַל,” in *TDOT Vol. 9*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David Green (Grand Rapids.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 493.

times. In the context of חבל in Ecclesiastes, a companion who lifts the other when they fall yields meaning in an otherwise meaningless life.²⁴⁸

Qoheleth further observes that when two people lie together, then they can keep each other warm (Ecc. 4:11). *BDB* defines שָׁכַב, in 4:11, as “two lying (together, for warmth).”²⁴⁹ The biblical Hebrew term חָמַם is used for “to become warm.” *HALOT* renders חָמַם as “is feeling warm, is getting warm.”²⁵⁰ K.-M. Beyse explains that the practical wisdom of two people warming themselves is reinforced by 1 Kings 1:1, where a Shunammite woman warms the aged King David.²⁵¹ However, Garrett notes that שָׁכַבוּ שְׁנַיִם וְתָמָּה לָהֶם וּלְאֶחָד אֶיךָ יָהֵם conveys an idea of emotional comfort.²⁵² Likewise, Provan comments that שָׁכַבוּ שְׁנַיִם וְתָמָּה לָהֶם וּלְאֶחָד אֶיךָ יָהֵם emphasizes that the phrase implies that the companions will face unsuspecting difficulties and dangers together and will be able to assist each other.²⁵³ While Qoheleth does not offer any

²⁴⁸ Eaton comments, “The proverb, however, looks beyond physical mishap; slips of judgment and other types of ‘falling by the wayside’ equally need a helping hand. The Hebrew is strictly plural (‘If they fall ...’), but occasionally the plural may ‘denote an indefinite singular’ and thus mean ‘If either of them should fall ...’.” See Eaton, 109. The plural is by no means used in Hebrew solely to express a number of individuals or separate objects but may also denote them collectively. There are also a number of plurals, found almost exclusively in poetry (sometimes along with the singular), which are evidently intended to intensify the idea of the stem (plural of amplification). See E. Kautzsch, ed., “§ 124e,” *Gesenius’ Hebrew Grammar*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1909), 397.

²⁴⁹ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “שָׁכַב,” 1012. *NASB Exhaustive Concordance* notes that שָׁכַב is a root meaning “to lie down.” See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, “שָׁכַב,” 1480.

²⁵⁰ Koehler, and Baumgartner, “חָמַם,” 328. Likewise, *BDB* renders חָמַם as “be or get warm through personal contact.” See Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “חָמַם,” 328.

²⁵¹ K.-M. Beyse, “חָמַם,” in *TDOT Vol. 4*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David Green (Grand Rapids.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 474.

²⁵² Garrett, 308.

²⁵³ Provan, 106. James Crenshaw explains that while Eccl. 4:10 has a view of a companion rescuing another in case of slipping or falling into a trap, an alternative meaning

resolutions to the world's injustices, other than that injustice is beyond human control, he does observe that companionship is the remedy for life's miseries and dangers. Therefore, his perspective is religiously based because it involves the practical wisdom of knowing Yahweh and the effects of that knowledge.²⁵⁴

Kindness is a relational act that deals with a close human bond. When people receive kindness, they are usually willing to reciprocate the act.²⁵⁵ In Ruth 3:10, the biblical narrative uses the biblical Hebrew verb *טב* to signify that Ruth is "practicing faithfulness."²⁵⁶ *BDB* explains that *טב* is used to "make a thing good, right, beautiful (make it more glorious than)."²⁵⁷ Zobel explains that "make good" in Ruth 3:10 is a relational concept of kindness revealed in Ruth's relationship with Naomi and Boaz, which is preferred over the young men.²⁵⁸ In Wisdom literature, defining what is good in life is shown through a "better than" statement (Prov 12:9; 15:16–17; Eccl 4:6).²⁵⁹ Therefore, Boaz recognizes that Ruth's recent act of kindness (wishing to marry him rather than one of the young men) is better than her first act of kindness, which was

could convey the idea of adversity. See James Crenshaw, *Ecclesiastes* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1987), 111.

²⁵⁴ Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Wisdom and Law in the Old Testament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 76.

²⁵⁵ Hans-Jürgen Zobel, "הָטָב," in *TDOT Vol. 5*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David Green (Grand Rapids.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 47.

²⁵⁶ Koehler, and Baumgartner, "יָטַב," 409.

²⁵⁷ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, "יָטַב," 406.

²⁵⁸ Zobel, 49.

²⁵⁹ Gordon, 347. Howell states, "The comparison, then, is between this appearance at the threshing floor and the familial lovingkindness she showed to Naomi in abandoning her own family and heritage for Naomi's sake (cf. 2:11). Boaz concludes that this appearance at the threshing floor so that Ruth can secure provision for Naomi through a redeemer is better than just simply joining with her for companionship." See Howell, 212.

her consideration for Naomi (Ruth 3:10). Qoheleth observes in 4:9–12 that companions reveal kindness when they endure unsuspecting dangers and difficulties together by helping each other. Likewise, Ruth reveals kindness in her willingness to act as a companion to Naomi (which can also be seen as familial devotion) through the uncertainties associated with being a widow, impoverished, and a foreigner (in Ruth’s case).²⁶⁰ Her kindness and devotion are elevated by her desire to marry Boaz instead of going after one of the younger men.

Redemption— Ecclesiastes 7:15–29

Redemption in the OT involves releasing people, animals, or land from enslavement. A prime example is Yahweh delivering the Hebrew people from Egyptian slavery (Ex. 12:37–15:21). Social, physical, or spiritual weakness makes it necessary for redemption through human or Yahwistic means.²⁶¹ In Wisdom literature, פְּדוּתָא is only found in Job 5:20; 6:23; 33:28, which deal with release from death, oppressors, and Sheol, respectively.²⁶² Qoheleth deals not with redemption directly but with the meaninglessness of life; however, Ecclesiastes 7:15–29 deals with reality and redemption.

Leading to Qoheleth’s indirect addressment of redemption (Eccl. 7:29), he provides observations concerning the righteous and the wicked. The biblical Hebrew term for righteous, in

²⁶⁰ Hubbard, Jr., 214.

²⁶¹ R. L. Hubbard, Jr., “Redemption,” in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander and Brian Rosner (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 716. Henri Cazelles comments that redemption is through the actions of a third party in releasing a person from danger, oppression, or an obligation. See Henri Cazelles, “פְּדוּתָא,” in *TDOT Vol. 11*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David Green (Grand Rapids.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 485.

²⁶² Cazelles, 489. The three occurrences in the book of Job (5:20, from death; 6:23, from oppressors; 33:28, from the Pit) fit with the usage of the Psalms. It is surprising that *pdh* is not found elsewhere in protocanonical wisdom literature.

verse 15, is צדק.²⁶³ Qoheleth breaks from the idea that actions have built-in consequences. He observes that people's deeds do not affect their fate.²⁶⁴ Thus, Qoheleth proclaims that the righteous do not always prosper, sometimes they suffer and die young, and at times, the wicked are the ones who do prosper (Ps. 37:7).²⁶⁵ Good order and honesty are futile; the wicked person often gets the better end of the deal than the righteous.²⁶⁶ So, how does Qoheleth cope with his observation? In Ecclesiastes 7:16–17, he states not to be overly righteous or overly wicked.²⁶⁷ In keeping with a prominent theme of Wisdom literature, wisdom versus folly, it is better to

²⁶³ The term צדק denotes “just, righteous.” Additional renderings are blameless (one time), innocent (one time), just (five times), man that the righteous (one time), one in the right (one time), right (two times), righteous (164 times), righteous man (nineteen times), righteous men (two times), Righteous One (two times), righteous one (two times), righteous ones (three times), righteously (one time), who are in the right (one time). See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, “צדק,” 1459.

²⁶⁴ K. Koch, “צדק,” in *TLOT Vol.2*, ed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 1060–1. Qoheleth's words imply that, to some extent, the life of the צדק is unattainable, futile, and thus not worth the effort. Further, the “proper” outcomes following on righteous or wicked actions often fail, and the lot that should come to one goes instead to the other. See David Reimer, “צדק,” in *NIDOTTE Vol. 3*, ed. Willem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 755.

²⁶⁵ Eccl. 7:15 indicates a reversal of retribution, which is a dilemma for Israel. It is a significant reflection by Qoheleth based on the traditional belief that Yahweh promised prosperity to the righteous. See Sidney Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from Ecclesiastes: Foundations for Expository Sermons* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans Pub., 2010), “Textual Theme and Goal.”

²⁶⁶ Rad, 228.

²⁶⁷ One comprehension of Eccl. 7:16–17 is the Golden Mean. This concept advocates for a middle ground between righteousness and wickedness and is based on the notion that Qoheleth is teaching immorality and misconduct, in other words sinning to a certain degree. See Wayne Brindle, “Righteousness and Wickedness in Ecclesiastes 7:15–18,” *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 23, no. 3 (Autumn 1985): 244–5. The Golden Mean, in this perspective, is supported by Walter Kaiser, R. N. Whybray, and George Barton. Another view of the Golden Mean is that to avoid a premature death, a person should not be too righteous or too wicked. A final perspective is that practicing extreme righteousness or wickedness leads to unhappiness. Therefore, a moderate course is advised between the two. Robert Gordis comprehends the Golden Mean concept in this light.

comprehend Qoheleth's statements to reference not being overly wise or foolish.²⁶⁸ He advocates a middle ground between a life of wisdom and a life of foolishness. While it was taught that foolishness and wickedness led to destruction, Qoheleth indicates that overzealous religiousness can be destructive.²⁶⁹ He deals with a philosophical view of life concerning longevity, prosperity, and enjoyment through wisdom and religious principles. Sinning is inevitable; however, people who embrace it face destruction.²⁷⁰ Qoheleth recognizes that sin is a part of people's lives; therefore, he suggests a fine line between righteousness and wickedness without going to an extreme for either one. The solution to the reversal of retribution is read in Ecclesiastes 7:18, fear Yahweh. Fearing Yahweh is the beginning of wisdom and the understanding that a person must recognize righteousness and wickedness. The wise person will not put on a false persona of perfection (super righteousness); however, they will recognize their potential and limitations.²⁷¹ Their understanding indicates a contrasting view to the traditional concept that the righteous will prosper with health and wealth; the wise person will comprehend life by knowing that sometimes the righteous suffer and the wicked will prosper. However, this comprehension is tamed by the

²⁶⁸ Righteousness is synonymous with wisdom, and wickedness is synonymous with foolishness.

²⁶⁹ Eunmy Lee, *The Vitality of Enjoyment in Qoheleth's Theological Rhetoric* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2005), 102. Righteousness is not founded on a strict adherence to the law, because a righteous person also sins (Eccl. 7:20). See Walter Steele, "Enjoying the Righteousness of Faith in Ecclesiastes," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 74, no. 3–4 (July 2010): 232. See also Martin Luther, *Luther's Works Vol. 15*, American ed., ed. Jaroslav Pelikan et al. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1955–1986), 122.

²⁷⁰ Garrett, 323; Crenshaw, 140.

²⁷¹ Longman III, "The 'Fear of God' in the Book of Ecclesiastes," 17; Steele, 234; Greidanus, "Textual Theme and Goal."

faith and belief that Yahweh is in control.²⁷² For Qoheleth, this is the pathway to Godliness and, indirectly, redemption.

The pathway to redemption also involves understanding the problem of sin (Eccl. 7:19–28). The section begins with Qoheleth’s observation that wisdom is beneficial (7:19). He asserts that a general attitude and moral application are necessary to navigate the pathway between moral legalism and moral indifference.²⁷³ The person who fears Yahweh is more powerful than the ten rulers in a city.²⁷⁴ Qoheleth’s statement in verse 19 is modified in verse 20 with וְ.

Crenshaw comments that no person can obtain full justice or avoid sinning; therefore, it is wise to understand that they can be wise and sin and not try to deceive themselves.²⁷⁵ Ecclesiastes 7:21–28 provides examples of sin’s problems. Ecclesiastes 7:21–22 reveals the need for self-restraint in the face of humiliation. How some people speak about others attests to their sinful nature. Listening to other people’s derogatory comments affects one’s tranquility. Likewise, a person’s conscience should prevent them from speaking ill towards another person.²⁷⁶ Personal experience should be a deterrent against being vindictive because it springs from sinfulness and is hastily inaccurate. O’Donnell comments that 7:21–22 indicates that a person’s tongue is the tip of the iceberg (a reflection of the person’s heart) and proves that it is the testimony of their

²⁷² Longman III, *Ecclesiastes*, 300.

²⁷³ Eaton, 131.

²⁷⁴ Garrett comments that powerful leaders try to dissuade wickedness by brute force; however, because of people’s nature, it is impossible. Thus, only the wise can discern and maintain an equilibrium between social injustices and moral weaknesses. See Garrett, 324. See also O’Donnell, “A Second Finding.”

²⁷⁵ Crenshaw, *Ecclesiastes*, 143. Murphy notes that the modification is revealed by Qoheleth stating that justice, or wisdom, is unavailable to sinful people. See Murphy, 71. Eaton states that 7:20 is a universal truth that covers the sins of omission (people do not do what they should do) and commission (people do what they should not do). See Eaton, 131.

²⁷⁶ Barton, 144–5.

depravity.²⁷⁷ Qoheleth admits that his wisdom is insufficient to understand life's mysteries (Eccl. 7:23). It was Qoheleth's resolve to acquire wisdom through personal discipline. However, he concludes that wisdom is elusive and inaccessible.²⁷⁸ Ecclesiastes 7:24 provides the basis for 7:23 by noting that wisdom is mysterious and unobtainable and cannot be discovered or grasped by anyone. While people are not fully righteous and wise, Yahweh is perfectly wise and righteous. Yahweh knows fully what cannot be discovered by people and is in control. Seow comments that wisdom's inaccessibility in 7:24 is comparable to the worthy woman in Proverbs 31:10, which asks who can find her.²⁷⁹ Qoheleth's methodology for finding wisdom is revealed in 7:25, which is understanding, investigating, and searching out. Qoheleth has pondered long and hard to comprehend the character of people. His conclusion (7:25b) involves many intellectual and moral observations.²⁸⁰

Qoheleth extends his observations about the problem of sin by noting how sin and temptation work. Ecclesiastes 7:26 indicates how the unscrupulous woman's heart is a snare and net to trap men. This seductive woman is dangerous, sets deadly traps, and must be avoided. The images given by Qoheleth represent a person who seduces people away from wisdom. Thus, the woman in 7:26 illustrates evil's deadly, seductive power.²⁸¹ When wickedness is in control, it is

²⁷⁷ O'Donnell, "A Second Finding." Fox notes that Eccl. 7:21–22 is incidental to 7:20 and advises a person to reduce the chances of personal unpleasantness. See Fox, *Qoheleth and His Contradictions*, 236. See also Seow, 270.

²⁷⁸ Crenshaw, *Ecclesiastes*, 145. Traditional knowledge, which Qoheleth had acquired, is not the same as real knowledge. See Lohfink, 100. Eaton notes that the ultimate wisdom that was not reachable pertained to death, which may relate to 7:15 where Qoheleth questions why righteous young men die and the wicked prosper. See Eaton, 131.

²⁷⁹ Seow, 260.

²⁸⁰ "Know ... search ... seek, wisdom ... reason, wickedness ... folly ... foolishness ... madness." See Eaton, 132.

²⁸¹ Seow, 262–3. Crenshaw states, "The opposites in the second half of the verse (*tôb lipnê hā'elôhîm* and *hôtîē*) are not moral categories. They refer to lucky and unlucky (as in 2:26)

nearly impossible to escape from its grasp. The length of Qoheleth's exploration is read in 7:27 when he states, "adding one thing to another to find an explanation." It impresses upon the reader Qoheleth's laborious undertaking and investigative process.²⁸² The result is that he has only found one man out of a thousand but not a woman. Thus, finding a wise and upright woman is rare.²⁸³ However, Qoheleth does not state that finding a wise and upright man is more straightforward than finding a woman. Verse 28 rephrases 7:20, where he observes that no righteous people, even wise people, sin. Wisdom is rare, and even the best men and women are sinners.

Redemption is the resolution to Ecclesiastes 7:29. Qoheleth states that Yahweh "made men upright" (Creation), and they "have sought out many devices" (Fall). Once sin entered the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3:1–7), its dreadful consequences included putting people's independence above Yahweh's will. This self-satisfaction is the pursuit of foolish pleasures. People's sins are perverse, deliberate, universal, and multiform.²⁸⁴ Therefore, after the initial sin and judgment, Yahweh enacted His plan for redemption (Gen. 3:15). Qoheleth does not mention Genesis 3:15 or allude to it in Ecclesiastes 7:29; however, the acquisition of perfect wisdom and righteousness is to be brought back to before the Fall. Hence, "upright" in verse 29 reflects 7:18, where Qoheleth states that a person who fears Yahweh is characterized by wisdom and righteousness.²⁸⁵

rather than to virtuous as opposed to wicked. The word *hōtē* 'signifies a person who misses the mark, the original meaning of the verb.' See Crenshaw, 146.

²⁸² Barton, 147.

²⁸³ Garrett notes that finding a man to be a true friend is easier than finding a woman who can fulfill that role without competition. See Garrett, 325.

²⁸⁴ Eaton, 133.

²⁸⁵ Greidanus comments that Qoheleth is thinking about the Genesis stories about the Fall into sin. Adam and Eve were unsuccessful in becoming wise like Yahweh, they only acquired the knowledge about good and evil. Therefore, Yahweh is not to be blamed for the world's wickedness and people cannot fully comprehend His will and actions. Thus, people should

In Ruth 4:9–10, Boaz buys Elimelech’s property from Naomi and marries Ruth to provide an heir to continue the family name. In verse 9, the biblical Hebrew verb קָנָה is used to denote "to buy."²⁸⁶ Boaz acted as a kinsman redeemer by buying the field from Naomi per Leviticus 25:25–28. The term קָנָה is used again in 4:10, indicating that Boaz has “acquired” Ruth to be his wife. W. Schmidt explains a unique situation involving קָנָה in Ruth 4. In 4:10, קָנָה means “to acquire;” however, in 4:9, the biblical Hebrew term means “to buy.”²⁸⁷ With Boaz redeeming the family property, he has relieved Naomi from her bitterness and worry because the threat of losing the family name and provision has been removed.²⁸⁸ Ruth’s marriage to Boaz answers her petition for marriage (Ruth 3:9) and provides security and rewards prayed for by Naomi (Ruth 1:8–9; 3:1) and Boaz (Ruth 2:12). Ruth 4:9–10 highlights the essential characteristics inherent in a redeemer; motivation and ability. Boaz demonstrates a selfless element because he acts to benefit people in need.²⁸⁹ Thus, he reflects the essential qualities of redemption.

entrust themselves to Yahweh. See Greidanus, “Sermon Exposition.” Submitting to Yahweh in faith and obedience brings about redemption, Yahweh’s rescuing of people from the bondage of sin.

²⁸⁶ Izak Cornelius, and Raymond Van Leeuwen, “קָנָה,” in *NIDOTTE Vol. 3*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 938. The redeemer’s actions are joined to the Year of Jubilee, which legislates sold property restoration to the original owner and or the liberation of enslaved people every fifty years. The redeemer is intended to undo the actions of the person who acquired or bought the land or a person. See Brad Embry, “‘Redemption-Acquisition:’ The Marriage of Ruth as a Theological Commentary on Yahweh and Yahweh’s People,” *Journal of Theological Interpretation* 7, no. 2 (2013): 260.

²⁸⁷ W. Schmidt, “קָנָה,” in *TLOT Vol.3*, ed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 1149.

²⁸⁸ Howell, 272. Boaz bought all Elimelech’s property and the property belonging to Mahlon and Chilion. See Hubbard, Jr., *Ruth*, 255.

²⁸⁹ Peter Lau, and Gregory Goswell, *Unceasing Kindness: A Biblical Theology of Ruth* (Westmont: InterVarsity Press, 2016), “The Contribution of Ruth to Redemption: The Redeemer.”

Obeying Instructions— Ecclesiastes 3:16–17; 12:13

Obedience to Yahweh pleases Him and secures the blessings of health, wealth, liberty, security, and tranquility. Yahweh told His people in Exodus 19:5 to obey His voice and keep His covenant. The failure to obey Yahweh results in displeasing Him and losing blessings.²⁹⁰ The beginning of obedience is to fear Yahweh. Qoheleth states in Ecclesiastes 3:12–14 that people should resolve to do good, to enjoy Yahweh’s gifts, and to fear Him. Stähli notes that שִׁירָאָו מִלְּפָנָיו occurs in Ecclesiastes 3:14; 8:12 but nowhere else in Wisdom literature. Qoheleth impresses upon the reader the distance between Yahweh and people and emphasizes fear in the face of the ineffable Yahweh, which necessitates people’s dependence on Him.²⁹¹ The phrase

²⁹⁰ J. I. Packer, “Obedience,” in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander and Brian Rosner (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 681.

²⁹¹ Stähli, 577. Verse 14 underscores Yahweh’s immutability and the permanence of His sovereignty and actions. People cannot add to or subtract from His actions. Therefore, Qoheleth states that Yahweh is in control and people should fear Him. See Ettienne Ellis, “Reconsidering the Fear of God in Job 37:14–24 and Qohelet 3:1–17 in the Light of Rudolf Otto’s *Dal Helige*,” *Old Testament Essays (New Series)* 28, no. 1 (2015): 63–4. However, Nili Samet contends that “men should fear Him” is a divinely orchestrated feeling. People cannot choose their actions or their thoughts and beliefs. See Nili Samet, “How Deterministic is Qohelet?: A New Reading of the Appendix to the Catalogue of Times,” *Zeitschrift Für Die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 131, no. 4 (2019): 583. Samet’s statement a brief explanation of determinism. N. L. Geisler explains that determinism is the belief that people’s actions are the result of preexisting causes derived naturalistically and theistically. Theistically, it is believed that Yahweh is in control of all events including human behavior. The concept of free will is detrimental to the understanding of Yahweh’s sovereignty. See N. L. Geisler, “Freedom, Free Will, and Determinism,” in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 2nd ed., ed. Walter Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001), 467–8. Two other deterministic views are indeterminism (people’s actions and behaviors are uncaused) and self-determinism (people’s actions and behaviors are self-caused). Self-determinism’s concept is that since there were no external influences involved with Yahweh creating the world, there are no external influences involved with people’s actions and behaviors because people were created in Yahweh’s image, which includes possessing free will. See Geisler, 469–70. Therefore, Samet contends that Yahweh fearing is not the result of self-determinism, but a divinely ordained sentiment planted in people’s minds and hearts by Yahweh. See Samet, 583. The dissertation’s author does not hold to a deterministic view but to a self-deterministic understanding because Gen. 1:26–27 states that people were created in Yahweh’s

שִׂירָאוּ מִלְּפָנָיו is not an expression of terror but a recognition of Yahweh's absolute sovereignty, which results in a person making wise decisions and cultivating an appropriate behavior pleasing to Yahweh.²⁹²

In Ecclesiastes 3:16, Qoheleth observes how the judicial system is flawed by noting that justice is replaced with misconduct. He concludes that power belongs to the oppressors, which affirms his other statements that the dead are better off than the living and that the unborn are fortunate to be spared from undeserved suffering.²⁹³ With 3:14 in mind, Qoheleth observes that people left to their own devices, are incapable of righteousness pleasing to Yahweh. Justice is perverse, and wickedness prevails in a place where it should not be.²⁹⁴ The wealthy and powerful sometimes escape human justice because they control it, and the impoverished lack the resources to adequately represent themselves in a court of law.²⁹⁵ Qoheleth's response to his observation is that Yahweh "will judge both the righteous man and the wicked man" (Eccl. 3:17). The fundamental problem of worldly governance is resolved through the "post-mortem settling of

image, which involves a natural and moral likeness including free will (due to time and space, a discussion concerning what free will means or its nature will not be evaluated).

²⁹² Pelt, and Kaiser, Jr., 523.

²⁹³ Crenshaw, *Ecclesiastes*, 101–2. Barton explains that "the place of righteousness" is used by Qoheleth to denote the administration of government and the practice of religion. See Barton, 108.

²⁹⁴ Murphy, 36. Longman notes that "the court is a human institution, but according to the Old Testament, it was to be run by godly kings, priests, and other leaders. The court was a place where wrongs were to be righted, victims helped, and sinners/criminals punished. In the Teacher's estimation, though, this institution was "corrupt." See Longman III, *Ecclesiastes*, 277–8.

²⁹⁵ Provan, 92.

accounts.”²⁹⁶ Qoheleth uses the biblical Hebrew verb *שפט* to denote "pass judgment."²⁹⁷ Ecclesiastes 3:17 is not Qoheleth asserting Yahweh’s just judgment but that He judges the wicked and the righteous. In the context of 3:14, fearing Yahweh is not the beginning of knowledge; however, the lack of human knowledge facilitates the fear of Yahweh.²⁹⁸ As with other events enacted by Yahweh, His judgment is according to His timetable and not by people’s finite understanding. Qoheleth believes that Yahweh is just and judges despite his observations “under the sun.”²⁹⁹ Therefore, according to Yahweh's time, he hopes there will be a divine judgment and vindication. Longman comments that people cannot penetrate Yahweh’s timing; therefore, they should fear Him. According to Qoheleth, this fear is the pathway to obedience.³⁰⁰ This concept of obedience is further supported by Qoheleth’s statement in Ecclesiastes 3:18, “*Yahweh* has surely tested them.” The term *ברר* is the biblical Hebrew verb to denote “to purge

²⁹⁶ Blenkinsopp, 74.

²⁹⁷ Koehler, and Baumgartner, “*שפט*,” 1625. *BDB* notes that *שפט* can be specifically used to “decide controversy, discriminate between persons, in civil, political, domestic and religious questions: of Yahweh, 3:17 indicates the condemning wicked and justifying righteous.” See Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “*שפט*,” 1047. *NASB Exhaustive Concordance* notes that *שפט* is a root interpreted “to judge, govern.” Additional interpretations include acting like a judge (one time), already he is acting (one time), argue our case (one time), decide (one time), defend (three times), deliver (one time), Dispense (one time), enter into judgment (six times), entered into judgement (one time), entering into judgment (one time), execute judgment (one time), executing judgment (one time), freed (two times), handed down (one time), has a controversy (one time), Judge (five times), judge (ninety-three times), judged (twenty-two times), judges (thirty-six times), judges decide (one time), judges governed (one time), judges...judged (one time), judging (five times), plead (one time), pleads (one time), pronounce judgment (one time), rule (two times), rulers (one time), rulers...ruled (one time), vindicates (six times). See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, “*שפט*,” 1485.

²⁹⁸ Ellis, 65. The fear of Yahweh is not a simple comprehension of “fear” or of “mystery,” but a complete understanding that the fear of Yahweh is a matter of “fear” and “mystery.” *Ibid.*, 67.

²⁹⁹ Murphy, 36.

³⁰⁰ Longman III, “The ‘Fear of God’ in the Book of Ecclesiastes,” 16.

out.”³⁰¹ Richard Averbeck explains that בַּרַר is the same verb used in Ezekiel 20:38. In 3:18, the verb refers to Yahweh’s “testing” of people derived from the concept of purging.³⁰² The idea of testing in verse 18 is that it is a provocation to elicit a response to fearing Yahweh in 3:14, which includes obedience.

The Book of Ecclesiastes provides a more straightforward approach to obedience in 12:13, “Fear *Yahweh* and keep His commandments.” The command to fear Yahweh is coordinated with the command to “keep His commandments,” revealing that reverence is shown by obedience to Yahweh. Garrett comments that to obey Yahweh is to be truly human. Humanity sought to become like Yahweh through disobedience (Adam’s and Eve’s sin), and by disobedience, people lost the one thing that makes them genuinely human: obedience.³⁰³ Craig Bartholomew remarks, “The resolution of this paradox is found in the fear of *Yahweh* (rejoicing and remembrance) which enables one to rejoice and apply oneself positively to life in the midst of all that one does not understand, including and especially death.”³⁰⁴

In Ecclesiastes 12:13, שָׁמַר was used to convey “keep.” However, in the Book of Ruth, neither שָׁמַר nor שָׁמַע is used in the biblical narrative to denote obedience. However, in Ruth 3:6,

³⁰¹ Koehler, and Baumgartner, “בַּרַר,” 162. *BDB* notes that בַּרַר is interpreted to “test, prove; that *Yahweh* may prove them.” See Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “בַּרַר,” 141.

³⁰² Richard Averbeck, “בַּרַר,” in *NIDOTTE Vol. 1*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 758. Vinzenz Hamp comments that the context favors the translation “test, examine” (“may *Yahweh* test them in this way”); this can be connected with the other meanings, “separate, purify”; elsewhere the meaning “test, examine,” is very well attested for the Arab. root *bwr*. See Vinzenz Hamp, “בַּרַר,” in *TDOT Vol. 2*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David Green (Grand Rapids.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 309.

³⁰³ Garrett, 344. Obedience is not a self-arrogant pride due to religious presumption; however, it is the deep humble acceptance of what it means to be a human.

³⁰⁴ Craig Bartholomew, *Reading Ecclesiastes: Old Testament Exegesis and Hermeneutical Theory. Vol. 139* (Rome: Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1998), 268.

צוה is the biblical Hebrew verb for “to give an order, command.”³⁰⁵ Therefore, the biblical narrator impresses the reader that Ruth did all Naomi had commanded her to do on the threshing floor. Not only did she do all that was commanded of her, but she did it exactly as was instructed by Naomi. Ruth’s loyalty to her mother-in-law is indicated by her unquestioning obedience to Naomi’s commands.³⁰⁶ The term צוה is additionally a part of a fulfillment formula, where there is a structure of an order-execution of order pattern.³⁰⁷ Therefore, since Naomi is Ruth’s mother-in-law and superior (familial matriarch), she commands Ruth what action to perform on the threshing floor towards Boaz. Ruth’s steadfast obedience reveals moral and ethical behavior through family devotion and loyalty to Naomi, which is pleasing to Yahweh (seen by His providence in Ruth 4 through marriage, children, and Ruth’s role in Israelite history).

Worthy Woman/Wife— Ecclesiastes 7:28

Proverbs 31:10 asks, “An excellent wife, who can find? For her worth is far above jewels.” This verse begins the section describing the honor and dignity of the capable wife. The adjective “excellent” conveys the woman’s strength, ability, efficiency, wealth, and valor.³⁰⁸

³⁰⁵ Tyler Williams, “צוה,” in *NIDOTTE Vol. 3*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 774. The term צוה conveys the sense of a superior person stating something with authority to a subordinate to elicit a response. The term צוה used with women as the subject is only found five times (Gen 27:8; Ruth 3:6; Esth 4:5, 10, 17).

³⁰⁶ Hubbard, Jr., *Ruth*, 206. See also Johanna W. H. Bos, “Out of the Shadows: Genesis 38; Judges 4:17–22; Ruth 3,” *Semeia* 42 (1988): 61.

³⁰⁷ G. Liedke, “צוה,” in *TLOT Vol.2*, ed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 1063. Both order and command produce a unique action in a particular situation and are given by a superior. The superiors who can give an order or kings, fathers, mothers, brothers, military, and master to servant relationships. *Ibid.*

³⁰⁸ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “חֵיל,” 298. See also Robin Wakely, “חֵיל,” in *NIDOTTE Vol. 2*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 117.

Qoheleth states in Ecclesiastes 7:28 that he has not found a wise and upright woman.³⁰⁹ *BDB* notes that אִשָּׁה is "a genuine (or ideal) woman."³¹⁰ Thus, one perspective is that Qoheleth is concerned with the moral conduct of a woman (i.e., good, trustworthy).³¹¹ In this context, Qoheleth is viewed as a misogynist because he trusts no women; they lack virtue.³¹² Another view is that Qoheleth has singled out a class of women. Dunham comments that Qoheleth envisions a woman, such as the outside woman in Proverbs, who brings destruction to men who fall prey to her.³¹³ A final view is that Qoheleth is metaphorically using women as wisdom.

In Proverbs, wisdom is something to be sought (Prov. 2) and passed on from generation to generation (Prov. 4:1–9). In Ecclesiastes, Qoheleth sees wisdom as positive (Eccl. 7:19), can

³⁰⁹ The term אִשָּׁה can denote adulteress (two times), any woman (one time), childbearing (one time), each (three times), each one (one time), each woman (one time), every (one time), everyone (one time), female (three times), girls (one time), harem (five times), harlot's (two times), harlot (three times), marriage (nine times), married (nine times), marry (three times), none (one time), one (eight times), widow (seven times), wife (274 times), wife and his wives (two times), wife and the wives (one time), wife or a woman (one time), wife's (eight times), wives (100 times), woman (203 times), woman of the wives (one time), woman's (six times), women (104 times), women as wives (one time). See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, "אִשָּׁה," 1366.

³¹⁰ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, "אִשָּׁה," 61.

³¹¹ Murphy, 77. This view parallels Prov. 20:6; 31:10. Crenshaw explains that an abstraction is being used in 7:28 indicated by that אָדָם refers to generally all of humanity and אִשָּׁה specifically to women. Therefore, Qoheleth is contributing to the ancient belief that women were seen negatively. See Crenshaw, *Ecclesiastes*, 147.

³¹² Longman III, *Ecclesiastes*, 304. Provan counters Longman with the explanation that Qoheleth is lumping man and woman into a culminative comprehension of the world. Therefore, he is not singling out women; however, he is observing that no one is wise and upright. See Provan, 155. Barton supports the misogynist view for Qoheleth. See Barton, 147.

³¹³ Dunham, 41. While his focus is on the woman's identity in 7:26, he applies the same conclusions to the woman in 7:28. Dunham comments that Qoheleth's reference to a thousand men is a generalization for the near universality of transgressors. While alluring women are Qoheleth's focal point, the young men are responsible for avoiding her snares and nets. Therefore, the woman in 7:26, 28 is a literal person, who resides outside the family boundaries and poses a risk to the male wisdom-seeker. *Ibid.*, 47–8.

achieve unexpected things (Eccl. 9:15), and has limitations (Eccl. 7:23–29).³¹⁴ Therefore, comprehending wisdom as a composite character for women helps to understand Ecclesiastes 7:28 and keeps the perspective in line with Wisdom literature. Ecclesiastes 7:23–29 involves Qoheleth’s search and discovery for wisdom. The one man out of a thousand is fortunate to have married an excellent woman and found Lady Wisdom. Thus, when he states, “I have not found a woman,” Qoheleth acknowledges that his efforts to become wise have failed because he married Dame Folly.³¹⁵ The emphasis of 7:28 is not on what Qoheleth found (“one man among a thousand”) but what he has not found: wisdom. Therefore, Qoheleth impresses the reader that wisdom is rare in both men and women.³¹⁶ Solomon was seduced into idolatry by Pharaoh’s daughter, who was instrumental in Solomon’s cursed and meaningless life. Therefore, seeking and finding wisdom, while rare for Qoheleth, is the means to rejecting the world’s pleasures that displease Yahweh and contradict life’s meaningfulness.³¹⁷ Compared to a deep chasm, wisdom

³¹⁴ David Firth, “Worrying About the Wise: Wisdom in Old Testament Narrative,” in *Exploring Old Testament Wisdom: Literature and Themes*, ed. David G. Firth and Lindsay Wilson (Apollos, 2016), 155.

³¹⁵ Little, 68–9. Seow notes that verse 28b was secondarily inserted because the copyist misunderstood 7:26 by thinking that it was an indictment against all women and not pertaining to personified Folly. See Seow, 265. Bartholomew sees a resemblance to Dame Folly and Lady Wisdom in 7:23–29; however, he takes a more epistemological stance because Qoheleth is not observing wisdom so much but about folly, which will lead someone not to truth. See Bartholomew, *Ecclesiastes*, 269, 275. George Schwab states, “In Ecclesiastes, to enjoy life with one’s beloved is to test and explore wisdom, the very thing Qoheleth sought and did not find. Solomon was a lover of women, but his women became snares into a life of meaningless and idolatry for him.” See George Schwab, Sr., “Woman as the Object of Qoheleth’s Search,” *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 39, no. 1 (Spring 2001): 82. Solomon had many wives and concubines. 1 Kgs. 11:3 states, “He had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines, and his wives turned his heart away.” Solomon was obliged to allow his foreign wives to worship their own gods, something that ultimately affected him.

³¹⁶ Eaton, 132.

³¹⁷ Daniel Estes comments that Qoheleth not finding an explanation (Eccl. 7:28) is comparable to the fool not finding wisdom in Prov. 1:28. Additionally, Qoheleth’s inability to find a woman in 7:28 mirrors the warnings against folly under the guise of women in Proverbs

underscores Qoheleth's lack of faith in human goodness. Men have no right to point a finger at women because wisdom is rare in both genders.³¹⁸ However, Pinker comments that in 7:27, Qoheleth finds a woman able to think, but in 7:28, the same woman cannot teach wisdom.³¹⁹ Another perspective is provided by Richard Clifford, which is in line more with Woman Wisdom than women, generally. He explains that 7:29 is the key to comprehending 7:27–28 by noting that Qoheleth believes that Yahweh “made men upright;” however, it is Woman Wisdom (Eccl. 7:28) that exclaims that humans are far from being upright. Proverbs 8:36; 9:4; 20:30–33 indicates that people who prefer death over wisdom lack intelligence, and Woman Wisdom calls them complacent, naive, scoffers, haters of knowledge, and despisers of her corrections.³²⁰

In Ruth 3:11, Boaz calls Ruth a “woman of excellence.” The biblical Hebrew term לַיִן is used for “excellence” in Ruth 3:11. *HALOT* notes that it can mean a “capable wife.”³²¹ Robin Wakely explains that לַיִן indicates a quality of character; a capable or good wife is one of

and the wounds and disgrace the adulterer will find in Prov. 6:33. See Daniel Estes, “Seeking and Finding in Ecclesiastes and Proverbs,” in *Reading Ecclesiastes Intertextually*, ed. Katharine Dell and Will Kynes (London: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2014), 126.

³¹⁸ Crenshaw, *Old Testament Wisdom*, 122.

³¹⁹ Pinker, “Qohelet’s Views on Women,” 184. When Qoheleth constrained his criteria for women in the world of Wisdom, the outcome was that he was able to find one man but no women. In other words, Qoheleth imposed the condition that women should be able to generate clever ideas within the framework of Wisdom. *Ibid.*, 186.

³²⁰ Richard Clifford, “Another Look at Qoheleth 7,23–29,” *Biblica* 100, no. 1 (2019): 56.

³²¹ Koehler, and Baumgartner, “לַיִן,” 312. *NASB Exhaustive Concordance* provides the following list for לַיִן: able (five times), armies (three times), army (eighty-two times), army (one time), capability (one time), capable (three times), elite army (one time), excellence (one time), excellent (two times), forces (twelve times), full (one time), goods (one time), great (one time), might (one time), mighty (one time), nobly (one time), power (two times), retinue (two times), riches (nine times), strength (ten times), strong (two times), substance (one time), troops (two times), valiant (forty-one times), valiant (four times), valiantly (six times), valor (eighteen times), very powerful (one time), warriors (one time), wealth (twenty-five times), wealthy (one time), worthy (one time). See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, “לַיִן,” 1391.

sterling quality who helps her husband become successful, cultivate a good reputation, respect, and acquire an influential position in the community (Prov. 31:10; Ruth 3:11).³²² Boaz tells Ruth that the community thinks she is an excellent woman because of her loyalty, lovingkindness, and humility that she has exhibited to Naomi and not because of her social and economic status.³²³ Ruth has proven devoted, humble, and hard-working to the community, which outshines her politeness. Her exemplary conduct has elevated her status to a woman worthy of marrying Boaz.³²⁴

City Gate—Ecclesiastes 10:15

As noted in chapter four, the city gate was an opening in the wall surrounding a city where most people accessed the fields or traveled to another city. Not only did the gate serve as the main entry and exit point, but it was also the city's security system. The gate was a lookout post because most cities were on top of mounds.³²⁵ Amihai Mazar calls the gate complex “one of the most imposing features of Israelite cities.”³²⁶ A practical significance of the city gate for travelers was that it would be easily recognizable, even from a distance.³²⁷ Not knowing the way

³²² Wakely, “לִּיָּדָה,” 117.

³²³ LaCocque, 99. A special honor reserved in Wisdom literature for an ideal wife.

³²⁴ Hubbard, Jr., *Ruth*, 216.

³²⁵ Carey Walsh, “Testing Entry: The Social Functions of City Gates in Biblical Memory,” in *Memory and the City in Ancient Israel*, ed. Ehud Ben Zvi and Dima Edelman (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2014), 44.

³²⁶ Amihai Mazar, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible: 10,000–586 B.C.E.* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 467.

³²⁷ Eissfeldt Otto notes that the city gate was an architecturally conspicuous entrance marking the entrance to urban wards, towns, and cities. See Eissfeldt Otto, “שַׁעַר,” in *TDOT Vol. 15*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David Green (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 368. Aron Pinker comments that the city and countryside were interdependent of each other; therefore, they could not be too far

to the city could imply not just a lack of physical direction but also a disconnection from the community's societal, legal, and economic life.³²⁸

Qoheleth observes in Ecclesiastes 10:15, “The toil of a fool so wearies him that he does not even know how to go to a city.” A literal interpretation of 10:15 would suggest that a fool walks around aimlessly trying to find their way to the city, even though it is common knowledge how to get there.³²⁹ Ecclesiastes 10:15 can also be comprehended in a way that foolish counselors give so much poor advice that they confuse a person through ill-advised or long-winded directions.³³⁰ Michael Fox explains that a חכם (“wise”) person encompasses faculty wisdom and knowledge manifested by ingenuity, good sense, and rational intellect.³³¹ Therefore, according to Fox’s explanation of the חכם, the פְּסִיל (“fool”) is a person who possesses a lack of ingenuity, good sense, and rational intellect.³³² J. Schüpphaus notes that פְּסִיל occurs most frequently in

from each other. See Aron Pinker, “A Reconstruction of Qohelet 10,15,” *Biblische Notizen* 149 (2011): 67.

³²⁸ A. R. Hulst comments that the significance of the city’s role played in the protection it provided to its citizens and the people in the surrounding vicinities. See A. R. Hulst, “עִיר,” in *TLOT Vol.2*, ed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 882. Therefore, most people would know where to go in case of an attack. Seow remarks, “This verse may provide some clues as to the extent of urbanization in Palestine during Qohelet’s time. In an urbanized society, the city is the center of commercial and social intercourse. The way to the city is, therefore, common knowledge; everyone except the most stupid and incompetent knows the way to the town.” See Seow, 320.

³²⁹ Michael Leahy disagrees and contends that Qoheleth is implying a distinction between urban dwellers and country people. Therefore, Qoheleth has in mind a person working unceasingly for a living, who is not smart enough to go to the city to live a life without hard work. See Michael Leahy, “The Meaning of Ecclesiastes 10:15,” *The Irish Theological Quarterly* 18, no. 3 (1951): 289.

³³⁰ Garrett, 335.

³³¹ Michael Fox, *A Time to Tear Down and a Time to Build Up: A Rereading of Ecclesiastes* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 1999), 73.

³³² Pinker, “A Reconstruction of Qohelet 10,15,” 66. See also Chou-Wee Pan, “פְּסִיל,” in *NIDOTTE Vol. 2*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 671.

Wisdom literature. Out of all the occurrences, eighteen are found in Ecclesiastes. It is a human trait that denotes slowness in a metaphorical sense.³³³ Thus, in the context of 10:15, the כְּסִיל did not know how to get to the city, the best-known place in the world with specific gates for entry.³³⁴ Besides, the city gate not only served the purpose of entering and exiting the city but was also the scene of many activities. Judicial (1 Kgs. 21:13; Deut. 17:6; 1 Sam. 7:6; 14:24; Job 24:2, 7; Ruth 4), political³³⁵, and retail were prominent activities held at the city gate.³³⁶ The wise person may not know everything about the world or why things happen the way they do, but they do know the geography of the land to navigate a way to the city, which was the center of everyday life.³³⁷

³³³ J. Schüpphaus, “כְּסִיל,” in *TDOT Vol. 7*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David Green (Grand Rapids.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 265–7. The term כְּסִיל is derived from the root כָּסַל denoting “to be or become stupid.” See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, כָּסַל, 1411. The term כְּסִיל means a “stupid fellow, dullard, fool.” Additional meanings are fool (thirty-five times), fool’s (two times), foolish (six times), foolish man’s (one time), fools (twenty-three times), stupid (one time), stupid man (one time), stupid ones (one time). See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, “כָּסַל,” 1411. M. Sæbø notes that כְּסִיל denotes a useless person. See M. Sæbø, “כְּסִיל,” in *TLOT Vol.2*, ed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 621.

³³⁴ Pinker, “A Reconstruction of Qohelet 10,15,” 71. There is always a plainly marked road leading to the city and city gate. However, if an unwise person does not take the time to learn the way, then they become tired and frustrated. See Leahy, 289.

³³⁵ Gen. 34:20, 24; Jer. 17:19; Ezra 10:9 provide some insight into “political” assembling at the city gate. However, most times the assemblies were before the council of elders and the men of the city. See Geoffrey Evans, “‘Gates’ and ‘Streets’: Urban Institutions in Old Testament Times,” *The Journal of Religious History* 2, no. 1 (June 1963): 5. See also 1 Kgs. 20, the actions between Ahab and Ben-Hadad.

³³⁶ Evans states that the gate’s use as a market space stems from the knowledge that the city’s population congregated at the gate. Anyone with merchandise for sale, whether from an outlying village or a foreign land, could come to the city gate to sell their wares. See Evans, 9.

³³⁷ Provan, 197. Through wisdom’s perspective, the כְּסִיל is lazy and does not have the intellectual capabilities to travel or give directions to the city.

In Ruth 4:1, the biblical author not only provides the location where Boaz was going but in what direction. Verse 1 states that “Boaz went up to the gate.” The civic litigation process took place at the city gate, involving ten elders whom Boaz called to witness the proceedings. After the nearer relative declines redeeming family and property, Boaz buys Naomi’s field and announces that Ruth will be his wife. At the city gate, the people gave their blessing on Boaz’s and Ruth’s wedding contract.³³⁸ Boaz calling for the elders and the citizens at the city gate indicates a formula for a legally binding agreement. Boaz called the witnesses to validate an oral contract or perform a notarial function.³³⁹ The city gate in 4:1 serves no different purpose than what may be implied in Ecclesiastes 10:15. In both verses, the gate was the entry and exit point for the city and served as the city’s place for judicial, political, business, and commercial functions, and placed an essential function in the city’s fortification (gatehouse). The distinction between Ruth 4:1 and Ecclesiastes 10:15 is that Boaz is utilizing the city gate for a legal proceeding, where he knew he would encounter the nearer relative and secure property and heritage redemption for Ruth and Naomi. However, in Ecclesiastes 10:15, the *לְקַיֵּץ* cannot find the way to the city even though the city gate is an architectural conspicuous entryway into the city.

Building Up a House— Ecclesiastes 2:4–11

The theme of building a house in Wisdom Literature, particularly within the context of the Hebrew Bible, encompasses a range of metaphorical and literal interpretations. Wisdom

³³⁸ Natalie May, and Ulrike Steinert, *The Fabric of the Cities: Aspects of Urbanism, Urban Topography and Society in Mesopotamia, Greece, and Rome* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 98–9.

³³⁹ Gene Tucker, “Witnesses and ‘Dates’ in Israelite Contracts,” *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 28, no. 1 (Jan. 1966): 43.

Literature often employs the imagery of building a house to convey deeper philosophical, moral, and theological meanings. In the Book of Proverbs, the sage takes a metaphorical approach by noting how wisdom builds a house, but folly destroys it (Prov. 14:1), which reveals the consequences of moral and ethical decisions. Proverbs 9:1 tells how Wisdom has built up her house with seven pillars, which denotes a stable and enduring life founded on wisdom's principles. In keeping with Ecclesiastes' theme of meaninglessness, Qoheleth observes the futility of material achievements, a literal approach to contrasting wisdom and folly.

Ecclesiastes 2:4–11 reveals how Qoheleth pursued fulfillment by acquiring material and financial possessions, which were meaningless.³⁴⁰ In verses 4–8, Qoheleth uses לִי ("for myself") to convey his personal involvement in securing material and financial wealth.³⁴¹ Qoheleth is taking the pathway to a pleasurable life with extravagant living, wealth, and imposing surroundings, indicating the spoils of his quest, which reflect royal power and riches.³⁴² The tie to wisdom is that the king (Eccl. 1:12) can experiment with life's pleasures and test wisdom's achievements.³⁴³ The result was that amassing material and financial wealth for pleasure was

³⁴⁰ Provan states, "Gladness of heart, joy, pleasure—it is not that these things are not good in themselves in Ecclesiastes. Yet Qohelet has discovered that the pursuit of them with the hope of gain is just as pointless as the pursuit of wisdom and knowledge for that purpose." See Provan, 71.

³⁴¹ Crenshaw, *Ecclesiastes*, 78. Longman remarks that Qoheleth did all of this for his personal pleasure with no charitable intentions involved. See Longman III, *Ecclesiastes*, 268. Garrett notes that לִי represents selfishness due to its frequency in verses 4–8. See Garrett, 291.

³⁴² Murphy, 18.

³⁴³ Crenshaw, *Ecclesiastes*, 70. He further comments that Eccl. 2:1–11 is a test of pleasure, which proves to be fruitless and futile. Arian Verheij compares Eccl. 22:4–6 with Yahweh's creation events in Gen. 1 and 2. The difference between the two biblical texts is that Yahweh saw His actions as "very good;" however, Qoheleth saw his results as worthless. See Arian Verheij, "Paradise Retried: On Qohelet 2:4–6," *JSOT* 16, no. 50 (June 1991): 114. Verses 12–17 is a test of wisdom and folly that proves to be a relative good.

הַבָּל.³⁴⁴ In 2:5, Qoheleth uses the biblical Hebrew term פָּרְדֵּס (“parks”).³⁴⁵ *BDB* defines פָּרְדֵּס as a “preserve, park” with an emphasis on “fruit trees and costly plants” in Ecclesiastes 2:5.³⁴⁶ I. Cornelius comments that פָּרְדֵּס is a “royal project of building gardens and parks.”³⁴⁷ The space would have been well landscaped and groomed, meant for enjoyment. Of interest is that the biblical Hebrew term *paredes* is like the English word “paradise.” Therefore, Qoheleth uses language in this verse to convey an image of recreating paradise conditions.³⁴⁸ In addition to the buildings and gardens, Qoheleth gathered enslaved people (Eccl. 2:7; bought and free), silver, gold, treasures, and singers (Eccl. 2:8). Finally, he states that he had “many concubines” (“הַנְּשִׂוֹת”), “the pleasures of men” (Eccl. 2:8).³⁴⁹ *HALOT* explains that initially הַנְּשִׂוֹת was challenging to interpret with early Jewish interpretations denoting “demons.” However, recent explanations are

³⁴⁴ Stuart Weeks notes that “For all the attempts to read luxury into this story, indeed, there is not much of it there. Qohelet makes buildings (of an unspecified sort) and plants vineyards (2:4). Any suspicion that the “gardens and parks” of 2:5 are merely decorative is swept aside by the immediate observation that he fills them with fruit trees, and Qohelet’s pools of water are for irrigation of a timber-forest, not boating. Of course, none of this is going to create an unpleasant environment, but when it is followed by an account of his many cattle and flocks, in 2:7, it does appear that the business aspect is uppermost in Qohelet’s mind.” See Stuart Weeks, *Ecclesiastes and Skepticism* (New York: T & T Clark International, 2012), 61–2.

³⁴⁵ The term פָּרְדֵּס, *paredes*, means “a preserve, park;” additionally, forest (one time), orchard (one time), parks (one time). See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, “פָּרְדֵּס,” 1457.

³⁴⁶ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “פָּרְדֵּס,” 825.

³⁴⁷ I. Cornelius, “פָּרְדֵּס,” in *NIDOTTE Vol. 3*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 673.

³⁴⁸ Longman III, *Ecclesiastes*, 268. Specifically, the Garden of Eden is in mind with Eccl. 2:5. Provan states that *paredes* is derived “from the Persian word *pairi-daeza*, “an enclosure,” from which we also ultimately derive our word “paradise.” Paradise is indeed evoked by the reference to the “trees” that fill these gardens and parks, watered by their reservoirs (cf. Gen. 2:6–10)—a world that is then “populated” (cf. Gen. 2:15–25) by the king’s own people: male and female slaves and the children born to them (Eccl. 2:7). See Provan, 72.

³⁴⁹ The term הַנְּשִׂוֹת means “a mistress” and comes from נֶשֶׂה, which means “(female) breast.” See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, “נֶשֶׂה,” 1476. The term הַנְּשִׂוֹת can refer to man concubines (one time). See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, “הַנְּשִׂוֹת,” 1476.

based on the Ugaritic word denoting “mistress, lady,” which in Hispano-Arabic means “concubine.”³⁵⁰ Given the context of 2:1–11, the recent explanations stipulating that $\eta\eta\psi$ means “concubines” make sense because of the accumulation of material and financial wealth.

Therefore, 2:8 could be comprehended as a person who has made a crude reference to women referencing their sexual parts ($\eta\psi$, “breasts”) and collected them for sexual pleasure.³⁵¹

Ecclesiastes 2:10 notes the extent of Qoheleth’s pleasure, “All that my eyes desired I did not refuse them. I did not withhold my heart from any pleasure.” Dariusz Iwanski comments that in Ecclesiastes 2:4–11, Qoheleth has become a self-centered individual obsessed with searching for his paradise and runs the risk of falling to the same outcome as the king in Ecclesiastes 1:12.³⁵²

In Ecclesiastes 2:11, Qoheleth’s experiment has been completed, and he presents the results, “behold all was vanity and striving after wind and there was no profit under the sun.”³⁵³ Thus, Qoheleth is stating that is hard $\eta\eta\psi$ (“toil, labor”) was for naught. He constantly asks what the benefit of $\eta\eta\psi$ is.³⁵⁴ David Thompson comments that $\eta\eta\psi$ describes the work used by a person to produce something or to accomplish a task, and in Ecclesiastes 2:4–8, names the material, financial, and human possessions that Qoheleth toiled for.³⁵⁵ Qoheleth’s determined effort at

³⁵⁰ Koehler, and Baumgartner, “ $\eta\eta\psi$,” 1420. *BDB* notes that $\eta\eta\psi$ has an unknown meaning. See Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “ $\eta\eta\psi$,” 994.

³⁵¹ Longman III, *Ecclesiastes*, 268; Garrett, 292.

³⁵² Dariusz Iwanski, “‘Royal Show’ in Qohelet 2:1–11: A Māšal – a Mind Exercise,” *Biblica et Patristica Thoruniensia* 14, no. 4 (2021): 360.

³⁵³ “Qoheleth turned from the absorption of his active material labors and his sensual pleasures to consider the meaning of them all, and finds that, like the delights of wisdom, the delights of possession are but vanity.” See Barton, 81–2.

³⁵⁴ Baker, and Carpenter, “ $\eta\eta\psi$,” 847.

³⁵⁵ Thompson, “ $\eta\eta\psi$,” 433–4.

enjoyment did not bring what he desired; joy is as limited as wisdom in what it can achieve.³⁵⁶ He is a realist who observes from personal experience the differences between his activities that produce inherent pleasures (Eccl. 2:10) and the meaningless attached to them (Eccl. 2:11). Daniel Estes states, “Just as unsurpassed human wisdom cannot provide advantage, neither can unparalleled controlled pleasure produce genuine profit in life.”³⁵⁷ Qoheleth’s solution to the dilemma in Ecclesiastes 2:24 comes from the wisdom that people are to enjoy life to the fullest that Yahweh has given them, recognizing it as a divine gift. Thus, Qoheleth built up a house with gardens and pools, and he added to it wealth, slaves, and concubines. However, it was only a fleeting pleasure. True pleasure comes from enjoying the things that Yahweh bestows on obedient people who please Him (Eccl. 3:12–13; 3:22; 5:18–19; 8:15; 9:7–9).

In the Book of Ruth, a stable family is established through the levirate marriage between Boaz and Ruth; both Ruth and Boaz exhibit *hesed* (going above and beyond typical kindness, devotion, loyalty, and generosity), and both fear Yahweh (Ruth forsaking her homeland and religion to embrace Israel and Yahweh and through Boaz’s *hesed* towards Ruth and his strict adherence to the Hebrew legal practices). In Ruth 4:11, the use of *בְּיָמֵינוּ* focuses on a dynasty. The Bethlehem women pray for Ruth’s destiny to parallel that of Rachel and Leah, who built up the house of Israel.³⁵⁸ The mentioning of Rachel, Leah, and Tamar conveys a *zekhut immahot*, “merit

³⁵⁶ Provan, 74.

³⁵⁷ Estes, *Handbook on the Wisdom Books and Psalms*, 301. Katharine Dell notes that human wisdom is ephemeral, but Yahweh’s wisdom endures. Human beings will never fully understand; all they can do is acknowledge the futility of life but trust in Yahweh all the same. See Katharine Dell, “Reading Ecclesiastes with the Scholars,” *Exploring Old Testament Wisdom*, ed. David Firth and Lindsay Wilson (London: Apollos, 2016), 97.

³⁵⁸ Dell, *The Solomonic Corpus of ‘Wisdom’ and Its Influence*, 182. ‘Building up a house’ is a perpetuating or establishing of a family line. See De Waard, and Nida, 71. The blessings pronounced in Boaz refers to Rachel, Leah, and Tamar. Rachel and Leah were Jacob’s wives, who produced Israel’s twelve ancestors (Gen. 29:21–30:24), they built up the house of Israel

of the mothers.”³⁵⁹ The women’s statement in 4:11 signifies that Ruth was elevated from a foreigner (a Moabitess) to a citizen of Israel, had a home and a husband, and wished that the family would be more significant than Rachel and Leah’s.³⁶⁰ Harry Hoffner remarks that a married woman was a part of her husband’s *בַּיִת*; additionally, he notes that frequently *בַּיִת* can denote a “home, dwelling, or family.”³⁶¹ Alan Levenson notes that *בַּיִת* can generically denote a “house” or as “House,” a connotation for “household.” However, in the Ruthan context, he comments that Ruth serves to unite the building project of the two Matriarchs.³⁶² The phrase *וְעָשְׂהָ תֵּיִל בְּאֶפְרַתָּה וְיִקְרָא שְׁמָהּ בְּבֵית-לְחֶם* (“and may you achieve wealth in Ephrathah and become famous in Bethlehem”) pertains to a dynastic understanding versus a literal comprehension of wealth and prosperity because it is already known that Boaz was an important person (Ruth 2:1). Therefore, the wishes expressed in 4:11 convey a hope for procreation and progeny.³⁶³

(Ruth 4:11). Tamar was a widow who pretended to be a prostitute to solicit Judah when he excluded her from a levirate marriage (Gen. 38). See Thoman Mann, “Ruth 4,” *Interpretation* 64, no. 2 (Apr. 2010): 179. See also Alan Levenson, “The Mantle of the Matriarchs: Ruth 4:11–15,” *Jewish Bible Quarterly* 38, no. 4 (Oct. 2010): 238.

³⁵⁹ Levenson, 238–9.

³⁶⁰ Hubbard, Jr. *Ruth*, 258–9.

³⁶¹ Harry Hoffner, “*בַּיִת*,” in *TDOT Vol. 2*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David Green (Grand Rapids.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 114.

³⁶² Levenson, 239.

³⁶³ C. J. Labuschagne, “Crux in Ruth 4:11,” *Zeitschrift Für Die Alttestamentilche Wissenschaft* 79, no. 3 (1967): 365.

Chapter 6

The Book of Job is a biblical text in Wisdom literature.¹ The issues that Job addresses pertain to suffering, theodicy, and retribution. Job wrestles with a timeless question: why do righteous people suffer?² The Book of Job shows some similarities with a couple of Mesopotamian texts. *The Babylonian Theodicy*, as known as *The Babylonian Ecclesiastes* or *A Dialogue about Human Misery*, provides the closest parallel to Job and his friend's dialogues. However, there is only a dialogue between the sufferer and one friend in this ancient text. The original composition could have been dated to the second millennium, with extant copies dating to the first millennium Neo-Assyrian or Neo-/Late Babylonian periods.³ It is of an acrostic structure consisting of twenty-seven strophes with eleven lines for each strophe. The text uses cuneiform signs, repetitions, rhymes, and couplets. The author identifies himself in the text as an incantation-priest. *The Babylonian Theodicy* does not begin with a descriptive narrative but commences with the dialogue between two unnamed protagonists. Takayoshi Oshima notes,

¹ Wisdom literature attempts to help the reader to understand human life and to live a morally righteous behavior pleasing to Yahweh. Therefore, Wisdom literature does not appeal to how Yahweh acts towards His creation but how people comprehend life itself. John Goldingay explains that Wisdom literature does not leave Yahweh or morality out of its teachings but believe that they are a part of a person's experiences. Thus, the Book of Job belies the patterns, logic, and regularities associated with the characterization of life. See John Goldingay, *Job for Everyone* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2013), 4. Katharine Dell comments that Job is closer to Ecclesiastes due to both books questioning the traditional manner of wisdom thought. However, a difference between the two books is that Ecclesiastes is closer to mainline wisdom than the Book of Job. See Katharine Dell, *The Book of Job as Sceptical Literature* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1991), 63.

² The biblical author addresses the issue of suffering through many sharp contrasts throughout Job. The basic tenet is the tension between a person's belief in Yahweh and personal experiences. See John Hartley, *NICOT: Job* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1988), 43.

³ Takayoshi Oshima, *Babylonian Poems of Pious Sufferers* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2021), 117.

“unlike other Sumero-Akkadian debate-texts, the speakers make no effort to convince their opponents of their superior authority: instead, the debate concentrates entirely on the point of doctrine, i.e., the meaning of belief in the gods and its benefit.”⁴ The Babylonian text centers on the many woes experienced by the sufferer and the friend’s replies of comfort, sharp criticism, and the need for piety to the gods.⁵ Hartley provides a parallel summary of the Babylonian text. He notes the sufferer’s many distresses, the problem of evil, separation from the gods, the friend’s explanation of the wicked’s punishment, the sufferer’s cry of injustice, and the friend’s accusation that the sufferer is complaining because he does not know the divine ways.⁶ The literary work abruptly ends without indicating the outcome of the dialogue. Christopher Hayes notes, “Furthermore, it makes no effort, not even a superficial one, to settle the issues that it raises, and the speaker closes the composition still in distress and misfortune.”⁷

Despite the ancient Mesopotamian text’s lack of resolution, it and Job are similar. Yair Hoffman notes that both literary pieces concentrate on the main character who is suffering and wondering how they are going to be saved, both deal with bodily and social suffering, both seek the reasons for their suffering, both reject sin as the reason for suffering, both deal with the wicked’s prosperity, and both involve friends offering explanations for the suffering.⁸ It has been theorized that *The Babylonian Theodicy* influenced the structure of the Book of Job. Although there are similarities between the two works, how they deal with suffering differs. Hartley notes

⁴ Oshima, 125.

⁵ Ibid., 127.

⁶ Hartley, 9.

⁷ Christopher Hays, *Hidden Riches* (Louisville: Presbyterian Publishing Corp., 2014), 332.

⁸ Yair Hoffman, *A Blemished Perfection* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc., 2009), 253–7.

that in *The Babylonian Theodicy*, the sufferer's distress and a solutional approach starkly contrast with Job's.

Ludlul bēl nēmeqi, I Will Praise the Lord of Wisdom, is another ancient Mesopotamian text similar to the Book of Job. The *Ludlul bēl nēmeqi* is a cuneiform text written in Akkadian, dating from the late Kassite period (1300–1155 BC) or the Second Dynasty of Isin (1157–1026 BC).⁹ While *The Babylonian Theodicy* shared many similarities to the Book of Job, the *Ludlul bēl nēmeqi*, as noted by Hays, shares the most striking comparison to the Hebrew text.¹⁰ The ancient Mesopotamian text has been nicknamed “The Babylonian Job.” Due to the Book of Job dating during the exilic period, a possible theory is that the Hebrew author was aware of Mesopotamian texts involving suffering and injustice; however, this is inconclusive.¹¹ In both texts, a man is suddenly afflicted with bodily suffering, economic losses, and a loss of social standing. Both contend with a silent deity, Marduk in *Ludlul bēl nēmeqi* and Yahweh in Job, the sufferer's use of rhetoric to describe their distress and eventual restoration.¹² Unlike Job, the man consults diviners to rid himself of his illness for nearly a year. The diviners are of no help, and the man continues to lament to gain favor from the gods. In three dreams, Marduk sends messengers to perform exorcisms to restore the man to his pre-inflicted state. In the end, the

⁹ Hays, 321.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 332.

¹¹ John Gray, “The Book of Job in the Context of Near Eastern Literature,” *Zeitschrift Für Die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 82, no. 2 (1970): 255.

¹² Hays, 332. “‘The Lord of Wisdom’ in the opening phrase of the first text, which served as its title, is Marduk, whose wisdom was expertise in magic spells to ward off evil demons. This long poetic monologue describes how a once prosperous public figure lost his post, wealth, family, friends and health, for no reason that he could fathom, and was then in reverse order given back by Marduk what he had lost. Marduk is discreetly blamed for the unexplained disasters.” See W. G. Lambert, “Some New Babylonian Wisdom Literature,” in *Wisdom in Ancient Israel*, ed. John Day, Robert Gordon, and Hugh Williamson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 32.

high-ranking man praises Marduk in gratitude.¹³ The text's writer is careful not to offend or publicly accuse Marduk of wrongdoing. He writes with an orthodox and pious thought.¹⁴ In *Ludlul bēl nēmeqi*, Yair Hoffman notes, "the poet's complaint is not addressed to an ethical evil; rather, his ill fortune is brought about because he does not know the code by which to decipher God's acts and bring about changes."¹⁵ Therefore, the poet's sufferer resorts to cultic practices and rituals to alleviate his distress. Thus, cultic magic provides the man's salvation, given to him through images that give a divine answer to a question that magicians and sorcerers could not answer.¹⁶ The Book of Job does not contain magic, sorcery, or divine images. It further separates itself from the ancient Mesopotamian text by providing a theodicy, solving the problem of suffering. Hays notes, "The problems of suffering and the justice of God were sharpened for Hebrew authors in a new way in the wake of Jerusalem's fall to the Babylonians in 586 B.C., as is so evident elsewhere in the Bible. Although the Book of Job focuses on individual rather than corporate suffering, it is not hard to imagine its significance for an exilic community."¹⁷

Job was "blameless and upright, fearing God" (Job 1:1).¹⁸ When Satan questions Yahweh, Yahweh confidently praises Job for turning away from evil; however, to test Job's

¹³ Hartley, 8.

¹⁴ Lambert, 34.

¹⁵ Hoffman, 259.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 259–60.

¹⁷ Hays, 333.

¹⁸ The biblical Hebrew term *תָּם* is used for "blameless," and *יָשָׁר* for "upright." The term *תָּם* conveys a sense of wholeness, completeness, and integral like as a circle is complete. The term *יָשָׁר* denotes something that is straight and not crooked. Therefore, Job 1:1 introduces a person who is as perfect as a circle and as straight as a line. The result of Job's perfection is the abundance of possessions bestowed on him by Yahweh. See David Robertson, "The Book of Job: A Literary Study," *Soundings: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 56, no. 4 (1973): 447–8.

faithfulness, He allows Satan to inflict calamities upon Job.¹⁹ Hence, within a wisdom frame, the Book of Job reveals virtues commonly valued by wisdom tradition.²⁰ Job 1:1's two virtues of fearing Yahweh and resisting evil are associated with Job. Proverbs 1:7 states that fearing Yahweh is the beginning of wisdom.²¹ Job 28 affirms this statement by indicating that wisdom is only found with Yahweh, and the proper response is to fear Him.²² This biblical truth is handled through the unusual application of the retribution principle (RP). The principle states that the righteous will prosper, and the wicked will suffer. In the Book of Job, Job is a righteous person who suffers, contradicting the traditional understanding of the retribution principle.²³ Therefore, the biblical author reveals how the RP cannot be rigidly applied and the errant thinking by Job's

¹⁹ The blameless and upright Job, who fears Yahweh, suffers deeply in the physical, social, emotional, and spiritual aspect of his life. The test is whether Job can maintain his moral resolve or not. See Hartley, 47–8.

²⁰ The Book of Job is known as reflective wisdom. It addresses realities that contradict the traditional comprehension of the creative order; therefore, Job is a reflection on Yahweh's sovereignty. See August Konkel, *CBC Vol. 6: Job*, ed. Philip Comfort et al. (Carol Stream: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 2006), 3.

²¹ Leo Perdue comments that wise behavior rooted in faith leads to Yahweh's protection and the rewards of prosperity and wealth. See Leo Perdue, *Wisdom in Revolt: Metaphorical Theology in the Book of Job* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991), 86. Job's wise behavior is revealed through his survival of two catastrophes: the loss of his property (Job 1:14–17) and the loss of his family (Job 1:18–19). Despite the unimaginable suffering, Job continues to praise and affirm Yahweh. His moral resolve is further tested, but not broken, by his wife's temptation to curse and forsake Yahweh (Job 2:7–10). *Ibid.*, 87.

²² Tremper Longman III, *BCOT: Job* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 66.

²³ John Walton and Kelly Vizcaino explain that in "Israelite theology the principle was integral to the belief in God's justice. Since God is just, the Israelites believed it was incumbent on him to uphold the RP. Having a worldview in which God was absolutely just and compelled to maintain the RP, they developed the inevitable converse corollary, which affirmed that those who prospered must be righteous (i.e., favored by God) and those who suffered must be wicked (i.e., experiencing the judgment of God). The RP was thus an attempt to understand, articulate, justify, and systematize the logic of God's interaction in the world." See John Walton, and Kelly Vizcaino, *NIVAC: Job*, ed. Terry Muck et al. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 39.

friends by applying a legalistic comprehension of the RP to Job's circumstance.²⁴ The Book of Job uses the RP's modified view to focus on Yahweh's wisdom, not His justice. The RP is not the only didactic wisdom²⁵ concept in the Book of Job. Job will be treated like the previous discussions on Ruth, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes.²⁶

²⁴ Lennart Boström, "Retribution and Wisdom Literature," in *Exploring Old Testament Wisdom: Literature and Themes*, ed. David Firth and Lindsay Wilson (London: Apollos, 2016), 147.

²⁵ Dell explains that didactic elements are found in the proverbial sayings and poetry contained in Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Sirach, and the Wisdom of Solomon. While the Book of Job is mainly devoid of proverbial sayings and didactic poetry, didactic elements are revealed through the interrogative questions, that could have come from educational content. Thus, the entire Book of Job is understood as a didactic lesson for people who suffer and or question Yahweh for their suffering. Additionally, wisdom forms are contained within Job through short wisdom sayings (Job 4:10–11; 5:2, 6–7; 12:11–12; 15:34–35), quasi-acrostic features (Job 4:2–6; 5:3–7), arguments characteristic of wisdom style (Job 4:3–9), example stories (Job 5:3–5), numerical sayings (Job 5:19–21), proverbs (Job 6:5–6; 12:12–13), ridicule of opponents (Job 15:2–3, 7–11; 16:2–6), accusations (Job 15:12–16), appeals to ancient traditions (Job 8:8–13; 15:17–19), descriptions of the fate of the wicked (Job 18:5–21; 20:4–29; 21:7–33; 27:13–23), summary appraisal formulas (Job 18:21; 20:29; 27:13), rhetorical questions (Job 20:4–5; 21:17–18), and nature wisdom (Job 38:4–39:30; 40:15–41:16). See Dell, 67, 71.

²⁶ Like with Chapters Three, Four, and Five, the topics of proper portion, discipline and hope, friendship and family loyalty, hard work, entreaty, inappropriate touching, true reward, humility, generosity of spirit, kindness, redemption, obeying instructions, worthy woman/wife, city gate, and building up a house will be analyzed.

Proper Portion— Job 23:14; 42:10

“For He performs what is appointed for me” (Job 23:14). The biblical Hebrew term קָוֶה is used for “appointed.”²⁷ Peter Enns notes that קָוֶה means Job’s ordained fate at Yahweh’s hands.²⁸ The קָוֶה is translated as “what is appointed for me.”²⁹ The sense of measure or portion is conveyed, according to Helmer Ringgren. The concept of a proper portion read in Job 23:14 aligns with Proverbs 30:8 and 31:15, which deal with an allotment of bread and food portions for the household and maidens, respectfully.³⁰ Another consideration for קָוֶה is that the term conveys a sense of Yahweh’s decree for Job. What Yahweh has decreed for Job’s life reveals the span and purpose for his life, which Yahweh controls.³¹ Verse 14 is tempered by Ecclesiastes 3:11,

²⁷ The term קָוֶה is derived from the root קָוָה meaning “to cut in, inscribe, decree.” See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, “קָוָה,” 1395. The term קָוֶה can be rendered as allotment (five times), boundaries (one time), boundary (two times), conditions (one time), custom (one time), decree (five times), due (five times), fixed order (one time), limit (two times), limits (one time), measure (one time), necessary food (one time), ordinance (four times), portion (three times), portions (one time), prescribed portion (one time), rations (one time), required amount (one time), resolves (one time), statute (nine times), statutes (seventy-nine times), thing...due (one time), what is appointed (one time). See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, “קָוֶה,” 1395.

²⁸ Peter Enns, “קָוֶה,” in *NIDOTTE Vol. 2*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 245.

²⁹ Ludwig Koehler, and Walter Baumgartner, “קָוֶה,” *HALOT*, 5th ed. (Leiden: Brill Publishing, 2000), 347. *BDB* comments that קָוֶה refers to “the destiny of man.” See Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, “קָוֶה,” *BDB* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1996), 349. See also G. Liedke, “קָוָה,” in *TLOT Vol. 2*, ed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 469.

³⁰ Helmer Ringgren, “קָוֶה,” in *TDOT Vol. 5*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David Green (Grand Rapids.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 141–2.

³¹ Norman Habel, *The Book of Job: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1985), 351. David Clines remarks that קָוֶה is an indeterminable assault upon Job’s body, dignity, and innocence that Yahweh has decreed. It is Yahweh’s intention to be completed to the very end. See David Clines, *WBC Vol. 18A: Job 21–37*, ed. Bruce Metzger et al. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2006), 599.

which states, “He has everything appropriate in its time.” Job’s suffering is appropriately portioned, or decreed, by Yahweh according to His sovereignty.³² The term *לֶחֶם* in verse 14 conveys the same sense in Job 23:12, which is “my necessary food, or my daily bread.”³³ Job 23:14 is a discouraging view of a proper portion because it reveals that Job dreads Yahweh (Job 21:6), which is not the same as fearing Yahweh. When a person dreads or is in terror of something or someone, the response is to run away. Job feared that Yahweh would exact what was decreed against him. The proper portion of suffering causes Job an apprehensive agony because he is afraid that he will die before Yahweh restores his honor.³⁴ It is not a reverential awe.³⁵ However, an encouraging view of a proper portion is read in Job 42:10.

In Job 42:10, Yahweh restores Job’s fortunes. The biblical Hebrew term used is *שׁוּב*, which conveys the sense of turning back to the time before Job’s circumstances.³⁶ *HALOT* explains that *שׁוּב* is a shift in direction, where a person will turn back or return to an original point that was departed.³⁷ Like in Psalm 85:4, where the people entreat Yahweh to restore them,

³² Robert Alden, *NAC Vol. 11: Job* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1993), 244. See also Francis Andersen, *TOTC Vol. 14: Job* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1976), 226.

³³ Alden notes that the suffix is first person when third is expected. Syriac and Vulgate read third person. Blommerde, following Dahood and others, finds this another of thirty-two examples in Job of -y or -i as a suffix for the third person in Hebrew, as it is occasionally in Ugaritic and regularly in Phoenician, 8, 102. See Alden, 244 “Footnote 37;” Marvin Pope, *AYB Vol. 15: Job* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965), 173.

³⁴ Hartley, 342.

³⁵ Longman III, 299.

³⁶ The *NASB Exhaustive Concordance* notes that *שׁוּב* is a primitive root meaning “to turn back, return.” The term *שׁוּב* has a broad range of meanings, which is too numerous to note here. See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, “*שׁוּב*,” 1477.

³⁷ Koehler, and Baumgartner, “*שׁוּב*,” 1429. The verb, with over 1,050 occurrences, ranks twelfth in frequency among words in the OT. It occurs 683 times in the qal, 360 in the hiphil, 95 in the hophal, and 12 in the polel. See M. Graupner, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, “*שׁוּב*,” in *TDOT Vol.*

Job is restored after his testing. Therefore, his rewards for being blameless and upright (Job 1:1) are restored, and Yahweh gives his proper portion. Pope comments that 42:10 is the only place where שׁוֹב is used with a personal name and not with a nation. Therefore, שׁוֹב does not convey a sense of a restoration from captivity but a restoration of fortune.³⁸ Job's intercession for his friends revealed a morally righteous behavior pleasing to Yahweh. Thus, Yahweh restored Job's original blessings and then doubled them. Job acted as a priest on his family's behalf in Job 1:5; now he is acting as a priest on his friend's behalf (Job 42:8).³⁹ Konkel comments that the restoration of Job's fortunes was not a blessing resulting from righteousness, but Job's willingness to submit to Yahweh. It is an expression of Yahweh's grace towards people who place their trust in Him.⁴⁰ Therefore, Job's proper portion in 42:10 is an abundant blessing given

14, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David Green (Grand Rapids.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 472.

³⁸ Pope, 351.

³⁹ Walton, and Vizcaino, 434. Michael Fox comments that the restoration of fortunes is not a reward or a gift of free grace, but a payment of reparation. See Michael Fox, "The Meanings of the Book of Job," *JBL* 137, no. 1 (2018): 17. However, there is some concern with Fox's statement. Fox explains that Yahweh has failed to respond to Job's lengthy and largely accurate accusations; therefore, Yahweh is guilty of harming Job without cause. Thus, the double fold restoration is half part recompense and half part a penalty. To state that Yahweh is guilty of harming someone without cause questions His sovereignty and purpose. Yahweh regularly tested the faithfulness and obedience of His people in the OT. Additionally, to say that Yahweh is paying Job a penalty implies that Yahweh can commit a crime. Exod. 34:6–7 states that Yahweh is "compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth; who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin; yet He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished." Yahweh disciplines, or tests, with love His people to keep them faithful to Him, not out of spite or without a cause. Walton and Vizcaino remark that Job interceded on his friend's behalf reflecting Yahweh's compassion and not by a suspicion of His character. See Walton, and Vizcaino, 434. Hartley comments that Job's restoration was not a reward for enduring affliction but how Yahweh freely and abundantly blessed him. He states, "The blessing proves that Yahweh is a life-giving God, not a capricious deity who takes pleasure in the suffering of those who fear him. In his sovereign design he may permit a faithful servant to suffer ill-fortune for a season, but in due time he will bring total healing. Moreover, the doubling symbolizes Yahweh's full acceptance of Job." See Hartley, 540.

⁴⁰ Konkel, 241.

by Yahweh due to Job's submission to Him. However, James Crenshaw comments that Job's significant gain was not what he lost but to cherish Yahweh's presence.⁴¹ Through the dialogues with the friends, Job reveals that he accepts Yahweh's sovereignty through his pure and selfless religious and ethical reasons and speaks correctly about Yahweh.⁴² In his comments on Job 36:8–10, H. M. Wahl remarks that Yahweh desires for people to return and not be destroyed.⁴³ Job's restoration is secured by his submission to Yahweh's sovereignty and wisdom, reflected by Yahweh's doubling of his family and possessions.⁴⁴ Additionally, Job's restoration is one result of restoring his friends before Yahweh. The concept of restoration, regarding a proper portion, is realized in the Book of Ruth.

In Ruth 1:16, Ruth urges her mother-in-law not to force her to return or turn back to her homeland of Moab. Verse 16 begins Ruth's commitment to Naomi, Israel, and Yahweh. The biblical Hebrew term שׁוּב in Job 42:10 conveys the sense of restoration of fortunes; however, in Ruth 1:16, שׁוּב denotes the restoration of Ruth.⁴⁵ Graupner and Fabry comment that שׁוּב denotes not only a literal sense of turning back to Moab but a deeper meaning of being directed to the

⁴¹ James Crenshaw, *Old Testament Wisdom* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998), 109.

⁴² Perdue, 239. He states, "Like Abraham, Job has rightly questioned divine justice, deconstructed the inadequate, naïve language of faith formulated by the friends, and moved to reestablish a discourse that makes faith articulate. In this new reading forged by the poet, the demonic God of the prose story has been redeemed. The structure of its meaning has been disassembled and reconstituted into a new and vital shape. Now through the issuance of divine decree, the integrity of Yahweh is regained, the world is ordered, and creation is sustained." *Ibid.*, 239–40.

⁴³ H. M. Wahl, *Der gerechte Schöpfer: Eine redaktions – und theologieggeschichtliche Untersuchung der Eilhureden – Hiob 32–37*, *BZAW* 207 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1993), 107.

⁴⁴ Longman III, 460.

⁴⁵ J. A. Thompson, and Elmer Martens, "שׁוּב," in *NIDOTTE Vol. 4*, ed. Willem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 58.

future. Therefore, Ruth's שׁוּב conveys a conversion because she intends to be a part of Israel and Yahweh.⁴⁶ Ruth's commitment and associated conversion lead to her receiving her proper portion, realized through Boaz's kinsman redeeming actions (Ruth 4:9–15).⁴⁷ In verse 15, the women exclaim that the son born to Boaz and Ruth will be Naomi's restorer. The term שׁוּב is used in the qal form in 1:16; however, in 4:15, it is in a hiphil form.⁴⁸ HALOT notes that שׁוּב denotes "to restore liveliness, vitality; to refresh."⁴⁹ Naomi's restoration functions as a resurrection; she has been restored to a fullness of life.⁵⁰ Ruth 4:15 is the culmination of Ruth's fullness to Naomi, started by her unwillingness to שׁוּב to Moab in 1:16. Mangrum additionally comments that the Book of Ruth's relevance during the feast of Pentecost reveals Yahweh's provision, a celebration of life and new beginnings expressed in restored joy and worship.⁵¹ Frederick Bush remarks that שׁוּב is used figuratively to restore and revive a person's strength, courage, and spirit.⁵² Thus, the restorer, Obed, in 4:15 is Yahweh's great act of provision to Ruth and Naomi.

⁴⁶ Graupner, and Fabry, "שׁוּב," 478.

⁴⁷ Thomas Mann explains that vv. 11–22 concerns the production of offspring and handles the circumstances of emptiness to satiety, bitterness to sweetness, and foreigner to family. The passage reveals Ruth's and Naomi's assertiveness, resourcefulness, and capability to work Israelite law. See Thomas Mann, "Ruth 4," *Interpretation* 64, no. 2 (Apr. 2010): 179.

⁴⁸ Bruce Waltke and Michael O'Connor explain that the hiphil stem is a causative of the qal stem. A modal sense of the hiphil verb stem is solicitude. The state, "The "causing" notion is right and welcome or agreeable to the participating subject." See Bruce Waltke, and Michael O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 445.

⁴⁹ Koehler, and Baumgartner, "שׁוּב," 1433.

⁵⁰ Benjamin Mangrum, "Bringing 'Fullness' to Naomi: Centripetal Nationalism in the Book of Ruth," *Horizons in Biblical Theology* 33, no. 1 (2011): 76.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 78.

⁵² Frederic Bush, *WBC Vol. 9: Ruth* (Dallas: Word, Inc., 1996), 257. Bush explains "it was a hiphil of שׁוּב that He [Yahweh] placed in the mouth of Naomi in 1:21 when she expressed most poignantly the death and emptiness that are here resolved: "full was I when I went away,

Discipline and Hope— Job 5:16, 17–18

Concerning the doctrine of retribution, Job’s friend, Eliphaz, comprehends reproof and discipline as the middle stage of retribution. Therefore, Eliphaz proclaims that blessed is the person that Yahweh reproves and wise they are in accepting His discipline.⁵³ A basis for Eliphaz’s speeches is that he views Job as being punished for excessive wickedness (Job 22:5). The biblical Hebrew term used for “discipline” in 5:17 is מוֹסֵר.⁵⁴ *BDB* comprehends מוֹסֵר in a severe aspect by interpreting the biblical Hebrew term as “chastening of Yahweh.”⁵⁵ The term מוֹסֵר denotes more apparent evidence of wisdom influence occurring only four times in the Book of Job.⁵⁶ Eliphaz’s use of מוֹסֵר is understood as Yahweh’s discipline, which involves suffering as

but empty has Yahweh brought me back” (הַשִּׁיבֵנִי). Given this significance of the phrase in this context, it captures Naomi’s restoration in a rich and expressive metaphor.” *Ibid.*

⁵³ Hartley, 124.

⁵⁴ *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, “יִסַּר,” 1404. The term מוֹסֵר is derived from the root יִסַּר, which means “to discipline, chasten, admonish.” Additional renderings are admonished (two times), chasten (five times), chastens (one time), chastise (four times), chastised (two times), correct (four times), corrects (one time), discipline (four times), disciplined (four times), disciplined me severely (one time), disciplines (one time), disciplining (one time), gave instruction (one time), instructed (two times), instructs (two times), punish (two times), take warning (one time), taught (one time), trained (one time), turned (one time), warned (one time). M. Sæbø notes that יִסַּר has a basic meaning that is hard to ascertain. See M. Sæbø, “יִסַּר,” in *TLOT Vol.2*, ed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 548. *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, “מוֹסֵר,” 1418. The term מוֹסֵר means “discipline, chastening, correction.” Additional meanings are chastening (three times), chastise (one time), correction (three times), discipline (eighteen times), disciplines (one time), instruction (twenty times), punishment (two times), reproof (one time), warning (one time). *HALOT* interprets מוֹסֵר as “training.” See Koehler, and Baumgartner, “מוֹסֵר,” 557. Gerhard von Rad comments that Yahweh is secretly but pursuing the training of people. The idea is that Yahweh organizes a person’s life, which benefits from His training and testing. See Gerhard von Rad, *Wisdom in Israel* (Great Britain: SCM Press Ltd., 1972), 200.

⁵⁵ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “מוֹסֵר,” 416.

⁵⁶ Sæbø, “יִסַּר,” 549. “Chastening translates a Hebrew term for disciplined teaching in wisdom, as seen in Proverbs 1:3; 23:12. In Proverbs 3:11–12 “The LORD reproves him whom he loves.” See William Reybun, *UBS: Job* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1992), 116.

a means of Yahweh's education.⁵⁷ Thus, Yahweh's education equals Eliphaz's perception of Job's suffering or life experiences (Job 4:8, "plow, sow, harvest").⁵⁸ According to Eliphaz, since Yahweh is the agent of suffering, He can bandage injuries and heal wounds (Job 5:18; Hos. 6:11). Perdue comments that Eliphaz's advice is in line with mainstream Israelite theology, that Yahweh is the ruler of the world and Israel through justice and mercy.⁵⁹ The fault with Eliphaz's first speech is that he holds a stringent view of the doctrine of retribution.⁶⁰ The מוֹסָר that Job endures is not from wrongdoing; however, it is a testing of his faith and obedience to Yahweh. Moreover, it is training to teach Job that he does not know Yahweh's methods and purposes and must learn to trust in Yahweh's sovereignty.⁶¹ Despite Job's predicament and the friend's harmful speeches, there is hope contained in the Book of Job.

Andersen notes that "The teaching that such experiences are *chastening* (*mûsār*) was the staple curriculum of the Wisdom schools." See Andersen, 130.

⁵⁷Sæbø, 550. See also Deut. 11:2 and Prov. 3:11.

⁵⁸ E. H. Merrill, "יָסָר," in *NIDOTTE Vol. 2*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 473. David Clines comments that the "discipline" in verse 17 parallels the father and child relationship. Therefore, suffering is seen as a positive aspect of Yahweh educating the sufferer. See David Clines, *WBC Vol. 17: Job 1–20*, ed. Bruce Metzger et al. (Dallas: Word Books, Publisher, 1989), 148.

⁵⁹ Perdue, 116. Walton and Vizcaino comment that Eliphaz considers Job guilty but is fortunate because Yahweh has taken notice, by allowing Job's suffering, and Job can take assurance that Yahweh will respond to his redemption and restore him. See Walton, and Vizcaino, 161. See also Longman III, 127.

⁶⁰ Along with a rigid comprehension of retribution, Eliphaz is guilty of a self-righteous attitude trying to authenticate his theology and thwarting his alleged wisdom to Job. Robertson notes that Eliphaz's friendly stance toward Job is merely a veil hiding his deep resentment and hostility towards Job. See Robertson, 452.

⁶¹ Eliphaz has taken a concept of Yahweh's sovereignty and perverted it into a cold, heartless, and rigid understanding of retributive justice. See Perdue, 117.

Yahweh is the theological ground for a person's hope in the OT. Therefore, trust in Yahweh provides hope regardless of personal circumstances.⁶² Suzanne Boorer comments that a portrait of hope emerges from the text in the dialogues between Job and his friends.⁶³ One proclamation of hope is read in Job 5:16, where Eliphaz states, "The helpless has hope." The biblical Hebrew nominative used is תִּקְוָה ("hope"). The term תִּקְוָה is derived from the root קוה, meaning "to wait for."⁶⁴ Thus, תִּקְוָה conveys the sense of expectation (three times), hope (twenty-eight times), and longing (one time).⁶⁵ Hope is an attitude of anticipation expecting something to happen: Yahweh's care and provision for the helpless (Job 5:16), a longing or desire (Job 6:8), the righteous person's hope in Yahweh (Ps. 62:5), and the hope for bearing a child (Ruth 1:12).⁶⁶

⁶² M. W. Elliott, "Hope," in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander and Brian Rosner (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 559.

⁶³ Suzanne Boorer, "Job's Hope: A Reading of the Book of Job from the Perspective of Hope," *Colloquium* 30, no. 2 (Nov. 1998): 102. Matitiah Tsevat comments that it is Job's hope that Yahweh longs for him, which upholds Job during his darkest hours. See Matitiah Tsevat, "The Meaning of the Book of Job," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 37 (1966): 77. In the Yahwistic speeches, a shift occurs refocusing the dialogue to Yahweh and away from Job's circumstances; therefore, offering Job a clearer perspective about his circumstances. Boorer explains that Job's shifting perceptions and hopes are misguided because of his ignorance and are transformed by Yahweh. Job's hope of encountering Yahweh is tempered because he was expecting an unjust Yahweh; however, he encountered a just Yahweh. See Boorer, 104.

⁶⁴ *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, "קוה," 1464. Additional meanings are eagerly waits (one time), expect (one time), expected (three times), hope (three times), hoped (one time), hopefully wait (one time), hoping (one time), look (one time), look eagerly (one time), looked (two times), wait (twenty-two times), waited (seven times), waited for you eagerly (one time), waited patiently (one time).

⁶⁵ *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, "תִּקְוָה," 1491.

⁶⁶ Warren Baker, and Eugene Carpenter, "תִּקְוָה," *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament* (Chattanooga: AMG Publishers, 2003), 1243. Of the 32x תִּקְוָה occurs, Yahweh is only once the explicit (Ps 71:5) and a few times the implicit object of hope (Job 5:16; 6:8; 11:18; Prov 23:18; Lam 3:29). In Job and Proverbs (Job 8:13; 17:15; 19:10; 27:8; Prov 11:7; 19:18; 24:14; 26:12; 29:20) hope seems to be an end, i.e., no object is in view. Only when hope is linked (or used in parallel) to other words is it possible to determine an object of hope (mostly not good in Job and Proverbs). See Daniel Schibler, "תִּקְוָה," in *NIDOTTE Vol. 3*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 890. See also G. Waschke, "קוה," in *TDOT Vol.*

In Eliphaz's first speech, תִּקְוָה derives from his understanding of the doctrine of hope, which the pious can have hope but the godless do not.⁶⁷ Therefore, Job's complaints are seen as godlessness before his friends; this is an errant view based on pious wisdom.⁶⁸ Despite the context of Eliphaz's first speech, his statement that Yahweh is a source for the helpless is a biblical truth. Yahweh rescues the impoverished by healing their emotional distress and shutting the mouths that utter iniquity (Ps. 107:42). Therefore, the helpless' hope is the anticipation of abundant blessings.⁶⁹

Eliphaz provides a positive view of hope in Job 5:16; however, Job uses hope in a negative context preceding and proceeding 5:16 in Job 3:9 and 6:8. In Job 3:9, Job curses the day that he was born by stating, "Let it wait [קָוָה] for light but have none." Job is figuratively using light for life. Therefore, it symbolizes the death of the night, which signifies the reversal of

12, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David Green (Grand Rapids.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 568. C. Westermann states, "It must be noted that hope is discussed in predominantly negative ways (otherwise with *qwh* pi. only Isa 64:2; Mic 5:6; Lam 2:16); hope must thus esp. have come to consciousness when the object of hope did not materialize. It becomes noticeable when it continues for a long period without finding fulfillment. Precisely this disappointment becomes a theme in the book of Job." See C. Westermann, "קוֹה," in *TLOT Vol.3*, ed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 1128.

⁶⁷ Eliphaz believes that a person with hope is faithful to Yahweh, thus Yahweh is faithful to that person. The helpless have hope because they know that Yahweh will deliver them from their circumstances. However, the errancy in Eliphaz's treatment of Job is that he does not consider the circumstances between Job and Yahweh. See Goldingay, 41.

⁶⁸ C. Westermann, "קוֹה," 1129. The author of Job regards this doctrinaire fixation of hope as dangerous; according to him, Job firmly maintains hope, even in his more skeptical discourses, that Yahweh gives hope, and he takes it away. Since Job admits and endures the danger to hope in the reality of human existence, he holds fast to hope as a possibility given by Yahweh to people. *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ Hartley, 122.

creation back to chaos.⁷⁰ Job is grappling with the present reality of his suffering versus his past life. It is an intolerable and gruesome reality that Job laments.⁷¹ In Job's mind, he had lost Yahweh, and if he did not have Yahweh, he did not have a place in the world.⁷² Another negative perspective of hope is read in Job 6:8, which is Job's continuing plea to die.⁷³ Job 5:17 reveals the anticipated expectation that the helpless will be cared for and protected by Yahweh; it is a positive aspect of *הִקְוָה*. However, *הִקְוָה* in 6:8 reverberates in a negative sense. In this verse, Job expects, or hopes, that Yahweh will fulfill his request to die.⁷⁴ The basis for Job's request is that he has no strength to carry on in this life, has lost the ability to wait (Job 6:11, 12–13), and has no future, which reveals he believes his days have no hope (Job 7:6).⁷⁵ While death symbolizes hopelessness, Job does not break his relationship with Yahweh by betraying Him through taking his life. However, he concedes that death is preferable to his present circumstances.⁷⁶ Therefore, 'desire' is understood as 'hope,' the exact comprehension read in Job 4:6.⁷⁷ Job recognizes that

⁷⁰ Boorer, 106. Andersen notes that for Job sunrise reveals the ugliness of life. See Andersen, 112. Perdue comments that the use of sacred language is to destroy creation and revert to chaos. He contends that Job's hope to destroy the day and night is not bounded to his birth but to destroy the temporal structure pertaining to creation. See Perdue, 97.

⁷¹ Goldingay, 27.

⁷² Konkel, 47.

⁷³ It should be noted that Job's cursing the day he was born and pleading for death is not a suicide attempt. Job is not responsible for his life or predicament; therefore, he is not seeking responsibility for ending his life. See Goldingay, 27. The biblical author recognizes that Yahweh has the power over life and death; therefore, the notion that Job wants to commit suicide never enters the Book of Job. See Andersen, 139.

⁷⁴ Koehler, and Baumgartner, "הִקְוָה," 1782; Brown, Driver, and Briggs, "הִקְוָה," 876.

⁷⁵ Boorer, 106.

⁷⁶ Longman III, 139.

⁷⁷ Reyburn, 130. It is Job's desire, or hope, that Yahweh stops His attack on Job and allow him, a divine slave, to die. See Perdue, 124.

his life is in Yahweh's hands; therefore, it must be Yahweh to take it, and Job hopes that he be dispatched quickly by Yahweh.⁷⁸

While Job expresses hope, it does not occur in a positive context.⁷⁹ His hope is for death to end his misery and vindication. In the Book of Ruth, hope is used in a less-than-ideal context when Naomi is discouraging her daughters-in-law from following her to Bethlehem. Ruth 1:12–13, Naomi alludes to her hopelessness of having additional sons and that Yahweh has acted against her. Waschke notes that *תקוה* is used secularly because it describes certain expectations determined by a person's experiences. Thus, Naomi sees no *תקוה*, "hope," in having sons, which would entice her daughters-in-law to remain with her.⁸⁰ Timothy Decker suggests that Naomi is seen as a negative role model for Oprah and Naomi by noting her moral duress to dissuade the daughters-in-law from following her.⁸¹ Her pessimistic view of hope is a ploy to discourage

⁷⁸ Clines, *WBC Vol. 17*, 173. The idea of 6:8 parallels Job's statement in 1:21, "Yahweh gave and Yahweh has taken away." The difference is that in 1:21, Job recognizes that Yahweh has blessed him with a family and possessions; therefore, He has the right to take them back. Thus, Job is exhibiting a proper attitude towards Yahweh's actions. However, in 6:8, Job recognizes that Yahweh has given him life, and, through military language, he desires Yahweh to take it away.

⁷⁹ Job's hope is related to death, a rejection of life that he sees as full of misery, and vindication, arisen from Job's reflections on death. Thus, Job's perspective of hope comes from the misery he is suffering and stemming from the perceived injustice he is receiving from Yahweh. See Boorer, 103.

⁸⁰ Waschke, "תקוה," 569.

⁸¹ Timothy Decker, "Contrastive Characterization in Ruth 1:6–22: Three Ways to Return from Exile," *Old Testament Essays (New Series)* 32, no. 3 (2019): 915. Thus, an unfortunate affect of Naomi's 'hope' is that Oprah returned to Moab and the primary god Chemosh. While the biblical author does not expound on Oprah's decision, the reader can understandably react negatively to her decision. *Ibid.*, 918. George Savran explains that Naomi is harshly expressing her pessimism about the future, which denotes Oprah's and Ruth's futility by joining her to Bethlehem because she has been cursed by Yahweh. Therefore, the daughters-in-law accompanying her would be a painful reminder of her misery and a furtherance of their tragedy. See George Savran, "The Time of Her Life: Ruth and Naomi," *NASHIM* 30, no. 5777 (Fall 2016): 10–11.

Oprah and Ruth. *HALOT* states that תִּקְוָה is used in a euphemistic sense.⁸² Schibler explains that Naomi is expressing a futile hope or pointless waiting because a point has been reached where there is no return or the circumstances have become desperate. Thus, Naomi has concluded that there is no hope of remarrying or having children due to her age, and it is pointless for the daughters-in-law to remain by her side.⁸³

Friendship and Family Loyalty— Job 1:2, 5, 2:11; 16:21; 42:12

In Job 1:2, the reader is introduced to Job’s sons and daughters. The biblical Hebrew term for “son” is בֶּן. To have many sons is considered a blessing from Yahweh (Deut. 28:4–11; 1 Chron. 28:5; Ps. 127:3–5).⁸⁴ The value of a son is the value of life determined good for a biblical person.⁸⁵ Job 1:2 additionally states that Job had seven sons. The biblical Hebrew word שֶׁבַע is primarily used as a cardinal number denoting “seven” or “a group of seven.”⁸⁶ Therefore, a literal translation of Job 1:2 would be that there were “seven sons.” However, when read in conjunction

⁸² Koehler, and Baumgartner, “תִּקְוָה,” 1782.

⁸³ Schibler, “תִּקְוָה,” 891. Westermann disagrees by stating that קוֹה in Ruth 1:12 speaks of an anticipated hope or a prospect that something could happen. See Westermann, “קוֹה,” 1129. However, a positive anticipation seems out of place in this context because Naomi is noting circumstances that would have to occur for Oprah and Ruth to remain with her. She states in verse 12 that she is too old to have a husband and bear children.

⁸⁴ Chrys Caragounis, “בֶּן,” in *NIDOTTE Vol. 1*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 661.

⁸⁵ Jan Bergman, Helmer Ringgren, and H. Haag, “בֶּן,” in *TDOT Vol. 2*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David Green (Grand Rapids.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 153.

⁸⁶ Koehler, and Baumgartner, “שֶׁבַע,” 1400; *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, “שֶׁבַע,” 1475. The term שֶׁבַע denotes forty-seven (one time), seven (270 times), seven times (six times), sevens (two times), seventeen (six times), seventeenth (six times), seventh (eight times), thirty-seven (four times), thirty-seventh (three times), twenty-seven (one time), twenty-seventh (six times).

with 1:1, which states that Job was “blameless and upright,” more can be read into אֲשֶׁר־עָשָׂה.

Conjecturally, אֲשֶׁר־עָשָׂה can convey the sense of “abundance, plenty.”⁸⁷ The idea of a complete family is framed by seven sons and three daughters (Job 42:13) and indicated by seven plus three to equal ten.⁸⁸ 1 Samuel 1:8, Elkanah asks his wife whether he is better to her than ten sons. Konkel notes that the seven and three ratios extend to Job’s possessions (7,000 sheep and 3,000 camels in Job 1:3).⁸⁹ Job’s family reflects his righteous character and fearing Yahweh, both pleasing to Yahweh.⁹⁰ His familial duty additionally indicates his moral character.

The leading male in the family, usually the father, was responsible for providing authority and security to all family members. The family was held together by duty, responsibility, and traditional concerns.⁹¹ In Job 1:5, it is read that Job performs a vital function as the head of the family, acting as a priest. In the traditional home setting, the home was church,

⁸⁷ Koehler, and Baumgartner, “אֲשֶׁר־עָשָׂה,” 1400. The term אֲשֶׁר־עָשָׂה can additionally denote “completeness” pertaining to “perfection.” P. Jenson comments that אֲשֶׁר־עָשָׂה associated with “completeness, totality, perfection” is a natural one when used with holiness. Therefore, with Job being a righteous person in the Yahweh’s eyes, seven sons and three daughters is the perfect and ideal family. See P. Jenson, “אֲשֶׁר־עָשָׂה,” in *NIDOTTE Vol. 4*, ed. Willem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 35; Crenshaw, 92; Andersen, 84, a token of Yahweh’s favor.

⁸⁸ “The sum of seven and three is ten, another special number. Ten was the lowest number Abraham bargained for as he pleaded for Sodom to be spared (Gen 18:32). Eliezer took ten camels to buy a bride for Isaac (Gen 24:10). Joseph’s ten brothers who went to Egypt returned with ten donkeys loaded with food (Gen 42:3; 45:23), and so on.” See Alden, 49. Clines explains that exceptional worth is placed to the sons because there was seven of them. However, having three daughters is significant. The number three can also symbolize perfect wholeness. See Clines, *WBC Vol. 17*, 13.

⁸⁹ Konkel, 30.

⁹⁰ The statements about Job are a furtherance of the description of Job. The details about his family, livestock, and servants are primarily descriptions of Job’s perfect blessedness instead of a cataloging of his possessions. His family and possessions are an aspect of Job’s identity, what it means to be Job. See Paul Cho, “The Integrity of Job 1 and 42:11–17,” *The Catholic Bible Quarterly* 76, no. 2 (Apr. 2014): 233.

⁹¹ J. Drane, “Family,” in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. T. Alexander, and Brian Rosner (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 494.

and the father was the priest; therefore, Job was responsible for teaching his children the wisdom and religious values he upheld.⁹² A priestly duty that Job performed was consecrating his sons and daughters by offering burnt sacrifices.⁹³ The biblical Hebrew term שָׁדַק is used for "consecrate."⁹⁴ *HALOT* explains that the piel form of שָׁדַק means to "transform someone to the state of holiness, dedicate."⁹⁵ Jackie Naudé explains that earthly things are daily; therefore, a special act is required to bring a person or thing into holiness. The piel factitive denotes setting something or someone into a state of holiness.⁹⁶ Thus, Job consecrates his children with

⁹² Goldingay, 9.

⁹³ Alden notes "One of the arguments for the antiquity of the man Job is that he was a priest to his own family. Like Abraham, he was not dependent on another to make sacrifices. Job was a patriarch in the sense that he was the head of his clan. He also was a patriarch in that he offered sacrifices for himself and for others. He knew nothing of the Levites or the laws of Moses." See Alden, 52.

⁹⁴ *NASB Exhaustive Concordance* states that שָׁדַק is a denominative verb derived from שָׁדָק from an unused word meaning "apartness, sacredness." See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, " שָׁדָק ," 1463. The term שָׁדַק means "to be set apart, consecrated." See the additional renderings in *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, " שָׁדַק ," 1463.

⁹⁵ Koehler, and Baumgartner, " שָׁדַק ," 1073. *BDB* comments that שָׁדַק is a "consecration by purification." See Brown, Driver, and Briggs, " שָׁדַק ," 873.

⁹⁶ Jackie Naudé, " שָׁדַק ," in *NIDOTTE Vol. 3*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 881. Waltke and O'Connor explain that a 'real' factitive denotes an objective event that can be seen or felt apart from the participants. Therefore, "The intransitive Qal 'to be holy' becomes in Piel 'to make to be holy = transfer to a state of holiness = consecrate,' which takes an object. The proper understanding of this example depends on an appreciation of "holiness" itself as a physical attribute and of "consecration" as the result of various gestures of touching and sprinkling." See Waltke, and O'Connor, 401–2. W. Kornfield and Helmer Ringgren comment that the שָׁדַק piel "refers first of all in a factitive manner to the generation of the condition described in the qal, "bring something/someone into the condition of holiness/consecration according to the cultic regulations." It then also refers to "declaring something/someone holy" (the sabbath, Gen. 2:3; Ex. 20:11). Finally, in an estimative sense it refers to "considering/viewing something/someone as holy" (the sabbath, Jer. 17:22, 24, 27)." See W. Kornfield, and Helmer Ringgren, " שָׁדַק ," in *TDOT Vol. 12*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David Green (Grand Rapids.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 528. See also H.-P. Müller, " שָׁדַק ," in *TLOT Vol.3*, ed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 1106.

representative sacrifices to counter any sins that may have occurred during the feasts. Job's intercession on behalf of his children shows that he believed in the power of a mediator, a belief that would play an integral role in Job's speeches.⁹⁷ While the biblical author does not specify any sins committed by the grown children, it conveys the sense of Job's scrupulous devotion to religious matters and his sense of responsibility for their behaviors. Therefore, Job's actions indicate his steadfast devotion and concern for his family by consecrating his children for any inward or outward sins possibly committed.⁹⁸ Job 1:12–22 chronicles how and why Job loses his family. However, in Job 42:12, Yahweh restores Job's family and possessions (seven sons, three daughters, and double the initial number of livestock). Job's restoration is an expression of Yahweh's grace for Job's trust in Him. Since creation belongs to Yahweh, He gives it to people according to His will who find favor with Him.⁹⁹ Job's familial duty is seen at the beginning of the Book of Job when he intercedes on his children's behalf by consecrating them. This priestly duty is read at the end of the Book of Job when Job intercedes on his friend's behalf because they did not speak correctly about Yahweh.¹⁰⁰ Job's family does not play a primary role in the Book of Job; however, the dialogue with his friends is vital.

Job 3–31 contains the three rounds of dialogues between Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar, and Job; Job 32–37 provides Elihu's four speeches. The reader is introduced to Job's friends in Job

⁹⁷ Andersen, 85.

⁹⁸ Goldingay, 9. Job offering sacrifices on his children's behalf to possibly safeguard them from divine retribution. While no sins are noted by the biblical author, Job's actions indicate his concern that the feasts provide an opportunity for sin if they include a celebration of wealth. See Cho, 234.

⁹⁹ Konkel, 241.

¹⁰⁰ Walton, and Vizcaino, 435.

2:11.¹⁰¹ The biblical Hebrew term *רֵעַ* is used for “friend” in verse 11.¹⁰² Baker and Carpenter render *רֵעַ* not only as a “friend” but a “close friend.”¹⁰³ Richard Hess explains that *רֵעַ*, in Job 2:11, specifies a companion or friend on a journey or task; thus, Job’s friends are accompanying him on the journey of suffering.¹⁰⁴ In the Book of Job, *רֵעַ* is used in a specialized sense denoting “friend” as expressed by Job (Job 16:20; 19:21) and by Elihu (Job 32:3; 35:4).¹⁰⁵ Patricia Vesely explains that Job had certain expectations concerning friendship: loyalty, compassion, courage,

¹⁰¹ The Book of Job contains a central concern, which is the theology of friendship. At the beginning of Job, the friends come to sympathize with and console Job. However, through the various cycles of speeches, it becomes clear that Job ponders who will be his friend. See Samuel Balentine, “Let Love Clasp Grief lest Both be Drowned,” *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 30, no. 4 (Winter 2003): 381.

¹⁰² The biblical Hebrew *רֵעַ* is derived from the root *רָעַע* which means “to associate with” as in associate (one time), companion (two times), cultivate (one time), keeps company (one time). See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, “*רָעַע*,” 1472. The term *רֵעַ*; therefore, takes on the meaning of “friend, companion, fellow.” The range of meanings include another (twenty-seven times), another’s (five times), companion (three times), fellow (one time), friend (thirty times), friend’s (one time), friends (eighteen times), husband (one time), kind (one time), lover (one time), lovers (one time), mate (one time), neighbor (sixty-four times), neighbor’s (twenty-three times), neighbors (three times), neighbors’ (one time), opponent (one time), opponent’s (one time), other (six times), together (one time). See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, “*רֵעַ*,” 1472.

¹⁰³ Baker, and Carpenter, 1064.

¹⁰⁴ Richard Hess, “*רֵעַ*,” in *NIDOTTE Vol. 3*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 1143. Hess further remarks, “The word *רֵעַ* appears in the Psalms and Wisdom literature in parallel with *אָהַב*, loved one (Ps 38:11 [12]; 88:18 [19]; cf. Lam 1:2 in reference to Jerusalem); with *אָח*, brother (Job 30:29; Ps 35:14; 122:8; Prov 17:17), and with *קָרוֹב*, one who is near (Ps 15:3). In Prov 27 a friend’s counsel is praised (v. 6), and a friend is regarded as better than a *אָח*, brother, in times of distress (v. 10). Parallelism occurs in Song of Songs with *דֹּדִים*, lovers (5:1), and with *דִּוְדִי*, my love (5:16).” *Ibid.*, 1144. However, Job’s friends would digress by not showing loyalty to him.

¹⁰⁵ Diether Kellermann, “*רֵעַ*,” in *TDOT Vol. 13*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David Green (Grand Rapids.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 528. Friendship is solidified with a covenant, promising to take care of each other no matter the circumstance. See Hartley, 85. 1 Sam. 20:42; Job 17:5; Prov. 12:26; 14:20; 16:28, 17:9, 17; 18:24; 22:24; 27:6, 9–10, and Eccl. 4:10 provide differing aspects of friendship.

hospitality, honesty, humility, and practical wisdom.¹⁰⁶ Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar came to Job to offer sympathy and comfort. Initially, they came to mourn with Job and not to judge or berate him.¹⁰⁷ Therefore, in the Book of Job's prologue, friends are expected to comfort each other.¹⁰⁸ They give encouragement through talking about life, death, punishment, and reward. Friends encompass another friend who is hurting or in need, like troops surrounding their king (Job 29:25).¹⁰⁹ They love each other emotionally and behaviorally (Prov. 17:17) and are trustworthy and honest.¹¹⁰ However, Job's friends cultivate an increasing vehemency, self-righteousness, and

¹⁰⁶ Patricia Vesely, *Friendship and Virtue Ethics in the Book of Job* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 106. She additionally remarks that these traits are revealed in actions of advocacy. She states, "A genuine friend who possesses such traits will perceive her companion as "another self" and will recognize the dignity and worth of that person's perceptions, values, affections, and the like." Therefore, a genuine friend will fight for another's justice. Ibid., 163. Eliphaz reciprocates Job's characterization of genuine friendship. He demands humility, honesty, and receptivity to a friend's wisdom. Additionally, he counsels Job to cultivate the virtues of submission, restraint, and acquiescence to Yahweh's will. Ibid. Hoffman notes that Eliphaz is the antithesis to Job. See Hoffman, 138–9.

¹⁰⁷ Longman III, 90. Job 2:13 states that the three friends sat in silence with Job for seven days and nights. Their initial response to Job's predicament reveals that sometimes silence is preferable to comforting words. Goldingay comments that as the dialogues progress, the friends are guilty of sticking their feet in their mouths. He suggests that their silence is focused more on themselves than on Job. See Goldingay, 22. Clines comments that the friend's unrecognition of Job is an expression denoting their treatment of him as already dead. Therefore, their good intentions are off to a rocky start especially when Job calls them traitors (Job 6:15) and torturers (Job 16:4). See Clines, *WBC Vol. 17*, 61. The friends begin to perceive Job as a threat. When he is pious and patient, then they are happy to console and comfort him. However, when Job begins to complain, then their defenses are raised. They believe that a friend is a person who bless Yahweh, but they question Job's friendship when he begins to complain. Balentine, 383.

¹⁰⁸ For Thomas Aquinas, "Every friend wishes his friend to be and to live; secondly, he desires good things for him; thirdly, he does good things for him; fourthly, he takes pleasure in his company; fifthly, he is of one mind with him, rejoicing and sorrowing in almost the same things." See Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (Allen: Christian Classics, 1948), II-II, q. 25, a. 7.

¹⁰⁹ D. Instone Brewer, "Comfort," in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. T. Alexander, and Brian Rosner (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 418.

¹¹⁰ Saul Olyan, *Friendship in the Hebrew Bible* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017), 30 and 33. Anthony Flood explains that Thomas Aquinas believed that friendship fell under the category of love, the highest kind of love. Aquinas distinguished three levels of

an unqualified condemnation of Job.¹¹¹ They attack Job with ferocity on all sides, expecting to break his will.

For this dissertation, three aspects of friendship will be evaluated: patience, compassion, and comfort. Eliphaz begins his first speech by noting how Job is impatient anytime someone speaks a word to him (Job 4:2). Patience, read in Ecclesiastes 7:8, is פְּתִיחַ.¹¹² Patience is a virtue that helps to sustain a friendship through trials and tribulations. Both patience and impatience represent how a person responds to suffering due to dire emotions or loss, whether a person or property.¹¹³ In Job 4:2, the biblical author uses הֵלֵל to denote a lack of patience or impatience. The idea behind הֵלֵל can also be indicated in Isaiah 7:13. Unlike Isaiah 7:13, Job's impatience is not with Yahweh but with his friends. Aquinas explains that Job's impatience results from his suffering and sadness according to his sensual side; however, Job still conforms to Yahweh's will. Therefore, Job is not guilty of the impatience that Eliphaz charges.¹¹⁴ The term הֵלֵל deals

friendship: use, pleasure, and true. Therefore, love represents true friendship. See Anthony Flood, "Friendship in the *Literal Exposition on Job*," in *Reading Job with St. Thomas Aquinas*, eds. Matthew Levering, Piotr Roszak, and Jürgen Vijgen (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2020), 342.

¹¹¹ Tsevat, 75. Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar have become inquisitors to Job. They point fingers at and ridicule him. Their dialogues become cold, hard, and calculating; therefore, since they consider him 'dead,' they have come to bury him. Balentine, 386.

¹¹² The biblical Hebrew פְּתִיחַ is derived from the root פְּתַח denoting "to be long" associated with continue (one time), delay (one time), endure (one time), endures (one time), lengthen (three times), lengthened (one time), lingered (two times), live (two times), long (eight times), makes him slow (one time), prolong (eight times), prolonged (four times), prolongs (one time), stick (one time), survived (two times). See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, "פְּתַח," 1365. The term פְּתִיחַ refers to long (one time), patience (two times), slow (ten times), who is slow (two times). See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, "פְּתִיחַ," 1365.

¹¹³ Flood, 351.

¹¹⁴ Thomas Aquinas, *The Literal Exposition on Job: A Scriptural Commentary Concerning Providence*, trans. Anthony Damico (Atlanta: Scholar's Press, 1989), Ch. 6, lines

with mental and spiritual exhaustion, not physical, and refers to the will and emotions. In Job 4:2, the emotional aspect is highlighted.¹¹⁵

The biblical Hebrew term רַחַם commonly denotes compassion. The term רַחַם is a denominative verb from the primitive root רַחַם, which conveys the sense of “compassion.”¹¹⁶

Baker and Carpenter explain that רַחַם involves a deep and kindly sympathy and sorrow felt for a person who has been afflicted or suffering misfortunes and the need to relieve the suffering.¹¹⁷

When a friend does not give compassion, the friendship, based on love, begins to fail. Job metaphorically describes his friend’s lack of compassion as a wadi and waterless (Job 6:15–17).¹¹⁸ The lack of compassion implies a lack of commitment by the friends. Commitment

126–34. Job’s patience stems from his appropriate relationship with and trust in Yahweh. Flood, 352.

¹¹⁵ Helmer Ringgren, “לֵאדָה,” in *TDOT Vol. 7*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David Green (Grand Rapids.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 395.

¹¹⁶ Other renderings associated with רַחַם are compassions (one time), deeply (two times), mercies (four times), mercy (two times). See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, “רַחַם,” 1470. Therefore, רַחַם denotes “to love, have compassion.” The range of interpretations include compassion (one time), compassionate (one time), find compassion (two times), finds mercy (one time), had (two times), had compassion (two times), has compassion (four times), have compassion (twenty times), have had compassion (one time), have mercy (two times), have pity (one time), have...compassion (three times), have...mercy (two times), love (one time), mercy (one time), obtained compassion (one time), Ruhamah (one time), show compassion (two times), surely have mercy (one time). See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, “רַחַם,” 1470.

¹¹⁷ Baker, and Carpenter, “רַחַם,” 1048. The root רַחַם and its derivatives go beyond the legal rights by focusing on grace and hope and the dependence on the willingness to show favor. See Mike Butterworth, “רַחַם,” in *NIDOTTE Vol. 3*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 1092. Aquinas explains that compassion between friends is consoling because adversity or burdens are more lightly borne, and sadness is alleviated through the presence of a friend’s pleasantness. See Aquinas, *Job*, Ch. 2, lines 244–52.

¹¹⁸ In verse 15, Job cynically calls his friends “brothers.” He describes their compassion as false as a wadi stream, which quickly dries up after a rain due to the porous rock. Jeremiah describes Yahweh’s fickleness with the same imagery (Jer. 15:18). See Andersen, 140; Pope, 53. Longman comments that Job is expressing his disdain for his friend’s disloyalty. See Longman III, 140. Likewise, Balentine comments that Job hopes for loyalty from his friends, even during

equates to unconditional love willingly expressed by a person and not out of a sense of need during suffering. Faithfulness is shown to a friend when that person has relinquished any right to receive a commitment. Therefore, the biblical author is revealing to the reader that the friend's lack of commitment is a failure in fearing Yahweh.¹¹⁹

Comfort is read in Job 2:11 when the three friends “come to sympathize with him and comfort him.” “Comfort” is denoted by the biblical Hebrew verb נָחַם. *HALOT* defines the piel form of נָחַם as “to comfort (with words),” which does not mean to sympathize but to encourage.¹²⁰ H. J. Stoebe comments that a visible sign of the friend's comfort was by the shaking of the head (Isa 51:19; Jer 15:5; 16:5; 22:10; 48:17; Nah 3:7; Psa 69:21; Job 2:11;

intense suffering. However, what Job receives is treachery. He calls them brothers conveying a sense of solidarity and familial duty, but they have abandoned him. Job's disappointment is compared to travelers hoping for water, but “They were disappointed for they had trusted, they came there and were confounded” (Job 6:20). See Balentine, 391. See also David Kang, “True Friendship: Job 6:14–30,” *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 21, no. 1 (2018): 72.

¹¹⁹ Goldingay, 42. Lev. 19 contains the instructions for caring of other people. Yahweh explicitly states that a person is to care for their neighbors, or friends. Therefore, for Job's friends to not exhibit commitment in the friendship, they are guilty of disobeying the instruction, regardless of if they felt that Job had wronged them. Job is stating that their commitment is fruitful during the good times; however, when adversity strikes it dries up like a wadi stream after a rain or a spring thaw.

¹²⁰ Koehler, and Baumgartner, “נָחַם,” 689. The biblical Hebrew נָחַם is a root meaning “to be sorry, console oneself.” The range of נָחַם meanings include am sorry (one time), appeased (one time), become a consolation (one time), change mind (six times), change minds (one time), changed mind (four times), comfort (thirty times), comforted (eighteen times), comforter (two times), comforters (four times), comforts (two times), console (three times), consolers (one time), consoling (one time), give rest (one time), have compassion (two times), moved to pity (one time), regret (one time), regretted (one time), relent (five times), relented (four times), relenting (three times), relents (one time), relieved (one time), repent (three times), repented (two times), sorry (six times), think better (one time), when the time of mourning was ended (two times). See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, “נָחַם,” 1434. Butterworth states that the piel form of נָחַם consistently means “comfort, console.” The word is used in Job, mostly of Job's friends, in their attempts to comfort him (2:11; 7:13; 16:2; 21:34; 29:25; 42:11). See Mike Butterworth, “נָחַם,” in *NIDOTTE Vol. 3*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 82.

42:11).¹²¹ The biblical Hebrew word נוד denotes “to indicate cooperation with someone by the shaking the head, to show sympathy.”¹²² Georg Fohrer suggests that נוד is not used to denote sympathy but to ward off evil.¹²³ Comfort was intended to be a well-meaning and unengaged address. It is plausible that Job’s friends had good intentions when they came to sympathize with and comfort him. Even when the dialogues went awry and were tactless at times, it is still fathomable to think that their intentions were good, albeit their claims about Yahweh and His justice and will be skewed.¹²⁴

Friendship in the human realm is not the only concern; however, there is friendship in the divine realm. In Job 16:20–21, Job asks for a divine helper or friend.¹²⁵ Thus, רַעַי is the designation for Yahweh, where He can dispense justice and act as a mediator. Exodus 33:11 is

¹²¹ The biblical Hebrew term נוד is used for “sympathy,” which is exhibited by the “shaking of the head.” H. J. Stoebe, “נוד,” in *TLOT Vol.2*, ed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 735–6. H. Simian-Yofre and Heinz-Josef Fabry note that “The verb most frequently used in parallel with the piel of *nḥm* is *nwd*, which denotes the gesture of concern made in the presence of misfortune (Job 2:11; 42:11; Isa. 51:19; Nah. 3:7; Ps. 69:21[20]). This usage suggests sympathy for the sufferer, even though it is clear that this sympathy is useless when it comes from human beings.” See H. Simian-Yofre, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, “נוד,” in *TDOT Vol. 9*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David Green (Grand Rapids.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 353.

¹²² Koehler, and Baumgartner, “נוד,” 678; Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “נוד,” 626; Helmer Ringgren, “נוד,” in *TDOT Vol. 9*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David Green (Grand Rapids.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 272. While נוד takes on the sense of mourning, sympathy, and concern for people, it can additionally be a display of disdain by shaking or nodding the head. See Baker, and Carpenter, “נוד,” 715.

¹²³ Georg Fohrer, *Das Buch Hiob*, 2 Auflage. KAT XVI (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus Gert Mohn, 1989), 104. Fohrer understands the throwing of the dust toward heaven as a rite to ward off evil or an attempt to stir up heaven in revenge. *Ibid.*, 104–6.

¹²⁴ Andersen, 100.

¹²⁵ Kellermann, “רַעַי,” 528. The LXX preserves the text of vv. 21–22 interpreting them as Job's desire for a divine friend.

the only other place where Yahweh is designated as a עֵר, "friend."¹²⁶ Walton and Vizcaino suggest that Job 16:21 is an inference for a divine council member to call on Yahweh on his behalf.¹²⁷ However, Hartley expresses that the interpreter can only be Yahweh Himself. Therefore, Yahweh will replace Job's friends and defend him.¹²⁸ A hint for the עֵר identification is read in the Book of Job's prologue, which states that Job was "blameless, upright, fearing *Yahweh* and turning from evil" (Job 1:1). It is, therefore, Job's prior character that makes it likely

¹²⁶ J. Kühlewein, "עֵר," in *TLOT Vol.3*, ed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 1245. Andersen contends that the mediator and friend that Job asks for is not Yahweh because Job has lost faith in his friends, and he is in dispute with Yahweh. See Andersen, 198; Reyburn, 319. Longman comments that the divine helper is not Yahweh but a third party in heaven that does not exist. See Longman III, 240. Ken Brown suggests that the עֵר is Satan. He explains that the only character in the Book of Job that resembles the role read in Job 16 is Satan (Job 1:6–12; 2:1–7). It is only Satan who can be a differentiated member of the divine council, bring up charges, and provide an indirect challenge to Yahweh's justice. See Ken Brown, "How to Charge God with Murder: The Role of the 'Witness in Heaven' in Job 16," *The Catholic Bible Quarterly* 81, no. 1 (Jan. 2019): 27–8. It should be noted that שָׂטָן, "Satan," is a title and not a proper name in the Book of Job. *HALOT* explains that שָׂטָן, in Job 1:12, is an expression for an "opponent, adversary." See Koehler, and Baumgartner, "שָׂטָן," 1317. *BDB* notes that שָׂטָן is a "superhuman adversary." See Brown, Driver, and Briggs, "שָׂטָן," 966. In Job 1 and 2, שָׂטָן is potentially seen as a heavenly accuser (akin to a defense attorney); however, שָׂטָן is not a specific demonic being. See Bruce Baloian, "שָׂטָן," in *NIDOTTE Vol. 3*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 1228. Finally, K. Nielsen explains that שָׂטָן can be understood in a family context. Nielsen states, "It would also be possible to understand the prologue as a family drama with *Yahweh* in the role of the father. The theme of the prologue would then be Satan's jealousy against Job and his attempts to convince the father that his "favorite son" was not so well behaved and obedient without reason." Thus, שָׂטָן denotes hatred and quarrel conducted by a divine son. See K. Nielsen, "שָׂטָן," in *TDOT Vol. 14*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David Green (Grand Rapids.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 76.

¹²⁷ Walton, and Vizcaino, 215.

¹²⁸ Hartley, 264.

he is calling out to Yahweh.¹²⁹ R. Gordis comments that Job views Yahweh as an impartial arbiter and a witness in his predicament.¹³⁰

In this section, family and friendship were evaluated. The size, nature, and familial duty were discussed concerning Job 1:2, 5; 42:12. Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar were introduced in Job 2:11. Competing views on friendship evolved from this verse. However, patience, compassion, and comfort were evaluated to indicate what true friendship entails. Finally, friendship was extended to the divine realm by evaluating the identification of עַר in Job 16:21. In the Book of Ruth, family and friendship are didactic topics comparative to the Book of Job.

A sense of family duty is revealed in Ruth 1:14, where Ruth does not leave Naomi but clings to her. The Hebrew term דָּבַק means to "stick, cling, cleave to."¹³¹ In the Ruthan context, דָּבַק is metaphorically used to express loyalty, affection, and proximity.¹³² Block notes that Ruth's actions demonstrate courage and faith, which will become more apparent during the third interchange.¹³³ Ruth's sense of family duty reaches new heights in Ruth 1:16–17. Bush comments that Ruth's vow to Naomi goes beyond racial origins and national religion by

¹²⁹ Lindsay Wilson, "Realistic Hope or Imaginative Exploration: The Identity of Job's Arbiter," *Pacifica* 9, no. 3 (Oct.1996): 246. See also E. Dhorme, *A Commentary on the Book of Job* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1967), 239.

¹³⁰ R. Gordis, *The Book of Job* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1978), 178.

¹³¹ George Brook, "דָּבַק," in *NIDOTTE Vol. 1*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 893.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 894; E. Jenni, "דָּבַק," in *TLOT Vol.1*, ed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 324; Brown, Driver, and Briggs, "דָּבַק," 179.

¹³³ Daniel Block, *NAC Vol. 6: Ruth* (Nashville: Broadman and Homan Publishers, 1999), 638. André LaCocque comments that דָּבַק is normally associated with a devotion to Yahweh. However, in this context, it defines an interpersonal relationship akin to the religious vocabulary used in the Song of Songs. Therefore, Ruth's actions instill a sense of intimacy. See André LaCocque, *CC: Ruth* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014), 50.

abandoning her homeland to embracing Naomi's people and Yahweh. Ruth further solidifies this commitment by mentioning Yahweh's name, that if she does not keep her solemn oath, she will accept divine punishment.¹³⁴ To signify the importance of her decision, Ruth states in verse 17 that where Naomi dies, she will die and be buried. Including a burial area solidifies her devotion to Naomi, Israel, and Yahweh.¹³⁵ Choices have consequences. In the case of Ruth, she chooses to be with Naomi (family duty), Israel (community duty), and Yahweh (religious duty). Proverbial wisdom teaches that wise choices yield Yahweh's blessings, and foolish choices result in Yahweh's curses.¹³⁶

A friendship aspect explored in the Book of Job was comfort. The biblical Hebrew word נָחַם, "comfort," is additionally used in Ruth 2:13. Like Job 2:11, נָחַם denotes comfort through encouraging words and not by sympathy.¹³⁷ Stoebe notes that נָחַם is dependent on the means of the comforter. Thus, in Ruth 2:13, the means is a social relationship, and נָחַם can convey the sense of "mercy."¹³⁸ In the Ruthan context, Boaz, the comforter, has the means to alter Ruth's

¹³⁴ Bush, 87.

¹³⁵ De Waard and Nida explain that for Ruth to make this expression it reinforces her loyalty to family, land, and Yahweh. See Jan de Waard, and Eugene Nida, *UBS: A Handbook on Ruth*, 2nd ed. (New York: United Bible Societies, 1992), 18. LaCocque notes that the grave was significantly important for a person because they would want to be buried in ancestral ground (Gen. 29:29–31; 50:13, 24–26; Josh. 24:32). It was believed that when a person was buried in their ancestral ground that they would "sleep with the fathers" (1 Kgs 2:10; 11:43; 14:31). Therefore, Ruth chooses to be with Naomi, Israel, Yahweh, and be buried with Naomi's family. See LaCocque, 54.

¹³⁶ Katharine Dell, *The Solomonic Corpus of 'Wisdom' and Its Influence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 176.

¹³⁷ Koehler, and Baumgartner, "נָחַם," 689. See also Robert Hubbard, Jr. *NICOT: Ruth* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1988), 169. Block explains that "The root *nhm* in this verb form (piel) is capable of a wide range of meanings: to comfort, to console, to bring relief. The word appears to be related to Arabic *nḥm*, "to breathe deeply," a sense that is still recognizable in the Old Testament." See Block, 665.

¹³⁸ Stoebe, "נָחַם," 736.

circumstances or unfortunate situation.¹³⁹ Edward Campbell comments that נחם in 2:13 parallels the same meaning found in Isaiah 40:2, which means “to comfort, to relieve.”¹⁴⁰ Another friendship aspect is compassion. Compassion is encountered in Job 8:5 with the biblical Hebrew verb נָנַח. *HALOT* defines the hithpael form of נָנַח as “to implore favor, compassion.”¹⁴¹ In the Joban context, it is Bildad who shows confidence that Yahweh will show favor for a wide range of needs.¹⁴² However, in the Book of Ruth, the human realm of compassion is read. In Ruth 2:2, 10, and 13, the biblical Hebrew nominative נָח is used.¹⁴³ While נָח is generally comprehended as

¹³⁹ Simian-Yofre, and Fabry, “נחם,” 352. Adam Howell states, “the Piel communicates putting someone into the state of comfort (factive), which means “to comfort.” “For you have comforted me.” The perfective aspect of the verb is best understood as an English perfect, “you have comforted me,” a past action with ongoing results.” See Adam Howell, *Ruth* (Bellingham: Lexham Academic, 2022), 153.

¹⁴⁰ Edward Campbell, Jr., *Ruth*, 1st ed. (Garden City: Doubleday, 1975), 101. Campbell provides two options to the meaning for נחם; however, they are less likely the biblical author’s intended use in Ruth 2:13. He explains that one option is that נחם means “to persuade, to entice a woman” as read in Gen. 34:3, Judg. 19:3; and Hos. 2:16. Another option is that נחם refers to the encouragement a king gives to this people (2 Sam. 19:8; 2 Chron. 30:22; 32:6). *Ibid.*, 100–1.

¹⁴¹ Koehler, and Baumgartner, “נָנַח,” 335. The biblical Hebrew נָנַח is a root with the following range of meanings: begged (one time), dealt graciously (one time), favor (one time), feel pity (one time), finds...favor (one time), give them to us voluntarily (one time), gracious (forty-five times), graciously (one time), graciously given (one time), graciously grant (one time), groan (one time), implore (one time), implore his favor (one time), implore the compassion (one time), implore the mercy (one time), implored (one time), made (one time), made supplication (two times), make supplication (five times), pity (two times), pleaded (two times), show favor (one time), show...favor (one time), shown favor (one time), sought his favor (one time), surely be gracious (one time). See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, “נָנַח,” 1394.

¹⁴² Terrence Fretheim, “נָנַח,” in *NIDOTTE Vol. 2*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 200.

¹⁴³ The term נָח is derived from נָנַח. The term נָח can mean adornment (one time), charm (two times), charming (one time), favor (fifty-one times), grace (eight times), graceful (two times), gracious (three times), pleases (one time). See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, “נָח,” 1393.

“favor, acceptance” in the Ruthan context, “compassion” can be implied.¹⁴⁴ The favor that Ruth found in Boaz includes a lasting affection. Thus, חַן is an "embellished thank you" that denotes a lasting and profound favor or compassion.¹⁴⁵ Fretheim comments that חַן is an interhuman activity denoting the reality of an ongoing relationship.¹⁴⁶ In Ruth 2:10, Boaz’s prerogative was to give unconditional favor to Ruth, and she understood it.¹⁴⁷ Boaz’s actions in Ruth 2 indicate that he is not merely doing Ruth a favor but is showing her compassion through his compassion and kindness.

Hard Work— Job 1:10–11; 31:3; 34:11; 36:3

Genesis 2:4–7 implies that work is a human responsibility in cultivating the ground, which is a part of the dominion mandate in Genesis 1:26–28. After Genesis 3:17–19, work takes on a new dimension by emphasizing the need for human survival.¹⁴⁸ Job 1:10 involves a theme that interplays Yahweh’s provision and human responsibility. The biblical Hebrew noun מַעֲשֵׂה is used to denote “work” in verse 10.¹⁴⁹ It follows closely to the verb עָשָׂה , describing what is

¹⁴⁴ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “ חַן ,” 336. The inclusion for חַן meaning "compassion" in Ruth 2:2, 10, and 13 stems from the understanding that חַן is derived from חָנַן , which conveys the sense of “compassion.”

¹⁴⁵ David Freedman, J. R. Lundbom, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, “ חָנַן ,” in *TDOT Vol. 5*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David Green (Grand Rapids.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 28.

¹⁴⁶ Fretheim, “ חָנַן ,” 199. He further explains that חַן describes beneficent actions that are freely offered or received through kindness or generosity that contributes to the well-being of another person or for the health of a relationship.

¹⁴⁷ Howell, 140.

¹⁴⁸ J. C. Laansma, “Rest,” in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. T. Alexander, and Brian Rosner (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 727.

¹⁴⁹ The biblical Hebrew מַעֲשֵׂה is derived from the root עָשָׂה meaning “do, make.” The range of meanings for עָשָׂה is too long to note here; however, they entail the action of "doing" or "making" of something. See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, “עָשָׂה,” 1452. The term מַעֲשֵׂה

accomplished by the literal or figurative action of the verb. The noun מַעֲשֵׂה signifies what is or is being done.¹⁵⁰ The literal action stated in Job 1:10 is Job’s work blessed by Yahweh.¹⁵¹ Job had a strong work ethic, as indicated by his farming and animal husbandry success. The depth of Job’s success is read where “וּמְקַנְהוּ פָּרִז בְּאֶרֶץ” (“his possessions have increased [*burst out, spread out*] in the land.¹⁵² The significance of Job’s hard work is denoted by the biblical Hebrew piel verb בָּרַךְ “to bless.” *HALOT* comments that בָּרַךְ refers to Yahweh as the subject blessing someone with special powers; in Job 1:10, Yahweh is blessing the work of the hands (also Deut. 28:12).¹⁵³

denotes “a deed, work.” The range of meanings include accomplishments (one time), achievements (one time), act (one time), act...did (one time), actions (one time), activities (two times), activity (three times), art (one time), business (one time), chainwork (one time), concern (one time), conduct (one time), deed (four times), deeds (seventeen times), design (four times), did (one time), does (one time), done (one time), eventful (one time), goods (two times), just (one time), labors (two times), made (two times), occupation (two times), practices (two times), sculptured (one time), tasks (two times), things (five times), verses (one time), vocation (one time), what He has done (one time), what is done (two times), what is made (one time), work (ninety-nine times), work quota (one time), working (two times), workmanship (ten times), works (forty-two times), wrought (one time), yield (one time). See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, “מַעֲשֵׂה,” 1426.

¹⁵⁰ Eugene Carpenter, “עֲשָׂה,” in *NIDOTTE Vol. 3*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 547; J. Vollmer, “עֲשָׂה,” in *TLOT Vol.2*, ed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 947.

¹⁵¹ Helmer Ringgren, “עֲשָׂה,” in *TDOT Vol. 11*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David Green (Grand Rapids.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 401. Reyburn notes that the works done by Job is an idiomatic way of stating that everything he undertakes. See Reyburn, 43. Job was a success regardless of how success is measured. See Alden, 55.

¹⁵² Hartley, 73; Pope, 12; Reyburn, 43.

¹⁵³ Koehler, and Baumgartner, “בָּרַךְ,” 160. The biblical Hebrew בָּרַךְ is a root denoting “to kneel, bless.” The full range of meanings are abundantly bless (one time), actually blessed (one time), bless (111 times), bless is blessed (one time), bless me indeed (one time), bless them at all (one time), blessed (167 times), blessed be those who bless (one time), blessed is everyone who blesses (one time), blesses (ten times), blessing (one time), boast (one time), congratulates (one time), curse (three times), cursed (three times), curses (one time), greatly bless (one time), greet (two times), greeted (one time), had to bless (one time), kneel (one time), kneel down (one time), knelt (one time), persisted in blessing (one time), pronounce blessing (one time), salute (one time), salutes (one time), surely bless (one time), thanked (one time). See *NASB Exhaustive*

BDB explains that בָּרַךְ is an antithetical to “curse” (Job 1:11), which is a blessing overdone, or a curse.¹⁵⁴ The OT abundantly states how Yahweh bestows blessings on people, families, and Israel; however, Yahweh rarely curses an individual.¹⁵⁵ In Job 1:10–11, Yahweh’s blessings on Job speak about his prosperity. Thus, אֲשַׁטֵּן challenges Yahweh by accusing Him of bribing Job (Yahweh blesses Job so that Job will be faithful to Him). The challenge is for Yahweh to remove His blessing and see if Job will בָּרַךְ, “curse” Him.¹⁵⁶ What אֲשַׁטֵּן does not understand is that Yahweh’s blessings on Job are a result of Job’s hard work and his character. For Job to receive Yahweh’s blessings, he must show Yahweh that he deserves them. Clines explains that the work done by Job’s hands has garnered him divine blessings.¹⁵⁷ Crenshaw comments that it is curious

Concordance, “בָּרַךְ,” 1288–9. The piel conjugation of the root בָּרַךְ is the most frequent. “The sentence structure is the same: A *brk* B be, “A blessed B with,” followed by a statement about the goods being given, or by the name of the one who charged A to speak.” See Josef Scharbert, “בָּרַךְ,” in *TDOT Vol. 2*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David Green (Grand Rapids.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 288.

¹⁵⁴ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “בָּרַךְ,” 139. Scharbert explains that “Among the other terms occasionally used in the sense of “curse” are *qabhabh* or *naqabh* (Nu. 22:11, 17; 23:8, 11, 13, 25, 27; 24:10; Job 3:8; 5:3; Prov. 11:26; 24:24), which really means “to revile,” “to express contempt for,” and *za’am* (Nu. 23:7f.; Mal. 1:4; Prov. 24:24), which elsewhere in the OT means “to threaten.” All these expressions appear in contrast with the only commonly used expression meaning “to bless” in the OT, viz., → בָּרַךְ *bārakh* (*berakhah*, “blessing”), whose meaning extends from “greet” to “speak of with appreciation, praise” to the formal “bless.”” See Josef Scharbert, “אָרַר,” in *TDOT Vol. 1*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David Green (Grand Rapids.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 415.

¹⁵⁵ M. Evans, “Blessing/Curse,” in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. T. Alexander, and Brian Rosner (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 399.

¹⁵⁶ Konkel, 33; Perdue, 89–90.

¹⁵⁷ Clines, *WBC Vol. 17*, 26.

that through the Adversary's travels, no notice was made about Job until Yahweh mentioned him. It was at that time that פָּטַח would issue his challenge.¹⁵⁸

Another biblical Hebrew term for “work” is read in Job 31:3, which is פָּעַל . The term פָּעַל is distinguished from עָשָׂה because it is used in poetry but rarely in narrative or legal texts.¹⁵⁹ Thus, פָּעַל conveys the sense of action, or doing, in verse 3 by people.¹⁶⁰ However, פָּעַל is used in a “poetic justice” sense because Job 31 concludes Job's speech, in which he lists crimes and denies them all.¹⁶¹ Tsevat explains that chapter 31 has a particular function in the Book of Job. Accusations, begging, and hoping have taken a back seat, and now Job is compelling Yahweh to take a stand and relate Himself to Job's problems.¹⁶² Job has taken a dangerous step by voicing

¹⁵⁸ Crenshaw, 92. It is to be understood that פָּטַח was not opposed to Job but to Yahweh's relationship with people.

¹⁵⁹ Koehler, and Baumgartner, “ פָּעַל ,” 950. K.-J. Illman explains that “The root $p' l$ thus occurs 111 times, a relatively small number compared to the more than 2,800 occurrences of $\rightarrow \text{עָשָׂה}$ $\acute{a}ś\acute{a}$. The distribution of $p' l$ already clearly reveals that this root was used more in poetic contexts. The few occurrences in prose and legal texts can be viewed either as elevated style or as extremely late texts. It is doubtful there is any historical explanation for this usage, e.g., that the root was viewed suspiciously in Israel because of its alleged Canaanite and Phoenician origin and thus receded in favor of the root $\acute{s}h$. The root $p' l$ was poetic and its use thus restricted from the outset.” See K.-J. Illman, “ פָּעַל ,” in *TDOT Vol. 12*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David Green (Grand Rapids.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 39.

¹⁶⁰ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “ פָּעַל ,” 821. The biblical Hebrew פָּעַל is a root denoting “do, make.” The range of meanings include accomplish (one time), act (one time), acted (one time), carried (one time), deal (one time), did (two times), do (fifteen times), doers (two times), does (one time), does his work (one time), doing (one time), done (six times), made (three times), Maker (one time), makes (two times), performed (two times), work (four times), workers (seven times), working (one time), works (two times), wrought (one time). See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, “ פָּעַל ,” 1456. The verb פָּעַל occurs more frequently with negative outcomes than positive ones. It is commonly associated with lying, evil, and wickedness (Hos. 7:1; Job 31:3; 34:32; Ps. 119:3; Mic. 2:1). Illman, “ פָּעַל ,” 40.

¹⁶¹ Andersen, 258. He states, “The form Job uses is, ‘If I have done X, then let Y happen to me!’ X is the crime; Y is the penalty.”

¹⁶² Tsevat, 77.

an oath that could result in divine punishment if he speaks untruthfully.¹⁶³ The use of פֶּעַל in 31:3 denotes the assurance of divine retribution on the wrongdoer. A wrongdoer's prosperity is destroyed when Yahweh causes a disaster to wipe out everything they own (Prov. 6:15). The after-effect is panic (Prov. 1:26–27). Therefore, Job has included a laundry list of sins he has had no desire to commit, including the פֶּעַל of the wicked.¹⁶⁴ In a positive context, in his fourth speech, Elihu addresses Yahweh as פֶּעַל, "Maker." In Job 36:3, Elihu makes the personal confession extolling Yahweh's creative activity in the sense of His providence and sovereignty.¹⁶⁵ In the Joban context, Elihu admits that Yahweh's justice and proper behavior play an integral part in the world order designed by Yahweh.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶³ A full oath is "If I did or shall do this, or if I did not or shall not do this, then may Yahweh punish me." Generally, in ANE and biblical Israel oaths, divine punishment was not included for the fear of uttering inaccuracies. Job was so sure of his innocence that he willingly includes and accepts divine punishment. See Tsevat, 78. Alden notes that the fear of punishment is a greater motivator than the promise of reward. See Alden, 299.

¹⁶⁴ Hartley, 410. The fact that Yahweh dispenses a portion of punishment to the wicked, in verse 2, resonates with Zophar's speech in Job 20:29. Additionally, the content resonates with Job's conviction about why the wick are spared and their future (Job 21:30). See Hassan Musa, "Job's Oath of Innocence: A Reading of Job 31 for Theological-Ethics of Responsibility," *Kagoro Journal of Theology* 1, no. 1 (2016): 111.

¹⁶⁵ J. Vollmer, "פֶּעַל," in *TLOT Vol.2*, ed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 1016; Eugene Carpenter, "פֶּעַל," in *NIDOTTE Vol. 3*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 644.

¹⁶⁶ Clines, *WBC Vol. 18a*, 854.

The nominative of פִּעַל is פִּעַל read in Job 34:11.¹⁶⁷ HALOT defines פִּעַל, in verse 11, as a "deed, accomplishment."¹⁶⁸ BDB explains that פִּעַל is "an action having a moral quality."¹⁶⁹ Thus, Elihu is telling Job that a person's actions have consequences. Specifically, the evil works and the people that do them will be judged (Jer. 25:4, Ps. 28:4; Prov. 24:12; Ruth 2:12; Isa. 1:31).¹⁷⁰ However, the error in Elihu's thinking is that he, along with the other friends, is adhering to a rigid view of the retribution principle.¹⁷¹ He has not considered Job's circumstances and applies his statement without mercy or compassion.¹⁷² Elihu's statement does not reaffirm the previous

¹⁶⁷ The biblical Hebrew פִּעַל is derived from פִּעַל. The term פִּעַל refers to a "doing, deed, work." The biblical Hebrew nominative's range of meanings include acquisition (one time), act (one time), activity (one time), conduct (two times), deeds (four times), doings (one time), something (one time), thing you are making (one time), wages (two times), what you have done (one time), work (twenty-two times). See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, "פִּעַל," 1456.

¹⁶⁸ Koehler, and Baumgartner, "פִּעַל," 951.

¹⁶⁹ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, "פִּעַל," 821.

¹⁷⁰ Carpenter, "פִּעַל," 645; Vollmer, "פִּעַל," 1016. Illman explains "Human deeds can be qualified, e.g., as *pō'al hāmās*, "wicked deed" (par. *ma'asē 'āwen*, "works of iniquity," Isa. 59:6). Elsewhere the negative nature of the action is contextually construed (e.g., Job 36:9; Ps. 28:4; Prov. 24:12, 29; Isa. 29:15; Jer. 25:14; 50:29), and occasional reference is also made to *Yahweh's* recompense (*šlm*, Ruth 2:12; Job 34:11; Jer. 25:14; *hēšīb*, Prov. 24:12, 29). See Illman, "פִּעַל," 41. See also Konkel, 204.

¹⁷¹ H. Rowley explains that Elihu, along with the other friends, is persuaded that Yahweh is just. The misconception is that they group all of human experience to the retribution principle, refusing to acknowledge any circumstance that might challenge it. See H. Rowley, *Job* (Nashville: Nelson, 1970), 279.

¹⁷² Alden, 335. Hartley comments "*Yahweh* rewards or pays (*šillēm*) each one according to his deeds by bringing back on (*himsī'*) a person the results of his conduct (*'ōrah*, lit. "way"). This belief of exact retribution is found frequently in the OT, particularly in the Wisdom literature. The idea here is not merely that a deed is pregnant with its own consequences, but that *Yahweh* judges every deed and renders to its doer a just reward. Elihu is countering Job's assumed position that *Yahweh* acts as he wills whether the people are innocent or wicked (cf. 9:23–24). See Hartley, 453–4. See also Clines, *WBC Vol. 18a*, 773. Brent Christiansen comments that אָרַח ("way" or "behavior") is a metonym for a person's character and moral nature, which involves a moral reciprocity with *Yahweh*. As a person chooses an אָרַח, *Yahweh* פִּעַל the אָרַח to meet them. Thus, thoughts and actions form a moral direction and pattern of life that is self-reinforcing; therefore, they define a person's character and alludes to their fate. See Brent

friend's speeches; however, it is a disputation with Job. Elihu's concern is with Job's statements in Job 12.¹⁷³ Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar, and Elihu are correct in believing that Yahweh does not pervert justice but are wrong in their assumption that Job was a sinner being punished.

In the Book of Job, work is seen as being blessed by Yahweh (Job 1:10), used as divine retribution on the wrongdoer (Job 31:3), a personal title for Yahweh (Job 36:3, "Maker"), and a recompense for a moral character and actions (Job 34:11). The biblical Hebrew word פֶּעַל is encountered additionally in the Book of Ruth (Ruth 2:12).

In Ruth 2:12, Boaz states to Ruth that Yahweh rewards her פֶּעַל. The term פֶּעַל is used as a nominative and is comprehended as "work" or "daily toil."¹⁷⁴ However, *HALOT* notes that in the Ruthan context, פֶּעַל denotes the "behavior, nature" of human actions.¹⁷⁵ Vollmer remarks that three aspects define פֶּעַל: describes the execution of the action, the result of the action, and the action's recompense. Therefore, in Ruth 2:12, the petition is made that Yahweh will requite Ruth's פֶּעַל (see also Job 34:11; Prov. 24:12).¹⁷⁶ Howell notes that verse 12 does not entail just

Christiansen, "Translating and Extraordinary Trope: A Note on Job 34, 11," *Zeitschrift Für Die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 121, no. 2 (2009): 282.

¹⁷³ Carol Newsome, *The Book of Job: A Contest of Moral Imaginations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 217. Newsome explains that in Job 12, Job mentions judges, kings, princes, the trusted, the mighty, priests, elders, and the strong. Elihu; additionally, talks about the kings, nobles, princes, the mighty, and the godless that rule. The dialogue between Elihu and Job is the only one that specifically talks about political power. The distinction is that Job talks about political power in a sapiential discourse, whereas Elihu's context is within Yahweh's sovereignty and human political power. *Ibid.*, 217–8.

¹⁷⁴ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, "פֶּעַל," 821.

¹⁷⁵ Koehler, and Baumgartner, "פֶּעַל," 951. Carpenter explains that פֶּעַל describes the good deeds performed by Ruth on behalf of Naomi. See Carpenter, "פֶּעַל," 645.

¹⁷⁶ Vollmer, "פֶּעַל," 1016; Illman, "פֶּעַל," 41.

completed work, but work being repaid for its worth.¹⁷⁷ The idea behind Job 31:3, acts and consequences, is seen in Ruth 2:12, noted by Hubbard, Jr.¹⁷⁸ Ruth 2 reveals the nature and extent of Ruth's work and her willingness to do so. It is a pivotal element of the biblical narrative that reinforces Wisdom literature's understanding of hard work. Ruth's work provides a provisional purpose for Naomi and herself but also serves a transformative purpose by gaining Boaz's attention. Hence, in the Book of Ruth, hard work is a way to improve one's condition in life. Ruth's פָּעַל in 2:12 indicates her providence for Naomi; however, subtly, it highlights Yahweh's superintendence of events and His providence.¹⁷⁹

Entreaty— Job 6:8; 40:27 [41:3]

Entreaty, a petition, is a prayer or request made to a powerful ruler or Yahweh.¹⁸⁰ One sense of the word is that it is a language used in a court setting. Esther appeals to Ahasuerus in Esther 5:6–8; 7:2; 9:12. Abigail appeals to David for her husband's life in 1 Samuel 25:23–31. Another sense of entreaty is prayer. In Daniel 6:7, Darius forbids anyone to make a prayer for thirty days unless it was made to him. Hannah prays to Yahweh to give her a child (1 Sam. 1:10). In the Book of Job, Job requests that Yahweh would grant his longing (Job 6:8), and in Job 41:3, Yahweh asks Job if Leviathan would make any supplications to him.

¹⁷⁷ Howell, 148. Ruth's extraordinary kindness to Naomi is at the foundation of Boaz's petition, which is noted by "all that you have done" (Ruth 2:11). Ruth's actions are radical and irrational for a foreigner. Therefore, Boaz petitions Yahweh to repay Ruth according to her פָּעַל towards Naomi. For every action, there is an equal reciprocal action. See Block, 661–2.

¹⁷⁸ Hubbard, Jr., *Ruth*, 165.

¹⁷⁹ Gregory Goswell, "Is Ruth Also Among the Wise?," in *Interpreting Old Testament Wisdom Literature*, eds. David Firth and Lindsay Wilson (Westmont: InterVarsity Press, 2017), 129.

¹⁸⁰ W. Harris, "Petition," in *ISBE Vol. 3*, ed. Geoffrey Bromiley (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1979–1988), 819.

In Job 6:8, the biblical Hebrew nominative הִלָּאֵשׁ is used to denote a "request." *HALOT* specifies that הִלָּאֵשׁ means "to make a wish come true."¹⁸¹ *BDB* defines הִלָּאֵשׁ as a "thing asked for."¹⁸² John Beck comments that הִלָּאֵשׁ occurs only fifteen times, denoting a request or desire. הִלָּאֵשׁ can be directed at a person (Est. 5:6) or to Yahweh (1 Sam. 1:27). A request is indicated as being made (Judg. 8:24) or being completed (Ps. 106:15).¹⁸³ H. Fuhs explains that the substantival use of לָאֵשׁ always denotes a "request," sometimes with nuances.¹⁸⁴ However, Reyburn contends that Job's לָאֵשׁ is not a "request" or a "desire" but "hope." He notes that the "desire" in 6:8 parallels the "hope" in 4:6.¹⁸⁵ Therefore, Job is hoping that Yahweh will "crush" him (Job 6:8–9). Job speaks about Yahweh in the third person, which is significant because it reveals that Job is making a request, in prayer, to a superior.¹⁸⁶ The basis for Job's request is that

¹⁸¹ Koehler, and Baumgartner, "הִלָּאֵשׁ," 1374.

¹⁸² Brown, Driver, and Briggs, "הִלָּאֵשׁ," 982. The biblical Hebrew הִלָּאֵשׁ is derived from the root הָלַשׁ denoting "to ask, inquire." See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, "הָלַשׁ," 1474. The term הִלָּאֵשׁ conveys the sense of a "request, thing asked for." The range of potential meanings include dedicated (one time), one (one time), petition (eight times), request (five times). See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, "הִלָּאֵשׁ," 1474. Baker and Carpenter explain that הִלָּאֵשׁ is a feminine noun signifying what a person or group asks for from another party. See Baker, and Carpenter, "הִלָּאֵשׁ," 1086.

¹⁸³ John Beck, "לָאֵשׁ," in *NIDOTTE Vol. 4*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 8. H. Fuhs notes the occurrences, "including 1 in Judges (8:24), 2 in 1 Samuel, 2 in 1 Kings, 1 each in the Psalms (106:15) and Job (6:8), 6 in Esther; and *miš'ālā*, 2 times, Ps. 20:6(5); 37:4 (both plural)." See H. Fuhs, "לָאֵשׁ," in *TDOT Vol. 14*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David Green (Grand Rapids.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 252.

¹⁸⁴ Fuhs, "לָאֵשׁ," 262.

¹⁸⁵ Reyburn, 131. Clines states, "“My hope” (תְּקוּתִי) is thought by some (e.g., Driver) to be less what Job means than “my desire.” Since LXX has αἴτησις “request,” several commentators have emended to תְּאֵוָה “my desire” (cf. RSV), but this suggestion is rarely followed now.” See Clines, *WBC Vol. 17*, 159.

¹⁸⁶ Andersen, 139. Job's request to a divine superior, Yahweh, shows that he is not willing to break his relationship with Yahweh. See Longman III, 138.

he does not have the strength or the means to carry on living. Thus, it is Job's request for Yahweh to kill him so he can escape the present circumstances of his life.¹⁸⁷ In a larger context, Job's request to Yahweh for his death can be possibly seen to protect his faith. Death is a preventative measure against potential blasphemy due to a lack of moral strength.¹⁸⁸ What can be seen is a wordplay between Job and Eliphaz. In Job 4:9, Eliphaz states that the wicked shall perish; however, in 6:8, Job entreats Yahweh to kill. Not because he is guilty of being wicked but as a freedom from the excruciating pain in his life.¹⁸⁹

In Job 40:27 [41:3], Yahweh asks Job if Leviathan would make supplications to him. The biblical Hebrew term used is תְּהַנֶּנּוּן, which conveys the sense of "pleading." *HALOT* explains that תְּהַנֶּנּוּן is an expression used that besets a mind filled with terror.¹⁹⁰ *NASB Exhaustive Concordance* notes that תְּהַנֶּנּוּן derives from הִנָּן, a root which means "to show favor, be gracious."¹⁹¹ The term תְּהַנֶּנּוּן means "supplication for favor" with associated meanings of supplication (three times) and supplications (fifteen times).¹⁹² *BDB* interprets תְּהַנֶּנּוּן as a "supplication unto (crocodile to man)."¹⁹³ Fretheim notes that the nominatives תְּהַנֶּנּוּן and תְּהַנֶּנּוּן almost always refer to supplications made to humans and Yahweh.¹⁹⁴ Stoebe compares Job 40:27 [41:3] to Proverbs 18:23 by

¹⁸⁷ Boorer, 106.

¹⁸⁸ David Smith, "The Concept of Death in Job and Ecclesiastes," *Didaskalia* 4, no. 1 (Oct. 1992): 5.

¹⁸⁹ Habel, 147.

¹⁹⁰ Koehler, and Baumgartner, "תְּהַנֶּנּוּן," 1719.

¹⁹¹ *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, "הִנָּן," 1394.

¹⁹² *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, "תְּהַנֶּנּוּן," 1489.

¹⁹³ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, "תְּהַנֶּנּוּן," 337.

¹⁹⁴ Fretheim, "הִנָּן," 199. An exception is with Job 40:27 [41:3], which is the idea of supplications made by Leviathan to a person, not interhuman or divine.

indicating a synonymous parallelism between the two verses.¹⁹⁵ Yahweh never seeks favor from people; however, Job 40:27 [41:3] provides a slight indirect hint of this happening through Leviathan.¹⁹⁶ There is a comedic sense in that a crocodile would ask a person for supplication with soft and gentle words; it is even more comedic, envisioning Yahweh asking for a favor from His creation: people.¹⁹⁷ Yahweh's questions intend to force Job to realize that he depends on Yahweh. Yahweh uses irony and unanswerable questions to lead Job down this path. Thus, a crocodile supplicating to a human is ironic and unimaginable.¹⁹⁸

A different form of entreaty is encountered in Job 40:10 using the biblical Hebrew particle אָּ. It is an exhortation ("now") that, ironically, is used as a challenge in verse 10.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁵ H. Stoebe, "אָּ," in *TLOT Vol.1*, ed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 444.

¹⁹⁶ Freedman, Lundbom, and Fabry, "אָּ," 30. The concept is that if Leviathan would not ask Job for supplications, how much more will Yahweh have to ask for them.

¹⁹⁷ Pope notes the following: "We do not know of any episode in which Leviathan begs for mercy. However, in the Ugaritic myth which tells of Baal's defeat of the sea-god, the goddess Astarte does intervene on behalf of the fallen sea-god and rebukes Baal and shames him into making the Sea captive rather than completely annihilating him (cf. ANET, p. 131a)." See Pope, 333. Daniel Estes comments "If no human is able to tame Leviathan, then how could anyone, including Job, ever expect to compel Yahweh, who is even more awesome than the uncontrollable Leviathan, to act in a prescribed way?" See Daniel Estes, *Handbook on the Wisdom Books and Psalms* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 123.

¹⁹⁸ Roland Murphy, *Wisdom Literature: Job, Proverbs, Ruth, Canticles, Ecclesiastes, and Esther* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1981), 44.

¹⁹⁹ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, "אָּ," 609. *HALOT* notes that אָּ is a particle giving "emphasis." See Koehler, and Baumgartner, "אָּ," 609. The biblical Hebrew אָּ is a particle of entreaty or exhortation, which is interpreted as "I (we) pray; now." The range of meanings for אָּ are Ah (two times), beg (one time), beseech (one time), come (three times), implore (one time), may (one time), now (159 times), O (two times), O may (one time), please (181 times), pray (sixteen times). See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, "אָּ," 1431. The term אָּ is sometimes classified as an enclitic particle. Waltke and O'Connor explain that an enclitic particle is a word or element that does not carry a stress of its own and depends on the preceding word, which connects or subjoins nouns and verbs or exits on the margins of an utterance. See Waltke, and O'Connor, "enclitic" 690 and "particle" 692.

Baker and Carpenter state that נָא is a participle meaning "please, now," primarily used in a polite form for asking something. Job 40:10 is an exception.²⁰⁰ Job 40:10 is the beginning of a set of imperatives that Yahweh confronts Job with, which are commands that a person could do; however, only Yahweh can effectively perform them.²⁰¹ Yahweh is exhorting Job to take on eminence, dignity, honor, and majesty. However, these attributes describe and can only be ascribed to Yahweh.²⁰² Reyburn notes that Yahweh is exhorting Job to manifest these attributes if he can. Yahweh's tone is harsh and sarcastic towards a sickly Job.²⁰³ Newsome explains that the second divine speech refutes Job's criticism of Yahweh's governance. Therefore, Yahweh is exhorting Job to display His power; if he can, Yahweh will praise Job's victory (Job 40:9–14).²⁰⁴ Yahweh implies that Job cannot govern the universe in His moral and legal categories of right, wrong, innocent, and guilty. Job cannot do this because that is not how retributive justice works in the world or how Yahweh works.²⁰⁵

²⁰⁰ Baker, and Carpenter, "נָא," 695.

²⁰¹ Alden, 394.

²⁰² See Longman III, 440; Pope 318; Hartley, 520. The divine attributes can be additionally read in Psalms 21:5; 93:1; 96:6; 104:1.

²⁰³ Reyburn, 741.

²⁰⁴ Newsome, 248. Perdue comments that Yahweh's tone goes from questioning to commanding, commanding Job to dress in the royal garments, which express the glory of Yahweh's sovereignty in creation and history. See Perdue, 220. James Crooks calls it an "immanent fury." He states Yahweh's imperatives are "a fresh blast on the theme of human impotence." Thus, Yahweh sarcastically bellows to Job to adorn himself with majesty, dignity, honor, and eminence. See James Crooks, *We Find Ourselves Put to the Test: A Reading of the Book of Job* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2018), 131.

²⁰⁵ Boorer, 119. Habel explains that Yahweh begins with a challenge to Job to demonstrate that he has the ability to govern the earth "with an arm as glorious and might as El's [Yahweh's] by unleashing his wrath, by humbling the proud and crushing the wicked. See Habel, 558.

In this section, three forms of entreaty have been explored. In Job 6:8, it was read that Job had made a “request” for Yahweh to crush him. Job 40:27 [41:3] denotes “pleading,” or supplications made by Leviathan to Job. Finally, the enclitic particle \aleph is encountered in Job 40:10, which denotes Yahweh’s exhortation, or challenge, to Job to robe himself with Yahweh’s divine attributes. However, this is not possible. While \aleph is commonly encountered in polite addresses, a forceful emphasis is indicated in verse 10. The Book of Ruth also uses the enclitic particle \aleph . Unlike Job 40:10, the biblical author of Ruth utilizes the polite approach.

In Ruth 2:7, the concept of entreaty is revealed.²⁰⁶ In verse 7, entreaty is indicated by the biblical Hebrew \aleph , a particle of injection. Its use in verse 7 is associated with a piel cohortative. Howell explains that this construction is the same for 2:2, where Ruth politely asks to glean in the field.²⁰⁷ *HALOT* explains that \aleph is a particle giving emphasis, which means “entreaty or exhortation.”²⁰⁸ In this verse, Ruth’s use of entreaty recognizes that she is a stranger, newcomer, and poor, and the emphatic particle acknowledges her place behind everyone else in the field.²⁰⁹ Hubbard notes that the distinction between the entreaty in 2:2 and 2:7 is that the first instance declares Ruth’s intention while the second is a permissive request.²¹⁰ Ruth’s request in 2:7 indicates that she relies on Boaz’s generosity.²¹¹ While the entreaty in the Book of Ruth is not

²⁰⁶ Other instances of the entreaty concept are seen in Ruth 1:16–17, in Ruth 3 where she presents herself at the threshing floor, and indirectly by Naomi when she advises Ruth on how to approach Boaz.

²⁰⁷ Howell, 125.

²⁰⁸ Koehler, and Baumgartner, “ \aleph ,” 656; Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “ \aleph ,” 609.

²⁰⁹ Dell, *The Solomonic Corpus of ‘Wisdom’ and Its Influence*, 178.

²¹⁰ Hubbard, 147.

²¹¹ Here Ruth presents a hermeneutical imperative. If a strict adherence to the Mosaic Law is presented by Boaz, then Ruth and Naomi are destined to die. If Boaz acts generously,

seeking wisdom, per se, it is aligned with handling social justice. Specifically, how Ruth, a stranger, poor, and a widow, will survive concerning the Mosaic Law.

Inappropriate Touching— Job 31:1, 9, 10

Two Proverbial texts address the act-consequence of adultery, Proverbs 5:18–23 and 6:29–32. Adultery is a severe sin that presupposes marriage’s existence (Gen. 2:24). Therefore, adultery is a sexual behavior engaged with a third party outside of the marriage.²¹² The sexual sin can take the form of a physical act or the heart’s intent. For example, Proverbs 6:23–29 involves the eyes and imagination taking in another person’s sexual attractiveness. Adultery is an attack against Yahweh’s divine decree for a family (Gen. 2:18, 24), and it is seen as treachery (Ps. 50:18). In Ecclesiastes 7:26, Qoheleth describes a “woman whose heart is snares and nets, whose hands are chains,” and that she will capture a sinner. The Book of Job does not shy away from the topic of adultery, which is inappropriate touching.

In Job 31, Job begins a section declaring his innocence in his personal life (Job 31:1–12), towards his neighbors (Job 31:13–23), and towards Yahweh (Job 31:24–34). It is in Job 31:1 that Job states that he has not “gazed at a virgin.” The biblical Hebrew verb for “gaze” is בִּיַן. *HALOT* notes that בִּיַן conveys the sense of “behaving intelligently,” when used with עָל, it means “to look out for.”²¹³ *BDB* specifies that בִּיַן, in Job 31:1, means to “shew oneself attentive, consider

then Ruth and Naomi will live. In view of this comprehension, a social justice is at stake. See LaCocque, 66.

²¹² B. W. Powers, “Adultery,” in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. T. Alexander, and Brian Rosner (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 378.

²¹³ Koehler, and Baumgartner, “בִּיַן,” 122. The biblical Hebrew בִּיַן is a root denoting “to discern.” The term has a wide semantic range, which involves the notions of discerning, caring, and understanding. See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, “בִּיַן,” 1369.

diligently.”²¹⁴ Ringgren notes that the hithpael form of בִּיץ generally means "to consider diligently; to closely watch." Therefore, in Job 31:1, Job avoids “closely watching” a virgin.²¹⁵ The crimes and offenses that Job specifies in Job 31 generate sins against other people. Thus, in Job 31:1, the Seventh and Tenth Commandments are in view because they pertain to avoiding committing adultery and coveting the neighbor’s wife.²¹⁶ Job expands the law by including the prohibition of casting his eyes longingly at an unmarried woman, “a covenant with my eyes.” Thus, Job is stating that he has made a moral decision not to lustfully gaze upon a virgin, which would lead to sexual desires.

A brief discussion about the identity of the בְּתוּלָה in 31:1 is necessary because it has a bearing on the context. Traditionally, בְּתוּלָה is comprehended as a “virgin.” *HALOT* notes that בְּתוּלָה denotes “virgins as a bride’s companions.”²¹⁷ *BDB* states that בְּתוּלָה is “one living apart in

²¹⁴ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “בִּיץ,” 107.

²¹⁵ Helmer Ringgren, “בִּיץ,” in *TDOT Vol. 2*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David Green (Grand Rapids.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 103. H. Schmid states that בִּיץ means “to inspect carefully” in Job 31:1. See H. Schmid, “בִּיץ,” in *TLOT Vol. 1*, ed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 231. In the OT, it was believed that the eyes were a gateway to the heart. Therefore, Job’s refusal to gaze longingly at a virgin reveals his cognizance and obedience of Yahweh’s commandments. See Hartley, 409.

²¹⁶ Konkel, 187. Sexual relations should be confined to the context of marriage, anything less is a violation against a woman and Yahweh. Clines remarks that Job “so rigorously repressed an impulse that could just possibly lead to sin, how much more would he have been careful to avoid any deliberate act of wrongdoing.” See Clines, *WBC Vol. 18a*, 1015. However, Walton and Vizcaino counter by stating that Job’s “statement concerns the acquisition of a harem. A large harem was an indicator of power and status in the ancient world. Job eschews amassing multiple wives and concubines, and he characterizes this decision as a covenant regarding his eyes in order to underscore the point that he is not even “on the prowl.”” See Walton, and Vizcaino, 323.

²¹⁷ Koehler, and Baumgartner, “בְּתוּלָה,” 167.

her father's house as a virgin."²¹⁸ John Walton suggests that בְּתוּלָה is better understood as a married woman; otherwise, the passage would be difficult to comprehend in a polygamous society.²¹⁹ The suggestion for rendering בְּתוּלָה as a "maid" is based on the notion that it would be foolish to look upon an unmarried maiden.²²⁰ However, Anthony Ceresko comprehended בְּתוּלָה through the use of ANE literature, specifically Ugaritic texts, *The Babylonian Theodicy*, and George Jeshurun's studies. The significance of Ceresko's research is that the identity of בְּתוּלָה pertains to idolatry. In this case, בְּתוּלָה is the Virgin Anat.²²¹ Therefore, inappropriate touching conveys a sense of idolatry, which violates the First and Second Commandments (Exod. 20:3–4). However, Clines disagrees that the biblical author had the Virgin Anat in mind for 31:1. He contends that verse 1 does not lend itself to the topics of legitimate and illegitimate worship.²²² Job 31:1, in the context of Job's oath of innocence, is better comprehended in sexual ethics. The violation of a virgin is an offense to the girl's father and is a destabilizing factor in the community. Therefore, Job is stating that he has not entertained the notion by making a covenant

²¹⁸ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, "בְּתוּלָה," 144.

²¹⁹ John Walton, "בְּתוּלָה," in *NIDOTTE Vol. 1*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 767. The traditional rendering for בְּתוּלָה is based on Hebrew grammar and lexicography. The problem with the traditional approach is that in Jewish society it was not unlawful to regard a woman's beauty. Besides, a woman's beauty was a blessing from Yahweh, and it would have been hard for Job, as a judge, not to listen or look on the person in front of him. Therefore, בְּתוּלָה is interpreted as "maid, maiden." See Walter Michel, "BTWLH, "Virgin" or "Virgin (ANAT)" in Job 31:1," *Hebrew Studies* 23 (1982): 59–60.

²²⁰ Jan Bergman, Helmer Ringgren, and M. Tsevat, "בְּתוּלָה," in *TDOT Vol. 2*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David Green (Grand Rapids.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 341.

²²¹ Anthony Ceresko, *Job 29–31 in the Light of Northwest Semitic* (Rome: Gregorian & Biblical Press, 1980), 104. According to the Northwest Semitic approach, Job states that he has not committed idolatry by gazing upon the Virgin Anat. See George Jeshurun, "A Note on Job XXX:1 [XXXI:1]," *Journal of the Society of Oriental Research* 12 (1928): 153; Michel, 63.

²²² Clines, *WBC Vol. 18a*, 1015.

with his eyes to not gaze upon a virgin.²²³ Regardless of whether adultery or idolatry is referenced in 31:1, both deal with forsaking Yahweh's commandments and are reflections of the heart through the eyes.

In Job 31:9, inappropriate touching is denoted by the biblical Hebrew verb פתה. *HALOT* states that the niph'al form of פתה means "let oneself be deceived, let oneself be taken for a fool."²²⁴ *BDB* adds the additional meaning of "be enticed."²²⁵ The idea of sexual immorality attached to פתה is revealed when the biblical author states that a man is a "fool" for lusting after his neighbor's wife ("lurked at my neighbor's door"). Therefore, פתה reflects the heart's inability to reason and make intelligent decisions.²²⁶ Job escalates the idea of 31:1 by going from lustful gazing to a sexual act in 31:9.²²⁷ Longing for another's spouse is a destructive power like the fires of hell that destroys the basis for human development, specifically the destruction of the

²²³ Samuel Balentine, *Job* (Macon: Smyth & Helwys Pub., 2006), 479.

²²⁴ Koehler, and Baumgartner, "פתה," 984.

²²⁵ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, "פתה," 834. Baker and Carpenter state a person is being enticed or deceived into something. See Baker, and Carpenter, "פתה," 929. The biblical Hebrew פתה is a denominative verb stemming from פָּתַח meaning "simple; open-minded." See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, "פָּתַח," 1458. The term פתה can mean allure (one time), became...enticed (one time), deceive (two times), deceived (five times), entice (nine times), enticed (one time), entices (one time), persuaded (one time), prevailed (two times), seduces (one time), silly (one time), simple (one time). See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, "פתה," 1458. Alden notes that other meanings include "tempted," "lured," and "ravished." See Alden, 301.

²²⁶ R. Mosis, "פתה," in *TDOT Vol. 12*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David Green (Grand Rapids.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 169.

²²⁷ Longman III, 359. He states, "Job denies sleeping with another man's wife and considers just how horrible an act it is to betray a friend by sleeping with his wife. Sleeping with another man's wife, especially a friend's, is so bad that it would result in horrible consequences." *Ibid.*

family.²²⁸ Job's oaths of innocence involved his eyes in 31:1 and now his heart in 31:9. Job is expressing that what his eyes see and the intentions, judgments, and thoughts that stem from the visions are components of his moral self for which he is responsible. Therefore, he is taking all possible precautions against tarnishing his morality.²²⁹ Michael Dick comments that Job's oaths of innocence in Job 31:1 and 9 are indicative of wisdom ethics rather than legality; preferred wisdom involves correct sexual ethics.²³⁰ The force of Job's vehemence is indicated by the consequence he is willing to endure if his neighbor's wife entices him in Job 31:10.

In Job 31:10, Job states that if he is guilty of adultery, then he willingly will give his wife to another man. The *NASB* uses "grind," which is denoted by the biblical Hebrew verb גרס. The verb גרס, in this context, carries an adulterous sense. *HALOT* notes that גרס means "to be slept

²²⁸ Konkel, 187. While adultery is a violation of the marriage covenant, it has devastating effects on a neighbor's trust. See Hartley, 412. Reyburn explains "the thought here is of the male adulterer who watches for the opportunity to sin with his neighbor's wife. Lain in wait is the same expression used in Proverbs 7:12, where, however, it is the woman waiting for the man. This is a military expression and is used in reference to setting up an ambush; that is, hiding to take someone by surprise." See Reyburn, 566.

²²⁹ Patricia Vesely, "The Physicality of Virtue in Job 31: The Use of Bodily Terms in Job's Depiction of Moral Integrity," *JTS* 73, no. 1 (2022): 11–12. The pairing of the eyes in verse 1 and the heart in verse 9 indicates Job's character regarding the treatment of women. He maintains control over what his eyes sees and guards his heart against misguided perceptions. The active control reveals his resolve to not engage in destructive behaviors towards others and himself. *Ibid.*, 14. Musa remarks that with Job guarding his eyes and heart, he cannot be enticed by a sensual woman, desire a young woman of marriageable age, or his neighbor's wife. For Job, adultery is a ethical evil that results in destruction. See Musa, 113.

²³⁰ Michael Dick, "Job 31, the Oath of Innocence, and the Sage," *Zeitschrift Für Die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 95, no. 1 (1983): 49.

with.”²³¹ Clines notes that טָהַן means “be subjected to sexual intercourse.”²³² While טָהַן may refer to the lowest form of enslavement, it is a euphemism for sexual intercourse. The euphemism is comprehended considering the context, which includes Job 31:1 and 9.²³³ Thus, Job is theoretically stating that if he is guilty of adultery, then he is willing to endure the shame caused by his wife sleeping with another man.²³⁴ The brevity of the self-incurred punishment reveals that a wife is closely identified with her husband in Israel. Therefore, if the husband disgraces his wife through adultery, then “his disgrace is as great as hers for letting this grave injustice happen to her.”²³⁵ In Jeremiah 8:10, Yahweh promises to the men that He will give their wives to other men as a punishment for their sins, thus humiliating the husband’s honor and the glory of the wives.²³⁶

²³¹ Koehler, and Baumgartner, “טָהַן,” 374. *BDB*; however, prefers the “slave” focus by stating that טָהַן means “serve him as his slave.” Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “טָהַן,” 377. See also Baker, and Carpenter, “טָהַן,” 402. *NASB Exhaustive Concordance* notes that טָהַן is a root meaning “to grind.” The range of meanings include grind (three times), grinder (one time), grinding (three times), ground (one time). See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, “טָהַן,” 1399. Cornelius Van Dam states that טָהַן is associated with the grinding task performed by slaves and was a source of humiliation (Judg. 16:21). See Cornelius Van Dam, “טָהַן,” in *NIDOTTE Vol. 2*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 354.

²³² David Clines, *The Concise Dictionary of Classical Hebrew* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2009), 141.

²³³ Andersen, 261. “The verb “grind” (*ṭhn*) indicates the motion of the hips in the act of sexual intercourse. The position of kneeling indicates that the man would be on top of her. There may be a double entendre here in that it would be bad enough for his wife to become a menial servant of another man, but the sexual context certainly implies more than that she will grind grain for another.” See Longman III, 359 note 21.

²³⁴ Goldingay, 148. The idea that a sin of adultery should result in retributive punishment against one’s wife is evident also in Deut. 28:30 and 2 Sam. 12:11.

²³⁵ Hartley, 413. Clines states that a wife, who is a sufferer of her husband’s adulterous affair, should bear the greater punishment by being given to another man submissively. See Clines, *WBC Vol. 18a*, 1017; S. Driver, and George Gray, *ICC: Job*, latest impression (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1986), 264.

²³⁶ Musa, 112.

The topic of inappropriate touching, or sexual immorality, is revealed in the Book of Job, especially in Job 31. In Job 31:1, it is not the physical, but the mental realm of sexual immorality exposed. Job states that he has made a covenant with his eyes to not lustfully gaze at a virgin, which would lead to sinful desires. Job 31:9 reflects on the physical realm by noting that immoral intentions of the heart lead to ambushing the neighbor's wife for sexual intercourse: adultery. Finally, Job vows that if he is guilty of adultery, then he is willing to submit his wife to the lowest form of enslavement, which includes sexual relations outside the marriage. Fearing Yahweh is the beginning of wisdom; thus, obeying the Decalogue is a moral and righteous response to Yahweh, which Job alludes to in Job 31:1–12. The Book of Ruth implicitly touches on inappropriate touching.

In Ruth 2:9, Boaz tells Ruth that he has commanded the servants not to touch her. The crucial word in this verse is נגַג ("touch, reach, strike").²³⁷ Michael Grisanti notes that נגַג occurs 150 times in the OT, with 107 of those occurrences in the qal form,²³⁸ meaning to touch by some form of physical contact. However, Grisanti explains that in Ruth 2, Boaz is more concerned with emotional and physical abuse than sexual misconduct.²³⁹ Due to Ruth's status as a foreigner,

²³⁷ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, "נגַג," 619.

²³⁸ Michael Grisanti, "נגַג," in *NIDOTTE Vol. 3*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 22. The *NASB Exhaustive Concordance* lists נגַג to mean add (one time), afford (one time), apply (one time), arrive (one time), arrived (four times), attained (one time), attains (one time), bring down (one time), brought down (one time), came (six times), cast (one time), casts (one time), close (two times), come (two times), draw near (one time), drawn near (one time), drew near (one time), follows (one time), happened (one time), happens (two times), plagued (one time), pretended to be beaten (one time), reach (four times), reached (six times), reaching (one time), smitten (one time), stricken (two times), strike (one time), strikes (one time), struck (three times), threw (one time), touch (twenty-two times), touched (twenty times), touches (forty-six times), touching (six times). See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, "נגַג," 1432. As seen, the idea of 'touching' is the prominent meaning for נגַג, occurring ninety-four times.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*, 23.

poor, and a widow, the young servants in the field would probably have been attracted to her. Because she is a widow, a sexual act between the young men and Ruth would not be considered as serious as an adulterous affair (Lev. 20:10; Deut. 22:22) or a sexual misconduct against a virgin (Ex. 22:16; Deut. 22:28–29).²⁴⁰ Therefore, Boaz’s command would ensure that Ruth could glean the field without fearing unwanted advances. De Waard and Nida have gone as far as to indicate that Boaz’s command to the servants was not to molest Ruth.²⁴¹ Hubbard tempers the situation by commenting that Boaz’s command in 2:9 is an intention to the actual command given in 2:15–16. Therefore, *נגע* in verse 9 means to bother, treat roughly, or rough up.²⁴² Bush remarks that *נגע* means to molest, trouble, or interfere. He points to 2 Samuel 4:10 and Jeremiah 12:14 to indicate how *נגע* is to be used in the Ruthan context.²⁴³ Whether Boaz’s command was to derail sexual misconduct or physical harm is debatable; however, both are inappropriate touching that is not tolerated.

In Ruth 2:22, Naomi advises Ruth to follow Boaz’s maids into the other field so she would not be bothered. In this verse, the biblical Hebrew verb *פגע* is used. *HALOT* explains that *פגע* means to "fall upon someone with the intent to molest a woman."²⁴⁴ The term *פגע* has a range of potential meanings.²⁴⁵ However, Grisanti comments that when *פגע* is used in conjunction with

²⁴⁰ LaCocque, 68.

²⁴¹ De Waard, and Nida, 30.

²⁴² Hubbard, Jr., *Ruth*, 159. He explains that it might have been a common practice to physically subdue a gleaner who has overstepped the boundary by interfering with the reaper’s work. Therefore, since Boaz is being generous to Ruth by allowing her to glean more than normal, the command would ensure her protection from the reapers.

²⁴³ Bush, 122.

²⁴⁴ Koehler, and Baumgartner, “פגע,” 910.

²⁴⁵ The *NASB Exhaustive Concordance* lists the probable meanings for *פגע*: approach (one time), attack (two times), attacked (one time), came (one time), cut him down (one time),

קָ, it signifies an intentional encounter to kill someone or have the intent to kill someone.²⁴⁶ De Waard and Nida comment that in this context (Ruth 2:22), פָּגַע, which generally means to “meet,” is used negatively to denote a hostile meeting with the intent of molesting or harming a person.²⁴⁷

True Reward— Job 42:10–17

Job 42:10–17 is part of the epilogue of the Book of Job. These verses indicate Yahweh’s restoration of Job, including family, possessions, and longevity. This restoration is in response to Job’s revelation that he had been tested by Yahweh, his integrity proven, and his faith deepened. Therefore, Yahweh’s last act in the Book of Job is to bless Job due to his tested and proven faith.²⁴⁸

In Job 42:10, the biblical author states that Yahweh restored Job’s fortunes. The biblical Hebrew term שׁוּב is used to denote "restore." *HALOT* comprehends the qal שׁוּב as “to regain one’s previous position,” like Ezekiel 16:55 and Exodus 4:7.²⁴⁹ *BDB* notes that שׁוּב conveys the

entreat (two times), fall (seven times), fell (four times), happen (one time), intercede (two times), interceded (one time), kill (one time), make supplication (one time), meet (three times), meets (three times), met (two times), pleaded (one time), reached (six times), spare (one time), strike the mark (one time), touched (one time), touched and reached (one time), urge (one time). See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, “פָּגַע,” 1453.

²⁴⁶ Michael Grisanti, “פָּגַע,” in *NIDOTTE Vol. 3*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 572.

²⁴⁷ De Waard, and Nida, 43.

²⁴⁸ Andrew Prideaux, “Job 42:7–17, and the God of the Happy Ending,” *The Reformed Theological Review* 71, no. 3 (Dec. 2012): 172–3. Sihun Jang comments that the twofold restoration in Job 42 is seen either as something other than the traditional logic of divine retribution or a declaration of repentance. He concurs that both perceptions involve Yahweh’s grace, compensation, or rewards. See Sihun Jang, “A Study on the Twofold Restoration in the Epilogue of Job (42:7–17),” *Korean Journal of Christian Studies* 113 (2019): 41–2. See also Longman III, 460; Hartley, 540; David Clines, *WBC Vol. 18b: Job 38–42* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 1207–11; Fox, 17; Balentine, *Job*, 715.

²⁴⁹ Koehler, and Baumgartner, “שׁוּב,” 1430.

sense of “returning to a physical condition.”²⁵⁰ J. Soggin suggests that שׁוֹב denotes “to turn fate, bring about a change.”²⁵¹ Yahweh’s restoration of Job’s fortunes is not a repayment of wrongs done by Yahweh but gifts given by grace.²⁵² Andersen notes that Job’s vindication is visible, material, and historical; it is not a hidden reconciliation.²⁵³ E. Dietrich comprehends שׁוֹב as “that שׁוֹב שׁוֹב properly means “render a restoration,” which suits the present context, and that in some prophetic passages, שׁוֹב was confused with שׁבִּיחַ “captivity.”²⁵⁴ However, the restoration of fortunes can be read as “turned the captivity.” The problem with a literal reading is that Job 42:10 has nothing to do with being in exile or captivity, and the concept of captivity is commonly applied to a nation and not to an individual.²⁵⁵ A potential problem with reading about Job’s restoration is that it does not mention his health. His assets are restored, but not his

²⁵⁰ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “שׁוֹב,” 997. Clines remarks that שׁוֹב means “to be restored to a former state (Ezek. 16:55). See Clines, “שׁוֹב,” 451.

²⁵¹ J. Soggin, “שׁוֹב,” in *TLOT Vol.3*, ed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 1314. Baker and Carpenter explain that שׁוֹב is used over one thousand times with various meanings among the four stems (qal, piel, hithpaal, and hophal). In the qal, שׁוֹב involves divine and human reactions, attitudes, and feelings. In its simplest sense, שׁוֹב means “to restore.” See Baker, and Carpenter, “שׁוֹב,” 1108.

²⁵² Fox argues that the restoration of fortunes is not a reward or a gift of free grace, but instead a payment of reparation. See Fox, 17. Konkel counters by commenting that Job’s restoration is based on divine graciousness. It is not a reward based on ethical obligation. See Konkel, 241.

²⁵³ Andersen, 317.

²⁵⁴ E. Dietrich, “שׁוֹב שׁוֹב: Die endzeitliche Wiederherstellung bei den Propheten,” *BZAW* 40 (1925): 32–37. See also Clines, *WBC Vol. 18b*, 1228. Interestingly, André LaCocque comments that in the epilogue, Job’s intercession on his friend’s behalf has elevated him to a prophet status. The promotion of Job to a prophet is his “reward” from Yahweh because he has spoken correctly about Yahweh and his words reflects Yahweh’s words. Prophets as intercessors can be found in Gen. 20:7; Exod. 32:11; 34:8–9; Num. 14:13–19; 21:7; 1 Sam. 7:5, 8; 12:19, 23; Amos 7:2; Jer. 7:26; 37:3; 42:2. See André LaCocque, “Justice for the Innocent Job,” *Biblical Interpretation* 19, no. 1 (2011): 30. Hartley contends that Job’s reward is based on the spiritual principle “that in giving one receives and in forgiving one is forgiven.” See Hartley, 540.

²⁵⁵ Reyburn, 776.

physical ailment.²⁵⁶ It can be implied that Job's physical restoration is a part of his overall restoration. In the context of Job 42:10, נְשַׁבְּרָתָהּ conveys the sense of "restore the fortunes of" or "bring about a restoration."²⁵⁷ Job's restoration is not only to a pre-suffering setting; Yahweh "increased all that Job had twofold."

The biblical Hebrew term for "increase" is נָסַף.²⁵⁸ Andrew Hill explains that the hithpael stem of נָסַף without an object expresses an increase in size or number.²⁵⁹ Proverbs 10:22 states that a person cannot increase their wealth but only by Yahweh's blessings. Therefore, after Job humbled himself to Yahweh, He blessed him by increasing his possessions.²⁶⁰ The twofold increase in Job's possessions reveals that Yahweh abundantly and freely blesses Job. While Yahweh permitted Job to suffer, He brought him back to his life in time. Therefore, Yahweh's increase reflects His complete acceptance of Job.²⁶¹ The epilogue highlights a central truth about

²⁵⁶ Philippe Guillaume explains that wealth is restored, family and possessions are doubled. However, health is not so easily recovered. The epilogue does not explicitly state the restoration of Job's health due to Satan's second assault. The contention is that Job was not healed, and the scars served as "a thorn in his flesh." See Philippe Guillaume, "Dismantling the Destruction of Job," *JBL* 127, no. 3 (2008): 493.

²⁵⁷ Thompson, and Martens, "נָשַׁבְּרָתָהּ," 59. LaCocque explains that the expression נְשַׁבְּרָתָהּ [נְשַׁבְּרָתָהּ] implies a complete reversal of fortune (physical and material). See LaCocque, "Justice for the Innocent Job," 31; Deut. 30:3; Jer. 20:14; Ezek. 16:53; 29:14; Isa. 53:10–12.

²⁵⁸ For the various meanings of נָסַף, see *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, "נָסַף," 1404.

²⁵⁹ Andrew Hill, "נָסַף," in *NIDOTTE Vol. 2*, ed. Willem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 469.

²⁶⁰ G. André, "נָסַף," in *TDOT Vol. 6*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David Green (Grand Rapids.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 124.

²⁶¹ Hartley, 540. Walton and Vizcaino explain that Job's prosperity is not a mechanical, automatic, or obligation by Yahweh; however, it is Yahweh's pleasure to abundantly restore Job. See Walton, and Vizcaino, 436. However, Crenshaw states, "The curious doubling of Job's possessions (and children in the Septuagint) indicts *Yahweh*, who pays the customary price of a convicted criminal." See Crenshaw, 108.

Yahwistic faith: fearing Yahweh leads to an abundant life. Job's restoration and increase are not due to his faithful bearing or suffering. However, it is a blessing from Yahweh, the giver of life.²⁶²

True reward is realized by how a person lives their life: morally, ethically, and according to Yahweh's standards. Proverbs 11:18 and 13:21 touch on retributive theology by teaching how the righteous are rewarded and the wicked are punished. In Proverbs 3:13–18, it is noted how wisdom is more valuable than silver and precious jewels. In the Book of Job, Job's true reward comes from his restoration by Yahweh (Job 42:10–17). In Ecclesiastes, Qohelet deals with the existential perspective by contesting the concept that the righteous are rewarded and the wicked punished (Eccl. 9:11; 8:14). The conclusion reached by Qohelet (Eccl. 2:13) is that the true reward gained from wisdom is realizing order in a chaotic world. True reward is revealed through Boaz's entreaty to Yahweh in the Book of Ruth.

In Ruth 2:12, Boaz entreats Yahweh to reward Ruth for her loyalty to Naomi, which includes leaving her homeland and forsaking the Moabite religion. He asks Yahweh to provide for and protect her. In verse 12, *שָׁלַם* is used to denote "recompense, reward."²⁶³ Specifically,

²⁶² Hartley, 544; Konkel, 242. Goldingay notes that people who honor Yahweh, Yahweh will honor them. Therefore, submission to Yahweh is insight and turning from evil is comprehension. See Goldingay, 209.

²⁶³ Koehler, and Baumgartner, "שָׁלַם," 1535. The term *שָׁלַם* can mean completed (one time), finished (three times), fulfill (one time), fully repay (one time), make (two times), make an end (two times), make it good (two times), make full restitution (one time), make restitution (nine times), over (one time), paid (one time), pay (nineteen times), pay back (one time), paying (one time), pays (one time), pays back (one time), perform (two times), performed (one time), performing (one time), performs (one time), present (one time), recompense (three times), recompenses (one time), render (two times), rendering (two times), repaid (three times), repay (nineteen times), repays (three times), restore (two times), reward (three times), rewarded (three times), surely make restitution (two times), surely pay (one time), without harm (one time). See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, "שָׁלַם," 1482.

Boaz asks Yahweh to double reward her because of her devotion to Naomi. Another instance of the piel imperfect form of שָׁלַם revealing double payment is in Jeremiah 16:18, where Yahweh states that Judah's iniquity will be doubly repaid because of their sin. Philip Nel notes that the piel form of שָׁלַם does not necessarily indicate a legal usage²⁶⁴ but can involve a larger comprehensive concept. The piel form of שָׁלַם is emphasized in the Covenant Code (Ex. 20:22–23:19), which deals with civil compensation and criminal rulings. K.-J. Illman states, “The Covenant Code uses the piel as a technical term in a series of legal precepts. These are formulated casuistically, with one or more conditional clauses followed by an apodosis stating what punishment entailed. The *šlm* forms appear in the apodosis describing the punishment or the restitution to be made.”²⁶⁵ Its twofold usage can be either positive (1 Sam. 24:20) or negative (Deut. 32:41). In Ruth 2:12, the shift in verbal usage of שָׁלַם indicates that deeds and behavior should be rewarded.²⁶⁶ LaCocque comments that the use of שָׁלַם and שָׁלַם indicates that it marks fullness.²⁶⁷ In the Book of Ruth, this reward concept is solidified through Ruth's familial devotion to Naomi, which included Ruth forsaking her homeland and religion to embrace Israel

²⁶⁴ Philip Nel comments, “The verb שָׁלַם with Yahweh as subject is also used in a positive sense when referring to his reward/recompense of good deeds (1 Sam 24:20; Prov 13:21; 25:22).” See Philip Nel, “שָׁלַם,” in *NIDOTTE Vol. 4*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 130–1.

²⁶⁵ K.-J. Illman, “שָׁלַם,” in *TDOT Vol. 15*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David Green (Grand Rapids.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 99.

²⁶⁶ G. Gerleman, “שָׁלַם,” in *TLOT Vol.3*, ed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 1341. When Yahweh is the subject and good deeds or behaviors are involved, the piel שָׁלַם is used to indicate a positive sense that reflects reward or recompense (Prov. 13:21; 19:17; 25:22). See Nel, “שָׁלַם,” 131.

²⁶⁷ LaCocque, *CC: Ruth*, 73.

and Yahweh. Her devotion is further realized through her hard work to provide for Naomi and herself.

Humility— Job 22:29; 42:1–6

Wisdom Literature frequently contrasts the proud with the humble (Prov. 16:19; 29:23). People who are exploited or afflicted are placed in a lowly, humbled state (Lev. 19:10; 23:22). Israel’s afflictions in the wilderness were designed to humble them before Yahweh (Deut. 8:2–5). Yahweh uses life’s trials to bring a person to humility (Pss. 69:32–33; 119:67, 71, 75, 92), who learn to depend on Him, who comforts them (Ps. 22:24; Prov. 22:4).²⁶⁸ In the Book of Job, humility is indicated in 22:29 and 42:1–6.

In Job 22:29 (Eliphaz’s third speech), Eliphaz correctly states that Yahweh will save the humble person. The biblical Hebrew verbal adjective כַּשֵׁ is used to describe a person who is “bowed, stooped.”²⁶⁹ *BDB* specifies כַּשֵׁ as “lowly of eyes, humble.”²⁷⁰ *NASB Exhaustive Concordance* notes that “humble” in 22:29 is represented by כַּשֵׁ and by עַי .²⁷¹ F. Stendebach explains that עַי can reflect an inward state: the “soul” reveals itself in the face and expressions.

²⁶⁸ D. Searle, “Humility, Pride,” in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. T. Alexander, and Brian Rosner (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 567–8.

²⁶⁹ Koehler, and Baumgartner, “ כַּשֵׁ ,” 1456.

²⁷⁰ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “ כַּשֵׁ ,” 1006. The term כַּשֵׁ refers to a person who is not proud, overly self-assertive, possibly low in rank, does not flaunt their abilities or achievements in front of others, and is lowly and meek before Yahweh. See Baker, and Carpenter, “ כַּשֵׁ ,” 1118.

²⁷¹ The biblical Hebrew כַּשֵׁ is derived from the root כַּש meaning “to bow, be bowed down, crouch.” See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, “ כַּש ,” 1479. The term כַּשֵׁ conveys the sense of “low, lowly” as in a humble person (one time). See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, “ כַּשֵׁ ,” 1478. The term עַי is an unclear derivative meaning “an eye.” Of the various meanings, עַי can denote a “humble person.” See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, “ עַי ,” 1446.

Therefore, when עַי is used with חַשׁ in Job 22:29, it denotes “eyes are a sign of humility.”²⁷²The biblical Hebrew phrase חַשׁ עֵינָיִם is attested only once in construct, conveying the sense that Yahweh is saving the “downcast (low [with respect to] eyes. This construction is called an epexegetical genitive.²⁷³ Eliphaz insists that Job’s failing is his pride, and he must cultivate humility to accept Yahweh’s instruction.²⁷⁴ At play is Eliphaz, who is using the doctrine of horizontal responsibility. According to the doctrine, a person’s righteousness will bring about good and prevent disaster.²⁷⁵ Reyburn comments that Yahweh is the subject of the active verb abases and translates line 29a as “God humbles the proud,” which is clearly in contrast to, but he saves the lowly.²⁷⁶ Eliphaz’s error is that he assumes that the source of Job’s suffering is sin. Thus, he is forcing Job to repent for a wrongdoing that has not been committed. A call for repentance is powerless when the person offering it harbors misconceptions and incorrect motivations.²⁷⁷

²⁷² F. Stendebach, “עַי,” in *TDOT Vol. 11*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David Green (Grand Rapids.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 34.

²⁷³ Gary Long, “חַשׁ,” in *NIDOTTE Vol. 4*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 77. An epexegetical genitive is a phrase where a word functions as glossing or clarifying immediately preceding material. In this case, “the epexegetical genitive, wherein G is characterized by C. Many epexegetical phrases can be rendered by English of-genitives; note the phrase ‘hard of heart,’ cf. ‘hard-hearted.’ The sense can also be conveyed by the gloss ‘as to’ or ‘with regard to,’ for example, ‘stiff with regard to their necks’; this is the meaning of the term “epexegetical.”” See Waltke, and O’Connor, 151.

²⁷⁴ Clines, *WBC Vol. 18a*, 567.

²⁷⁵ Konkel, 150. An example is Abraham’s use of this doctrine in Gen. 18:17–33 when he pleaded for Sodom.

²⁷⁶ Reyburn, 428. He states that there are two possible interpretations for Job 22:29: (a) “When they are brought low, you will say: ‘restoration’ and He (Yahweh) will save (the man with) lowered eyes”; and (b) “When they are brought low, you will say: ‘(it is because of) pride,’ but (the man with) lowered eyes He (that is, Yahweh) saves.”

²⁷⁷ Hartley, 335. The irony of the situation is that Job has not sinned and is not being punished. However, in Job 42, it is Job who intercedes on his friend’s (Eliphaz, Bildad, and

While Job 42:1–6 does not explicitly mention humility, the virtue is inferred through Job’s response to Yahweh’s speeches. Job repents his pride and rebellion to find contentment in Yahweh’s fellowship. His confession reveals humility in that he knows nothing (42:3) in his desire to be instructed by Yahweh (42:4) and his ability to see Him (42:5). The strongest indicator of humility is reflected in 42:6, where Job states, “I repent²⁷⁸ in dust and ashes,” which is a sign of humbling.²⁷⁹ The biblical Hebrew term **דָּנַנְתִּי** is the center of a dispute concerning its intended meaning in verse 6. *HALOT* notes that it means “to reject what one has said previously, revoke.”²⁸⁰ *BDB* renders **דָּנַנְתִּי** as “despise.”²⁸¹ However, there is a secondary and rare use of **דָּנַנְתִּי**

Zophar) behalf for speaking incorrectly about Yahweh and angering Him. See also Julius Moster, “The Punishment of Job’s Friends,” *Jewish Bible Quarterly* 25, no. 4 (Oct. 1997): 214.

²⁷⁸ Clines explains that “submit” is a better rendering for **דָּנַנְתִּי** in verse 6 instead of “retract.” See Clines, *WBC Vol. 18b*, 1207. See also William Morrow, “Consolation, Rejection, and Repentance in Job 42:6,” *JBL* 105 (1986): 214–5. Walton and Vizcaino contend that the Job’s phrase (verse 6a) goes beyond humility and is a form of self-abasement. Thus, he is deeply ashamed of himself for challenging Yahweh. See Walton, and Vizcaino, 431. However, Pope suggests that what Job now despises, refuses, rejects is his former attitude and utterances. The verb **דָּנַנְתִּי** is not used of self-loathing. See Pope, 348.

²⁷⁹ Konkel, 238. He states, “Job had now found wisdom, which led him to repentance and submission before *Yahweh*. He now understood that he could not dictate to the Creator what is just and right for his life.” *Ibid.*, 239. Goldingay notes that “dirt and ashes” in the OT refers to human feebleness and mortality. See Goldingay, 207.

²⁸⁰ Koehler, and Baumgartner, “מָאָס,” 540. Perdue notes that **מָאָס** “to reject” is retained as a transitive verb with the hendiadys **עָפָר וְאֵשׁ** (“dust and ashes”) as the direct object. See Perdue, 232. He additionally notes that “מָאָס is an active, not reflexive, form, and therefore cannot mean ‘I despise myself’. Without a direct object the verb means ‘to protest’ (Job 7:16; 34:33; and 36:5). With a direct object, as is the case here (‘dust and ashes’), the verb means to ‘despise’ (Amos 5:21; Job 19:18; Prov. 15:32) or ‘reject’ (Hos. 4:6; 9:17; 1 Sam. 15:23, 26; Jer. 7:29).” *Ibid.*, 237.

²⁸¹ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “מָאָס,” 549. The biblical Hebrew **מָאָס** is a root word meaning “to reject.” The range of meanings include: abhorred (one time), cast them away (one time), cast away (one time), cast off (two times), completely rejected (one time), despise (six times), despised (four times), despises (two times), despising (one time), disdained (one time), refuse (two times), reject (eight times), rejected (thirty-seven times), rejects (one time), reprobate (one time), retract (one time), utterly rejected (one time), waste away (one time). See *NASB*

denoting "to flow, run."²⁸² Morrow suggests that the biblical author is using a double entendre based on **סאמ** (common usage) and **סאמ** (rare usage).²⁸³ Therefore, **סאמ** is used as a metaphor for capitulation or retreat; hence, "I submit." This rare usage for **סאמ** can be inferred from Proverbs 15:32, "The wise (or pious) one knows that life can be successful (or blessed) only if it remains nestled in the established order; consequently, he/she does not cast "reproof" to the wind but regards himself/herself with appropriate humility."²⁸⁴ In Wisdom Literature, thirteen occurrences (eleven in Job and twice in Proverbs) exhort the acceptance of one thing and the rejection of another.²⁸⁵ Andersen cautions not to attach modern conventions to the word "repent" because it is not being used as a penitence for sins in 42:6. In this verse, Job is making a humble plea.²⁸⁶

Exhaustive Concordance, "מאס," 1416. See also Eugene Merrill, "מאס," in *NIDOTTE Vol. 2*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 827.

²⁸² The term **סאמ** denoting "to flow, run" is used in this manner in Ps. 58:7 [8], where David prays that the wicked will melt and flow away like a river. See Baker, and Carpenter, "מאס," 562. The biblical Hebrew **סאמ** is the same root word for **סאמ**; however, in this sense it means flow (one time), runs (one time). See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, "מאס," 1416. Clines suggests that **סאמ** means "waste away." See Clines, "סאמ," 200.

²⁸³ Morrow, 215. "Wherefore I retract (*or* I submit) and I repent (*or* on account of) dust and ashes." *Ibid.*, 217.

²⁸⁴ H. Wildberger, "מאס," in *TLOT Vol.2*, ed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 654.

²⁸⁵ Siegfried Wagner, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, "מאס," in *TDOT Vol. 8*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David Green (Grand Rapids.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 47. "Subdued by *Yahweh*, Job confesses guilt and repents in dust and ashes, renounces his previous rebellious, accusatory, and judgmental attitude toward *Yahweh*, and "despises himself" ('*al-kēn 'em 'as*). Here (in a completely singular fashion) **סאמ** functions as a term for penitence and is given a positive estimation." *Ibid.*, 54.

²⁸⁶ Andersen, 315. Guillaume asks, "What is he repenting about?" Job's answers are to unclear to sustain the notion of repentance. See Guillaume, 495. Paul Goldin comments that Job is more in awe than in a reformed state of mind. See Paul Goldin, "Job's Transgressions," *ZAW* 108 (1996): 389.

In Job 1:8, the biblical author states that Job fears Yahweh. Therefore, Job's response in 42:1–6 reaffirms his proper response to Yahweh. Because of his fear of Yahweh, Job becomes silent, submissive, and still willing to remain in a righteous relationship with Yahweh through worship amid suffering.²⁸⁷ Fearing Yahweh is partly shown by being humble. Job had to learn to humble himself like a child before Yahweh and allow Him to control his life.²⁸⁸ Job did not get any resolution as to why he was made to suffer; however, humility forced him to recognize that Yahweh was in control of His creation. In the Book of Ruth, Ruth displays humility because of her treatment by Boaz.

Ruth 2:13 records Ruth's response to Boaz after his entreaty to Yahweh. She acknowledges Boaz's favor towards her and that he speaks to her like one of his maidservants even though she is not like one of his maidservants. Her telling Boaz that she is not equal to one of his maidservants emphasizes her humbleness.²⁸⁹ Ruth's use of *הַפְּקֻדָּה* ("maidservant") is a self-designation of deferential respect when addressing a man of higher social status; it reveals a willingness to serve and obey instructions.²⁹⁰ A maidservant's lowly status meant a humble social position.²⁹¹ A synonym to *הַפְּקֻדָּה* is *הַמְּאָדָּה*, used in Ruth 3:9. There are some semantic distinctions

²⁸⁷ Longman III, 456.

²⁸⁸ Konkel, 238.

²⁸⁹ De Waard, and Nida, 34. James McKeown comments that Ruth was bewildered and amazed at Boaz's kindness towards her. The biblical author is painting a portrait of Ruth as a hard-working woman who takes nothing for granted and appreciates the acts of kindness given to her. Ruth's response is wrapped with gratitude and humility. Her humility is indicated in her response to Boaz in that she realizes she is below his maidservants, yet she is humbled because what he has granted her is greater than someone of her low status would have expected. See James McKeown, *Ruth* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2015), "2:18 The First Conversation between Boaz and Ruth."

²⁹⁰ Richard Schultz, "*הַפְּקֻדָּה*," in *NIDOTTE Vol. 4*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 212.

²⁹¹ Baker, and Carpenter, "*הַפְּקֻדָּה*," 1186.

between the two nouns used for ‘female slave, maidservant.’²⁹² The term *הַקְּדוּשָׁה*, used in Ruth 2:13, implies an unmarried woman who has a lower social status and is viewed as a laborer or possession. The term *הַמְּדוּלָה*, used in Ruth 3:9, designates a female servant eligible to be married, has a higher social status, and is viewed as a person, not an object.²⁹³ Hubbard remarks that Ruth’s use of *הַמְּדוּלָה* in 3:9 indicates that Ruth views herself in an improved social status and a woman eligible for marriage.²⁹⁴ Therefore, Ruth’s use of *הַקְּדוּשָׁה* in 2:13 reveals her humility towards Boaz.

²⁹² Both *הַקְּדוּשָׁה* and *הַמְּדוּלָה* are used interchangeably to render “female slave;” *הַמְּדוּלָה* is less common (only fifty-four times in the OT, primarily in the legal texts). The *NASB Exhaustive Concordance* provides the following possible renderings for *הַקְּדוּשָׁה*: female (nine times), female servant (three times), female servants (five times), maid (twenty times), maids (five times), maidservant (fifteen times), maidservants (one time), servants (six times), slave (one time), slave girl (one time), slaves (four times), women (one time). See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, *הַקְּדוּשָׁה*," 1485. The possible renderings for *הַמְּדוּלָה* are female (fifteen times), female servant (four times), female slave (two times), handmaid (one time), maid (eight times), maids (five times), maidservant (nineteen times), servant (one time), servants (six times), slave (four times), slaves (four times). See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, “*הַמְּדוּלָה*," 1362. Just from looking at the renderings, not a noticeable distinction can be seen. However, E. Reuter notes that in Ruth 2:13 “she is asking a favor and therefore refers to herself submissively as *šiphâ*; in 3:9 she is more demanding and therefore calls herself *’āmâ*.” E. Reuter, “*הַקְּדוּשָׁה*,” in *TDOT Vol. 15*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David Green (Grand Rapids.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 409. All other ordinances dealing with unfree females speak of the *’āmâ*. Unlike the *’ebed*, the female slave had no chance to regain her freedom. See Reuter, “*הַקְּדוּשָׁה*,” 409–10. Richard Schultz remarks that *הַמְּדוּלָה* designates the slave when emphasizing her feminine qualities (need for protection, weakness, sexual attractiveness) while *הַקְּדוּשָׁה* is used when the female slave is viewed as a possession or a laborer. See Richard Schultz, “*הַמְּדוּלָה*,” in *NIDOTTE Vol. 1*, ed. Willem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 413. Therefore, in Ruth 2:12, Ruth is designating herself as someone who is below Boaz’s female laborers. However, in Ruth 3:9, Ruth has redesignated herself as a person who needs Boaz’s protection because of her weak status in Bethlehem.

²⁹³ Schultz, “*הַמְּדוּלָה*,” 413.

²⁹⁴ Hubbard, Jr., *Ruth*, 211.

Generosity of Spirit— Job 6:14; 29:12; 31:16–21

Generosity is exhibited by showing favor or mercy, being gracious or willing to give away, revealing a singleness of heart, and a willingness to communicate. A person with a generous heart (Exod. 35:5) deals graciously with the needy but undeserving.²⁹⁵ In Job 6:14, the biblical author states, “For the despairing man there should be kindness from his friend.” The biblical Hebrew nominative רַחֻמִּים is used to convey “kindness.” *BDB* notes that רַחֻמִּים is “kindness (especially as extended to the lowly, needy, and miserable), mercy.”²⁹⁶ *HALOT* explains that the nominative רַחֻמִּים denotes a “joint obligation between relatives, friends, host and guest, master and servant; closeness, solidarity, loyalty.”²⁹⁷ The term רַחֻמִּים is derived from the root רַחַם , meaning “to be good, kind: show yourself kind (two times).”²⁹⁸ The term רַחֻמִּים has a strong relational emphasis commonly used for people’s attitudes and behaviors towards each other.²⁹⁹ However, the וַיִּסָּר plus the לֹא in verse 14 denotes the “refusal” of extending kindness to a friend in despair. Thus, רַחֻמִּים incorporates an element of action within the relational concept.³⁰⁰ A doctrine that is heavily

²⁹⁵ R. Hughes, III, “Generosity; Generous,” in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. T. Alexander, and Brian Rosner (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 431.

²⁹⁶ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “ רַחֻמִּים ,” 338.

²⁹⁷ Koehler, and Baumgartner, “ רַחֻמִּים ,” 337.

²⁹⁸ *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, “ רַחַם ,” 1394. The biblical Hebrew רַחַם will be further explored and evaluated in Chapter Seven.

²⁹⁹ D. Baer, and R. Gordon, “ רַחֻמִּים ,” in *NIDOTTE Vol. 2*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 206. The רַחֻמִּים between friends is normally assumed and sometimes stated. In Job 6:14, רַחֻמִּים denotes a common human attitude (kindness, sympathy, readiness to listen to someone) that exceeds the customary requirements of ordered social life (fear of Yahweh). See H. J. Stoebe, “ רַחֻמִּים ,” in *TLOT Vol.2*, ed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 456.

³⁰⁰ Hans-Jürgen Zobel, “ רַחֻמִּים ,” in *TDOT Vol. 5*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David Green (Grand Rapids.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 48.

involved with the Book of Job is the retribution principle. The relationship between *דָּוָה* and the doctrine of retribution is such that *דָּוָה* places an essential part in the “rules for the conduct of life by virtue of being made the principle by which life should be governed, but is also viewed in relationship to *Yahweh*, thus becoming part of the common doctrine of retribution.”³⁰¹ Job is challenging his friends because they lack a real relationship with him. He is earnestly seeking people who will feel and understand the injustice he is experiencing. The righteous and innocent Job expects his friends to express *דָּוָה* as a true friend would show to another in despair.³⁰² However, Job’s friends await him to affirm their religiosity and perseverance.³⁰³ The friend’s actions and words counter the intent of *דָּוָה*. Instead of offering protection and help in distress, they attack Job and intensify the problem.³⁰⁴ The critical point that Job is making to his friends is that if a person does not give *דָּוָה* to a friend, then they show no respect to *Yahweh*.³⁰⁵

In Job 29:12, Job refutes the allegation that he was not a generous person. He states that people experiencing poverty and orphans were helped. The biblical Hebrew term used in verse 12 that conveys the sense of generosity is *מָלַט*. *HALOT* notes that the piel form of *מָלַט* means to

³⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 50.

³⁰² Kang, 72; Habel, 148. Clines explains that Job is looking for unqualified acceptance from his friends. They are only offering support from a realistic point of view, already assuming that Job is guilty; therefore, their reasoning is that they cannot support Job, who is claiming a false self-righteousness position (a position that Job challenges in Job 6:24). See Clines, *WBC Vol. 17a*, 176. See also Pope, 52.

³⁰³ Tiffany Houck-Loomis, “When Fast-Held God Images Fail to Meet Our Needs: A Psychoanalytic Reading of Job Chapters 6 and 7,” *Pastoral Psychology* 64, no. 2 (April 2015): 200.

³⁰⁴ Longman III, 140.

³⁰⁵ Reyburn, 135. Withholding love, compassion, mercy, and loyalty reflects an ungenerous person. If a person cannot support another during times of trouble, they are guilty of suppressing the afflicted, needy, and neighbor, which is admonished by *Yahweh* (Lev. 19:9–18).

"save someone (deliver)."³⁰⁶ Hubbard, Jr. explains that the piel verb מלט is used by Job as an attempt to verify his innocence. He argues for his integrity in saving those who cried out for help.³⁰⁷ It is noted that the root מלט and פלט belong to the language of Israelite forensic justice. Thus, in Job 29:12, Job states that he has cared for the needy.³⁰⁸ Job resisted using his judicial position and power for personal gain. His desire to protect and provide for the afflicted, widows, orphans, and needy made him respectable in the community.³⁰⁹ In describing his character, Job uses a clothing metaphor. The clothing metaphor in the OT was a way to indicate a spiritual condition (Isa. 52:1; 59:17).³¹⁰ It is a tricolon type found in old Canaanite verse: "Righteousness I

³⁰⁶ Koehler, and Baumgartner, "מלט," 589. The same sense for מלט is used in Psa. 116:4; Job 6:23, 22:30; Eccl. 8:8; 9:15; Isa. 46:4. See also Brown, Driver, and Briggs, "מלט," 572. The biblical Hebrew מלט is a root word denoting "to slip away." The range of meanings are: certainly rescue (one time), deliver (seven times), delivered (nine times), escape (twenty-six times), escaped (twenty-five times), escapes (three times), gave birth (one time), get away (one time), lay (one time), leap forth (one time), left undisturbed (one time), rescue (two times), rescued (four times), retain (one time), save (eight times), saved (two times). See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, "מלט," 1423. E. Ruprecht notes that מלט is synonymous with פלט in meaning and construction so that both words can be treated similarly. See E. Ruprecht, "מלט," in *TLOT Vol.2*, ed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 986.

³⁰⁷ Robert Hubbard, Jr., "מלט," in *NIDOTTE Vol. 2*, ed. Willem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 943. He additionally notes that Job's rhetorical question denies asking his friends to מלט him from his adversary through underhanded or illegal means. *Ibid.*

³⁰⁸ G. Hasel, "פלט," in *TDOT Vol. 11*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David Green (Grand Rapids.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 561.

³⁰⁹ Goldingay, 139. Pope notes that it was Job's prime duty as a ruler to protect the impoverished, widows, and orphans (see Ps. 72:12). See Pope, 212. Mark Hamilton explains that there is an emphasis on the ruler's protection of the ruled, a use of power by seeming to distribute power and wealth more widely. See Mark Hamilton, "Elite Lives: Job 29–31 and Traditional Authority," *JSOT* 32, no. 1 (Sept. 2007): 78. However, Job's actions went beyond the call of duty. His moral and spiritual character dictated how he responded to people in times of trouble (see Job 1:1–5; 23:11–12).

³¹⁰ Longman III, 339. Job 29:12 is Job's assertion that he provides for the unfortunate by using his wealth. See also Alden, 283.

wore, And it clothed me like a cloak, like a mantle my judgment.”³¹¹ Mark McConnell comments that Job honored the dignity of his fellow man, combatted the unrighteousness and injustices in society, used his leadership to make decisions on behalf of the people, and used his resources for the betterment of the people Yahweh placed in his path.³¹² Relationships grounded in righteousness and justice are essential to those who receive compassion and those who offer compassion. Job understood that how he dealt with people nourished and cultivated his moral and spiritual character.³¹³

Job 31 concludes the section (Job 29–31) containing Job’s innocence oaths. In chapter 31, Job devotes a section vowing that if he has not tended to the needs of the poor or the orphans (Job 31:16–21) then let Yahweh punish him. In verse 16, Job alludes to the fact that he has not withheld from the poor their portion. The biblical Hebrew term מָנַע is used to denote “to withhold, refuse (from someone).”³¹⁴ Elmer Martens notes that מָנַע is the opposite of “to give” in the context of someone who has the power and ability to give but does not. Therefore, Job is refuting Eliphaz’s accusation that he has withheld resources from the impoverished (Job 22:7).³¹⁵ Resembling Proverbs 11:26, the virtues of generosity and compassion can be implied from the

³¹¹ Andersen, 251.

³¹² Mark McConnell, *The Prime of My Days: Lessons in the Prime of Life from the Book of Job* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2020), 79–83.

³¹³ Balentine, *Job*, 442.

³¹⁴ Koehler, and Baumgartner, “מָנַע,” 602. The biblical Hebrew מָנַע is a root denoting “to withhold, hold back.” The range of meanings include held back (two times), hinder (one time), hold back (one time), holds (one time), keep (two times), keep back (one time), kept (one time), refuse (two times), restrain (one time), restrained (two times), restrains (one time), withheld (eight times), withhold (five times), withholds (one time). See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, “מָנַע,” 1424.

³¹⁵ Elmer Martens, “מָנַע,” in *NIDOTTE Vol. 2*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 981–2. See also Baker, and Carpenter, “מָנַע,” 630. Prov. 3:27 cautions to not hold back from people when it is in the giver’s power to do so.

Joban text. In the religious realm, in connection with social themes, Eliphaz accused Job of withholding bread and water from the hungry and thirsty people. However, Job denies the allegation that he kept anything back from what a person desired.³¹⁶

In Job 31:19, Job continues his oaths of innocence by noting that he has not caused anyone to perish due to a lack of clothing. The biblical Hebrew verb **אָבַד** is used to denote "perish, die (of individuals)."³¹⁷ The verbal form of **אָבַד** ("perishing" and "destruction") can be applied to a variety of things: weapons, harvest, images, a person's name, wisdom, counsel, property, and divine judgments.³¹⁸ Jenni notes that the verbal **אָבַד** can mean "to snatch away."³¹⁹ The picture that the biblical author has provided is another Joban self-malediction. In verse 19, Job continues to counter claims made by his friends (Job 22:6) that he did not tend to the needs of the impoverished or orphans. He states that if he saw anyone perishing from a lack of

³¹⁶ Heinz-Josef Fabry, "מָנַע," in *TDOT Vol. 8*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David Green (Grand Rapids.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 425. "Desired" goes beyond what is actually necessary; therefore, implying that Job more than fulfilled his social obligation.

³¹⁷ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, "אָבַד," 1. The biblical Hebrew **אָבַד** is a root word denoting "to perish." The range of meanings include: annihilate (two times), annihilated (one time), been lost (one time), broken (one time), corrupts (one time), destroy (thirty-three times), destroyed (fifteen times), destroying (two times), destroys (two times), destruction (two times), dying (two times), fail (one time), fails (one time), give up as lost (one time), lacking (one time), lost (twelve times), make vanish (one time), makes to perish (one time), no (two times), obliterate (one time), perish (sixty-one times), perished (sixteen times), perishes (seven times), perishing (two times), ruined (four times), surely perish (three times), take (one time), utterly destroy (one time), wandering (one time), wastes (one time), wiped (one time). See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, "אָבַד," 1355.

³¹⁸ Cornelius Van Dam, "אָבַד," in *NIDOTTE Vol. 1*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 222. See also Benedikt Otzen, "אָבַד," in *TDOT Vol. 1*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David Green (Grand Rapids.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 22.

³¹⁹ E. Jenni, "אָבַד," in *TLOT Vol. 1*, ed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 13.

clothing, he would give the fleece of wool from his flock to help them.³²⁰ Through his self-maledictions, Job states to his friends that he is maintaining a covenantal relationship with Yahweh. In Job 31:19, Job insists that he took seriously the spirit of the Sabbath requirements.³²¹

In 31:21, Job concludes his self-malediction that if he raises his hand against an orphan, then let harm come to him. Job is countering the friend's notion that he has used his position and authority for self-interests and to pervert justice. The biblical Hebrew word נָרַף is used for "lifted up."³²² *BDB* explains that נָרַף means to "shake, wave, or brandish the hand against another."³²³

Richard Averbeck comments that נָרַף is used to denote "the shaking or striking the hand."³²⁴

Clines suggests that the accusation against Job, which he denies, is unclear. The gesture alluded

³²⁰ Clines, *WBC Vol. 18a*, 1022. In ancient Israel's patriarchal society, the widow and the orphan lacked a husband and father and thus were open to exploitation. Thus, Yahweh made known His special concern for them (Deut. 10:18; 24:17–21; 27:19). Job states in 6:27; 24:3, 21 that he paid particular attention to the needs of the widow and orphan. See Longman III, 361.

³²¹ Konkel, 188. Job's activities are comprehended through a rubric of justice. A just person is one who shows compassion and charity. Therefore, Job is reiterating to his friends that he is like a just person who showed charity and compassion to others and is above reproach. See Walton, and Vizcaino, 326. The impoverished, widows, and orphans were easily exploited and relied on some powerful person willing to support their cause (Job 5:4; 24:12; Prov. 22:2). See Pope, 234.

³²² *HALOT* notes that נָרַף means to assume a threatening position against another person (see also Isa. 13:2). Koehler, and Baumgartner, "נָרַף," 682.

³²³ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, "נָרַף," 632. The biblical Hebrew נָרַף is a root word denoting "to move to and fro, wave, sprinkle." The range of meanings include: lifted (one time), offer (one time), present (five times), presented (six times), shake...back and forth (one time), shakes (one time), shed abroad (one time), sprinkled (one time), wave (thirteen times), waved (one time), waving (one time), wield (three times), wielded (one time), wielding (one time), wields (one time). See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, "נָרַף," 1434.

³²⁴ Richard Averbeck, "נָרַף," in *NIDOTTE Vol. 3*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 64. Ringgren notes that נָרַף in 31:21 conveys a threat or an act of violence, which Job denies. See Helmer Ringgren, "נָרַף," in *TDOT Vol. 9*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David Green (Grand Rapids.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 297.

to in 31:21 could be a common way the judges voted with a raised hand, or it could have been a signal for bystanders to side against the accused.³²⁵ Another contention is that the raised hand symbolized a fraudulent business deal or a miscarriage of justice at the city gate.³²⁶

In Job 31:16–21, Job uses a technique common in sanctuary courts. In this setting, divine judgment was used to determine a person’s guilt or innocence, especially when no eyewitness accounts were available.³²⁷ The basis of Job’s self-maledictions was revealing his good behavior whenever he tried to prevent a person’s bad circumstance. In the domain of ethics, this is the intelligent appropriation of what is right.³²⁸ By accentuating his righteousness, Job intends that he was a just ruler, helped the people, and provided sustenance to the impoverished with compassion and charity.³²⁹ Tsevat comments that Job 31 serves a functional role in the Book of Job by taking action against Yahweh by forcing Him to take a stand and relate to Job’s problems. Job believes that he has lived a good life and has not sinned.³³⁰ Job’s character and virtues are

³²⁵ Clines, *WBC Vol. 18a*, 304; Alden, 304. The term נָנַח is such " an action undertaken by an influential party could turn the mood of the court against the defendant, regardless of his innocence. Another possible interpretation of this gesture is that Job did not signal one of his servants, i.e., his supporter standing by to help his master, to arouse the crowd in shouting down the poor defendant as he presented his defense. In ancient courts if a party was silenced, that party lost the case." See Hartley, 417.

³²⁶ Andersen, 261.

³²⁷ Perdue, 184.

³²⁸ Rad, 93.

³²⁹ Boorer, 116.

³³⁰ Tsevat, 77–8. Job 31 is the most significant example in the Bible of a person strongly asserting themselves against Yahweh but remaining faithful to Him. *Ibid.*, 79. See also Robertson, 460–1.

reflected and rooted in his intentions, desires, and emotions. While Job 31:16–21 denote physical and visual accounts of good behavior, a person’s unseen regions are morally accountable.³³¹

Job exhibits a spirit of generosity through his actions with the impoverished, widow, and orphan in Job 31:16–21. His self-maledictions, while a counter against false claims made by his friends, reveal his willingness to maintain a righteous relationship with Yahweh. His compassion and charity were above and beyond what the letter of the law stipulated. In the Book of Ruth, a similar circumstance is read in the interaction between Ruth and Boaz in Ruth 2.

In Ruth 2:14–16, Boaz’s generosity of spirit is revealed through his invitation to Ruth to eat with him, the reapers, and his command to allow Ruth to glean from the sheaves and leave extra grain for her to gather. The allowance of additional grain for Ruth to gather exceeded her legal rights. In verse 14, צָבַט is used to mean “give, pass.” Grisanti notes that צָבַט is challenging to define, with suggestions coming from Koine Greek, Akkadian, Ugaritic, and late Hebrew.³³² The Ugaritic and late Hebrew seem to have a better grasp of the meaning by defining צָבַט as to “seize, grasp.”³³³ HALOT remarks that the qal form of צָבַט in Ruth 2:14 means “to pick up and

³³¹ Vesely, “The Physicality of Virtue in Job 31,” 18. Job 31 offers an alternative model of the moral self that involves thinking, seeing, and desiring as a full part of the physical setting and a person’s moral self.

³³² Michael Grisanti, “צָבַט,” in *NIDOTTE Vol. 3*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 735. Block explains “In mishnaic Hebrew *šābaṭ* denotes “to grasp, seize,” a sense found also in Akkadian *šabātum* and Arabic *dabaṭa*. Our word is undoubtedly based on the same root, but by a curious lexical development an expression that originally meant “to seize with the hand” has come to mean “to hand,” that is, “to give with the hand.” See Block, 667.

³³³ Grisanti, “צָבַט,” 735. Clines notes that צָבַט in the qal form means “hold out grain to a person.” See Clines, “צָבַט,” 373. The biblical Hebrew צָבַט is a root word denoting “to reach, hold out.” An additional meaning is served (one time). See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, “צָבַט,” 1459.

offer to someone.”³³⁴ Bush explains that “to heap up” is preferable because it supports the biblical statement that Ruth had a surplus of food she took home to Naomi.³³⁵ The scene shows that Boaz is a generous benefactor, indicating that sustenance can transform a person and develop kinship bonds.³³⁶ Not only did Boaz serve her roasted grain, but he generously gave her enough to have leftovers to bring home. LaCocque suggests that Boaz’s generosity is a marital act. Likewise, when Ruth fed Naomi, she attached herself to Naomi like a husband to a wife.³³⁷ The biblical author shows how Boaz took a simple meal and turned it into an extraordinary act of generosity, compassion, and acceptance.³³⁸

Kindness— Job 6:14; 10:12

In this section, רַחֲמִים will be briefly explored in Job 6:14 and 10:12. The biblical Hebrew term רַחֲמִים involving the aspect of generosity was evaluated in the previous section. The characteristics of kindness and lovingkindness will be evaluated here.³³⁹

In Job 6:14, Job states that a friend should show kindness to a despairing man. The concept of faithfulness, steadfast love, and kindness has a robust relational aspect necessary to

³³⁴ Koehler, and Baumgartner, “צָרַת,” 997. Baker and Carpenter specify צָרַת by noting that it means “to serve generously with respect and love towards Ruth.” See Baker, and Carpenter, “צָרַת,” 935.

³³⁵ Bush, 126.

³³⁶ Cynthia Chapman, “The Field Belonging to Boaz: Creating Kinship through Land, Labor, Food, and Feeding,” *JBL* 142, no. 3 (2023): 441.

³³⁷ LaCocque, *Ruth*, 74.

³³⁸ Block, 667. Boaz’s generosity exemplifies his racial and religious tolerance which is indicative of a generous Israelite. See Hubbard, Jr., *Ruth*, 173.

³³⁹ The term רַחֲמִים will receive only a fractional interaction in Chapter Six. A detailed explanation will be performed in Chapter Seven.

comprehending חַסְדִּים.³⁴⁰ The term חַסְדִּים has affinities with the English word "kindness" and "goodness." It is a human demeanor that can fill a life with form and sometimes the requirement for a community's birth. The term חַסְדִּים is a sacrificial and human willingness to be there for another person to do a good deed.³⁴¹ The giving of חַסְדִּים between people should mirror חַסְדִּים between Yahweh and people. Faithfulness and kindness are to be exhibited between people who know each other, with strangers, and the poor, needy, and widowed (1 Sam. 20:15'; Ps. 14:15; Job 6:14; Prov. 19:22; 20:28).³⁴² Job's understanding for חַסְדִּים is that a person who shows and gives kindness is justified in receiving it.³⁴³ This concept is illustrated by Rahab when she shows kindness to the Israelite spies and asks for the same towards her family and her (Josh. 2:12, 14). Likewise, between David and Jonathan in 1 Samuel 20:8, 14. Because Job accuses his friends of not reciprocating, he calls them unworthy covenantal partners because they lack true piety.³⁴⁴ Job points out how little he has asked of his friends: no financial assistance or rescue from adversaries. However, what he has asked for is support during his troublesome time. They have

³⁴⁰ Baer, and Gordon, "חַסְדִּים," 206. Pope explains that חַסְדִּים can mean both "loyalty" and "sympathy." See Pope, 52.

³⁴¹ Stoebe, "חַסְדִּים," 456.

³⁴² Baker, and Carpenter, "חַסְדִּים," 360–1.

³⁴³ Zobel, "חַסְדִּים," 47. Zobel states, "In view of the impressive evidence for the mutuality of *hesed*, we may venture the conjecture that even in cases where the context does not suggest such mutuality it is nevertheless implicit, because we are dealing with the closest of human bonds. In the case of Abraham and Sarah (Gen. 20:13) as well as Orpah/Ruth and Mahlon/Chilion (Ruth 1:8), it is the relationship between husband and wife; in the case of Israel and Joseph (Gen. 47:29), it is father and son; in the case of Laban/Bethuel and Isaac (Gen. 24:49), it is next of kin; and in 2 S. 16:17, it should be noted that Hushai's relationship to David is called that of a "friend" (*rēa*)." Ibid., 48.

³⁴⁴ Bruce Waltke, and Charles Yu, *An Old Testament Theology: An Exegetical, Canonical, and Thematic Approach* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), III.B.2.

provided him with a breach of confidence because they believe he is guilty.³⁴⁵ However, what Job needs from his friends is an unqualified acceptance to take his side with his perceived Yahwistic injustice. Job's friends attempt to reproof Job; however, they fail to reprove because they do not take Job seriously. They listen to Job and conveniently forget his words; they have become unreliable.³⁴⁶

In Job 10:12, Job responds to Bildad's first speech. His response includes taking note of Yahweh's care. The term רָחֵם is used again in verse 12; however, instead of an interhuman relationship, it now pertains to a divine-human relationship.³⁴⁷ Job states, "You have granted me life and lovingkindness [רָחֵם], and Your care has preserved my spirit." *HALOT* notes that in this context, רָחֵם refers to Yahweh's "faithfulness, goodness, graciousness."³⁴⁸ *BDB* specifies that רָחֵם denotes Yahweh's "kindness, lovingkindness in condescending to the needs of His creatures."³⁴⁹ Yahweh's רָחֵם sustains life; it counteracts death's dynamic power that attempts to drag down and cut off a person's life.³⁵⁰ Zobel explains that Job is the object of Yahweh's רָחֵם (Job 10:12),

³⁴⁵ Katharine Sakenfeld, *The Meaning of Hesed in the Hebrew Bible: A New Inquiry* (Missoula: Published by the Scholars Press for the Harvard Semitic Museum, 1978), 216.

³⁴⁶ Goldingay, 41; Longman III, 140.

³⁴⁷ It is important to note that רָחֵם is used more to describe a Yahwistic attribute than describing a human characteristic. Additionally, רָחֵם is used in a superior (Yahweh) to an inferior (His creatures) relationship. Importantly, Yahweh's רָחֵם is based on a previous bond He shares with people. However, Yahweh expects His רָחֵם to be reciprocated and demands service and fear. See Baer, and Gordon, " רָחֵם ," 207–8. See also Hos. 10:12. Zobel comments that Yahweh's רָחֵם is the same phenomenon witnessed in personal interactions. The recipients and manifestations of Yahweh's רָחֵם commonly coincides with the secular use of רָחֵם . See Zobel, " רָחֵם ," 55.

³⁴⁸ Koehler, and Baumgartner, " רָחֵם ," 337.

³⁴⁹ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, " רָחֵם ," 339. In Job 10:12, רָחֵם is used to denote "preservation of life from death."

³⁵⁰ Baer, and Gordon, " רָחֵם ," 210.

which reveals Yahweh's, in a confessional manner, nature for exercising רָחֵם .³⁵¹ Job states that Yahweh has shown His lovingkindness through supporting his full life, not merely his birth or physical existence.³⁵² Habel explains that Yahweh's care and רָחֵם would typically be seen as positive influences in a person's life. This positiveness would be quickly embraced when Job mentions Yahweh's care in the latter half of 10:12. However, Job is not focusing on the positive aspect but the negative one. He comprehends Yahweh's actions as wanting to harm him instead of helping him.³⁵³ Andersen disagrees. He explains that the use of רָחֵם at this point is of the utmost importance for the theology of the Book of Job. To call creation an act of רָחֵם lays the groundwork for resolving Job's questions, which seem at first to require a covenant of redemption, by the surprising use of 'nature' poetry in the Yahweh's speeches at the end.³⁵⁴

Briefly, רָחֵם has been touched in an interhuman and a divine-human relationship. When one thinks of רָחֵם , a positive interpretation comes to mind. However, in Job 6:14 and 10:12, רָחֵם

³⁵¹ Zobel, "רָחֵם," 54.

³⁵² Clines, *WBC Vol. 17*, 248. See also Goldingay, 59. However, Konkel contends that what is meant in 10:12 is that Job comprehends Yahweh's actions to scrutinize his life (7:20). It is a level of despair that beyond what he states in 7:17–21. In the larger context, Job's statement in verse 12 is a reaffirmation of his desire to die. He is implicitly entreating Yahweh to show His lovingkindness by permitting Job to die. See Konkel, 85.

³⁵³ Habel, 199. The breath of life that was given to him at birth has been tainted. He laments that he will not be able to experience the fullness and wellness of life that is wisdom's goal (Ps. 34:12). See Perdue, 128. One aspect to Job's thought process is that he is thinking within a traditional theological idea of reward and punishment. However, he is trying to refute the idea of "those who plow iniquity and those who sow trouble harvest it" (Job 4:8) because he is blameless and does not deserve it. See Yung Suk Kim, "Job's Lament: How to Understand," *Currents in Theology and Mission* 50, no. 2 (2023): 31. Additionally, Aaron Pinker explains that Job 1:12 is not a positive affirmation of Yahweh bestowing and cultivating Job's life. However, it is a negative perspective of how Yahweh constantly scrutinizes him, which results in Job questioning the purpose for his birth and life. See Aron Pinker, "On the Meaning of חַיִּים וְחַיָּה 'shyt `mdy [Hebrew Characters] in Job 10, 12a," *Zeitschrift Für Die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 126, no. 1 (2014): 110.

³⁵⁴ Andersen, 166.

is used by Job in a negative tone. In Job 6:14, he despairs because his friends do not reciprocate דָּקָדָק. In Job 10:12, Job's tone is negative because he laments his life and states that if Yahweh had lovingkindness and care for him, He would allow Job to die and suffer no more. Turning the attention to the Book of Ruth, kindness is indicated through a different biblical Hebrew term, לֵב.

In Ruth 2:13, Ruth states that Boaz has spoken לֵב ("kindly") to her. *HALOT* interprets לֵב as “attention, consideration, reason” in the Ruthan context.³⁵⁵ *BDB* states that לֵב is the “seat of emotions and passions; it is used in variations of joy and gladness.”³⁵⁶ Boaz, in Ruth 2:13, is comforting Ruth’s heart. לֵב denotes an "act of compassion," "gentle persuasion," or "tender speaking.”³⁵⁷ The term לֵב as the seat of emotions stems from the vital לֵב, which is the use of the body’s vital functions to describe emotional reactions. Ruth 2:13 uses a common idiom for “wooing affection” or “speaking to someone’s heart.”³⁵⁸ Howell comments that עַל-לֵב is an idiomatic phrase found also in Genesis 34:3; 50:21; Judges 19:3; 2 Samuel 19:8; Isaiah 40:2; Hosea 2:16.³⁵⁹ Bush explains that עַל-לֵב should be understood in conjunction with נָחַם (“to console”) to illicit a meaning of “to speak reassuringly or encouragingly to those who for various

³⁵⁵ Koehler, and Baumgartner, “לֵב,” 514.

³⁵⁶ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “לֵב,” 525. The biblical Hebrew לֵב is from the same לֵבב, which denotes “inner man, mind, will, heart.” See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, “לֵבב,” 1413. The range of meanings for לֵב is extensive; however, they refer to “inner man, mind, will, heart.” See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, “לֵב,” 1413.

³⁵⁷ Alex Luc, “לֵב,” in *NIDOTTE Vol. 2*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 745.

³⁵⁸ Heinz-Josef Fabry, “לֵב,” in *TDOT Vol. 7*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David Green (Grand Rapids.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 414 and 417.

³⁵⁹ Howell, 153–4.

reasons need such.”³⁶⁰ Initially, the phrase meant speaking tenderly while leaning on someone’s breast, expressing sweet and caressing words. However, when combined with נָחַם, the sweet caressing words are used to reassure someone in distress.³⁶¹ The kindness shown to Ruth by Boaz is recognized by Naomi in Ruth 2:20. By her words, she understands that there is a link between Boaz’s actions and Yahweh’s actions. Therefore, Boaz’s kindness towards Ruth mirrors Yahweh’s kindness to Israel.³⁶² It may be tempting to view Ruth’s work in Boaz’s field and her interaction with him as sheer luck. Additionally, Boaz’s actions and words may seem to come from a passionate nature. However, unbeknown to Ruth, Naomi, or Boaz is Yahweh’s providence at work. Boaz is Yahweh’s designated redeemer in the Book of Ruth. From Elimelech’s relocation to Moab with his family (Ruth 1:1) to the current verse, Yahweh has been planning and acting. In the Book of Ruth, Yahweh does not intervene but makes His presence known through His providential care.³⁶³ Thus, Boaz’s נָחַם (“heart”), Boaz’s נָחַם (“comforting”) words, and Ruth’s נָחַם (“kindness”) reflect Yahweh’s נָחַם.

Redemption— Job 5:20; 19:25

In the OT, redemption is primarily attached to the appropriate payment for property and life. In Leviticus 25:25–27, 47–54, a person who lost their inheritance or was sold into slavery could be redeemed by a monetary payment. The liberation of the people from Egypt is a divine redemption by Yahweh (Exod. 6:6; 15:13). Though Yahweh did not pay the price, His divine

³⁶⁰ Bush, 124. Block states that it is interpreted to mean “to speak compassionately and sympathetically.” See Block, 665.

³⁶¹ Hubbard, Jr., *Ruth*, 169.

³⁶² Martha Moore-Keish, “Ruth 2,” *Interpretation* 64, no. 2 (April 2010): 175.

³⁶³ Greg King, “Ruth 2:1–13,” *Interpretation* 52, no. 2 (April 1998): 182–3.

strength was how He accomplished the objective. In Proverbs 23:10–11, the sage expresses confidence in a living Redeemer.³⁶⁴ To deny redemption on Israelite grounds is to deny Yahweh's divine rights because it was Yahweh who redeemed the Israelites from Egyptian enslavement. Therefore, Yahweh's redemption is divine grace for Israel's freedom, social equality, and community unity.³⁶⁵ In the Book of Job, two passages will be evaluated to reveal how they pertain to redemption: Job 5:20 and 19:25.

In Job 5:20, Eliphaz tells Job that Yahweh will redeem him from death.³⁶⁶ The biblical Hebrew term פדה denotes "redemption." Precisely, Job 5:20 reflects that Yahweh will redeem a person.³⁶⁷ The term פדה has a broader sense of meaning than לאל because the biblical Hebrew word lacks לאל specific legal roots.³⁶⁸ The use and meaning of פדה in 5:20 is removed from Job

³⁶⁴ E. Harrison, "Redeemer, Redemption," in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 2nd ed., ed. Walter Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001), 994. However, in the OT there are numerous passages that do not explicitly state that a ransom was paid for the redemption of property or life. The idea of a monetary payment may reflect the notion of strength needed for deliverance, as exemplified by Yahweh's redemption of His people from Egypt.

³⁶⁵ R. Hubbard, Jr., "Redemption," in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. T. Alexander, and Brian Rosner (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 717.

³⁶⁶ Job 5:20 falls within a larger context (verses 8–27) where Eliphaz urges Job to submit to Yahweh's discipline and He would bless him if Job repented. Von Rad comments that a person who brings their relationship in order with Yahweh is in the league with the field's stones and befriended by the field's beasts. See Rad, 302.

³⁶⁷ Koehler, and Baumgartner, "פדה," 912. The biblical Hebrew פדה is a root word denoting "to ransom." The range of meanings include: any means redeem (one time), ransom (four times), ransomed (seven times), redeem (twenty-four times), redeemed (eighteen times), redeems (one time), redemption price (one time), rescued (one time), surely redeem (one time), way been redeemed (one time). See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, "פדה," 1453.

³⁶⁸ Robert Hubbard, Jr., "פדה," in *NIDOTTE Vol. 3*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 575. In Job 6:23, Job poses a rhetorical question by asking if his friends have ever delivered him from an adversary or the ruthless. In this verse, פדה is used rather than לאל because it involves a friend's voluntary action instead of a family requirement. Thus, it falls outside legal literature. *Ibid.*, 577.

33:28. While both verses speak of redemption and death, 33:28 pertains to the Hebrew thought that death has power over a sick person; therefore, deliverance is not from the underworld but through healing. In 5:20, Eliphaz recognizes Yahweh's ability to deliver Job from famine and war.³⁶⁹ Henri Cazelles explains that *הִפָּד* use in Job 5:20 is reminiscent of its usage in the Psalms. The Psalms (Ps. 49) take up the theme of "redeem" or "set free" after the exile and the return to temple worship. Therefore, Job 5:20 is comparative to the usage in Psalms (most often, it is an individual or an individual's life that is the object of Yahweh's liberating act (Ps. 26:11; 31:6[5]; 55:19[18]; 71:23). One may be set free from enemies (69:19[18]) or oppression (119:134). In 34:23(22) and 44:27(26), it is the psalmist whom Yahweh sets free. Interestingly, *הִפָּד* cannot be found anywhere else in protocanonical wisdom literature.³⁷⁰

Eliphaz's speeches hinge on his understanding of the link between acts and consequences associated with the retributive principle. He abstractly addresses Job's suffering versus lived experiences. Therefore, instead of addressing Job's innocence or guilt, Eliphaz purposely focuses

³⁶⁹ J. Stamm, "הִפָּד," in *TLOT Vol.2*, ed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 972. Another distinction is that 33:28 has occurred in the past while 5:20 is occurs in the present or future. *Ibid.*, 971.

³⁷⁰ Henri Cazelles, "הִפָּד," in *TDOT Vol. 11*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David Green (Grand Rapids.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 489. Clines states, "The term belongs to the realm of the law and of psalmody, not to the wisdom material. Salvation of all kinds is of course the substance of much psalmody, so it is not surprising to find parallels to deliverance from famine in Ps 33:19; 105:16–17; to deliverance from death in Ps 49:16 [15]; 103:4 (cf. Job 33:28); and note especially Ps 49:8–9 [7–8] "the ransom of life is costly"; to deliverance from the sword in Ps 22:21 [20]; 144:10; to protection from the tongue of false witnesses or sorcerers in Ps 31:21 [20]; 52:4, 6 [2, 4]; 64:4 [3]; 120:2; to protection from the pestilence that "wastes" (*הִשָּׁח*, cf. *הִשָּׁח* here) at noonday in Ps 91:6 (the whole of Ps 91 is in fact reminiscent of these verses). This imagery is not exclusive to the Psalms but evidences the blend in the Joban poetry of "wisdom" and "psalmic" material." See Clines, *WBC Vol. 17*, 151–2.

on his perception that Job is suffering because of his inability to be morally upright.³⁷¹ Phil Botha explains that Job 5:17–26 is influenced by Psalm 91 and Proverbs 3. Both texts approach wisdom teaching by addressing that a righteous person can receive Yahweh’s protection and proving to believers that the wicked will be judged. Therefore, Job 5:20 teaches that Yahweh protects people from fearing destruction (a belief read in Prov. 3:24, 25).³⁷² Psalm 91’s (specifically for a king suffering from an illness) association with Job 5:17–26 indicates the need for Yahweh’s protection against the backdrop of intense danger.³⁷³

In Job 19:25, a different type of redemption is encountered. The context is Job’s second reply to Bildad’s speech. Within his response, Job states that Yahweh is his Redeemer. The biblical Hebrew term used is גאל. Unlike פדה, גאל is used to denote Yahweh’s redemptive actions.³⁷⁴ The term גאל implies a redemptive relationship with Yahweh (Gen. 48:15; Ps. 69:19; 72:14; 103:4; 119:154; Lam. 3:58; Jer. 50:34; Hos. 13:14).³⁷⁵ When Yahweh is the גאל, like the

³⁷¹ Yasir Saleem, “For a Man is Born to Suffer: Intertextuality between Job 4–5 and Gen. 2.4b–3.24,” *JSOT* 46, no. 3 (Mar. 2022): 401. Eliphaz is sincerely convinced of Job’s guilt; therefore, to explain the reason for Job’s suffering he applies the doctrine of inherent sinfulness of people. This application to Job’s circumstances indicates that Eliphaz is implicating that Job’s sin is not from wickedness but because he is a human. Hence, the forcefulness behind Eliphaz’s request for Job to correct himself before Yahweh, which stems from his religious experience. See Robertson, 452. R. Whybray notes that Job’s view of suffering contrasts his friend’s perception. The friends contend that suffering is a divine response to the consequence of sin and a person’s unavoidable destiny from birth. See R. Whybray, “Wisdom, Suffering, and the Freedom of God in the Book of Job,” in *In Search of True Wisdom*, ed. Ronald Clements (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 237.

³⁷² Phil Botha, “Psalm 91 and Its Wisdom Connections,” *Old Testament Essays (New Series)* 25, no. 2 (2012): 267.

³⁷³ Beat Weber, *Die Psalmen 73 bis 150* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2003), 125.

³⁷⁴ Koehler, and Baumgartner, “גאל,” 169.

³⁷⁵ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “גאל,” 145. The biblical Hebrew גאל is a root word meaning “to redeem, act as a kinsman.” The full range of meanings are avenger (thirteen times), bought back (one time), buy back (one time), claim (one time), close relative (three times), closest relative (three times), closest relatives (one time), ever wish to redeem (two times),

familial counterpart, He helps those who have fallen in need. This is the distinction from the previous discussion on אָבִי; it is used in a more legalistic sense to denote a family member's responsibility. Three wisdom texts depict Yahweh as אָבִי. In Proverbs 23:10–11, Yahweh will defend the orphans from illegal encroachment. In Jeremiah 50:34, Yahweh redeems the earth from Babylonian persecution; therefore, the prisoners' rights are asserted and set free from prison. Finally, in Job 19:25, Job states that Yahweh will protect his legal rights.³⁷⁶ Ringgren comments that the Redeemer's identity is not as clear-cut as some readers suppose. He states that since Job is in dispute with Yahweh, it would be unlikely that Yahweh would act as a vindicator and legal attorney against Himself. Therefore, Job is probably referencing a third party in heaven to act as his witness and spokesperson (Job 9:33; 33:23).³⁷⁷ Jan Holman contends that the Redeemer is the personification of the cry of Job's blood in Job 16:18, which will act as his living savior.³⁷⁸ Andersen comments that since verses 25–27 are woven together, it leaves no

kinsman (two times), redeem (twenty-two times), redeemer (one time), Redeemer (eighteen times), redeems (one time), relative (two times), relatives (one time), rescue (one time), wishes to redeem (one time). See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, “אָבִי,” 1374.

³⁷⁶ Robert Hubbard, Jr., “אָבִי,” in *NIDOTTE Vol. 1*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 778. With a time reference, Yahweh's redemptive actions stated in Job 19:25 are in the present and received by an individual. In a human realm, the king was to legally act as a אָבִי to save his people from oppression and violence. In the divine realm, Yahweh “legally” acts to save His people from oppression and violence. See J. Stamm, “אָבִי,” in *TLOT Vol. 1*, ed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 292.

³⁷⁷ Helmer Ringgren, “אָבִי,” in *TDOT Vol. 2*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David Green (Grand Rapids.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 355. See also Konkel, 130. “Vindicator” is suggested by Pope, 146; Reyburn, 363; Perdue, 161.

³⁷⁸ Jan Holman, “Translation of Job 19, 24,” In *Book of Job*, ed. W. A. M. Beuken (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1994): 377–8. See also Clines, *WBC Vol. 17*, 459–60.

doubt that Job is referring to Yahweh.³⁷⁹ Alden further states that the Redeemer is Yahweh, Israel's Redeemer, and a possible human relative.³⁸⁰ Finally, Bissmeyer, who sides with Pope, comprehends גַּאֵל as an agent (such as read in 9:33 and 16:19) who serves the same function as the personal god of Sumerian theology; therefore, the Redeemer will act as an advocate and defender before a divine council.³⁸¹ Despite the debate over the Redeemer's identity, Job states that the Redeemer lives and will arrive when he is on the dung heap, his expected grave (Job 2:8), a place for either mourning or death.³⁸² It is possible that a better rendering of Job 19:26 is not to understand it as death but that Job will see Yahweh while he is still alive. Therefore, Job states that he is confident that Yahweh will find him innocent while he is still alive; this confidence is also expressed by Job in 13:18.³⁸³ A formulaic pair is noted between אֶלֹּהִים and אֶתְחַיֶּה that would convey the sense of a same life setting. Therefore, 19:25 does not have death in view but healing and resurrection. Thus, the formulaic pair can be interpreted as “can restore” and “can raise.” In the Joban context, 19:25 could be read as “I know that my Redeemer will restore my health/life.”³⁸⁴

³⁷⁹ Andersen, 209. Hartley explains that the term “Redeemer” was an affectionate title for Yahweh in Israelite confessional theology. Therefore, Job is intentionally alluding to Yahweh's title by using special nuances for deliverance and love. See Hartley, 293.

³⁸⁰ Alden, 207. Job had wished for some fellow human being then and there to say a good word for him before God and his neighbors, but he also envisioned a divine Redeemer. Jamie Bissmeyer disagrees by stating that Job recognized that he would not get any help from either his friends or family. See Jamie Bissmeyer, “Job's Eschatological Hope: The Implications of Job's Redeemer for Social Justice,” *The Master's Seminary Journal* 30, no. 2 (Fall 2019): 216.

³⁸¹ Bissmeyer, 218.

³⁸² Walton, and Vizcaino, 219. Job's dung heap is the word *'eper* (“ashes”), like the word for dust (*'apar*).

³⁸³ David Deuel, “Job 19:25 and Job 23:10 Revisited: An Exegetical Note,” *The Master's Seminary Journal* 5, no. 1 (Spr. 1994): 98.

³⁸⁴ Michael Barré, “Note on Job 19:25,” *Vetus Testamentum* 29, no. 1 (Jan. 1979): 107–9.

Two different uses for “redemption” were explored from the Book of Job: 5:20 and 19:25. Job 5:20 uses פדה to denote redemption that can come either from friends or family. While פדה is attached to legal texts, it does not have the “legal” force found with גאל. In Job 19:25, גאל is used to denote “Redeemer.” While there is an ongoing debate about the Redeemer’s identity, Job’s point is that he believes that he will be redeemed or restored. In the Book of Ruth, גאל is used but in a different context.

In Ruth 2:20, Naomi informs Ruth that Boaz is a גאל (“close relative”). In the Ruthan passage, גאל is a family member legally bound to act as a redeemer.³⁸⁵ The redeemer would be a relative obligated to help the widows. Because of Boaz’s obligation, Ruth can propose marriage to Boaz. However, another גאל must cede their obligatory rights as a redeemer.³⁸⁶ Uncertainty surrounds a גאל responsibility in a levirate marriage. However, due to Boaz’s kindness, compassion, devotion, and moral righteousness, he goes beyond the required responsibilities of a kinsman redeemer by marrying Ruth. It is an act that reveals Boaz is concerned about keeping the entire family intact.³⁸⁷ However, גאל is not the only designator for Boaz in 2:20. Earlier in the verse, Naomi refers to Boaz as just a קרוב (“relative”). קרוב, used as an adjective, denotes the relative’s proximity; he was a close relative.³⁸⁸ Naomi sees Boaz no longer as a generous and prominent Israelite but as a near relative who can help Ruth and her by fulfilling the obliged

³⁸⁵ Koehler, and Baumgartner, “גאל,” 169. *BDB* specifies that גאל is a kinsman who will do the part of the next of kin. See Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “גאל,” 145.

³⁸⁶ Hubbard, Jr., “גאל,” 776.

³⁸⁷ Stamm, “גאל,” 290.

³⁸⁸ Bill Arnold, “קרוב,” in *NIDOTTE Vol. 3*, ed. Willem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 974. *HALOT* notes that the adjectival form of קרוב indicates a nearness of relationship either between humans or between Yahweh and people. See Koehler, and Baumgartner, “קרוב,” 1139.

duties.³⁸⁹ LaCocque remarks that an anonymous rabbi in *Ruth Rabbah* notes that Naomi immediately notices Boaz is a near relative due to his kindness and generosity towards Ruth, the heaping up of roasted grain, and the leftovers she brought home.³⁹⁰ Because there is not a legal issue involved yet, גאל is not used in favor of קרוב which denotes a general familial relationship. R. Gane and J. Milgrom comment that קרוב denotes a personal relationship, in Ruth 2:20, a close kinship.³⁹¹

Obeying Instructions— Job 22:21–22; 36:11

In the OT, it is obedience to Yahweh that pleases Him, that brings about His blessings of prosperity, longevity, liberty, security, and tranquility. Noah obeyed Yahweh in Genesis 6:22, Abram obeyed Yahweh in Genesis 12:1–4; 22:15–18, and Moses obeyed Yahweh in Exodus 3:10–4:20. The Decalogue was given to the people for them to show their obedience to His requirements (Exod. 20:3–17). The failure to obey Yahweh displeased Him and caused the forfeiture of blessings. The old covenant, established by Yahweh and given by Moses, was a temporary, educative, and parabolic arrangement that established a covenantal relationship between Yahweh and His chosen people.³⁹² Obedience involves three actions: hearing, comprehending, and acting. Therefore, obedience’s backbone in the OT is hearing Yahweh’s words, understanding Yahweh’s words, and following His requirements. In Wisdom literature,

³⁸⁹ Hubbard, Jr., *Ruth*, 189.

³⁹⁰ LaCocque, *Ruth*, 78.

³⁹¹ R. Gane, and J. Milgrom, “קרוב,” in *TDOT Vol. 13*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David Green (Grand Rapids.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 144. Therefore, their understanding of Ruth 2:20 is that קרוב and גאל are used together to denote the “nearest relative.”

³⁹² J. Packer, “Obedience,” in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. T. Alexander, and Brian Rosner (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 681.

obeying instructions enabled moral and ethical behavior and guided living a practical life, whether with another person or Yahweh. Following instructions contributes to the well-being of a person, whereas forsaking instructions could lead to detrimental consequences. In the Book of Job, two passages will be examined to see how they contribute to understanding obedience.

In Job 22:21, in his third speech, Eliphaz states, “Yield now and be at peace with Him; thereby good will come to you.” In this verse, the biblical author uses the biblical Hebrew term סָכַן, denoting “to be reconciled with.”³⁹³ Baker and Carpenter comment that סָכַן conveys the sense of “to be accustomed to acting in a certain way (Num. 22:30), to take care of things as needed (1 Kgs. 1:2).³⁹⁴ The concept of “submitting” is attached to סָכַן and is the preferred rendering by the *NIV*.³⁹⁵ Eliphaz uses language that is anticipated between friends when there is a falling out between them. In Job 22:2, Eliphaz states that a person cannot be profitable to Yahweh, or יָצַד. Therefore, an intentional wordplay may be involved, indicating that Job can come to terms with and live in harmony with Yahweh.³⁹⁶ A harmonious relationship would

³⁹³ Koehler, and Baumgartner, “סָכַן,” 755. *BDB* specifies by stating “to show harmony with.” See Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “סָכַן,” 698. The biblical Hebrew סָכַן is a root word denoting “to be of use or service, benefit.” The full range of meanings include advantage (one time), ever been accustomed (one time), intimately acquainted (one time), nurse (two times), profits (one time), steward (one time), use (one time), useful (one times), useless (one time), yield (one time). See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, “סָכַן,” 1441. The hithpael stem of סָכַן occurs only in Num. 22:30, Ps. 139:3; Job 22:21. See Walton, and Vizcaino, 245. They state, “Based on a cognate in the Akkadian letters from Amarna and the contexts of the three biblical passages where this form occurs, it is likely that the verb signifies showing awareness, taking an informed position, paying attention—engaging with someone.” Pope comments that סָכַן is used in the same manner in Islam. The Muslim is a person who obtains peace by submission. See Pope, 167.

³⁹⁴ Baker, and Carpenter, “סָכַן,” 778.

³⁹⁵ W. Domeris, “סָכַן,” in *NIDOTTE Vol. 3*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 255. See also Konkel, 149. There is a benefit to those who live righteously before Yahweh. Eliphaz is telling Job that he can enjoy peace if he “submits” to Yahweh.

³⁹⁶ Clines, *WBC Vol. 18a*, 562.

involve “receiving instruction” and “establishing His words” (Job 22:22), according to Eliphaz. Andersen surmises that Eliphaz’s statement is a regurgitation of Bildad’s desire (Job 8:5) and Zophar’s expectation (Job 11:5). He states that their attitude is “fatuous” and an easily arranged assumption of already knowing the outcome.³⁹⁷ Eliphaz’s statement is considered a standard wisdom fare seen in Proverbs 3:9–10; 8:10–11, 18; 21:21; 22:4.³⁹⁸ Von Rad notes that the friends are telling Job to submit to Yahweh’s education and correction as a blessing and not be broken by a futile resistance to Him.³⁹⁹ Wilson Bishai explains that a preferable way to comprehend Job 22:21 is that the second half dictates the verse’s first half meaning. Thus, Eliphaz tells Job to “acquiesce and submit to instruction.”⁴⁰⁰ Habel notes that when read in conjunction with verse 23, Eliphaz tells Job to repent through traditional language. The force of Eliphaz’s advice is indicated in Job 22:22, which uses a wisdom focus of receiving instruction from a wise teacher.⁴⁰¹ Job 22:22 uses the biblical Hebrew word לקח for “receive.” *HALOT* notes that לקח conveys the sense of “to accept, receive, meaning comply with.”⁴⁰² *BDB* comments that לקח means to “receive instruction,” like in Proverbs 24:32.⁴⁰³ The biblical Hebrew לקח is used

³⁹⁷ Andersen, 221.

³⁹⁸ Alden, 236.

³⁹⁹ Rad, 212.

⁴⁰⁰ Wilson Bishai, “Notes on Hskn in Job 22:21,” *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 20, no. 4 (1961): 259. Balentine comments that Job is being told to yield to Yahweh’s authority and submit to His judgments. Therefore, Job’s role, according to Eliphaz, is subordination to Yahweh, which is a requirement for a relationship with Him. Job must receive what Yahweh gives him and take it to heart. See Balentine, *Job*, 341, 349.

⁴⁰¹ Habel, 342.

⁴⁰² Koehler, and Baumgartner, “לקח,” 534.

⁴⁰³ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “לקח,” 543.

figuratively to denote “obeying” or “taking on commands, instructions” (Prov. 10:28).⁴⁰⁴

Therefore, for Job to obtain peace he must obey Yahweh, according to Eliphaz.⁴⁰⁵ Accept His instruction with a teachable spirit eager to learn, receive instruction, and obey.⁴⁰⁶ Obedience’s foundation of hearing, comprehending, and action is further read in Job 36:11.

In Job 36:11, Elihu’s fourth speech, Elihu states that a person who hears and serves Yahweh will enjoy prosperity and pleasures. The first piece of Elihu’s advice is to “hear,” represented by the biblical Hebrew term שָׁמַע. *HALOT* notes that שָׁמַע is used to denote “to hear, to listen to (meaning to harken), to obey.”⁴⁰⁷ *BDB* comments that שָׁמַע can mean to “listen, give heed (hear and do).”⁴⁰⁸ In the Joban context, שָׁמַע is used to express to a person to obey and put into practice what was heard. In Proverbs, a wise person will heed the advice, rebuke, correction, and instruction (Prov 12:15; 13:1; 15:31–32; 19:27; 25:12). Lady Wisdom speaks about

⁴⁰⁴ Baker, and Carpenter, “לָקַח,” 555. P. J. J. S. Els explains that “The sages, and the prophets too, speak of taking or not taking instruction and correction. The exhortation to receive instruction or the report of having appropriated some learning is found in Prov (Prov 1:3; 8:10; 24:32). The prophets complain that their listeners did not receive instruction (Jer 5:3; 17:23; 32:33) or correction (Jer 2:30; 7:28; Zeph 3:2).” See P. J. J. S. Els, “לָקַח,” in *NIDOTTE Vol. 2*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 809.

⁴⁰⁵ Longman III, 290. This is the only place in Job where the word *tôrāh* is used. The terminology of the Mosaic ‘law’ is surprisingly absent from the book. See Andersen, 221. The concept of law as an established body of belief followed by the religious community does not exist in this book. Here *tôrā* or “law” is used as in the Wisdom tradition for the body of instruction given by the wise. See Hartley, 333.

⁴⁰⁶ Steven Lawson, *Job* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2005), “Job 22, Commentary, Eliphaz’s Appeal, 22:21–22.”

⁴⁰⁷ Koehler, and Baumgartner, “שָׁמַע,” 1572. Elihu envisions a person who has sinned in this context. Therefore, the only two options for that person are to obey Yahweh and prosper or disobey Yahweh and face death. See Clines, *WBC Vol. 18b*, 859.

⁴⁰⁸ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “שָׁמַע,” 1033. The biblical Hebrew שָׁמַע is a root word conveying the sense “to hear.” The range of meanings is long, and all uses will not be noted here. However, שָׁמַע does denote obedience in its usage. See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, “שָׁמַע,” 1483.

“listening to me” and “keeping my ways” (Prov. 8:32–34).⁴⁰⁹ The concept of hearing is of central significance in Israel for wisdom. Thus, attentive hearing is beneficial for instruction and obedience.⁴¹⁰ The act of שמע is a prerequisite for gaining wisdom; therefore, wisdom proper usually begins with an exhortation to “hear.”⁴¹¹

The second word of advice in Job 36:11 is denoted by the biblical Hebrew word עבד ("serve"). *HALOT* renders עבד as "to submit."⁴¹² However, *BDB* comprehends עבד as to "serve Yahweh."⁴¹³ In reference to Yahweh, עבד is "serving Yahweh." It is a comprehensive term signifying a relationship with Yahweh and the service to the sanctuary. Therefore, עבד represents an essential and inalterable aspect of a person's life.⁴¹⁴ The errant righteous respond to Yahweh

⁴⁰⁹ K. Aitken, “שמע,” in *NIDOTTE Vol. 4*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 178. It is noted that sometimes with שמע in Hebrew constructions that it can be a challenge to decide whether it construes actual obedience or the willingness to listen which leads to obedience.

⁴¹⁰ H. Schult, “שמע,” in *TLOT Vol.3*, ed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 1377.

⁴¹¹ U. Rütterswörden, “שמע,” in *TDOT Vol. 15*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David Green (Grand Rapids.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 275–6.

⁴¹² Koehler, and Baumgartner, “עבד,” 774.

⁴¹³ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “עבד,” 713. The biblical Hebrew עבד is a root word denoting “to work, serve.” The biblical Hebrew term can be used to convey enslavement, imposition, servitude, observation, and worship. See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, “עבד (H5647),” 1442.

⁴¹⁴ C. Westermann, “עבד,” in *TLOT Vol.2*, ed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 824. The term עבד does not denote subordination to Yahweh but a belonging and security with Yahweh. Therefore, serving Yahweh signifies a relationship with Him and acknowledging that He is responsible for a person's existence. *Ibid.*, 829. It may be possible to understand עבד here as “to do,” i.e., obey. A similar case occurs in Isa. 19:23, which announces that in the future both Egypt and Assyria will עבד, which probably means “serve Yahweh.” See Helmer Ringgren, U. Rütterswörden, and H. Simian-Yofre, “עבד,” in *TDOT Vol. 10*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David Green (Grand Rapids.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 382.

by hearing and willingly obeying Him. They faithfully submit to His divine instructions, which effects a gracious change in their lives.⁴¹⁵

Elihu's fourth speech is considered a doctrinal speech, a theodicy, which is primarily a theology. He suggests that a person's destiny is in Yahweh's hands, and He acts according to their attitude towards Him.⁴¹⁶ Larry Waters explains that Elihu's speech about Job's suffering serves a pedagogical or educational purpose. Suffering's teaching ministry is designed to keep down pride (Job 33:17; 35:12–13; 36:9; 37:19–20). It is also beneficial in obtaining patience (Job 35:14) and cultivating humility before Yahweh (Job 36:24–37:24). However, Elihu sees Job's suffering as divine discipline, leading to Job's disobedience. Thus, Elihu's prompting Job to spiritual discipline is his perception that Job needs to correct his wrongful behavior and start to "hear and serve" Yahweh.⁴¹⁷

In the Book of Job, obedience is observed through סָכַן ("yield" or "submit") in Job 22:21 and לָקַח in Job 22:22. These two verses reflect Elihu's advice to Job to submit to Yahweh's instruction and obey Him. In Job 36:11, שָׁמַע ("hear") and עָבַד ("serve") indicate Elihu's urging for Job to hear Yahweh's instruction and obey Him. Therefore, Job's suffering, per Elihu, is a Yahwistic education to correct the wrongdoing and bring Job back to righteousness, prosperity, and pleasures in life. In the Book of Ruth, obedience is indicated and guides living a moral, ethical, and practical life.

⁴¹⁵ Hartley, 471. The alternatives of promise and threat read in Job 36:11 is like those in Isa. 1:17–20. See also Reyburn, 662.

⁴¹⁶ Ragner Andersen, "The Elihu Speeches: Their Place and Sense in the Book of Job," *Tyndale Bulletin* 66, no. 1 (2015): 87.

⁴¹⁷ Balentine, *Job*, 602. See also Daniel Estes, *Job* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2013), 220.

An example of obeying instructions in the Book of Ruth is Ruth 3:6, where Ruth obeys Naomi's instructions concerning the threshing floor. The first biblical Hebrew word for evaluation is עָשָׂה. The term עָשָׂה uses the same Strong's designation as עָשָׂה.⁴¹⁸ The term עָשָׂה is generally defined as "to do, make."⁴¹⁹ However, associated meanings include obedience and observation. *HALOT* defines עָשָׂה in the obedience context as "to carry out, perform (ordinance, law, proscribed action)."⁴²⁰ Tyler Williams explains that עָשָׂה is used frequently to note the fulfillment or performance of a law or command, either between Yahweh and people or between two people.⁴²¹ By understanding the semantic and lexical background for עָשָׂה, in Ruth 3:6 is revealed that Ruth carries out, performs, and obeys Naomi's instructions. The second biblical Hebrew word for evaluation in Ruth 3:6 is צִוָּה. *BDB* provides a basic definition for צִוָּה as to "lay charge (upon), give charge (to), charge, command, order."⁴²² In the Ruthan context, צִוָּה means to "command."⁴²³ It is additionally a part of a fulfillment formula, where there is a structure of an

⁴¹⁸ For עָשָׂה, the *NASB Exhaustive Concordance* provides an extensive list, which is too long to note here. See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, "עָשָׂה," 1452.

⁴¹⁹ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, "עָשָׂה," 793.

⁴²⁰ Koehler, and Baumgartner, "עָשָׂה," 891.

⁴²¹ Tyler Williams, "צִוָּה," in *NIDOTTE Vol. 3*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 546. The term צִוָּה can convey the sense of carrying out a command. Therefore, in Ruth 3:6, Ruth did what was commanded by Naomi completely. See Ringgren, "צִוָּה," 394.

⁴²² Brown, Driver, and Briggs, "צִוָּה," 845.

⁴²³ *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, "צִוָּה," 1459; Koehler, and Baumgartner, "צִוָּה," 1010–1. The usual subjects for צִוָּה are Yahweh and men. However, women can be the subject (Gen. 27:8; Ruth 3:6; Est. 4:5, 10, 17). See F. Garcia-López, "צִוָּה," in *TDOT Vol. 12*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David Green (Grand Rapids.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 277.

order-execution of order pattern.⁴²⁴ Therefore, since Naomi is Ruth's mother-in-law and superior (familial matriarch), she commands Ruth what action to perform on the threshing floor towards Boaz. Her command to Ruth constitutes a course of action to help Ruth gain a husband and a home.⁴²⁵ Hubbard explains that Ruth entirely performed Naomi's command, which shows unwavering obedience and indicates Ruth's loyalty to Naomi.⁴²⁶ Interestingly, there appears to be a schematic structure in play within Ruth 3 (verses 5 and 6 with verses 11 and 16). The nature of the structure connects Naomi and Boaz through Ruth. Ruth did all Naomi commanded her to do, and Boaz performed all that Naomi said through Ruth.⁴²⁷

Worthy Woman/Wife— Job 2:9–10

In Genesis 2:15, Yahweh created man and placed him in the Garden of Eden to till and keep it. In Genesis 2:18, Yahweh created a woman to be a helper opposite of a man; however, there is no status difference between the two. Yahweh decrees the union between the man and woman in Genesis 2:24, "a man shall leave his father and his mother and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh." Yahweh's divine decree reveals that a husband's and wife's relationship is to be complete. However, after Adam's and Eve's sin, a hierarchy was established

⁴²⁴ G. Liedke, "צורה," in *TLOT Vol.2*, ed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 1063. Both order and command produce a unique action in a particular situation and are given by a superior. The superiors who can give an order or kings, fathers, mothers, brothers, military, and master to servant relationships. *Ibid.*

⁴²⁵ Bush, 155.

⁴²⁶ Hubbard, Jr., *Ruth*, 206. See also Johanna Van Wijk-Boz, "Out of the Shadows: Genesis 38; Judges 4:17–22; Ruth 3," *Semeia* 42 (1988): 61. The distinction between Ruth 3:5 and 3:6 is that in verse 5, "say" is used instead of "command" in verse 6.

⁴²⁷ L. Daniel Hawk, *Ruth* (Nottingham: Apollos, 2015), 99.

by Yahweh.⁴²⁸ However, it is sporadically read in the OT where the wife took a subordinate position in the family home: the one-sided divorce doctrine in Deuteronomy 24:1, considered as part of the husband's property (Exod. 20:17), and the right to have her vows annulled (Num. 30:6). However, the husband did owe duties to his wife (Exod. 21:10).⁴²⁹ In Wisdom Literature, especially in Proverbs, a woman is portrayed either as folly (Prov. 9:13–18) or wisdom (Prov. 1:20–33; 8:1–36; 9:1–6). A worthy woman/wife is described in Proverbs 31. She is characterized by wisdom, independence, and supportive of her husband.⁴³⁰ However, the Book of Job portrays a negative image of a wife, which will be explored in this section to provide the necessity for a wife's worthy characteristics.

In Job 2:9, the reader is introduced to Job's wife.⁴³¹ However, instead of supporting her husband through the loss of property and health, she urges Job to curse Yahweh and die.⁴³² Her role in 2:9 resembles the circumstances surrounding Eve in Genesis 3:1–6. Here, Satan tempts,

⁴²⁸ P. Johnston, "Humanity," in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. T. Alexander, and Brian Rosner (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 565.

⁴²⁹ N. Isaacs, and E. Isaacs, "Relationships, Family," in *ISBE Vol. 4*, ed. Geoffrey Bromiley (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1979–1988), 77.

⁴³⁰ Renate Hood, "Women in the Bible," in *LBD*, ed. John Barry et al. (Bellingham: Lexham Press, 2016), "Women in Wisdom Literature."

⁴³¹ Targum names Job's wife Dinah, based on the connection that Dinah also acted foolishly (Gen. 34:1–10). In the Testament of Job, Job's wife is named Sitis. See Hartley, 83.

⁴³² The LXX and the *Testament of Job* portray Job's wife as helping him and not damning him; therefore, to illicit more sympathy for her. The text's state that she has sacrificed and suffered for her husband by sharing his pain and taking care of him. See David Penchansky, "Job's Wife: The Satan's Handmaid," in *Shall Not the Judge of All the Earth Do What is Right?: Studies on the Nature of God in Tribute to James L. Crenshaw*, ed. James Crenshaw, David Penchansky, and Paul Redditt (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2000), 224. Sam Meier explains that "touch his bone and his flesh" in Job 2:5 also refers to Job's wife. The phrase was used by Adam greeting his helper in the Garden of Eden. Thus, it articulated the relationship between the husband and wife (Gen. 2:23). See Sam Meier, "Job 1–2: A Reflection of Genesis 1–3," *Vetus Testamentum* 39, no. 2 (Apr. 1989): 189.

or deceives, Eve by suggesting that Yahweh is not good or fair because He restricted eating the fruit from the tree. Thus, Eve succumbed to Satan's temptation, and she tempted Adam to eat the fruit. Satan used Job's wife to tempt Job. Her statement to Job is an affirmation of what Satan predicts will happen to Job when he forsakes Yahweh for the loss of property and health.⁴³³ However, her role can be seen as sharing Job's misery and wishing for death.⁴³⁴ Penchansky notes that the wife is a victim of an oppressive male society and a male narrative.⁴³⁵ She suffers because of Satan's wager about Job's integrity; therefore, she wants to see Job suffer terribly.⁴³⁶ Thus, the only avenue of escape for Job is death, according to his wife.⁴³⁷ The biblical Hebrew

⁴³³ Clines, *WBC Vol. 17*, 50.

⁴³⁴ Konkel, 41. Clines comments that Job's wife is dependent on him for financial well-being, social status, and moral standing in the community. When Job loses everything, his wife sees a ruined existence. Additionally, she sees Job as a hypocrite because all the early morning sacrifices for his children amounted to nothing. Therefore, he must be guilty to deserve such a punishment and the only honorable thing for him to do is die. See Clines, *WBC Vol. 17*, 51. S. L. Terrien, Augustine, Chrysostom, and John Calvin view Job's wife in a negative sense. Another view is that the wife is retaining a benevolent relationship with Job. She becomes a spiritual mother by birthing Job into a new level of understanding. See Penchansky, 226. As a spiritual mother, see F. Rachel Magdalene, "Job's Wife as Hero: A Feminist-Forensic Reading of the Book of Job," *Biblical Interpretation* 14, no. 3 (2006): 232. Another perspective is to understand that Job's wife also was suffering a loss, the loss of ten children. Therefore, she is expressing anger and grief by telling her husband to curse Yahweh and die. Job's wife questions if life is worth living if it is cruel and capricious. See Audrey Schindler, "One Who Has Borne Most: The Cri de Coeur of Job's Wife," *Australian Biblical Review* 54 (2006): 25.

⁴³⁵ Victor Sasson states that a bizarre claim made is that evidence is twisted accusing the victim and not the wife, which reflects a biased view. See Victor Sasson, "The Literary and Theological Function of Job's Wife in the Book of Job," *Biblica* 79, no. 1 (1998): 87.

⁴³⁶ Penchansky, 225.

⁴³⁷ Andersen, 98. The wife's statement can be read as an indirect way of committing suicide. It must be admitted that it cannot be told just what she is proposing, and even less what her motive was. If the distraught woman could no longer endure the sight of her patient, tormented husband, and for love's sake would rather death end his misery, then her desperate remedy may be pardoned. The simple sequence, Curse Yahweh, and die, could mean 'Curse Yahweh before you die', that is, while there is still time. She wants Yahweh cursed more than she wants (even if it means) her husband's death. *Ibid.*

term “curse” is the same as “bless,” בָּרַךְ. *HALOT* notes that the piel stem of בָּרַךְ is used euphemistically.⁴³⁸ *BDB* describes בָּרַךְ, in Job 2:9, as a blessing with an antithetical meaning of curse. It is an overdone blessing denoted as a curse in vulgar English.⁴³⁹ Alden comments that to curse Yahweh is tantamount to committing suicide.⁴⁴⁰ However, Pope counters by explaining that cursing Yahweh does not necessitate death. He suggests that Job’s wife realizes he does not have long to live; therefore, he should vent his feelings by cursing Yahweh.⁴⁴¹ However, if Job were to yield to his wife’s course of action, it would undermine his faith in Yahweh.

Therefore, in Job 2:10, Job calls his wife foolish for suggesting that he curse Yahweh and die.⁴⁴² The biblical Hebrew term נָבֵל denotes “foolish” in verse 10. *HALOT* comments that נָבֵל means a person “who has no relationship with Yahweh: fool, unbeliever.”⁴⁴³ *BDB* notes that נָבֵל designates a person who is “senseless; of religious and moral insensibility.”⁴⁴⁴ J. Marböck

⁴³⁸ Koehler, and Baumgartner, “בָּרַךְ,” 160.

⁴³⁹ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “בָּרַךְ,” 139. 1 Kgs. 21:10, 13; Job 1:5, 10; 2:5, 9 are the only six cases where בָּרַךְ is used to denote “curse.” See C. Keller, and G. Wehmeier, “בָּרַךְ,” in *TLOT Vol. 1*, ed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 270. William C. Williams contends that בָּרַךְ is erroneously labeled as a piel when it should be given the qal verbal stem. When בָּרַךְ is used as a euphemism for curse it should be revocalized to a qal. See William C. Williams, “בָּרַךְ,” in *NIDOTTE Vol. 1*, ed. Willem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 741. See also M. Rotenberg, “Did Job’s Wife Use a Euphemism in Job 2:9?,” *Lešonēu* 52 (1987–88): 176–7.

⁴⁴⁰ Alden, 67. Alden further states, “The verb מוֹת, “die,” is not a reflexive, i.e., hithpael, but a simple qal imperative— “drop dead!””

⁴⁴¹ Pope, 22. Reyburn comments that Job 2:9 should be better rendered as “speak evil words against Yahweh” or “tell Yahweh that He is worthless.” See Reyburn, 61.

⁴⁴² Habel calls Job’s response to his wife as a “verbal battle” and a “conflict.” See Habel, 81.

⁴⁴³ Koehler, and Baumgartner, “נָבֵל,” 663.

⁴⁴⁴ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “נָבֵל,” 615. See also Chou-Wee Pan, “נָבֵל,” in *NIDOTTE Vol. 3*, ed. Willem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 12. The biblical Hebrew נָבֵל is derived from the root נָבַל denoting “to be senseless or foolish.” See *NASB Exhaustive*

explains that נָבֵל use in Job 2:10 also appears in 2 Samuel 13:13, which describes the נָבֵל as someone who seriously damages the Israelite community through a sexual transgression.⁴⁴⁵ The term נָבֵל has an intellectual-moral connotation as well as an ethical-religious or social connotation.⁴⁴⁶ Sasson notes that the wife is acting foolishly because she spoke an outlandish and blasphemous suggestion about whether to end Job's and her suffering or because she is trying to get out of a marital commitment.⁴⁴⁷ Job's calling his wife a נָבֵל is not to say that she is mentally unstable or insane; however, he is expressing that she is morally and religiously deficient.⁴⁴⁸ Job may be referring to his wife as נָבֵל, a stupid, worthless, and futile person. The presence of the biblical Hebrew construct כְּדַבֵּר ("speaking") could allude to an ongoing state between Job and his wife; she constantly utters foolishness, which aggravates him.⁴⁴⁹ Regardless, in the sense of wisdom tradition, Job's response to his wife constitutes a double insult: a foolish person was one

Concordance, "נָבֵל," 1432. Therefore, נָבֵל can mean fool (nine times), foolish (five times), foolish man (one time), foolish woman (one time), fools (two times). See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, "נָבֵל," 1432. Alden explains that of the several words for "fool" in Hebrew, this root, נָבֵל, carries with it the overtones of being morally corrupt, dishonorable, insensitive, and irreverent. The immoral dimension is illustrated by its use in Judg 19:23–24; 20:6, 10. The irreverent side appears in Ps 14:1 = 53:1 [2]). See Alden, 67.

⁴⁴⁵ J. Marböck, "נָבֵל," in *TDOT Vol. 9*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David Green (Grand Rapids.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 163. Marböck concludes that the semantic location of the root is that it should be understood as "a breach or derangement of the bonds that unite human beings with each other or with God, whether expressed in status, attitude, word, or deed." *Ibid.*, 171.

⁴⁴⁶ Clines, *WBC Vol. 17*, 53. He states that in Job 2:10, נָבֵל should be taken to mean as "low class" or "common" with a religious and moral overtone. *Ibid.*, 54. Konkel contends that Job's wife was not a foolish woman but spoke like one. See Konkel, 42. Magdalene suggests that Job was not implying that his wife was a foolish woman; however, he becomes angry because she expresses words that were on the verge of coming from him. See Magdalene, 239.

⁴⁴⁷ Sasson, 87.

⁴⁴⁸ Reyburn, 62.

⁴⁴⁹ Emily Gravett, "Biblical Responses: Past and Present Retellings of the Enigmatic Mrs. Job," *Biblical Interpretation* 20, no. 1–2 (2012): 107.

without regard to the appropriate word in time, and while men were considered educated, women were seen as foolish.⁴⁵⁰ Whether it was through personal anguish or disdain for her husband's hypocrisy, it is evident that Satan used her to break Job's spirit so he could win the wager with Yahweh. Susan Garrett comments that Job's wife's role and maternal possessions bound her to the corruptible earth realm and provided easy access for Satan to attack Job despite Job's superior moral standing.⁴⁵¹

Job 2:9–10 provides an antithesis to what a worthy wife is described as in Proverbs 31. In the Joban context, Job's wife is unsupportive, unloving, foolish, religiously, and morally deficient. Augustine labeled Job's wife as "Satan's assistant" because she wittingly or unwittingly encouraged Job to do what Satan expected Job to do. She became Satan's last effort to accomplish what he could not do by taking Job's possessions and health.⁴⁵² Unlike the Joban view of the wife, the Book of Ruth portrays a worthy wife more in line with Proverbs 31.

In Ruth 3:11, Boaz calls Ruth a "woman of excellence." The biblical Hebrew noun used for "excellence" is תָּיִל. The Hebrew noun has the same meaning associated with Proverbs 31:10, "capable wife."⁴⁵³ The same characteristic qualities attributed to the capable wife are applied to Ruth ("woman of noble character" *NIV*).⁴⁵⁴ The phrase אִשָּׁת תָּיִל occurs only three times in the OT (Prov. 12:4; 31:10; Ruth 3:11). In the Megilloth, Ruth follows Proverbs; therefore, the

⁴⁵⁰ Schindler, 25.

⁴⁵¹ Susan Garrett, "The 'Weaker Sex' in the Testament of Job," *JBL* 112, no. 1 (1993): 63, 70.

⁴⁵² Mayer Gruber, "The Rhetoric of Familiarity and Contempt in Job 2:9–10," *Scriptura* 87 (2004): 262.

⁴⁵³ Koehler, and Baumgartner, "תָּיִל," 312.

⁴⁵⁴ Robin Wakely, "תָּיִל," in *NIDOTTE Vol. 2*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 117.

characteristic qualities shared between the two women lends credence to the concept that Ruth is the answer to the question asked in Proverbs 31:10, “An excellent wife, who can find?”⁴⁵⁵ Boaz tells Ruth that the community thinks she is an excellent woman because of her loyalty, lovingkindness, and humility to Naomi and not because of her social and economic status.⁴⁵⁶ Ruth has proven devoted, humble, and hard-working to the community, which outshines her politeness. Her exemplary conduct has elevated her status to a woman worthy of marrying Boaz.⁴⁵⁷

The theme of trust can be seen in Ruth’s decision to forsake her homeland and accompany Naomi to Bethlehem (Ruth 1:16) and acknowledged by Boaz in Ruth 2:11. In 2:11, Boaz acknowledges that Ruth left her parents and homeland to come to Bethlehem (Ruth 1:16–17). Verses 16–17 indicate Ruth’s commitment to Naomi by leaving what she knows to travel to an uncertain life.⁴⁵⁸ Ruth is exhibiting an indirect character of faith (loyalty and trust).⁴⁵⁹ Ruth 3:11 reveals how the townspeople have recognized Ruth’s loyalty and kindness to Naomi and reciprocated that knowledge into trust. Their acknowledgment that she is a worthy woman which

⁴⁵⁵ Samuel Goh, “Ruth as a Superior Woman of לָוִיָּהּ? A Comparison between Ruth and the ‘Capable’ Woman in Proverbs 31:10–31.” *JSOT* 38, no. 4 (2014): 488. The qualities shared are hardworking, loyalty to family, kindness, marriage, resourcefulness, and praises from others. Marriage pertains to Ruth as a capable woman is reflected in 3:10–11, where Boaz praises her for her willingness to marry him (i.e., it is a kindness extended to Boaz from Ruth). See Goh, 491.

⁴⁵⁶ LaCocque, *Ruth*, 99. A special honor reserved in Wisdom literature for an ideal wife.

⁴⁵⁷ Hubbard, Jr., *Ruth*, 216.

⁴⁵⁸ Hubbard, Jr. comments that Ruth willingly chose an uncertain future as a foreign widow, in a strange land, hardly any legal rights, and facing possible racial prejudice. See Hubbard, Jr., *Ruth*, 118.

⁴⁵⁹ LaCocque, *Ruth*, 54.

includes trustworthiness.⁴⁶⁰ Thus, while trust is not explicitly stated in the Book of Ruth, unlike Proverbs, the theme of trustworthiness is indicated. It is a virtue seen in Ruth towards following Naomi from Moab to Bethlehem and is cultivated by Boaz and the townspeople (Ruth 2:11; 3:11).

Ruth's goodness, or righteousness, is viewed in 1:16 when she forsakes her religion to embrace Yahweh, Naomi's God. Furthering her devotion is the invoking of a formula that includes divine punishment for breaking her oath (Ruth 1:17). The oath formula with a divine punishment indicates a total and dedicated commitment on Ruth's part. Her decision to accompany Naomi and remain by her side reflects a life-changing event. It marks a new direction in her life, home, people, and toward a new God, Yahweh.⁴⁶¹ Ruth's acceptance of Yahweh is responsible for the events when Ruth and Naomi reach Bethlehem (Yahweh's redemption).⁴⁶² In Ruth 2:18, Ruth carries home and gives Naomi the leftovers from the meal with Boaz. While this may be considered a requirement, the act better indicates Ruth's generosity. Her kindness towards Naomi reveals that Ruth is a source of abundance and a well of hope.⁴⁶³ Whereas the capable wife supplies her family's and the household's needs (Prov. 31:15), Ruth provides for Naomi. Ruth's actions reveal that she is doing good to Naomi and not evil.

The capable wife and Ruth fear Yahweh (Prov. 31:30; Ruth 1:16–17, respectively). In Proverbs 31:30, it is clearly stated that the woman fears Yahweh. However, in Ruth 1:16–17, it is

⁴⁶⁰ Hubbard, Jr., *Ruth*, 216. Bush comments that the virtues revealed in Prov. 31:10–31 are realized in Ruth: her faithfulness to the social, family, and religious responsibilities. See Bush, 173.

⁴⁶¹ Hubbard, Jr. *Ruth*, 120.

⁴⁶² LaCocque, *Ruth*, 54.

⁴⁶³ LaCocque, *Ruth*, 76. Hubbard calls this a “loyal, affectionate care of Naomi.” See Hubbard, Jr., *Ruth*, 181.

implied. Her willingness to forsake her religion to accept Naomi's God, Yahweh, and to invoke the divine punishment in her oath formula illustrates her fear of Yahweh. Hubbard remarks that Ruth 1:16–17 is a conversion to Yahwism because the marked difference in tone and style indicates a confession.⁴⁶⁴ Ruth's use of Yahweh (God's covenant name) instead of Elohim reveals a personal nature to her commitment. Ruth 2:12 contains Boaz's entreaty for Ruth, which includes protection, "under whose wings you have come to seek refuge." In 1:16–17, Ruth converts to Yahweh, which includes entry into His protective realm. Boaz's prayer in 2:12 acknowledges her conversion by entreating Yahweh to protect her like a mother bird, spreading her wings over the defenseless young.⁴⁶⁵

Ruth 3:10 reveals the kindness extended to Boaz by Ruth through wanting to marry him. Her kindness is an act of dedicated love.⁴⁶⁶ If Boaz's entreaty in 2:12 were for Ruth to be rewarded by Yahweh for her kindness to Naomi, then her רָחֵם in 3:10 would merit additional rewards.⁴⁶⁷ Ruth's רָחֵם towards Boaz is from a lasting relationship, satisfies Ruth's and Naomi's redemption needs, a willing act based on moral grounds, and indicates an extraordinary level of generosity.⁴⁶⁸

The Book of Ruth indicates what a worthy woman or wife entails, which resonates with Proverbs and differs from Job 2:9–10. The ethical qualities of loyalty, kindness, and integrity are

⁴⁶⁴ Hubbard, Jr., *Ruth*, 120, M. D. Gow, "Ruth," in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. T. Alexander, and Brian Rosner (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 177.

⁴⁶⁵ Hubbard, Jr., *Ruth*, 167, Goh, 492.

⁴⁶⁶ Stoebe, " רָחֵם ," 455.

⁴⁶⁷ Those additional rewards would be the blessings of marriage, offspring, and a part of Israel's history. Hubbard believes all of these are true; however, the role of founding mother of the Davidic dynasty seems to bear more weight. See Hubbard, Jr., *Ruth*, 215.

⁴⁶⁸ Bush, 170.

revealed in Ruth’s character, and theologically, those character traits reflect Yahweh’s moral and righteous standards that evoke His blessings on Boaz and Ruth.

City Gate—Job 29:7

Job 29:7 reveals that Job was an important person in the land of Uz, stating that he would sit in the square at the city gate. Job’s location within Edom has been theorized to be near Bozrah, one of the primary governmental centers. The existence of city gates denotes a city’s fortification against attack. Burton MacDonald notes that the Bozrah toponym refers to a defensive feature: fortification.⁴⁶⁹ He notes that the city was on a spur projection protected by steep ravines on the north, east, and west sides. The south side provided easy access to the city. Besides the natural fortification, the city was encased in a 6.8-meter-wide defensive wall.⁴⁷⁰ City walls, gates, and earth ramparts were characteristic of Canaanite fortifications during the Middle Bronze Age. Amihai Mazar notes, “In Palestine, they were still rare during this period, but in the following MB IIB phase they became more common.”⁴⁷¹

The biblical Hebrew term שַׁעַר is used to denote a “gate.” *HALOT* explains that the שַׁעַר was a link between the city and another location in an elevated position (a hilltop or mountain ledge).⁴⁷² *BDB* specifies that Job had the citizen’s right to enter the gate, meaning he lived

⁴⁶⁹ Burton MacDonald, *East of the Jordan* (Atlanta: American Schools of Oriental Research, 2000), 189.

⁴⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷¹ Amihai Mazar, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible, Volume 1* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 181.

⁴⁷² Koehler, and Baumgartner, “שַׁעַר,” 1615–6. The biblical Hebrew שַׁעַר is from an unused word denoting “a gate.” The range of meanings include cities (two times), city (two times), court (two times), courts (one time), each gate (one time), every gate (one time), Gate (forty-nine times), gate (195 times), gatekeepers (one time), gates (eighty-eight times), gateway

outside the city.⁴⁷³ The city gate was the strategic center of the ancient city. Judges were appointed at every gate where cases were decided, and punishments and executions were carried out.⁴⁷⁴ Since the ancient Israelite cities did not have a centralized building within the city to serve multiple purposes, the city gate was the focal point for the city's civil functions. The civil functions held at the city gate were independent of the palace and the temple. In larger cities, the city would be divided into wards, each with a designated gate.⁴⁷⁵ Job's right to be seated indicates the force of Job's status. This status is higher than that of the elders, who would rise to their feet when he approached and remain standing until he sat down.⁴⁷⁶ A significant aspect of 29:7 in association with 2:8 is a reminder of Job's most tremendous loss, his respect within the community.⁴⁷⁷ The source of Job's respect was primarily due to his success and prosperity. However, his wisdom, kindness, blamelessness, and record for caring for the impoverished and

(six times), town (six times), towns (thirteen times). See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, “נָשָׂא,” 1485.

⁴⁷³ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “נָשָׂא,” 1045.

⁴⁷⁴ Richard Hess, “נָשָׂא,” in *NIDOTTE Vol. 4*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 209.

⁴⁷⁵ Eissfeldt Otto, “נָשָׂא,” in *TDOT Vol. 15*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David Green (Grand Rapids.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 395.

⁴⁷⁶ Clines, *WBC Vol. 18a*, 985.

⁴⁷⁷ Konkel, 177. In earlier times he was regarded with awe; when he smiled at others, they could scarcely believe it because honored, dignified men in Job's day did not smile. He was a leader and a comforter; now he was despised and in need of comfort himself. Alden notes that sitting at the square was an honor granted to the noblest and wealthiest of the city's citizens. See Alden, 282. The contrast between Job's present and past is not about wealth and poverty or health and illness. It is the contrast between the public's favor and disfavor towards Job, whose career has been shattered. See René Girard, “The Ancient Trail Trodden by the Wicked’: Job as the Scapegoat,” *Semeia* 33 (1985): 18.

needy played integral roles in Job’s communal recognition.⁴⁷⁸ It was an honor that Job recognized as a part of the blessings bestowed by Yahweh. It was not a private privilege but a prize of the righteous person.⁴⁷⁹

Job 29:7 is a glimpse into Job’s past—when he was highly respected and deserving of a seat in the square at the city gate. The city gate and the associated square played important civil roles in the city’s daily life. Here, Job tended to the impoverished, presided over and decided cases, and meted out punishments and executions. Job’s lament is that his respectable actions for the needy, poor, widow, and orphan have been forgotten, and it is a more significant pain than losing his wealth and health. In the Book of Ruth, the city gate is integral to Boaz fulfilling the kinsman-redeemer role.

The city gate in the Book of Ruth (Ruth 4:1) served the same function indicated in Proverbs 22:22; 31:23; Job 29:7; the location will decide Ruth’s fate. However, unlike Proverbs 22:22; 31:23; Job 29:7, Ruth 4:11 involves a second group of people, the citizens' assembly. Otto comments that this group was distinct from the Council of Elders, but they participated in the administration of civic concerns.⁴⁸⁰ Ben Zvi and Edelman remark that the city gate is the place for deciding the social status of three people in the Book of Ruth: Ruth, Boaz, and the unnamed relative.⁴⁸¹ For Boaz, his roles at the gate shift from a negotiator (Ruth 4:2–6) to a legal

⁴⁷⁸ Andersen, 315. Boorer comments that Job was a person who ruled justly, helped the impoverished, and determined people’s destiny. Therefore, people found hope in Job. But now, Job is placing his hope in Yahweh. See Boorer, 116.

⁴⁷⁹ Rad, 83.

⁴⁸⁰ Otto, “שַׁעַר,” 397.

⁴⁸¹ Carey Walsh, “Testing Entry: The Social Functions of City Gates in Biblical Memory,” in *Memory and the City in Ancient Israel*, ed. Ehud Ben Zvi and Diama Edelman (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2014), 55.

representative (Ruth 4:7–11a) and finally to a kinsman redeemer (Ruth 4:11b–13).⁴⁸² Boaz’s actions further highlight his *hesed* for Ruth. Boaz models this divine characteristic of covenant loyalty by committing to Ruth and Naomi in a public and legally binding setting. The city gate is where Ruth’s fate will be decided and the survival of the family lineage.⁴⁸³

Building Up a House— Job 1:1–3

In Job 1:1–3, the reader is introduced to Job, who lived righteously, feared Yahweh, and was blessed with a big family and many possessions.⁴⁸⁴ The focal point for this discussion is the nature of Job’s family and how it reflects the didactic concept of building a house. The familial unit was also called the “father’s house.” It was the third level of the kinship structure in Israel.⁴⁸⁵ The biblical Hebrew term *בַּיִת* denotes “house.”⁴⁸⁶ The *בַּיִת* was an extended family that included

⁴⁸² Walsh, 55–6.

⁴⁸³ Dell, *The Solomonic Corpus of ‘Wisdom’ and Its Influence*, 181.

⁴⁸⁴ Job epitomizes a wise person by fearing Yahweh. A person who fears Yahweh knows their place in creation and willing to obey Him. Proverbs states that fearing Yahweh is the beginning of wisdom (Prov. 1:7). See Longman III, 79.

⁴⁸⁵ C. J. H. Wright, “Family,” *AYBD*, ed. David Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 762.

⁴⁸⁶ The biblical Hebrew *בַּיִת* is a root word meaning “a house.” The full range of meanings include armory (one time), beneath (one time), Beth-ashbea (one time), Beth-togarmah (two times), between (two times), boxes (one time), buildings (two times), daughter (one time), dungeon (two times), faced inward (one time), family (three times), guard (one time), hall (one time), hangings (one time), harem (five times), holders (seven times), home (thirty-three times), homeborn (two times), homes (two times), house (1,534 times), house and the houses (two times), household (125 times), household was inside (one time), households (seventy-three times), houses (101 times), houses while house (one time), inner (two times), inside (thirteen times), inward (six times), jail (six times), jailer (three times), large enough to hold (one time), palace (twenty-two times), palace and the houses (one time), perfume (one time), place (two times), places (one time), prison (fifteen times), residence (one time), room (six times), rooms (one time), shrine (one time), temple (thirty-six times), temple to the house (one time), temples (two times), tomb (one time), treasury (one time), turned inwards (one time), web (one time), where (one time), within (three times). See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, “בַּיִת,” 1369.

the father and his wife, his sons and their wives, male and female slaves along with their families, resident laborers, and any other non-related residents.⁴⁸⁷ It is recognized in the OT that a father's punishable sin is felt by the entire household (Josh. 7:1–15). Alternatively, an innocent man and his family are protected by Yahweh (Gen. 7:1; Josh. 2:12; 6:22; 1 K. 17:15).⁴⁸⁸ The mentioning of Job's family and possessions serves to illustrate his character: blameless, upright, and fearing Yahweh. Thus, the extent of his family and possessions indicates Yahweh's blessings bestowed on Job.⁴⁸⁹ The number of Job's sons is significant because seven indicates completeness. Further accentuating the idea of completeness is the mentioning of three daughters. The number ten represents a complete family.⁴⁹⁰ Perdue comments that a person's wise behavior, which is rooted in faith, is the source of Yahweh's protection and His blessings of

⁴⁸⁷ Wright, 762. Daughters are excluded because when they marry, they will join their husband's house. Some estimates place a household to be anywhere from fifty to one hundred people. Another clue to a household's size is revealed in the observance of the Sabbath law requiring the stoppage of work on the Sabbath day. This would pertain to father, mother, sons, daughters, sojourners, nonrelated residents, and cattle (Exod. 20:10). See Harry Hoffner, "בֵּית," in *TDOT Vol. 2*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David Green (Grand Rapids.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 113.

⁴⁸⁸ Hoffner, "בֵּית," 114.

⁴⁸⁹ Clines, *WBC Vol. 17*, 9. Clines states that the inclusion of Job's family and possessions are not a "decorative addition" but evidence concerning Job's character. Job's character was the precondition of his family and possessions. The number of sons bestowed on Job is a heritage granted by Yahweh's blessing. A caution should be noted that retributive theology is not at play in the opening verses. *Ibid.*, 13. However, Michael Fox contends that the theology of reward and punishment is at play in the prologue. Job prospered because he was righteous. There is no coincidence that Job was righteous and happened to be fortunate. See Fox, 9.

⁴⁹⁰ Konkel, 30; Andersen, 84. Hartley explains, "The ideal of seven children is referred to in 1 Sam. 2:5; Ruth 4:15. But Job is blessed more abundantly, for he has three daughters in addition to his seven sons. Ugaritic mythology has an interesting parallel: Baal had seven sons and three daughters (UT, 67: V:8–11), and the daughters, but never the sons, are named." See Hartley 67. With the Book of Job as part of Wisdom literature, it is fitting that Job is portrayed as a prime example of an unreprouchful person who has achieved success by the highest standards. See Walton, and Vizcaino, 58.

a large family and wealth.⁴⁹¹ Therefore, through a familial concept of building up a house, Job's character and standing with Yahweh yields a large household. As a father, Job oversaw the farming and herding tasks, provided wisdom instruction, invoked religious and social traditions, and strove to protect the family's honor.⁴⁹² Perdue explains that Yahweh's character and activities are shaped by the family's discourse. Human morality concerns behavior within the context of the household. Therefore, the result for the family is divine blessings and reproduction. The reproduction of the family and livestock is seen as a Yahwistic blessing derived from faithful obedience to Him.⁴⁹³

The Book of Job does not address the physical structure of a home; however, it does provide a glimpse into a prosperous family dynamic. Job 1:1–2 gives an insight into how this is possible by indicating that the head of the household, Job, was a blameless and upright person who feared Yahweh and turned from evil. The brevity of Job's faithfulness is shown by the expanse of his family and possessions. Seven sons are revered as perfect, but seven sons and three daughters are seen as the complete and ideal family. Like the Book of Job, the Book of Ruth does not reflect how to build a successful physical home but how Yahweh's providence yielded a family lineage.

Ruth 2:19 relays a message in Proverbs 5:18: "Let your fountain be blessed." In Ruth 2:19, Naomi says, "he who took notice of you be blessed." The concept presented in Proverbs

⁴⁹¹ Perdue, 86.

⁴⁹² Victor Matthews, "52. Family, Children, and Inheritance in the Biblical World," in *Behind the Scenes of the Old Testament: Cultural, Social, and Historical Contexts*, ed. Jonathan Greer, John Hilber, and John Walton (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2018), "Basic Family Units."

⁴⁹³ Leo Perdue, *Families in Ancient Israel*, 1st ed. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 225–6.

5:18 concerns vitality and fruitfulness, or the abundance of offspring.⁴⁹⁴ The biblical Hebrew counterpart to ‘bless’ is בָּרַךְ. *BDB* states that בָּרַךְ, in this context, is the “blessing of men (blessed be the one blessing thee (Ruth 2:19)).”⁴⁹⁵ Keller and Wehmeier note that בָּרַךְ can be used in a formulaic manner (Prov. 5:18; Ruth 2:19).⁴⁹⁶ Naomi’s expression of blessing reveals that she is asking Yahweh to look favorably upon Boaz, which does not include material prosperity.⁴⁹⁷ Jeremy Schipper comments that Naomi’s blessing suggests that Yahweh’s blessing has not forsaken her home, which includes past and present members (and includes Ruth as a member of the household).⁴⁹⁸ Naomi issues a second blessing in Ruth 2:20 after she is made known who the generous person is, Boaz. This blessing stems from Boaz’s *hesed* and the realization that he is a family member who can redeem Ruth and Naomi. Therefore, Naomi’s excitement comes from the possibility that Boaz is a potential husband for Ruth. Hubbard remarks that Boaz’s and Ruth’s dialogue in 2:8–17 reflects a standard Hebrew literary convention, the “betrothal-type scene” (Gen. 24).⁴⁹⁹ Ruth’s life revealed the outworking of the covenant to the patriarchs, which would tie her destiny to theirs. Thus, it is possible to infer that בָּרַךְ can mean Ruth’s association

⁴⁹⁴ Dell, *The Solomonic Corpus of ‘Wisdom’ and Its Influence*, 182.

⁴⁹⁵ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “בָּרַךְ,” 138. Edward Campbell comments, “A highly interesting variant, almost certainly an expansion but a rather early one, is attested by the Lucianic family with Theodoret; literally it reads at the conclusion of the brief blessing, “for he has satisfied a hungry soul, as he has done with that which he has done.” The first part of this is a quotation from Ps 107:9, and one LXX witness, not usually found with the Lucianic family, stopped with the quotation only.” See Edward Campbell Jr., *AYB Vol. 7: Ruth* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 106.

⁴⁹⁶ Keller, and Wehmeier, “בָּרַךְ,” 268.

⁴⁹⁷ De Waard, and Nida, 40. Block comments that בָּרַךְ is an appeal to Yahweh to bless someone by conferring good upon them (a blessing can take the form of land, offspring, food, clothing, and health). See Block, 612.

⁴⁹⁸ Jeremy Schipper, *AYB Vol. 7d: Ruth* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 139.

⁴⁹⁹ Hubbard, Jr., *Ruth*, 187.

with a family (with Boaz as the kinsman redeemer) and dynasty (Ruth is the great-grandmother to David). In Ruth 4:11, the use of בָּנִיתָ focuses on a dynasty. The Bethlehem women pray for Ruth's destiny to parallel that of Rachel and Leah, who built up the house of Israel.⁵⁰⁰ The women's statement in 4:11 signifies that Ruth was elevated from a foreigner (a Moabitess) to a citizen of Israel, had a home and a husband, and wished that the family would be more significant than Rachel and Leah's.⁵⁰¹

⁵⁰⁰ Dell, *The Solomonic Corpus of 'Wisdom' and Its Influence*, 182. 'Building up a house' is a perpetuating or establishing of a family line. See De Waard, and Nida, 71.

⁵⁰¹ Hubbard, Jr., *Ruth*, 258–9.

Chapter 7

Wisdom teaching in the OT encapsulates various but related themes, which can be viewed positively and negatively (especially outside the Book of Proverbs).¹ Proverbs 1:7 states that the fear of Yahweh is the beginning of wisdom. Thus, the wise person understands that wisdom comes from comprehending that Yahweh is in control through His sovereignty and providence.² This chapter will concentrate on action-related wisdom, or wisdom that governs a person's conduct, which is an understanding of the correct perception of proper behavior pleasing to Yahweh.³ In the OT, wisdom was given by three primary methods. Priests proclaimed Yahweh's Law, the prophets proclaimed Yahweh's divine word, and the sages gave counsel.⁴ In Wisdom Literature, Proverbs searched for knowledge, Ecclesiastes sought the

¹ Martin Shields, "Wisdom," *LBD*, ed. John Barry et al. (Bellingham: Lexham Press, 2016), "Wisdom in the Bible." Adam's and Eve's acquisition of wisdom is viewed negatively because it came about through disobedience to Yahweh (Gen. 3:1–7).

² Perceiving wisdom highlights a person's understanding of the world where people live. Therefore, wisdom pertains to attitudes, relations with people and Yahweh's creation, state of mind, and the meaning of life. See E. Schnabel, "Wisdom," in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander and Brian Rosner (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 843.

³ *Ibid.* Gerhard von Rad comments that a person could not live a day without appreciable harm if they did not have practical experience. In ancient Israel, the Israelites cultivated experiential knowledge by using practical experience from a spiritual and religious context of understanding. See Gerhard von Rad, *Wisdom in Israel* (Great Britain: SCM Press, Ltd., 1972), 3–5. Roland Murphy explains that wisdom involves shaping a person's moral character, which is broader than a person being obedient to the Decalogue. See Roland Murphy, "Wisdom in the OT," *AYBD*, ed. David Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 925. However, Craig Bartholomew notes that wisdom literature assumes certain ethical principles that are like the principles found in the law. See Craig Bartholomew, "Old Testament Wisdom Today," in *Interpreting Old Testament Wisdom Literature*, eds. David Firth and Lindsay Wilson (Westmont: InterVarsity Press, 2017), 25.

⁴ James Crenshaw, *Old Testament Wisdom: An Introduction* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998), 17.

meaning of life, and Job quested for Yahweh’s presence.⁵ The Book of Ruth does not fit neatly within Wisdom Literature; however, it does reveal how action-related wisdom affects the characters.⁶ Therefore, three wisdom aspects will be evaluated: רַחֻם (“kindness”), לַגַּל (“redeemer”), and the fear of Yahweh. Each aspect will be analyzed, the aspect’s use in the OT will be evaluated, and how each aspect is treated in the Book of Ruth will be examined.

רַחֻם (“kindness”) in the Old Testament

The root רַחֻם occurs only in Hebrew and Aramaic.⁷ In biblical Hebrew, רַחֻם primarily has a positive connotation; however, negative connotations are indicated in the OT (Lev. 20:17; Prov, 14:34; 25:10). In the Syriac, the negative sense dominates, and in the Christian Palestinian Aramaic, both connotations are reflected.⁸ The LXX uses ἔλεος as an equivalent for רַחֻם.⁹ In the

⁵ Crenshaw, 50.

⁶ The Book of Ruth shows a closer affiliation with wisdom when studied alongside the Book of Proverbs. However, the dissertation’s previous chapters revealed how the Book of Ruth encapsulates wisdom themes evident in Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Job. Gregory Goswell notes that character, theodicy, providence, kindness, diligence, and reward are some prominent themes shared between Ruth and Wisdom Literature. See Gregory Goswell, “Is Ruth Also Among the Wise?,” in *Interpreting Old Testament Wisdom Literature*, eds. David Firth and Lindsay Wilson (Westmont: InterVarsity Press, 2017), 123.

⁷ Hans-Jürgen Zobel, “רַחֻם,” in *TDOT Vol. 5*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David Green (Grand Rapids.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 44; D. Baer, and R. Gordon, “רַחֻם,” in *NIDOTTE Vol. 2*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 206; H. Stoebe, “רַחֻם,” in *TLOT Vol.2*, ed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 449.

⁸ Stoebe, רַחֻם, 449.

⁹ The Koine Greek term ἔλεος is a primitive root word denoting “mercy, pity, compassion.” The full range of meanings include compassion (two times) and mercy (twenty-five times). See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, “ἔλεος,” 1526. The designation “primitive root” categorizes a term by denoting that it cannot be derived from any other known term. The usual range of meanings for ἔλεος in Classical usage denotes “mercy” or “sympathy.” It is the focus for רַחֻם in exilic theological use and became dominant in the intertestamental period. See Katharine Sakenfeld, *The Meaning of Hesed in the Hebrew Bible: A New Inquiry* (Missoula:

OT, חֶסֶד is used approximately 250 times.¹⁰ Nelson Glueck’s basic assumption for חֶסֶד is that it primarily denotes a relationship between two parties.¹¹ The concept of חֶסֶד has its historical origin in an Israelite society which placed an immense value, in familial and personal relationships, on gratitude.¹² In an ethical-religious perspective, חֶסֶד is Yahweh’s covenantal relationship with His followers, which His followers can expect. Yahweh’s חֶסֶד is a manifestation of His strength and power and is based on His grace.¹³ Therefore, חֶסֶד namely entails human behavior in the secular and religious realm and Yahweh’s dealings with humanity.

Published by Scholars Press for the Harvard Semitic Museum, 1978), 15. Zobel states, “The LXX usually renders חֶסֶד by means of *éleos* (213 times), *eleēmosýnē* (6 times), or *eleēmos* (twice); in addition, we find *dikaíosýnē* (8 times), *cháris* (twice), and (once each) *díkaios* (Isa. 57:1), *dóxa* (Isa. 40:6), *elpís* (2 Ch. 35:26), *táxis* (Prov. 31:26[LXX v. 25]), *tá hósia* (Isa. 55:3), *oiktirmós* (Jer. 31:3[LXX 38:3]), *antiléemptōr* (Ps. 109:12[LXX 108:12]), and *dikaíosýnē kaí éleos* (Ex. 34:7).” Zobel, “חֶסֶד,” 45.

¹⁰ C. Whitely, “The Semantic Range Of Hēsed,” *Biblica* 62, no. 4 (1981): 519. Stoebe and Zobel note 245 occurrences, and Baer and Gordon note 246 occurrences. See Stoebe, “חֶסֶד,” 449; Zobel, “חֶסֶד,” 45; Baer, and Gordon, “חֶסֶד,” 206. Gordon Clark notes 282 occurrences in human-human (92 times), Yahweh-human (187 times), and nonpersonal relationships (three times). See Gordon Clark, *The Word Hēsed in the Hebrew Bible* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 49. The term חֶסֶד has a long range of uses, which expresses an ethical concept. It is an untranslatable biblical Hebrew term that signifies an attitude and virtue; nevertheless, חֶסֶד does not have a precise name in English. See Robert Adams, *Finite and Infinite Goods; A Framework for Ethics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 171.

¹¹ Nelson Glueck, *Hēsed in the Bible*, trans. Alfred Gottschalk (Cincinnati: The Hebrew Union College Park Press, 1967), 35. Glueck notes, that in a secular use, חֶסֶד is between relatives, tribes, hosts and guests, allies, friends, ruler and subjects, and those who have received aid and are under obligation to repay it. *Ibid.*, 37. Sakenfeld comments that because of a personal relationship or by some previous action, a person has some recognizable responsibility for the person who is to receive חֶסֶד. On the other hand, there is no legal requirement or personal obligation to give חֶסֶד. See Sakenfeld, 24. The concept of חֶסֶד goes beyond a legal obligation; however, it denotes a person’s attitude concerning kindness (such as forgiveness) in which the giver is not bound by a strict duty. Thus, “mercy” is understood as חֶסֶד and seen as a type of grace and should extend beyond a demanded duty. See Adams, 172.

¹² Adams, 173.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 102. See also Whitely, 520.

The nominative **רַחֵם** appears throughout the OT.¹⁴ Most nominative occurrences fall within narrative literature and wisdom with a robust representation in Psalms. The biblical Hebrew term **רַחֵם** is derived from the root **רָחַם**, which denotes “to be good, kind.”¹⁵ The term **רַחֵם** usage in the secular realm will be explored first.

A secular usage is read in Genesis 19:19, where Lot pleads his inability to escape to the mountains; however, he states the angel’s **רַחֵם**. Zobel explains that this is a formulaic usage of **רַחֵם** with **עֲשֵׂה**. The nature of the angels’ **רַחֵם** is the protection they provided Lot by taking him and his family out of Sodom. Whitely notes that **רַחֵם** in verse 19 has a more significant meaning than “kindness” or “favor.” Therefore, **רַחֵם** in this context denotes “protection, confidence, assurance.”¹⁶ This view of **רַחֵם** reflects a situation of need, freedom not to fulfill the need, and the

¹⁴ 11 times in Genesis, 4 times in Exodus, 2 times in Numbers, 3 times in Deuteronomy, 3 times in Joshua, 2 times in Judges, 3 times in Ruth, 16 times in 1-2 Samuel, 5 times in 1 Kings, 15 times in 1-2 Chronicles, 3 times in Ezra, 5 times in Nehemiah, 2 times in Esther, 3 times in Job, 127 times in Psalms, 10 times in Proverbs, 8 times in Isaiah (1 time in Isaiah, 4 times in Deutero-Isaiah, 3 times in Trito-Isaiah), 6 times in Jeremiah, 2 times in Lamentations, 2 times in Daniel, 6 times in Hosea, 1 times in Joel, 2 times in Jonah, 3 times in Micah, and 1 time in Zechariah. It does not occur in Leviticus, 2 Kings, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, Ezekiel, Amos, Obadiah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, and Malachi. Four of eight occurrences in Isaiah fall to Deutero-Isaiah and three to Trito-Isaiah. Isa 16:5 is hardly authentically Isaianic, and, in addition, it bears a wisdom character (cf. Prov 20:28) in its formulation, despite a messianic intention (cf. Isa 9:6). See Stoebe, “**רָחַם**,” 449. There is not enough time or space to devote for each occurrence of **רַחֵם** in the OT; therefore, a representation of primary usages will be evaluated.

¹⁵ *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, “**רָחַם**,” 1394. The term **רַחֵם**; therefore, denotes “goodness, kindness.” The full range of meanings include deeds of devotion (two times), devotion (one time), devout (one time), faithfulness (one time), favor (two times), good (one time), kindly (seven times), kindness (thirty-two times), loveliness (one time), lovingkindness (176 times), lovingkindnesses (seven times), loyal deeds (one time), loyalty (six times), mercies (one time), merciful (two times), mercy (one time), righteousness (one time), unchanging love (two times). See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, “**רָחַם**,” 1394.

¹⁶ Whitely, 523–4.

lack of resources of the person needing divine help.¹⁷ Genesis 19:19 reveals the importance of hospitality. Lot took in the two angels and refused to hand them to the Sodomite men, instead offering his daughters. Because he showed favor to his guests, the angels showed חֲסֵד because Lot was worthy of receiving it.¹⁸

In Genesis 20:13, Abimelech restores Sarah to Abraham after their deception. This verse highlights the relationship between relatives. The term חֲסֵד in verse 13 denotes "kindness, mercy, loyalty." However, in the verse's context, it is better to comprehend חֲסֵד as loyalty.¹⁹ The formulaic usage reveals a marital obligation between a husband and wife. Thus, Sarah must show חֲסֵד to Abraham, her husband.²⁰ Due to the seriousness of the situation, Whitely suggests that חֲסֵד should be rendered "pledge" or "agreement."²¹ Therefore, the situation reinforces Glueck's understanding of חֲסֵד in that it is not spontaneous but a mode of behavior defined by rights and obligations.²² However, the use of חֲסֵד in 20:13 highlights two distinct meanings for the biblical

¹⁷ Sakenfeld, 97. See also Victor Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis. Chapters 18–50* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1995), "3. Lot's Departure from Sodom (19:15–22)."

¹⁸ Glueck, 44. He contends that while verse 19 displays חֲסֵד by grace and mercy, the law of hospitality plays a prominent role in the context stemming from the rights and responsibilities between host and guest.

¹⁹ William Reyrburn, and Euan McG. Fry, *Genesis* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1998), 456.

²⁰ Glueck, 39. Sakenfeld notes that חֲסֵד can be comprehended as a duty-oriented conduct; therefore, Abraham is not asking anything more from Sarah than what was normally expected; therefore, it is not a "command" per se. See Sakenfeld, 26–7.

²¹ Whitely, 524.

²² Stoebe, "חֲסֵד," 451.

Hebrew word: חֶסֶד describes an intimate marital bond, and it is applied to covenants and other willing agreements.²³

Joshua 2:12, 14 records a different relationship within the secular realm. In these two verses, Rahab makes the spies pledge to treat her and her family kindly in return for the kindness she extends to them. In this context, חֶסֶד denotes an “agreement, pact, covenant” characterized by faithfulness and loyalty required by both parties.²⁴ The ambiguous situation is that Rahab is a Canaanite prostitute who professes faith in Yahweh (Josh. 2:10–13 reflects her belief that Yahweh was the true God of Israel). Thus, while a Canaanite should be banned from Israel, Rahab’s faith has provided her and her family with inclusion into Israel.²⁵ Clark explains that חֶסֶד is used contiguously with אֱמֻנָה , being used attributively.²⁶ The frequent pairing of חֶסֶד with

²³ Brian Britt, “Unexpected Attachments: A Literary Approach to the Term *Ḥesed* in the Hebrew Bible,” *JSOT* 27, no. 3 (2003): 304.

²⁴ Robert Bratcher, and Barclay Newman, *Joshua* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1983), 30.

²⁵ David Firth, *Including the Stranger* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2019), 21. The concept of חֶסֶד reflected in Josh. 2:12, 14 is indicated in Jdg. 1:24, 25 where the spies sent to Bethel encounter a man whom they implore for information on how to approach the city. Therefore, since the man provided the necessary information, the spies allowed the man and his family to escape Bethel.

²⁶ Clark, 154. Bruce Waltke and Micheal O’Connor explain that an attributive adjective acts as a single syntactical unit in a modified-modifier unit. Therefore, “kindly and faithfully” describes the “we” in Josh. 2:14. See Bruce Waltke, and Michael O’Conner, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 258. Richard Nelson notes a divergence concerning verse 14. He states, “MT expands the spies’ speech, anticipating v. 20 and converting their agreement into a carefully guarded promise contingent on the behavior of Rahab and her family. This connects with the MT revision’s concern for secrecy. In OG [*Old Greek*] Rahab speaks instead, accepting their unconditioned oath by restating their obligation. Perhaps the change in persons in OG was an attempt to recover sense after a misreading of *lānū* “to us” as *lākem* “to you.” Although “city” may be appropriate for Rahab’s viewpoint and “land” for the spies’ perspective, “city” here appears to be a pedantic OG correction, as in v. 18.” See Richard Nelson, *Joshua* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 37.

תמנן agrees with the sense of “faithfulness” or “trustworthiness” of an unfulfilled promise or a commitment in circumstances of continuous need.²⁷

1 Samuel 20:14–15 indicates דִּבְרֵי between David and Jonathan. In this secular usage, a covenantal דִּבְרֵי is envisioned. Jonathan recognizes that David will become king and requests protection for himself and his family when David takes the throne (verses 14–15). Contextually, verses 14–15 can be linked to verse 8 because it involves a covenantal relationship between allies.²⁸ Therefore, David’s request for דִּבְרֵי is based on Jonathan’s love for him. In return, Jonathan asks David for דִּבְרֵי, renewing the vow based on Jonathan’s love for him.²⁹ Loyal love is an aspect of דִּבְרֵי that reflects “steadfast love.” Therefore, the דִּבְרֵי that David is to show to Jonathan’s lineage is either a reflection of Yahweh’s דִּבְרֵי or required by Yahweh.³⁰

Another instance of דִּבְרֵי between two parties is read in Genesis 40:14. In this context; Joseph has interpreted the cupbearer’s dream. Joseph’s interpretation revealed that the cupbearer

²⁷ Baer, and Gordon, “דִּבְרֵי,” 207. Zobel explains that 20:14 includes a hendiadys (דִּבְרֵי with תמנן) and emphasizes the permanence, validity, and certainty of the demonstration or promise of דִּבְרֵי. See Zobel, “דִּבְרֵי,” 48.

²⁸ The inclusion of תְּבָרִית (“covenant”) in 1 Sam. 20:8 reveals the force of David’s and Jonathan’s friendship. It is not their friendship that David appeals for kindness, but the covenantal relationship between them. Therefore, תְּבָרִית is not a requirement for דִּבְרֵי but it provides firm and primary basis for דִּבְרֵי. See Robin Routledge, “Hesed as Obligation: A Re-Examination,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 46, no. 1 (1995): 183.

²⁹ Clark, 125. There is a mutual bond of friendship between David and Jonathan, which involved a sacred covenant concluded by inducing Yahweh’s name. Their mutual friendship turned into a “brotherhood” grounded in דִּבְרֵי. See Glueck, 46. Jonathan’s request to David for דִּבְרֵי is grounded in his concern for his lineage whether he will be alive or dead. Therefore, an oath by David is appropriate for the circumstances since it might occur after Jonathan’s death. Significantly, the דִּבְרֵי in verses 14–15 is not dependent on its inclusion in verse 8. See Sakenfeld, 88.

³⁰ Roger Omanson, and John Ellington, *The First Book of Samuel* (New York: United Bible Societies, 2001), 435.

would be restored to his position by Pharaoh. In return, Joseph asked the cupbearer to repay this good fortune by kindly remembering him before Pharaoh. The crux of Joseph's statement is that he is trying to secure his freedom by the good deed he had performed for the cupbearer, the interpretation of the dream. The distinction of **זָכַר** in 40:14 is that there is not a pre-existing personal bond between Joseph and the cupbearer. Therefore, the basis for **זָכַר** is the interpretation of the dream.³¹ Gordon Wenham suggests that because of Joseph's statements, he is expecting divine rather than human action.³²

A final example of **זָכַר** in the secular realm is read in 1 Kings 20:31. This **זָכַר** is between a king and his subjects. Ben-hadad's servants tell him that they have heard that the Israelite kings showed **זָכַר** ("mercy").³³ In this context, Ben-hadad is seeking the preservation of life, the

³¹ Sakenfeld, 47. There is no legal obligation for the cupbearer to repay Joseph for interpreting his dream even though Joseph performed a service. Joseph's action was a freely performed good deed. In his willingness to help the cupbearer, Joseph realized an avenue of rescue for himself. Ibid., 48. See also Stoebe, "זָכַר," 455. Glueck, however, contends that Gen. 40:14 shows a case of merited obligation because Joseph propitiously interpreted the dream and implores the cupbearer to remember him before Pharaoh after his restoration of duties. See Glueck, 37. Clark states, "Joseph, with Yahweh's help, is able to render service to the butler; all he asks in return is a tangible expression of the butler's appreciation, an appreciation based on the commitment he expects, and which he considers he deserves, because of his good turn to the butler. This incident introduces a deviation from the predominant usage of **זָכַר** in the context of a commitment that already exists; here the commitment is expected but does not yet exist." See Clark, 225.

³² In Genesis, e.g., "remember" (8:1; 9:15; 19:29; 30:22; Exod 2:24), "do this kindness" (24:12, 14; Exod 20:6), and "bring me out of this house" (cf. 15:7 and especially Exod 20:2, "I am the LORD your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt out of the house of bondage"). See Gordon Wenham, *WBC Vol. 2 Genesis 16–50*, ed. Bruce Metzger et al. (Dallas: Word, Inc., 1994), 383.

³³ One interesting aspect of 1 Kgs, 20:31 is that Ben-hadad is asking his servants rather the other way around. Another aspect is that while the general intent as kings who do **זָכַר**, **מִלְכֵי זָכַר** divorces **זָכַר** from any direct connection to the previous encounter between Ahab and Ben-hadad. See Sakenfeld, 51. Ben-hadad talking to his servants represents an ideological change due to the higher level of despotic authority in the Hellenistic world. See Simon DeVries, *WBC Vol. 12: 1 Kings*, 2nd ed., ed. Bruce Metzger et al. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2003), 244.

content of **דָּוָה**.³⁴ The Israelite kings had a reputation for giving **דָּוָה** (David and Solomon) when a claim was submitted for it. The people who fulfilled the basic requirements for a **דָּוָה** relationship were shown it by the monarchy.³⁵ However, in 20:31, **דָּוָה** is not expected or counted on. The mentioning of **דָּוָה מִלְּכֵי הָאָרֶץ** in verse 31 points to a realization of a probable covenant, which materializes in verse 34 when Ahab and Ben-hadad made a **בְּרִית**.³⁶

The previous biblical examples discussed indicate an interhuman relationship concerning **דָּוָה** in a secular realm. Familial devotion, host to guest, friends, nonacquaintances, and the relationship between the king and subjects have been briefly explored. The characteristic attitude and virtue of **דָּוָה** can be seen as either obligatory (such as in a family setting or a host and guest context) or nonobligatory (such as when it is between nonacquaintances or about the monarchy). The following section will explore **דָּוָה** in the divine realm (of Yahweh).

The first area of the divine realm to evaluate is how a person does what Yahweh requires. The biblical Hebrew **דָּוָה** is a mode of conduct of people interacting with each other; additionally, it is pleasing to Yahweh and considered the only proper relationship with Him.³⁷ Hosea 6:6 states that Yahweh delights in **דָּוָה** (“loyalty”) rather than sacrifices. The loyalty requirement expresses Yahweh’s will and is a part of the foundation for a relationship with Him.³⁸ A reciprocal relationship is exposed in the Book of Hosea. On one side, Yahweh provides

³⁴ Clark, 262.

³⁵ Glueck, 51.

³⁶ Stoebe, “**דָּוָה**,” 454.

³⁷ Glueck, 56.

³⁸ Zobel, “**דָּוָה**,” 50. The prophet Hosea is attempting to persuade the people to express **דָּוָה** and the knowledge of Yahweh with each other, which is pleasing to Him. Sacrifices should be brought due to **דָּוָה** and not out of a responsibility. See Clark, 196.

for His people, grants rest and peace, and is full of kindness. On the other side of the relationship, people must obey His commands, pay attention to His demands, and remain faithful to Him.³⁹ Therefore, דָּבָר is no longer a human conduct grounded in obligation but a conduct stemming from a religious and ethical behavior pleasing to Yahweh.⁴⁰ In 6:6, Yahweh's words, through the prophet Hosea, amount to a rejection of strict ritualism of sacrifices. Yahweh is most concerned with covenantal loyalty, which will guard against future Yahwistic wrath if Israel seeks loyalty to and knowledge of Him.⁴¹ This is not to say that sacrifices were to be discarded; however, they are meaningless if they are given without covenantal loyalty and the knowledge of Yahweh.⁴²

³⁹ Glueck, 56–7.

⁴⁰ Sakenfeld comments that דָּבָר coupled with the knowledge of Yahweh is directed towards Him. It is a religious and ethical behavior that goes beyond adherence to ritualistic sacrifices. In return, the דָּבָר expressed towards Yahweh should be a conduct towards other people. See Sakenfeld, 173. Stoebe explains “Hos 6:6 also demonstrates this duality in its juxtaposition of דָּבָר and sacrifice (cf. 1 Sam 15:22). The alternative of דָּבָר toward Yahweh or only among people is falsely posed because, for the OT, both belong together. That דָּבָר and the sacrificial cult are so juxtaposed should be understood against the background of the fact that sacrifice need not exclude human devotion, but that it can also be understood as a duty with necessary consequences for behavior toward others too.” See Stoebe, “ דָּבָר ,” 459. The relational dynamic of דָּבָר directed towards Yahweh and other people, fulfills the Torah laws, and maintains a covenantal relationship between Yahweh and His people. See Paba Andrado, “Hesed and Sacrifice: The Prophetic Critique in Hosea,” *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 78, no. 1 (2016): 55.

⁴¹ Douglas Stuart, *WBC Vol. 31: Hosea-Jonah*, ed. Bruce Metzger et al. (Dallas: Word Books, 1987), 110. Kindness and goodness in moral behavior joined with a knowledge of Yahweh's ethical nature reflect a correct devotion to Yahweh that cannot be achieved through ritualistic sacrifice system. This is a consistent and unchanging requirement Yahweh expects from His people. See A. Macintosh, *ICC: Hosea* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1997), 233–4.

⁴² Hosea did not reject sacrifices. He was against idolatry and perverse sacrilegious attitudes exhibited by the contemporary cultic sacrificial system's abuse. Therefore, Hosea is stressing that sacrifices are properly given when דָּבָר and the knowledge of Yahweh are the foundations for them. See Andrado, 52. See also Britt, 303.

In Jeremiah 2:2, דָּבָר is used to denote “devotion.” In this context, Yahweh is telling the prophet Jeremiah to proclaim to Jerusalem how He remembers their דָּבָר .⁴³ Jeremiah uses a marriage metaphor, borrowed from the Book of Hosea, to reveal that the “marriage ceremony” originated at Sinai, where Yahweh “proposed” and Israel “responded.” Thus, the significance of “devotion,” “love,” and “following” in verse 2.⁴⁴ The דָּבָר of youth parallels the bridal imagery. Due to this portrayal, דָּבָר cannot be rendered “faithfulness;” however, it is comprehended by denoting “trust” and “devotion” in which the youth followed Yahweh.⁴⁵ The concept of דָּבָר in this context refers to an inner disposition of love and not solely to an inner affection. It characterizes a covenantal loyalty to Yahweh, which entails more than a legal obligation to the covenant. Therefore, it is a wholehearted obligation to the covenant arising out of the relationship with Yahweh that it created and by the covenant’s spirit.⁴⁶ Michael DeRoche

⁴³ Yahweh remembers the people’s eagerness to express דָּבָר towards Him. See Elmer Martens, *CBC: Jeremiah*, ed. Philip Comfort (Carol Stream: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 2005), 317.

⁴⁴ Ibid. “The essence of the Sinai covenant had been a relationship of love between *Yahweh* and Israel, but that relationship had implications for both religion and politics. With respect to religion, a nation that loved *Yahweh* could not practice love for other gods, for example, the fertility cults whose worship was permeated with sexual activity. And with respect to politics, a nation bound in contract to *Yahweh* could not also join itself by treaty to other nations as its lord and master.” See Peter Craigie, Paige Kelley, and Joel Drinkard, Jr., *WBC Vol. 26: Jeremiah 1–25*, ed. Bruce Metzger (Dallas: Word Books Publisher, 1991), 24.

⁴⁵ Stoebe, “ דָּבָר ,” 460. Glueck comments that דָּבָר is closest to meaning “loyal affection” in Jer. 2:2. In their youth, Israel achieved true communion with Yahweh, and Yahweh with Israel. Additionally, the דָּבָר Israel expressed was reciprocated by Yahweh through His leading and protection. However, Glueck contends that Israel’s relationship with Yahweh was based on a דָּבָר that involved familial duties, responsibilities, and obligations. See Glueck, 60.

⁴⁶ John Mackay, *Jeremiah: Vol. 1 Ch. 1–20* (Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 2004), 128. However, Michael Fox contends that דָּבָר is not used to describe a person’s attitude or action towards Yahweh. He explains that the phrase $\text{דָּבָרְךָ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ}$ (“the devotion of your youth”) parallels to the phrase “the kindnesses of David” (Isa. 55:3). Thus, the kindnesses were not shown by David but shown to Him from Yahweh. Likewise, the “devotion of your youth” is the devotion shown to the young Israelite nation by Yahweh, not towards Him. Fox calls this a one-

explains that Jeremiah 2:2–3 is better understood when realizing that Jeremiah contrasts Israel’s attitudes. He states that at one time, Israel demonstrated following Yahweh and referred to Him as a husband, displaying רַחֲמֵי in the wilderness. However, once Israel settled in the Promised Land, their attitude changed by not expressing רַחֲמֵי to Yahweh.⁴⁷

Micah 6:8 is another example indicating people’s expression of רַחֲמֵי towards Yahweh.⁴⁸ In this verse, Israel proposes to make up for their sin by doing justice, loving kindness, and walking humbly with Yahweh. Micah 6:8 uses relational terminology by joining the terms “justice” and “kindness,” which entail the qualities people should exhibit in a covenantal relationship with Yahweh.⁴⁹ With regards to רַחֲמֵי , the Israelites are to love kindness and show it to others, which indicates their loyalty and faithfulness to Yahweh, who reciprocates it. Therefore, רַחֲמֵי results in a humble walk with Yahweh. Dan Liroy comments that רַחֲמֵי in 6:8 refers to “mercy.” Thus, as Yahweh showed the people mercy, they are to reciprocate it to others.⁵⁰ The inclusion of the

sided boon given by the one who has the power to aid the recipient. Michael Fox, “Jeremiah 2:2 and the Desert Ideal,” *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 35, no. 4 (Oct. 1973): 443–4. Sakenfeld comments that a superior party is normally the sole source of assistance available to the inferior party. If the superior party chooses not to assist, then the inferior party will meet with disaster. See Sakenfeld, 234.

⁴⁷ Michael DeRoche, “Jeremiah 2:2–3 and Israel’s Love for God During the Wilderness Wanderings,” *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 45, no. 3 (July 1983): 370–1.

⁴⁸ Glueck, 61. Glueck comments that רַחֲמֵי undergoes a considerable expansion in meaning because the term conveys the sense of people becoming each other’s brother along with a relationship with Yahweh. Sakenfeld explains that with respect to Yahweh, Israel has a responsibility to Him and not for Him. The expansion of רַחֲמֵי to the fellowmen is comprehended as people within the Israelite society, and not outside its boundaries. Therefore, the religious responsibility is towards the members in the covenant community. See Sakenfeld, 174.

⁴⁹ Willie Wessels, “Meeting Yahweh’s Requirements – A Proposes Reading of Micah 6:1–8,” *Old Testament Essays (New Series)*, 15, no. 2 (2002): 548.

⁵⁰ Dan Liroy, “The Supreme Importance of Promoting Equity, Kindness, and Humility: A Descriptive and Comparative Analysis of Micah 6:1–16 and 1 Corinthians 13:1–13,” *Conspectus* 25 (Mar. 2018): 64.

phrase “what is good” gives an impetus for a religious of דָּבָר within the covenant framework.⁵¹ Stoebe comments that Micah 6:8 is to be interpreted along the lines of 7:2, which conveys that Yahweh’s דָּבָר is the foundation for trust and life that examples and requires human דָּבָר as a response to other people and Him.⁵² Therefore, the prophet Micah stresses faithfulness and reliability in a covenantal relationship. It conveys covenantal obligations and loyalty to Yahweh by extending it to the fellowman.⁵³ A quality of Yahweh is pre-eminently דָּבָר , which must also be Israel’s response in life. The inward and outward expressions of דָּבָר must govern the actions towards the weak and oppressed in brotherly identification.⁵⁴

⁵¹ Sakenfeld, 189.

⁵² Stoebe, “ דָּבָר ,” 463. Zobel explains that דָּבָר , as read in Mic. 6:8, is presupposed by the wisdom sayings to the extent that the reciprocity of דָּבָר is an important part of the rule for conduct and government of life, as well as the relationship with Yahweh. See Zobel, “ דָּבָר ,” 50.

⁵³ David Clark, and Norman Mundhenk, *Micah* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1982), 234. Leslie Allen states, “In grace *Yahweh* had tied himself in covenant bond and voluntarily taken upon himself obligations he was honor-bound to fulfil. The resultant attitude of heart was *hesed*. As a word of partnership it betokens mutual loyalty, not only the faithfulness of *Yahweh* to man but man’s faithfulness to *Yahweh*.” See Leslie Allen, *NICOT: Micah* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1976), 373. John Smith comments that Micah 6:8 lays hold of the essential elements in religion and, detaching them from all else, sets them in clear relief. It links ethics with piety, duty toward men with duty toward Yahweh, and makes them both coequal factors in religion. See John Smith, *ICC: Micah* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1985), 127.

⁵⁴ Blessing Boloje, “Extravagant Rituals or Ethical Religion (Micah 6:6–8)?: Ritual Interface with Social Responsibility in Micah,” *Old Testament Essays (New Series)* 32, no. 3 (2019): 815.

Psalm 119 is a wisdom psalm⁵⁵ arranged in an alphabetic acrostic, in which each stanza begins with a letter from the Hebrew alphabet.⁵⁶ Psalm 119:41 begins the 11th stanza and indicates Yahweh’s רַחֲמֶיךָ (“lovingkindness”). The psalmist writes about an obedient servant of Yahweh who is loyal and devoted. Throughout the psalm, the obedient servant entreats Yahweh for רַחֲמֶיךָ according to His covenantal promises.⁵⁷ Baer and Gordon comment that Yahweh’s eternal רַחֲמֶיךָ is a self-binding promise to provide רַחֲמֶיךָ into the future. The context of Psalm 119, which involves verse 41, is an urgent reminder for Yahweh to remember His covenantal promise.⁵⁸ In the sixth stanza (119:41–48), the psalmist seeks Yahweh’s salvation from the fiery trial stemming from his loyalty to the Word. The psalmist has faith in this deliverance because of Yahweh’s covenantal promises, which are backed by His רַחֲמֶיךָ.⁵⁹

⁵⁵ OT wisdom includes two literary groups. Wisdom Literature includes Prov., Eccl., and Job. Proverbs seeks to understand the orderly component of life by comprehending how it works, Ecclesiastes and Job are speculative wisdom supplements traditional wisdom by comprehending life’s meaning and why it does not work according to the retribution principle. The second group is the wisdom psalms. The wisdom psalms are composed of literary forms, techniques, and themes that show a close affiliation to Wisdom Literature. See Daniel Estes, *Handbook of the Wisdom Books and Psalms* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 127.

⁵⁶ Ps. 119 consists of twenty-two stanzas with each one beginning with a letter from the Hebrew alphabet in the traditional order. Each stanza is eight verses long with each verse beginning with the appropriate letter from the Hebrew alphabet. Thus, in Ps. 119:41–48, each verse begins with the Hebrew letter ך. See David Freedman, *Psalm 119 The Exaltation of Torah* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1999), 28.

⁵⁷ Glueck, 91.

⁵⁸ Baer, and Gordon, “רַחֲמֶיךָ,” 210. See also Sakenfeld, 219. She notes that Yahweh’s רַחֲמֶיךָ involves His willingness to deliver. Thus, verse 41 is the psalmist’s appeal for action based on Yahweh’s word and covenantal promises. *Ibid.*, 224.

⁵⁹ Steven Lawson, *Psalms 76–150* (Nashville: Holman Reference, 2006), Psalm 119:9–48. II Commentary. 119:41–42. Robert Bratcher and William Reyburn explain that the psalmist’s use of “steadfast love [*lovingkindness*]” and “salvation” are used as synonyms. They comment “These are not mutually exclusive qualities; their meanings overlap, and they are all expressive of Yahweh’s constant commitment to the covenant he made with his people always to love,

Isaiah 16:5 states that “A throne will be established in lovingkindness (“*ṭṭṭ*”).⁶⁰ The term *ṭṭṭ* is used to denote the ethical and religious conduct of the king.⁶¹ The term *ṭṭṭ* is attributed to Yahweh; however, in this context, it is used to denote how a king secures his throne by his humanity or to his subjects.⁶² Therefore, *ṭṭṭ* is the primary feature of a king's rule. While *ṭṭṭ* can be comprehended by “graciousness,” “goodness,” or “kindness,” it can denote the king's “faithfulness” and “love” towards his subjects.⁶³ He would have a perception of what is transpiring in his kingdom, and he would not be deceived or tempted to thwart justice or righteousness because of his *ṭṭṭ*. Thus, according to Yahweh's will, the king would order his kingdom with steadfast love or faithfulness.⁶⁴ A judicial role may be envisioned. Thus, the king in Isaiah 16:5 has the role of judging cases.⁶⁵ This can be supported by comprehending *ṭṭṭ* and

bless, and protect them.” See Robert Bratcher, and William Reyrburn, *Psalms* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1991), 1010 and 386.

⁶⁰ Stoebe notes that Isa. 16:5 is not considered Isaianic, and it bears a wisdom character in its formulation. See Stoebe, “*ṭṭṭ*,” 449. He additionally notes that a king's *ṭṭṭ* means more than his righteousness, it includes his geniality, which supports his throne. *Ibid.*, 455. Hans Wildberger; additionally, does not view Isa. 16:4–5 as coming from the prophet Isaiah. See Hans Wildberger, *CC: Isaiah 1–12*, trans. Thomas Trapp (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 123.

⁶¹ Glueck, 65. The use of *ṭṭṭ* in association with a king has long been understood as the rights and duties between the ruler and subjects. However, in Isa. 16:5, *ṭṭṭ* is expanded to denote the ruler's conduct as a servant of Yahweh towards the subjects.

⁶² George Gray, *The Book of Isaiah I–XXVII* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, Ltd., 1980), 289.

⁶³ Graham Ogden, and Jan Sterk, *Isaiah 1–66* (Reading: United Bible Societies, 2011), 474. Douglas Kennard states that loyal love, faithfulness, justice, and the cause for righteousness are hallmarks of a king's established throne. See Douglas Kennard, *A Biblical Theology of the Book of Isaiah* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2020), 56.

⁶⁴ Andrew Abernathy, *The Book of Isaiah and God's Kingdom*, ed. D. A. Carson (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2016), 132.

⁶⁵ Gregory Goswell, “Isaiah 16: A Forgotten Chapter in the History of Messianism,” *Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament* 28, no. 1 (2014): 97. He notes that the language used in Isa. 16:5 suggests a courtroom scene. “Prompt in righteousness” would be a strong indicator in describing a judge who does not delay judgment wanting to reach a correct verdict. See Jacob

מִשְׁפָּט with מִשְׁפָּט and צְדָקָה as overlapping terms to be exhibited by the king in his role of preserving social justice.⁶⁶

Proverbs 21:21 contains the recognizable biblical Hebrew term for “kindness,” חֶסֶד. *NASB* uses “loyalty” for חֶסֶד in verse 21. Thus, חֶסֶד is a mode of behavior defined by rights and obligations in a relationship.⁶⁷ In 21:21, חֶסֶד involves an active nature; it includes an element of action, רִדְף צְדָקָה וְחֶסֶד (“he who pursues righteousness and loyalty”).⁶⁸ Waltke remarks that “righteousness” in verse 21 highlights the spiritual value’s cause with the material benefit’s consequences. It is the pursuit of kindness and righteousness that results in honor.⁶⁹ Life, prosperity, and honor (Prov. 3:16; 22:4) are the rewards bestowed due to the faithful obligations shown by a wise person who pleases Yahweh. Therefore, longevity, enough wealth to share freely, and an honorable name are the goals of a wise person.⁷⁰

Bazak, “The Meaning of the Term ‘Justice and Righteousness’ in the Bible,” *The Jewish Law Annual* 8 (1989): 8.

⁶⁶ Goswell, “Isaiah 16,” 97. Therefore, the king’s judicial role in Isa. 16:5 is considering the refugee’s request for asylum. In a broader context, Jerusalem is invited to be a part of Yahweh’s plan by establishing His kingdom of righteousness and justice on earth. See Barnabas Aspray, “‘A Throne Will Be Established in Steadfast Love’: Welcoming Refugees and the Davidic Kingdom in Isaiah 16:1–5,” *Open Theology* 7, no. 1 (2021): 438.

⁶⁷ Stoebe, “חֶסֶד,” 451.

⁶⁸ Zobel, “חֶסֶד,” 48.

⁶⁹ Bruce Waltke, *NICOT: The Book of Proverbs, Chapters 15:30–31:31* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2005), 184. Toy explains that “justice” and “kindness” are in view with verse 21 because “righteousness” would make “kindness” unnecessary. See Crawford Toy, *ICC: The Book of Proverbs* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1899), 406. According to Michael Fox, the active pursuit of kindness and justice yields Yahweh’s blessing (“reward”). See Michael Fox, *AYB Vol. 18B: Proverbs 10–31* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 161.

⁷⁰ Paul Koptak, *NIVAC: Proverbs* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 504. Duane Garrett comments that life can be either a long life, eternal life, or the inner life of emotional health. See Duane Garrett, *NAC Vol. 14: Proverbs* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1993), 183.

The term חָכְמָה is reencountered in Proverbs 31:26. Verse 26 is contained within the context concerning the capable wife. Here, it teaches that a capable wife speaks wisely and teaches kindness. The clever wife is exhibiting a self-denying generosity of speech.⁷¹ Therefore, the capable wife is not showing kindness or generosity with material possessions or finances; however, she is generous with her wise instructions on kindness. Toy explains that her wisdom is derived from common sense, good judgment, and discretion, which she freely shares with family, servants, and friends (instruction of kindness).⁷² “Opens her mouth” means speaking at great length or with freedom. Coupled with “wisdom,” the capable wife has a wisdom that she wants to speak about correctly and carefully.⁷³ One interpretive view is that the kind instructions spoken by the wise wife come from Yahweh’s covenant with His people.⁷⁴

In Job 6:14, Job states that a friend should show kindness to a despairing man.⁷⁵ The concept of faithfulness, steadfast love, and kindness has a robust relational aspect necessary to comprehending חֶסֶד .⁷⁶ The term חֶסֶד has affinities with the English words "kindness" and "goodness." It is a human demeanor that can fill a life with form and sometimes the requirement for a community’s birth. The term חֶסֶד is a sacrificial and human willingness to be there for

⁷¹ Stoebe, “ חָכְמָה ,” 455.

⁷² Toy, *Proverbs*, 547. William Reyburn and Euan McG. Fry add that the capable wife may be giving faithful instruction or instruction that is sound. See William Reyburn, and Euan McG. Fry, *UBS: A Handbook on Proverbs* (New York: United Bible Societies, 2000), 662.

⁷³ Waltke, *NICOT: Proverbs 15–31*, 532.

⁷⁴ Tremper Longman III, *BCOT: Proverbs* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 547.

⁷⁵ Glueck notes that חֶסֶד must be practiced towards one’s friend and fellowmen. It is the basic condition and the first proof of fearing Yahweh. See Glueck, 61.

⁷⁶ Baer, and Gordon, “ חֶסֶד ,” 206. Marvin Pope explains that חֶסֶד can mean both “loyalty” and “sympathy.” See Marvin Pope, *AYB Vol. 15: Job* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965), 52.

another person to do a good deed.⁷⁷ The giving of חֶסֶד between people should mirror חֶסֶד between Yahweh and people. Faithfulness and kindness are to be exhibited between people who know each other, with strangers, and the poor, needy, and widowed (1 Sam. 20:15'; Ps. 14:15; Job 6:14; Prov. 19:22; 20:28).⁷⁸ Job's understanding for חֶסֶד is that a person who shows and gives kindness is justified in receiving it.⁷⁹ This concept is illustrated by Rahab when she shows kindness to the Israelite spies and asks for the same towards her family and her (Josh. 2:12, 14). Likewise, between David and Jonathan in 1 Samuel 20:8, 14. Because Job accuses his friends of not reciprocating, he calls them unworthy covenantal partners because they lack true piety.⁸⁰

A final aspect of חֶסֶד is that of an attribute of Yahweh. Exodus 34:6–7 lists the self-revelation of Yahweh. Yahweh's חֶסֶד is a superior quality, permanent, and abundant. He shows חֶסֶד towards people who are favorably disposed toward Him.⁸¹ It is a lasting willingness to act in

⁷⁷ Stoebe, "חֶסֶד," 456.

⁷⁸ Warren Baker, and Eugene Carpenter, "חֶסֶד," *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament* (Chattanooga: AMG Publishers, 2003), 360–1

⁷⁹ Zobel, "חֶסֶד," 47. Zobel states, "In view of the impressive evidence for the mutuality of *hesed*, we may venture the conjecture that even in cases where the context does not suggest such mutuality it is nevertheless implicit, because we are dealing with the closest of human bonds. In the case of Abraham and Sarah (Gen. 20:13) as well as Orpah/Ruth and Mahlon/Chilion (Ruth 1:8), it is the relationship between husband and wife; in the case of Israel and Joseph (Gen. 47:29), it is father and son; in the case of Laban/Bethuel and Isaac (Gen. 24:49), it is next of kin; and in 2 S. 16:17, it should be noted that Hushai's relationship to David is called that of a "friend" (*rēa*')." Ibid., 48.

⁸⁰ Bruce Waltke, and Charles Yu, *An Old Testament Theology: An Exegetical, Canonical, and Thematic Approach* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), III.B.2.

⁸¹ Baer, and Gordon, "חֶסֶד," 212. The term חֶסֶד implies an intimate relationship between the giver and receiver; therefore, it indicates Yahweh's steadfastness or being true to Himself. See Jan Bosman, "The Paradoxical Presence of Exodus 34:6–7 in the Book of the Twelve," *Scriptura* 87 (2004): 235. See also Alphonso Groenewald, "Exodus, Psalms, and Hebrews: A God Abounding in Steadfast Love (Ex. 34:6)," *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies* 64, no. 3 (Mar. 2008): 1375.

the interest of the people.⁸² Yahweh showed רַחֲמֵי (rahamei) even after people sinned. It is through His רַחֲמֵי that when people repent, He would forgive them. However, ethical and religious convictions had to be renewed. Yahweh's רַחֲמֵי is a self-revelatory attribute and is one basis for His covenantal relationship with His people.⁸³ The attribute רַחֲמֵי is one of many describing Yahweh in 34:6–7. These attributes reveal who Yahweh is and define His name.⁸⁴ Yahweh's רַחֲמֵי can be understood as His unchanging love. Yahweh's covenant רַחֲמֵי is joined with אֱמֻנָה (emuna) to indicate His steadfastness and loyalty. He never goes back on a promise; therefore, Yahweh's love is boundless, without measure, and beyond degree.⁸⁵ When joined with אֱמֻנָה, the two words indicate Yahweh's

⁸² Stoebe, “רַחֲמֵי,” 458. Stoebe further explains that, especially in relation to verse 7, “The *hesed* promised here cannot ignore human sinfulness; rather it presupposes and consists in the willingness to forgive sins. It seeks to express a truth that surpasses human conception. God's [*Yahweh's*] comprehensive goodness does not exclude his sovereignty.” Ibid. Zobel notes that Yahweh's רַחֲמֵי can be comprehended in the same manner as humans; however, instead of focusing on a person or a small group of people, Yahweh's רַחֲמֵי extends to the entire people of Israel, which manifests itself in His acts throughout Israel's history. See Zobel, “רַחֲמֵי,” 55.

⁸³ Glueck, 82–3. Sakenfeld explains that Yahweh's רַחֲמֵי consists in His willingness to forgive obtainable only through a person's willingness to assume responsibility. Sin breaks the relationship with Yahweh; however, His רַחֲמֵי is strong enough to forgive any sin. See Sakenfeld, 165. She further states that Yahweh's רַחֲמֵי involving forgiveness must always have been a latent in the theological use of רַחֲמֵי. The provision or taking away of land is the result of Israel's obedience or disobedience of Yahweh. Therefore, Yahweh's forgiveness is a deliverance based on a concrete use of רַחֲמֵי. His רַחֲמֵי reveals His refusal to give up on people, even in the face of rejection. Ibid., 119–20.

⁸⁴ Eugene Carpenter, *Exodus*, ed. H. Wayne House (Bellingham: Lexham Press, 2016), 353. These attributes denote a life-giving description of Yahweh that does not negate but augment His omnipresence, omniscience, and omnipotence. Michael Card notes that the attributes in 34:6–7 are called “the Shelosh-Esreh Middot Ha Rakhmim, the Thirteen Attributes of Mercy.” See Michael Card, *Inexpressible: Hesed and the Mystery of God's Lovingkindness* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2018), “2. The Definitive Encounter. In the Morning.”

⁸⁵ Philip Ryken, and R. Kent. Hughes, *Exodus: Saved for God's Glory* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2005), “91. When God Passes By. God: A Definition.”

reliability and truth.⁸⁶ When Moses asked to see Yahweh, Yahweh revealed His nature. Moses is, therefore, enlightened by his new knowledge, made possible through his request, that the Yahweh he worships is the Yahweh of רָחֻם .⁸⁷ Part of Moses' revelation is that Yahweh's רָחֻם describes His readiness to forgive transgressions and to ensure that the people's sins do not break their relationship with Him. It is an act of forgiveness that Yahweh is not obligated to perform; however, it is an act of reconciliation gifted by Yahweh's sovereign freedom.⁸⁸ The concept of רָחֻם is closely linked with the divine covenants. The Sinaitic covenant and Yahweh's commitment to the people indicate the close association of רָחֻם with the divine covenant.⁸⁹ Psalms 86:15; 103:7–10; 145:8–9; Nehemiah 9:17; Joel 2:13; Isaiah 54:7–8 attest to Yahweh's רָחֻם .

Just as רָחֻם is revealed in other OT books, it can be implicitly and explicitly indicated in the Book of Ruth. It is a primary theme reflected through Ruth and Naomi's relationship, Ruth

⁸⁶ Noel Osborn, and Howard Hatton, *Exodus* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1999), 800. See also Walter Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy* (Minneapolis; Fortress Press, 2005), 217.

⁸⁷ Card, "A New Understanding." Yahweh did not state the words in 34:6–7 to Moses when He gave the first stone tablets. The inclusion of Yahweh's statement with the second stone tablets is to emphasize His giving the people a second chance to enter a covenantal relationship with Him. Yahweh's רָחֻם stems from His covenantal promise to Abraham and his offspring. Therefore, the second stone tablets represent a re-giving of Yahweh's Law to the people stemming from His רָחֻם . See Joel Andersen, "Yhwh's Surprising Covenant Hessed in Jonah," *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 42, no. 1 (Feb. 2012): 5–6.

⁸⁸ Clark, 251. Yahweh's רָחֻם indicates His solidarity with Israel, despite their disobedience, persists. Although He is the 'offended partner,' Yahweh chooses to forgive based on His רָחֻם . See Walter Houston, "The Character of YHWH and the Ethics of the Old Testament: Is Imitatio Dei Appropriate?," *JTS* 58, no. 1 (Apr. 2007): 17.

⁸⁹ Routledge, 187. Yahweh demonstrated His רָחֻם in the Abrahamic covenant by delivering the people from Egypt. In the Sinaitic and Davidic covenants, Yahweh maintains His רָחֻם that Israel had come to expect. Therefore, it was the unfailing and enduring רָחֻם that people based their confidence and appeal for deliverance. *Ibid.*, 188.

and Boaz's relationship, and Yahweh's provision to the people (ending the famine and providing a child).⁹⁰ This section of the dissertation's evaluation of רַחֵם will concentrate on the explicit use of רַחֵם in the Book of Ruth (1:8; 2:20:3:10).

In Ruth 1:8, Naomi is entreating her daughters-in-law to return to Moab. In the process, she prays that Yahweh will deal רַחֵם ("kindly") with them as they have been with her.⁹¹ *HALOT* renders רַחֵם as "to show loyalty."⁹² *BDB* explains that רַחֵם, in the Ruthan context, is to be comprehended as kindness or lovingkindness expressed by Yahweh towards the needs of His creation. Specifically, רַחֵם is a lovingkindness in redemption from a person's enemies or troubles.⁹³ Ruth's רַחֵם extends beyond the usual sense of the biblical Hebrew term because it is

⁹⁰ Gili Kugler, and Ohad Magori, "Hesed in Ruth: A Frail Moral Tool in an Inflexible Social Structure," *Religions* 14, no. 5 (2023): 3 of 13.

⁹¹ Naomi's prayer includes the imperfect verb וַיִּשְׁׁ, which is used to express the wish or desire of a person. Waltke and O'Connor call this use a nonperfective of injunction. See Waltke, and O'Connor, 509–10. There are exegetical consequences for how a person comprehends Naomi's rhetoric. "In the context, Naomi is attempting to motivate her daughters-in-law to return to their families in Moab. An imperfect verb might mean that she is predicting that they will find blessing at home, rather than with her. A jussive verb would be a standard blessing, wishing them well as they go on their way." See Ellis Brotzman, and Eric Tully, *Old Testament Textual Criticism*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016), 145. Edward Campbell prefers the jussive rendering. He states, "The verb is given the full consonantal spelling of an imperfect form, rather than the short spelling of the so-called jussive, but the jussive, expressing a wish, is clearly what is called for throughout Naomi's speech." See Edward Campbell, Jr., *AYB Vol. 7: Ruth* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 65.

⁹² Ludwig Koehler, and Walter Baumgartner, "רַחֵם," *HALOT*, 5th ed. (Leiden: Brill Publishing, 2000), 337.

⁹³ Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles Briggs, "רַחֵם," *BDB* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1996), 339. Stoebe explains that the construction of רַחֵם with הַשֵּׁ indicates the concept of רַחֵם that it transcends the person's deed, which shifts the concept of רַחֵם weight to the side of a promise inherent in an attitude. See Stoebe, "רַחֵם," 453. Zobel notes that the רַחֵם with הַשֵּׁ construction indicates that רַחֵם belongs to the sphere of human interaction, where it is operative. Thus, רַחֵם reflects the relationship between Naomi with her daughters-in-law. See Zobel, "רַחֵם," 46.

an attitude that she willed and not out of familial obligation. She was not obliged to go to Bethlehem with Naomi; however, Ruth's faithful love and loyalty were a reason for her to go with her mother-in-law, not because she was compelled.⁹⁴ Naomi's urging for her daughters-in-law to return to Moab was an attempt to free them from any familial responsibility towards her. However, Ruth freely chooses to go with Naomi.⁹⁵ Another aspect of רָצוּן in Ruth 1:8 is that it invokes Yahweh's רָצוּן according to the רָצוּן that Naomi has received. Naomi realizes that she cannot do anything for Orpah or Ruth; therefore, her prayer includes turning over the repayment of רָצוּן to Yahweh.⁹⁶ Thus, Naomi has relinquished her responsibility for keeping them out of trouble by invoking Yahweh's רָצוּן (deliverance from trouble).⁹⁷ Kugler and Magori note that Naomi's prayer is not one for actions but words because of the kindness the daughters-in-law have shown towards her and her sons.⁹⁸ Ruth's רָצוּן can be viewed as her behavior and decision to go with Naomi, which embodies kindness and selfless love. Boaz will recount her רָצוּן in Ruth 2:11:12.

⁹⁴ Glueck, 40–1.

⁹⁵ It may be considered that Ruth knew about Yahweh due to her being a part of Elimelech's family. This consideration would make it possible for Orpah and Ruth to understand the nature of Naomi's prayer invoking Yahweh's רָצוּן on them. Therefore, Ruth's decision to go with her mother-in-law is not out of a family obligation, but an obligation to Yahweh. In essence, Ruth threw herself at Yahweh's mercy and care. See D. Ulrich, "Ruth 4: Person," in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Wisdom, Poetry & Writings*, ed. Tremper Longman III, and Peter Enns (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 701.

⁹⁶ The term רָצוּן specifies what Naomi prays that Yahweh will do for her daughters-in-law. Thus, רָצוּן connotes loyalty and devotion, but when associated with Yahweh, it describes His lovingkindness and covenant faithfulness. See Adam Howell, *Ruth* (Bellingham: Lexham Press, 2022), 43.

⁹⁷ Sakenfeld, 109. See also Daniel Block, *NAC Vol. 6: Ruth* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 633; Robert Hubbard, Jr., *NICOT: Ruth* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1988), 103.

⁹⁸ Kugler, and Magori, 3 of 13.

The second instance of *חַסְדֵּךָ* in the Book of Ruth is read in Ruth 2:20, where Naomi acknowledges the kindness shown to Ruth. *HALOT* notes that *חַסְדֵּךָ* is a lasting loyalty or faithfulness between relatives (between Ruth and a close relative).⁹⁹ The term *חַסְדֵּךָ* in 2:20 indicates a solid-state relational aspect operating within a familial setting (between Ruth and Boaz, the close relative).¹⁰⁰ Glueck contends that *חַסְדֵּךָ* in 2:20 is a familial obligation with Boaz as the subject, not Yahweh. He explains that nowhere else in the Hebrew Bible does Yahweh show *חַסְדֵּךָ* to the dead because only the living can have a relationship and communion with Him.¹⁰¹ It was Boaz's realization of who Ruth was that he showed *חַסְדֵּךָ* towards her and her dead relatives. Sakenfeld disagrees. She establishes that Boaz's actions towards Ruth were only a general responsibility towards an impoverished person gleaning in the field. Therefore, Yahweh is the primary view in 2:20.¹⁰² Ruth's *חַסְדֵּךָ* towards Naomi and Boaz's *חַסְדֵּךָ* towards Ruth reflects what

⁹⁹ Koehler, and Baumgartner, “*חַסְדֵּךָ*,” 337.

¹⁰⁰ Baer, and Gordon, “*חַסְדֵּךָ*,” 207.

¹⁰¹ Glueck, 42. See also Basil Rebera, “Yahweh or Boaz? Ruth 2:20 Reconsidered,” *The Bible Translator* 36 (1985): 324–5. Frederic Bush explains that it is Boaz's connection with Naomi and Ruth, their urgent need as widows and impoverished, and as a free act by Boaz; that the subject of *חַסְדֵּךָ* is Boaz. See Frederic Bush, *WBC Vol. 9: Ruth, Esther* (Dallas: Word, Inc., 1996), 135. André LaCocque comments that Boaz is the subject because he showed *חַסְדֵּךָ* towards Ruth in the field and during the meal, and the dead that Naomi refers to is her death. Therefore, since Boaz is a close relative, he would be concerned about her death. See André LaCocque, *CC: Ruth* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014), 78.

¹⁰² Sakenfeld, 106. Clark states, “Prepositional *אֵל* is sometimes found with the word *חַסְדֵּךָ*, but the verb is always *עָשָׂה*, not *אֵל עָשָׂה*. *עָשָׂה* is also frequently used with *עִזָּב*—not as a preposition but as the sign of the object. If this is the case here, then *חַסְדֵּךָ* is the subject of *עָשָׂה*, even though this is very rare in narrative passages. It is then probable that *יְהוָה* standing immediately before *אֵל* is the antecedent of this relative particle, rather than the more remote *הוא* (i.e. Boaz), and also the antecedent of the pronominal suffix.” See Clark, 200. Therefore, the subject of *חַסְדֵּךָ* is Yahweh and not Boaz (“May Yahweh, whose lovingkindness has not forsaken the living and the dead, bless him [*Boaz*]”). See also Campbell, Jr., 106, Brotzman, and Tully, 157; Block, 672, Hubbard, Jr., 186.

Yahweh intends for His people to do. Therefore, Boaz's actions are consistent with Yahweh's חֶסֶד , which is kindness towards people.¹⁰³ Naomi recognizes that Boaz's kindness towards Ruth indicates that Yahweh has not withheld His חֶסֶד towards her or her family.¹⁰⁴ Regardless of how the agent of חֶסֶד is, its importance is not diminished. The term חֶסֶד in Ruth 2:20 still reveals lovingkindness, loyalty, and faithfulness either between relatives or Yahweh's covenantal relationship with His people. The significance of חֶסֶד is not lost.

Finally, in Ruth 3:10, Boaz acknowledges Ruth's חֶסֶד to him at the threshing floor, kindness better than what she had shown to Naomi.¹⁰⁵ Ruth's חֶסֶד has incurred Boaz's statement about "being blessed by Yahweh." The blessing is a special provision by Yahweh because of a person demonstrating חֶסֶד to others.¹⁰⁶ Glueck comments that Ruth 3:10 is another example of familial obligation. However, the חֶסֶד that Ruth provides is not towards Boaz but her dead husband. The חֶסֶד shown to her dead husband was leaving her native land and joining Naomi in Bethlehem.¹⁰⁷ What is more probable is that Ruth is showing חֶסֶד to Boaz through her marriage

¹⁰³ Justin Jackson, "The One Who Returned: A Retrospective and Prospective Reading of Ruth," *JETS* 63, no. 3 (Sept. 2020): 450. He explains the human acts of חֶסֶד should be theocentric and theoreminiscent. However, Kugler and Magori contend that Boaz's actions are not defined as חֶסֶד because he has something to gain, another maidservant with a good nature. See Kugler, and Magori, 4 of 13.

¹⁰⁴ Yoo-Ki Kim, "The Agent of חֶסֶד in Naomi's Blessing (Ruth 2, 20)," *Biblica* 95, no. 4 (2014): 593. The clue to the subject of חֶסֶד is found with the ל in $\text{בְּרִיךְ הוּא לְכַלְלֵהָ}$. Waltke and O'Connor comment that the biblical Hebrew verb ברך is categorized as a verb of speaking. Therefore, Boaz would be blessed according to Yahweh and would make Yahweh the subject of חֶסֶד . See Waltke, and O'Connor, 206–7.

¹⁰⁵ Stoebe comments that Ruth's חֶסֶד is universally interpreted as "devoted love." See Stoebe, " חֶסֶד ," 455.

¹⁰⁶ Clark, 262.

¹⁰⁷ Glueck, 40. Sakenfeld remarks that Ruth's חֶסֶד is not so much an obligation but was an action due to her personal relationship with her dead husband. It reflects Ruth's desire to carry

proposal on the threshing floor and by not going after the younger men.¹⁰⁸ The appearance at the threshing floor and the familial devotion shown to Naomi is the basis for Ruth's רַחֵם and Boaz's blessing.¹⁰⁹ The form of the blessing that Boaz bestows on Ruth is identical to the blessing that Naomi attaches to Boaz in Ruth 2:20. Therefore, Boaz's response to Ruth is a form of divine inspiration, realizing that Yahweh's providential care is at play. Yahweh is controlling the individuals, their actions, and their dispositions.¹¹⁰ Ruth's רַחֵם involves Yahweh's רַחֵם (her kindness extended to another person reinforces Yahweh's care for His people). Ruth's רַחֵם has evolved from being kind to her mother-in-law to extending kindness to Boaz, revealed by wanting to marry him instead of another young man. In Ruth 2:20, בָּרַךְ ("to bless") is used as a qal passive participle; however, in 3:10, בָּרַךְ is still used as a passive participle but with an active

on her dead husband's name, which is not legally required by her to do so but a free willingness to perform. See Sakenfeld, 43. However, Zobel comprehends 3:10 as Ruth's relationship with Naomi and to Boaz, whom she prefers over the young men. Therefore, while Ruth may have had her dead husband in mind, her רַחֵם was extended to Boaz. See Zobel, 49.

¹⁰⁸ Barry Webb, *Five Festal Garments*, ed. D. A. Carson (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 47. Ruth's רַחֵם is a nobility characteristic shared by Boaz.

¹⁰⁹ Howell, 212.

¹¹⁰ Block, 692. LaCocque remarks that Ruth 3:10 can be viewed through two planes: legal and narrative. In a legal plane, Boaz has not obligation to marry Ruth, and Ruth has not obligation to marry Boaz. She could have easily gone after one of the younger men. In a narrative plane, Ruth's רַחֵם does not go unnoticed. It is self-sacrificial by choosing Boaz over the younger men. What Ruth demonstrates towards Boaz is not a blind romance but a self-sacrificial רַחֵם. See LaCocque, 98.

form.¹¹¹ Hence, an interpretation of בָּרַךְ would be "may you be (you are) blessed."¹¹² C. A. Keller and G. Wehmeier comment that בָּרַךְ is an exclamation of thankfulness and admiration (the blessed person is the object of praise and thankfulness). When associated with Yahweh, בָּרַךְ means that Yahweh has given the blessed person benevolent power.¹¹³ Dell comments that Boaz is praising Ruth's loyalty because of her loyalty to Naomi and him by proposing marriage instead of going after younger men.¹¹⁴

The biblical Hebrew term בְּרָכָה was evaluated along with its various concepts in the OT. Not every instance of בְּרָכָה was noted due to time and space; however, a sampling was provided to reveal how בְּרָכָה is an interhuman response, a person's response to others based on Yahweh's communal Laws, and a Yahwistic attribute. Finally, three instances of בְּרָכָה were discussed from the Book of Ruth (Ruth 1:8; 2:20; 3:10). Stemming from בְּרָכָה is the concept of גֹּאֵל ("redeemer"), which will be the focus of the dissertation's next section.

¹¹¹ A Hebrew volitional jussive. Waltke and O'Connor explains that a volitional jussive (in the third person) is a directive from a superior to an inferior or vice versa: a pragmatic force. The implicit or explicit direction to the divine realm in a benediction or malediction is a jussive. See Waltke, and O'Connor, 568. Therefore, in Ruth 3:10, Boaz is entreating Yahweh to bless Ruth for her kindness. Michael Brown states, "To pronounce someone as בָּרַכְתָּ or to admit that someone is בָּרַכְתָּ can be: (a) an acknowledgment that God has specially favored and been gracious to that individual, as if to say, "You are loved by the LORD!" or, (b) a prayer or desire that the individual might receive special blessing from God in light of their special acts, equivalent to our, "God bless you!" See Michael Brown, "בָּרַךְ," in *NIDOTTE Vol. 1*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 749.

¹¹² Koehler, and Baumgartner, "בָּרַךְ," 159.

¹¹³ C. A. Keller, and G. Wehmeier, "בָּרַךְ," in *TLOT Vol.1*, ed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 269. Michael Brown denotes that בָּרַךְ was pronounced on a person who was acting in harmony with Yahweh. See Brown, "בָּרַךְ," 745–6.

¹¹⁴ Dell, *The Solomonic Corpus of 'Wisdom' and Its Influence*, 176.

לָאָה (“redeemer”) in the Old Testament

Redemption is a translation from the derivative of the Hebrew root לָאָה.¹¹⁵ Yahweh’s relationship with His creation, especially Israel, is denoted through metaphors using observable nature and social phenomena. From a theological perspective, the redeemer-redeemed relationship is observable through a social and legal lens.¹¹⁶ The redeemer-redeemed relationship is comprehended as a person who pays the price owed by an impoverished relative to affect their release or the release of property.¹¹⁷ A biblical Hebrew term commonly used to denote this relationship is לָאָה.¹¹⁸

The biblical Hebrew root לָאָה is exclusive to the Hebrew language. The only possible cognate is the Amorite proper name *Gā’ilālum*.¹¹⁹ Therefore, due to the term’s limited cultural

¹¹⁵ The term לָאָה is a passive participle derived from לָאָה. The biblical Hebrew term means “redemption, perhaps kin.” The full range of meanings include redemption (seven times), redemption right (two times), redemption rights (one time), right of redemption (three times). See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, “לָאָה,” 1375. The biblical Hebrew term לָאָה is a “primitive” root denoting “to redeem, act as a kinsman.” Its full range of meanings are avenger (thirteen times), bought back (one time), buy back (one time), claim (one time), close relative (three times), closest relative (three times), closest relatives (one time), ever wish to redeem (two times), kinsman (two times), redeem (twenty-two times), redeemed (twenty-five times), redeemer (one time), Redeemer (eighteen times), redeems (one time), relative (two times), relatives (one time), rescue (one time), wishes to redeem (one time). See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, “לָאָה,” 1374. A word is called “primitive” because it is not derived from any other known word in the Hebrew language.

¹¹⁶ Gary Shogren, “Redemption,” in *AYBD*, ed. David Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 650.

¹¹⁷ N. Parker, and Amy Balough, “Redeemer,” in *LBD*, ed. John Barry et al. (Bellingham: Lexham Press, 2016), “Old Testament.”

¹¹⁸ Another biblical Hebrew term used for “redemption” is פָּדָה. However, emphasis will be placed on לָאָה and its usage in the OT.

¹¹⁹ Helmer Ringgren, “לָאָה,” in *TDOT Vol. 2*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David Green (Grand Rapids.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 350; Robert Hubbard, Jr., “לָאָה,” in *NIDOTTE Vol. 1*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 751.

use, it is difficult to determine its etymology. The verb לָאֵל is found in the qal and niph'al, with the qal active participle as a substantive denoting “redeemer.”¹²⁰ The verb לָאֵל commonly finds its linguistic usage conveying the sense of “delivering” or “rescuing.” It is connected to the secular realm regarding the Israelites' social and legal life and the divine realm, indicating Yahweh's redeeming acts.¹²¹ Hubbard comments that the kinsman-redeemer is the most common form of redemption in the OT, whether by a person or by Yahweh.¹²² While לָאֵל pertains to people or property, it is hardly associated with sin in the OT.¹²³ This section will concentrate on the root לָאֵל used in the secular and religious realm.

The first use to be explored is in the secular realm. Leviticus 25:25–34 provides a wealth of understanding concerning לָאֵל association with Israel.¹²⁴ In Leviticus 25:25–28 concerns the redemption of property. An Israelite who was forced to sell his land could have it redeemed with or without a לָאֵל. Leviticus 25 belongs to the Holiness Code and contains regulations for restoring Israel's original conditions.¹²⁵ Verse 25 highlights the redemption of property for an

¹²⁰ Ringgren, “לָאֵל,” 351. The root לָאֵל occurs 118 times in the OT with the qal participle occurring forty-six times. See J. Stamm, “לָאֵל,” in *TLOT Vol.1*, ed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 288.

¹²¹ Mary Vandenberg, “Redemptive Suffering: Christ's Alone,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 60, no. 4 (Nov. 2007): 397.

¹²² R. Hubbard, Jr., “Redemption,” in *NDBT*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander, and Brian Rosner (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 717.

¹²³ E. Harrison, “Redeemer, Redemption,” in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 2nd ed., ed. Walter Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001), 994. The only instances that redemption is associated with sin in the OT is read in Ps. 49:7; 130:8; Isa. 40:2; 44:22; 59:20.

¹²⁴ “Verses 24–55 use the words “redeem, redemption, redeemable” eighteen times (vv. 24, 25, 26 [2×], 29 [2×], 30, 31, 32, 33, 48 [2×], 49 [3×], 51, 52, 54). The verb *gā'al* (“redeem”) and the nouns *gō'el* and *gē'ullā* (“redeemer” and “redemption”) appear in Leviticus again only in ch. 27 (nine times: vv. 13, 15, 19, 20 [2×], 27, 28, 31, 33.” See Victor Hamilton, *Handbook on the Pentateuch*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 291.

¹²⁵ Stamm, “לָאֵל,” 289.

Israelite who had to sell it due to financial struggles. The concept behind the redemption of property is that Israel did not own the land they occupied; Yahweh owned it. Therefore, Yahweh institutes a redemption policy for original landowners to reclaim their property without being sold or lost to outsiders.¹²⁶ It must be noted that when a landowner had his property redeemed by a לָאֵל, he did not possess the land until the Jubilee.¹²⁷ This policy allowed the לָאֵל to recoup his redemption costs and kept the land within the Israelite clan.¹²⁸ Leviticus 25:25 denotes the importance of the לָאֵל. It was a close relative with the right and duty to protect anyone facing any difficulty. Thus, the term לָאֵל brings out the kinship and responsibility of redeeming his relative or his relative's property.¹²⁹ The situation in Leviticus 25:25–28 is that a landowner has become severely in debt due to an inability to support himself. The institution of the לָאֵל helped to prevent wealthy landowners from accumulating too much property or economic power. The social and economic equilibrium was a prominent concern that Yahweh intended to prevent.¹³⁰

¹²⁶ Hubbard, Jr., "לָאֵל," 775. Each Israelite clan had a piece of land assigned to it, and it must always remain in their possession (i.e. a loan from Yahweh).

¹²⁷ Jubilee is an Anglicized transliteration of the Hebrew word יוֹבֵל. The Jubilee is also associated with the Sabbatical year. See Hamilton, 291. The original landowner only sold the land's revenue, its produce or yield. He does not sell his land but, in essence, rents it out until it can be redeemed by a לָאֵל or until the next Jubilee. See Robert Hubbard, "The GO'EL in Ancient Israel: Theological Reflections on an Israelite Institution," *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 1 (1991): 8. The family or community would provide financial aid to the person who was in need. The aid could either be short-term or long-term. Short-term financial aid was a loan backed by collateral, which was to be repaid within six years. However, the long-term financial aid is associated with Jubilee and was to be forgiven if the person could not repay it. See Michael Harbin, "Jubilee and Social Justice," *JETS* 54, no. 4 (Dec. 2011): 688.

¹²⁸ Jacob Milgrom, *CC: Leviticus* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004), 299–300.

¹²⁹ René Péter-Contesse, and John Ellington, *Leviticus* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1990), 384. The idea of redeeming describes the giving of something for the return of an item or a person; therefore, the redemption of property or enslaved people.

¹³⁰ Hubbard, "The GO'EL in Ancient Israel," 9.

Another function of the גאל in the secular realm was the redemption of the enslaved person—Leviticus 25:39–55 concerns Israelite slavery. In verse 39, the reader is introduced to the regulations concerning enslaved Israelites. The fundamental conviction is that a person should not be enslaved to another family member or an Israelite to another Israelite.¹³¹ The biblical Hebrew term עבד is used to denote "slave."¹³² HALOT notes, in this context, that עבד conveys "to let someone work as a slave."¹³³ Enslaved people were distinct from paid laborers because they were the property of their masters.¹³⁴ The Holiness Code no longer referred to people as Hebrews but as brothers. The only time an Israelite could enslave a person is if that person was a foreigner. Israelites could not enslave their "brother" because all Israelites were understood to be enslaved to Yahweh, whom he freed from Egypt.¹³⁵ Debt slavery, however, was

¹³¹ C. Westermann, "עבד," in *TLOT Vol.2*, ed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 821.

¹³² In the Levitical passage, an Israelite who was severely in debt could become a debt-slave ("hireling") to pay off his debt. These individuals could not be treated like a slave. Another form of slavery is the chattel-slaves. These were individuals who were acquired from pagan lands or were captives from an enemy army. See Harbin, 694. Chattel-slaves could be treated harshly and sold or passed on as part of the family inheritance indefinitely. See John Van Seters, "Law of the Hebrew Slave: A Continuing Debate," *Zeitschrift Für Die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 119, no. 2 (2007): 178.

¹³³ Koehler, and Baumgartner, "עבד," 774. The term עבד is derived from the primitive root עבד meaning "to work, serve." See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, "עבד," 1442. The range of meanings for עבד include attendants (one time), bondage (two times), male (twenty-four times), male servant (seven times), male servants (five times), male slaves (one time), officers (one time), official (two times), Servant (six times), servant (332 times), servant's (four times), servants (365 times), servants' (two times), slave (twenty-five times), slave's (one time), slavery (eleven times), slaves (twenty-seven times). See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, "עבד," 1443.

¹³⁴ Helmer Ringgren, U. Rütterswörden, and H. Simian-Yofre, "עבד," in *TDOT Vol. 10*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David Green (Grand Rapids.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 387.

¹³⁵ Ringgren, Rütterswörden, and Simian-Yofre, "עבד," 388. See also Calum Carmichael, "The Three Laws on the Release of Slaves (Ex 21,2–11; Dtn 15,12–18; Lev 25,39–46)," *Zeitschrift Für Die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 112, no. 4 (2000): 524.

a common practice in Israel. This type of slavery is reminiscent of a skilled laborer. The distinction is that a debt-slave was an Israelite who was in financial distress and willing to pay off a debt through labor. It was a temporary situation and allowed some rights.¹³⁶

Leviticus 25:48 introduces the גאל. In the debt-slave context, the גאל could release a person from debt bondage.¹³⁷ Verses 48–49 stipulate that a brother (fellow Israelite), uncle, uncle’s son, or another blood relative could redeem the Israelite from debt bondage. The גאל does not perform redemption, per se, but the liberation of the enslaved Israelites. The effect of the Jubilee competed with the old regulation concerning the manumission of an Israelite debt-slave after six years (Ex. 21:2–6; Deut. 15:12).¹³⁸ Hubbard comments that debt slavery may indicate a more severe case of financial distress because it may imply that the impoverished Israelite has already mortgaged his property.¹³⁹ While in debt bondage, the Israelites earned wages that would be applied to the outstanding debt; additionally, any surplus of money could be used to pay off the debt and restore the Israelite’s status.¹⁴⁰ The function of the גאל was to implement Yahweh’s rights and policies toward His land and people and serve a restoration

¹³⁶ Gordon Wenham, *NICOT: Leviticus* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1979), 322.

¹³⁷ Koehler, and Baumgartner “גאל,” 169. See also Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “גאל,” 145. The Israelite debtor was not to be treated like a slave; however, if an Israelite sold himself to a foreigner, then the גאל could be used in this circumstance. See Ringgren, “גאל,” 325. See also Hamilton, *Handbook on the Pentateuch*, 291.

¹³⁸ Stamm, “גאל,” 290. See also, Hubbard, Jr. “גאל,” 775.

¹³⁹ Hubbard, “The GO’EL in Ancient Israel,” 10. He additionally comments that it is unclear why an impoverished Israelite would seek this recourse from a foreigner. Israel’s law did not allow a non-Israelite to own property; however, they could have business ventures in Israel. Therefore, the impoverished Israelite may seek a foreigner’s help because of their wealth.

¹⁴⁰ Milgrom, 306–7. He additionally comments that the Israelite debt slave’s family had no obligation to redeem him. Thus, if the debt was not paid off entirely, the Jubilee would allow the forgiveness of the debt and the restoration of status. See also Harbin, 688.

purpose, whether through the redemption of property or debt bondage. Thus, the לָאֵל served Yahweh by acting as a redeemer to vulnerable Israelites, like Yahweh redeemed the vulnerable Hebrews from Egypt.¹⁴¹

The religious realm for לָאֵל still hinges on the secular comprehension of the biblical Hebrew term. Legal and social issues still play a role in the religious understanding of לָאֵל. Therefore, some legal nuances can be addressed.¹⁴²

Proverbs 23:10–11 warns against the exploitation of the needy and poor. Verse 10 provides admonition, and verse 11 introduces the redeemer who will provide the protection. The biblical Hebrew verb לָאֵל is used to describe the person's actions that will plead the poor person's case. *HALOT* explains that לָאֵל, in verse 11, means “to claim for oneself, redeems orphans and widows.”¹⁴³ However, *BDB* specifies that Yahweh is the verb's subject and implies a personal relationship with orphans.¹⁴⁴ Leviticus 25:25–28; 29–34; 47–49 deals with the poor and needy, who must sell themselves or their property to a wealthy person or neighbor. The לָאֵל is a

¹⁴¹ Hubbard, “The GO’EL in Ancient Israel,” 12–13.

¹⁴² Ringgren, “לָאֵל,” 352.

¹⁴³ Koehler, and Baumgartner, “לָאֵל, 169. The *NASB Exhaustive Concordance* provides the following probable meanings for לָאֵל: avenger (thirteen times), bought back (one time), buy back (one time), claim (one time), close relative (three times), closest relative (three times), closest relatives (one time), ever wish to redeem (two times), kinsman (two times), redeem (twenty-two times), redeemed (twenty-five times), redeemer (one time), Redeemer (eighteen times), redeems (one time), relative (two times), relatives (one time), rescue (one time), wishes to redeem (one time). See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, “לָאֵל,” 1374.

¹⁴⁴ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “לָאֵל,” 145. J. J. Stamm comments that Proverbs 23:10 applies to Yahweh because He is the protector of the weak against mighty opponents. See Stamm, “לָאֵל,” 292. Hubbard states that Yahweh is the Redeemer that protects an orphan's property from illegal encroachment. See Hubbard, Jr., “לָאֵל,” 778.

family member responsible for redeeming lost property or the enslaved individual.¹⁴⁵ The theological implication of לָאֵל is that Yahweh possesses land, and the Israelites have temporary custody of it; therefore, if it is lost, it must be redeemed. The land cannot be entirely sold and must be available for repurchase. Additionally, an enslaved Israelite is a descendant of the people freed from slavery in Egypt (Ex. 6:6); therefore, they cannot continue to be enslaved.¹⁴⁶ The probable view in Proverbs 23:11 is that Yahweh is performing the role of a kinsman redeemer by protecting those who cannot protect themselves. Therefore, Yahweh is defending His people like a human לָאֵל would protect a family member.¹⁴⁷ Dell remarks that in the case of the orphan, widow, or poor, the stronger redeemer is often the savior from adversity.¹⁴⁸

The “He” in verse 11 indicates Yahweh as the Redeemer.¹⁴⁹ He will “plead their case” at the time of judgment. The Father of the fatherless and the Defender of the poor and needy will condemn those who exploit the defenseless people.¹⁵⁰ Fox comments that Proverbs 23:11 is reminiscent of an Egyptian text (Amenemope 7.19 and 8.14, divine punishment), which provides

¹⁴⁵The word לָאֵל “is used of a man’s nearest relative at a particular time. In Lev. 25:48f., it refers to a man’s brother, uncle, cousin, or some other kinsman who is responsible for standing up for him and maintaining his rights. Behind this usage stands the strong feeling of tribal solidarity: not only the members of a clan, but also their possessions, form an organic unity, and every disruption of this unity is regarded as intolerable and as something which must be restored or repaired.” See Ringgren, “לָאֵל,” 351.

¹⁴⁶ Stamm, “לָאֵל,” 289–90. The qal participle form of לָאֵל is substantivized in verse 11. See Stamm, “לָאֵל,” 288.

¹⁴⁷ Hubbard, Jr., “לָאֵל,” 778.

¹⁴⁸ Dell, 180.

¹⁴⁹ Ringgren, “לָאֵל,” 352.

¹⁵⁰ Waltke, *NICOT: Proverbs 15–31*, 245. He; additionally, states “As verse 23:10 uses a metonymy of effect, 23:11 uses a metonym of cause. The moving of the boundary stones resulted from corrupt legislation and sharp legal practices by powerful and influential neighbors, and *Yahweh* leaping to the defense of the helpless guarantees that the oppressors are evicted, punished and their victims reinstated on their fields.” Ibid.

clues to how the ancient Israelite's comprehension of redeemership possibly evolved.¹⁵¹ The divine punishment language used in verse 11 is based on the legal system created to protect the poor and defenseless. Therefore, anyone caught breaking the protection laws was subject to punishment. As a Redeemer, Yahweh will use the same tactics against the people who used them against the poor and defenseless.¹⁵²

In this biblical passage (Prov.23:10–11), it is revealed how a לָאָה ("to redeem") is used as a nominative to describe a person's action of redeeming a person and property, albeit divinely. Yahweh's actions as a redeemer follow closely to the legal system established for the Israelites in Leviticus to release taken property and enslaved people just as Yahweh did for them in Exodus. Proverbs 23:10–11 acknowledges Yahweh's divine providence in protecting the defenseless against mighty oppressors.

Psalms 72 is a royal psalm¹⁵³ where it is revealed in verse 14 that the king will לָאָה ("rescue") his people. *HALOT* describes it as the redemption of the pious.¹⁵⁴ Stamm comments that לָאָה refers to an individual's deliverance in the present.¹⁵⁵ The crux of Ps. 72:14 is that it is

¹⁵¹ Fox, *AYB Vol. 18B*, 732.

¹⁵² Koptak, 546. Garrett explains that Proverbs 23:10–11 envisages a courtroom scene where Yahweh is portrayed as an attorney defending the oppressed party against the wrongdoers, who have no hope in winning. See Garrett, 196.

¹⁵³ A royal psalm celebrates the Israelite king's coronation either at the time of inauguration or during an annual festival in which his coronation was celebrated. See Bratcher, and Reyburn, 621. Tremper Longman calls Psalm 72 a "kingship" psalm. See Tremper Longman III, *Psalms* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2014), "Psalm 72: A Prayer For the King. Context."

¹⁵⁴ Koehler, and Baumgartner, "לָאָה," 169.

¹⁵⁵ Therefore, לָאָה does not constitute a past or present action. The consideration is based on the liberated people involved and the time that it occurred. See Stamm, "לָאָה," 292. Charles Spurgeon comments that deceit and violence are the two things that assails an impoverished person, "both the law and no law are employed to fleece them." See Charles Spurgeon, *The Treasury of David Vol. 3: Psalm LVIII to LXXXVII* (London: Marshall Brothers Ltd., 1869), 230.

being affirmed that the king conforms to the common practice of rescuing his people from legal oppression by restoring their rights to them.¹⁵⁶ The separation of “oppression” and “violence” indicates that the Israelite king will rescue the impoverished from the people who oppress and treat them cruelly.¹⁵⁷ Andrew Mein states that the world order in Psalm 72 is a “top-down one.” Yahweh stands at the pinnacle of the pyramid with kings under Him. Therefore, Yahweh’s justice, care, and provision are handed down to the kings who rule with the same characteristics. The monarchy then becomes a divinely authorized institution that cultivates peace and fertility of the land, is genuinely concerned with the treatment of the vulnerable, and is a result of the virtuous behavior that allows the king to rule.¹⁵⁸ The Israelite king’s responsibility to his people is read through an interweaving of covenantal imperatives addressed to the king and divine promises conditioned by the imperatives.¹⁵⁹ The king acting as a לַאֲלֹהִים for people experiencing poverty is the basis for the monarchy’s financial prosperity. Verses 1–4 and 12–14 concern the care for the vulnerable, while verses 5–7 and 8–11 envision the monarchy’s well-being.¹⁶⁰ As a לַאֲלֹהִים, the king is tasked to defend those people who cannot defend themselves through compassion and not through laws. The king’s compassion and redemption should mirror Yahweh’s because it

¹⁵⁶ Hubbard, Jr., “לַאֲלֹהִים,” 778.

¹⁵⁷ Bratcher, and Reyburn, 628.

¹⁵⁸ Andrew Mein, “Justice and Dominion: The Imperial Legacy of Psalm 72,” *Bangalore Theological Forum* 41, no. 2 (2009): 146, 157. See also John Pleins, *The Psalms* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1993), 110.

¹⁵⁹ Walter Brueggeman, and William Bellinger, *Psalms* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 313.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 314.

is His people that the king rules. While compassionate, the king must be powerful to rescue Yahweh's people who are oppressed and on the verge of losing their lives.¹⁶¹

In Job 19:25, Job states to Bildad that he knows “that my Redeemer lives.” *NASB* indicates that the *לֹאֵל* in verse 25 is the Redeemer, the living Yahweh. To support this interpretation, *HALOT* notes that, in the Joban context, *לֹאֵל* denotes “to reclaim as one's own, to redeem (Yahweh).”¹⁶² Stamm applies *לֹאֵל* to Yahweh; however, he uses a legal context by noting that *לֹאֵל* is to be comprehended as a “lawyer” or “legal aid.”¹⁶³ However, Ringgren digresses from this accepted interpretation by explaining that it does not make sense for Job to acknowledge Yahweh as his “lawyer,” considering that Yahweh would not defend Job in a legal case against Himself.¹⁶⁴ A concern with the comprehension that the *לֹאֵל* is Yahweh, the Redeemer, is that the interpretation is made with the NT in mind.¹⁶⁵ However, a proper understanding of *לֹאֵל* should be

¹⁶¹ Gerald Wilson, *NIVAC: Psalms* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 989. Wilson notes that the king is not only rescuing the person but their divinely appointed core which is the source of self-awareness and self-determination: their soul.

¹⁶² Koehler, and Baumgartner, “*לֹאֵל*,” 169. See also Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “*לֹאֵל*,” 145.

¹⁶³ Stamm, “*לֹאֵל*,” 292. See also Hubbard, Jr., “*לֹאֵל*,” 778.

¹⁶⁴ Ringgren, “*לֹאֵל*,” 355. He states, “The point in Job 19:25 is that just as there is a vindicator in an earthly lawsuit, so in Job's dispute with *Yahweh* there must also be one who intercedes for him, but it does not make clear who this vindicator might be. Accordingly, what we have here is an inexact statement: Job wishes to express the conviction that he must be acquitted in the end, and he clothes this thought in the figurative language of the lawsuit: someone must vindicate him to prove his innocence.” *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁵ The identification of Job's Redeemer is a complex discussion evenly divided among scholars. An extensive investigation into Job's Redeemer is beyond the scope of this dissertation. There are many legitimate alternatives to interpreting Job 19:25. What makes the identification challenging is that there are issues surrounding the translation, and when the context takes place. Suzanne Boorer takes the stance that the *לֹאֵל* rises after death and that Job hopes to see Yahweh before his death. Therefore, according to this possibility, Job hopes to see Yahweh before his death and that hope continues after his death by the *לֹאֵל* vindication. See Susan Boorer, “Job's Hope: A Reading of the Book of Job from the Perspective of Hope,” *Colloquium* 30, no. 2 (Nov.

confined to the OT and with the Joban context in mind.¹⁶⁶ Therefore, Job is looking for a לֹאֵל, a kinsman-redeemer, who will vindicate him and guarantee that Job will get a fair hearing and defend his innocence.¹⁶⁷ This comprehension parallels Proverbs 23:10–11, where the לֹאֵל is a redeemer who will plead the orphan’s case.¹⁶⁸ While questionable, Job could have had Yahweh in mind as his “living Redeemer” when לֹאֵל is comprehended along with Job 9:22 (“umpire”), Job 16:19 (“witness”), and Job 19:26 (Job’s reference to seeing Yahweh).¹⁶⁹ The לֹאֵל could pertain to Yahweh as delivering Job from imminent death (see also Ps. 103:4; Lam. 3:58).¹⁷⁰ John Hartley adds that the biblical author’s choice of using “Redeemer” for לֹאֵל reveals a special place in Jewish confessional theology. It is an intentional allusion to Yahweh’s deliverance of and love for His people, which is attached to the divine title “Redeemer.”¹⁷¹ In the Pentateuch and

1988): 113. Another concern is the number of defective spellings in the Book of Job, which may deviate from the biblical author’s intended meaning. See David Freedman, “Orthographic Peculiarities in the Book of Job,” *Eretz-Israel* 9 (1969): 35–44. Specifically, the nonrepresentation of a final vowel in the orthography. *Ibid.*, 43.

¹⁶⁶ It is possible that the term לֹאֵל was used in Job 19:25 to denote the role of a blood avenger. In Job 16:18, Job makes an appeal to the earth to not cover his blood since the violence he endured equated to murder. See Norman Habel, *The Book of Job* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1985), 304. The use of לֹאֵל in Job 19:25 is someone (a redeemer) who can restore Job’s life and health, which reflects a usage concerning a setting-in-life. See Michael Barré, “Note on Job 19:25,” *Vetus Testamentum* 29, no. 1 (Jan. 1979): 107.

¹⁶⁷ Estes, 79. See also August Konkel, *CBC Vol. 6: Job*, ed. Philip Comfort et al. (Carol Stream: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 2006), 130.

¹⁶⁸ Edouard Dhorme, *A Commentary on the Book of Job* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1984), 283.

¹⁶⁹ Job does not agree with his friends, while he admits to having sinned, he feels that the punishment does not fit the crime. Therefore, Job is confident that Yahweh will clear him of all charges. See David Deuel, “Job 19:25 and Job 23:10 Revisited: An Exegetical Note,” *The Master’s Seminary Journal* 5, no. 1 (Spring 1994): 98.

¹⁷⁰ Pope, 146.

¹⁷¹ John Hartley, *NICOT: Job* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1988), 293.

historical books, the term לֹאֵל was comprehended in commercial or legal terms; however, in the Psalms and prophets, it developed a theological sense.¹⁷² Matthew Suriano makes another observation. He contends that the לֹאֵל is a kinsman-redeemer; however, the לֹאֵל functions as a kinsman who performs the necessary duties to honor Job. Thus, the לֹאֵל ensured that Job's remains were placed in the family burial site and his name recorded in an epitaph.¹⁷³ While the identity of the לֹאֵל is debatable in Job 19:25, the function is not. The לֹאֵל is still envisioned as someone who will redeem Job's innocence.¹⁷⁴

Yahweh is seen as the לֹאֵל in Exodus 6:6. In this verse, Yahweh states that He will redeem the Hebrews "with an outstretched arm and with great judgments." Like Job 19:25, *HALOT* renders לֹאֵל as "to reclaim as one's own, to redeem (Yahweh)."¹⁷⁵ Thus, Yahweh is delivering His people from Egyptian bondage. A salvific element is applied to the legal term, read in religiotheological language.¹⁷⁶ Yahweh's salvific activity is directed toward an internal

¹⁷² Robert Alden, *NAC Vol. 11: Job* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1993), 207.

¹⁷³ Matthew Suriano, "Death, Disinheritance, and Job's Kinsman-Redeemer," *JBL* 129, no. 1 (Spring 2010): 59. He contends that Job's לֹאֵל is not within a courtroom scene but concerns Job's death and burial. The consequence of an unrighteous life is a terrible death and the erasure of one's name from memory. Therefore, Job's לֹאֵל will defend him against the final retribution and preserve his name. *Ibid.*, 65. A problem with this contention is that Job realizes that he has no hope of vindication from either his friends or family. Therefore, there would not be a לֹאֵל to preserve his name or defend his honor.

¹⁷⁴ The לֹאֵל is someone who will justify another person who cannot help themselves. Thus, Job is asking for outside help to vindicate his name before Yahweh. See Jamie Bissmeyer, "Job's Eschatological Hope: The Implication of Job's Redeemer for Social Justice," *The Master's Seminary Journal* 30, no. 2 (Fall 2019): 217.

¹⁷⁵ Koehler, and Baumgartner, "לֹאֵל," 169.

¹⁷⁶ Stamm, "לֹאֵל," 291. Joseph Wimmer calls this portion of Exodus as an "announcement of salvation." He notes that a communal lament, Yahweh's awareness of the Hebrew's distress, His promise of action, and His plan of action allude to salvific oracle. See Joseph Wimmer, "Tradition Reinterpreted in Ex. 6,2-7,7," *Augustinianum* 7 (1967): 412.

and societal change. Thus, Yahweh changes all aspects of life: religious, political, social, and individual. Exodus 6:6 indicates that poverty and oppression are not the end for the Hebrews because Yahweh will be their **לאל**.¹⁷⁷ Hubbard suggests that **לאל**, in this context, is a paradigmatic act of redemption. He elaborates that in Exodus 6:6, redemption is the rescue of people enslaved by military means; it is not the redemption of enslaved people, as read in Leviticus 25: 39–55.¹⁷⁸ Brevard Childs explains that Exodus 6:2–8 is bracketed by Yahweh’s name and that the core verses explicate His name and reveal His purpose for Israel: Yahweh will deliver, adopt, and make a covenant with Israel.¹⁷⁹ The use of **לאל** indicates a kinship relationship between Yahweh and the Hebrews.¹⁸⁰ This relationship reveals that Yahweh will be Israel’s God, and Israel will be Yahweh’s people. It, additionally, reflects the covenantal promises made to Abraham (Gen. 13:14–17; 15:13–14). When Yahweh is the subject of the biblical Hebrew verb **לאל** (Ex. 6:6), the Hebrews will be restored to their original condition of liberty. In other texts, when Yahweh is the subject of **לאל**, Israel’s restoration from Babylonian exile is read (Isa. 43:1; 44:23; 48:20; 52:9), and when death is changed to life and hopelessness to hope (Ps. 103:4; Lam. 3:58, Hos. 13:14).¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁷ Terrence Fretheim, *Exodus* (Louisville: John Knox Westminster Press, 2010), “The Meaning of Liberation and Exodus as Paradigm.”

¹⁷⁸ Hubbard, Jr., “**לאל**,” 777.

¹⁷⁹ Brevard Childs, *The Book of Exodus* (Louisville: Westminster Press, 2004), 115.

¹⁸⁰ The anthropomorphic allusion that Yahweh is **לאל** (“redeemer” or “next of kin”) stems from Israel’s understanding as united in familial bond with Yahweh. As a self-designated relative, an allusion is made that Yahweh shows **רִחֻם** by delivering the Hebrews from Pharaoh’s bondage. See Richard Sklba, “The Redeemer of Israel,” *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 34, no. 1 (1972): 14.

¹⁸¹ Victor Hamilton, *Exodus* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), “Part 2: Liberation from Egypt. God, Not Moses is Lord. 6:6–8.” Fretheim notes that while Yahweh does redeem the Hebrews from Egypt it is not the end of their “slavery.” The Hebrew liberation is not intended as a declaration of independence because the Hebrews are moved from the bondage of

In Isaiah 44:23, Yahweh's role as **לגא** serves as a glorification to Him and for all His creation to rejoice.¹⁸² The prophet Isaiah uses **לגא** for the redemption and return of the exiles from Babylonian captivity. Thus, this context can be viewed as an eschatological song of praise.¹⁸³ While this gives immediate hope for the exiled Israelites, it also serves as a point to all nations. Witnesses to Yahweh's redemption of His people will show the pagan nations who Yahweh is and the futility of their idols.¹⁸⁴ The biblical Hebrew term retains its ancient sense of redemption from slavery.¹⁸⁵ The use of **לגא** in verse 23 reveals Yahweh's restoration of Jerusalem.¹⁸⁶ It reflects Yahweh's powerful nature and His willingness to forgive sins.¹⁸⁷ Thus, He is the Redeemer redeeming the exiles from Babylonian captivity, the price for their transgressions. The prophecy of Israel going home is something to be rejoiced by all of nature.¹⁸⁸ The comprehension of Yahweh being the **לגא** indicates the familial relationship He has with Israel and the obligations

Pharaoh to Yahweh's service as His chosen people. See Fretheim, *Exodus*, "The Meaning of Liberation and Exodus as Paradigm."

¹⁸² Ringgren, "לגא," 354.

¹⁸³ Stamm, "לגא," 293. It is an imminent but future salvific act that will be rejoiced by nature.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 293–4.

¹⁸⁵ Hubbard, Jr., "לגא," 777.

¹⁸⁶ Yahweh performs the earthly office of Redeemer of Israel to physically deliver them from captivity. This liberation is a new exodus and uses the **לגא** concept with its familial implications to frame Yahweh's promises of a post-exilic experience. See S. Ashdown, "A Cognitive Semantic Approach to Redeemer (Gō'ēl) in Deutero-Isaiah," *Acta Theologica* 35, no. 1 (Jan. 2015): 6. Isaiah 43:19 is a divine promise for a new deliverance from slavery reminiscent of the deliverance from Egypt.

¹⁸⁷ Israel's redemption has cosmic significance because it reveals Yahweh's sovereignty. Yahweh is more power than the fictitious Babylonian gods. See Walter Brueggeman, *Isaiah 40–66*, 1st ed. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998), 72.

¹⁸⁸ Larry Walker, *CBC Vol. 8: Isaiah*, ed. Philip Comfort (Carol Stream: Tyndale House Publishers, 2005), 196.

that come with that redeemer relationship. Punishment cannot be the final act in the relationship.¹⁸⁹ However, Yahweh's relationship with Israel is personal and intimate, based on His covenant with them. As Israel's לַאֲלֹהֵי, Yahweh has the responsibility to redeem the rights and privileges of His people.¹⁹⁰ He willingly does this for Israel out of His love and pity for them. As a redeemed people, Israel shows the world they are a distinct group that enjoys Yahweh's redemption.¹⁹¹ Likewise, when Yahweh redeems His people, then sin's curse is removed from all of creation (Ps. 96:10; 98:7); therefore, they rejoice.¹⁹²

Finally, in Psalm 78:35, the psalmist reminds Israel of how Yahweh was their rock and לַאֲלֹהֵי, "Redeemer." Yahweh's redemption was the Hebrew's liberation from Egyptian bondage. Psalm 78 is a didactic review of Israel's wilderness rebellion and recalls how distressed Israel remembered Yahweh, the Redeemer, who delivered the Hebrews from slavery in Egypt.¹⁹³ Ringgren states in Psalm 78:35 that לַאֲלֹהֵי is a divine epithet for Yahweh, the protector that never

¹⁸⁹ John Goldingay, and David Payne. *Isaiah 40–55* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 1:51.

¹⁹⁰ Redemptive promises are as much for Yahweh as they are for Israel. A לַאֲלֹהֵי cannot let his servant be shamed because eventually the shame rests on the redeemer's shoulders (Isa. 48:11; 49:23). See Ashdown, 19.

¹⁹¹ Kennard, 153–4.

¹⁹² J. Motyer, *Isaiah* (Nottingham: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 317.

¹⁹³ Hubbard, Jr. "לַאֲלֹהֵי," 778. Estes explains that Psalm 78 is a psalmody used for noncultic private instruction. In other words, it is a private composition that seeks to praise Yahweh and instruct the youth. See Estes, 127. However, Crenshaw does not include Ps. 78 in his list of wisdom psalms. Only Ps. 37, 39, 49, and 73 are included in his list. He notes that a wisdom psalm incorporates the question about divine justice pertaining to the wicked's apparent prosperity. See Crenshaw, 171. Gili Kugler notes that Psalm 78 is a historical text like Ps. 105, 106, 135, and 136. According to Kugler, Psalm 78 aims to justify a particular Israelite socio-political structure. See Gili Kugler, "Not Moses, but David: Theology and Politics in Psalm 78," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 73, no. 2 (2020): 132.

waivers.¹⁹⁴ Psalm 78:32–39 recalls Israel’s sin, punishment, and repentance cycle. However, Yahweh, as the גאל, continues to show mercy by forgiving Israel’s sins and redeeming His people.¹⁹⁵ Even though Israel was unfaithful to Yahweh, He was faithful to them. After each Israelite cycle, Yahweh remembers His covenant, remains trustworthy, and redeems Israel.¹⁹⁶ The biblical Hebrew term צור ("rock") parallels גאל in 78:35. The term גאל denotes that Yahweh is the Redeemer and that He is a צור, a source of protection. *HALOT* notes that צור is used metaphorically to denote a place of protection, refuge, and safety.¹⁹⁷ The term צור is primarily found in hymns, thanksgiving songs, and confidence and lament psalms. It denotes Yahweh’s help, protection, refuge, saving activity, and unshakeable faithfulness.¹⁹⁸ Therefore, according to the psalmist in Psalm 78:35, Yahweh is גאל and צור (“Redeemer” and “Rock:” the source of rescue and the place of rescue).¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁴ Ringgren, “גאל,” 355. Israel thought about the fact that Yahweh was their protector and savior; however, it did not sustain them, and they fell back to their sinful ways. See Bratcher, and Reyburn, 692.

¹⁹⁵ Christine Jones, “Lessons Learned: Applying a Hermeneutic of Curiosity to Psalm 78,” *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 44, no. 2 (Summer 2017): 178.

¹⁹⁶ Phillip McMillion, “Psalm 78: Teaching the Next Generation,” *Restoration Quarterly* 43, no. 4 (2001): 227.

¹⁹⁷ Koehler, and Baumgartner, “צור,” 1017. Likewise, *BDB* explains that צור is a figurative of Yahweh which conveys the sense of defense and support for His people. See Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “צור,” 849.

¹⁹⁸ A. S. van der Woude, “צור,” in *TLOT Vol.2*, ed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 1070. As Israel’s “Rock,” Yahweh was a unique God (1 Sam 2:2; Isa 44:8) and eternal God (Isa 26:4), their creator (Deut 32:18), their protection and salvation (Deut 32:15; Ps 62:6–7 [7–8]; 94:22), their provider (Ps 81:16 [17]; Isa 48:21), and a righteous judge (Hab 1:12). See Andrew Hill, “צור,” in *NIDOTTE Vol. 3*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 790.

¹⁹⁹ Heinz-Josef Fabry, “צור,” in *TDOT Vol. 12*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David Green (Grand Rapids.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 318.

Outside the Book of Ruth, the OT reveals the various aspects of לָאֵל both in the secular and religious realms. The OT indicates how people are to act as a לָאֵל towards each other, how acting as a לָאֵל reflects on Yahweh's standard, and how Yahweh is לָאֵל for His people. In the Book of Ruth, לָאֵל is encountered explicitly and implicitly. However, the focus will be on the explicit use of לָאֵל in the Ruthan text found ten times (Ruth 2:20; 3:9, 12, 13; 4:1, 3, 4, 6, 8, 14).

The biblical Hebrew term לָאֵל is found in Ruth 2:20, where Naomi acknowledges that Boaz is a לָאֵל. *HALOT* states that in the Ruthan context, לָאֵל is a redeemer.²⁰⁰ Naomi's open praise for Yahweh's kindness and faithfulness is due to the realization that Boaz is a לָאֵל ("kinsman-redeemer"), which allows for Ruth's and her redemption.²⁰¹ However, the use of לָאֵל does not appear to reflect a legal sense in 2:20.²⁰² Its use conveys a reference to Yahweh, who acts on behalf of His people. Yahweh, as Israel's לָאֵל reproached her widowhood by becoming her husband. Thus, Yahweh is remedying Ruth's and Naomi's widowhood by providing Boaz as the לָאֵל.²⁰³ The use of לָאֵל additionally signals a shift in Ruth's social status. By referring to Boaz as a לָאֵל, which is reserved for family members, Naomi is embracing her daughter-in-law and revealing that she is a familial member deserving the role of a לָאֵל recipient.²⁰⁴ The joining of נָא

²⁰⁰ Koehler, and Baumgartner, "לָאֵל," 169. *BDB* comments that the לָאֵל is the next of kin, kinsman that acts as a redeemer. See Brown, Driver, and Briggs, "לָאֵל," 145.

²⁰¹ Jackson. 441. The use of לָאֵל anticipates the prospect of a happy marriage for Ruth and the eventual provision of an heir. See Hubbard, "The GO'EL in Ancient Israel," 14.

²⁰² Kirsten Nielson, *Ruth*, 1st ed. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 64.

²⁰³ Bush, 137. Block notes that the plural use of לָאֵל signifies that Naomi is anticipating a future marriage for Ruth. See Block, 676.

²⁰⁴ Hubbard, Jr., *Ruth*, 189. See also Mary Evans, *Judges and Ruth* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2017), "D. Naomi and Ruth: Conversation at the End of the Day (2:17–23). 19–22."

with **לֹאֵל** conveys a sense reminiscent of Psalm 69:19 (18), where deliverance is from general distress.²⁰⁵

Naomi's categorization of Boaz as a **לֹאֵל** justifies Ruth's marriage proposal to him in Ruth 3:9.²⁰⁶ In Ruth 3:9, Ruth refers to Boaz as a **לֹאֵל**, a close relative. Therefore, by her request for Boaz to "spread your covering over your maid," Ruth shows her desire to marry Boaz, who has shown the willingness to act as a **לֹאֵל**. By this symbolic action, Ruth becomes Boaz's beloved, and he becomes her protector and husband.²⁰⁷ Bush comments that Ruth is basing her marriage proposal to Boaz on the levirate marriage law (Deut. 25:5–10), which would be his responsibility as a **לֹאֵל**.²⁰⁸ Ruth deviates from Naomi's instructions (Ruth 3:2–4) by invoking the **לֹאֵל** custom herself instead of Boaz. This deviation reveals that Ruth is more concerned about Naomi than herself.²⁰⁹ LaCocque comments that there is a metaphor in play with the covering and the term **לֹאֵל**. Both allude to Yahweh's protection and His role as **לֹאֵל**. Thus, when Ruth tells Boaz to cover her, she alludes to his protection and the redeemer of Ruth's and Naomi's clan.²¹⁰

²⁰⁵ Ringgren, "לֹאֵל," 353. See also Howell, 177.

²⁰⁶ Hubbard, Jr., "לֹאֵל," 776. The meaning of **לֹאֵל** in Ruth 3:9 is like what was noted in 2:20. The distinction between the two verses is that in 2:20 Naomi identifies Boaz as a **לֹאֵל**, and, in 3:9; Ruth classifies Boaz as a **לֹאֵל** to fulfill the role. See Block, 692.

²⁰⁷ Jackson, 442.

²⁰⁸ Bush, 166. The OT does not explicitly indicate this obligation; however, Ruth was compelled to include this responsibility in the scope of a **לֹאֵל**. See Hubbard, Jr., *Ruth*, 213. Danna Fewell and David Gunn comment that making a levirate marriage fit with the role of the **לֹאֵל** in Ruth 3:9 is an "unnecessary interpretive leap." See Dana Fewell, and David Gunn, "Boaz, Pillar of Society: Measures of Worth in the Book of Ruth," *JSOT* 14, no. 45 (Oct 1989): 51.

²⁰⁹ Hubbard, Jr., *Ruth*, 213. See also Howell, 210; Winfred Neely, "Seize the Moment: Ruth 3," *The Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society* 14, no. 1 (Mar 2014): 59.

²¹⁰ LaCocque, 96. Jan de Waard and Eugene Nida caution against rushing to a sexual interpretation of Ruth 3:9. While in other parts of the OT it may suggest this interpretation, in Ruth 3:9, it is out of character. A literal translation is preferred, which is the act of a marriage proposal. See Jan de Waard, and Eugene Nida, *Ruth* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1992),

Beattie contends that Ruth's reference to Boaz as a גאל indicates her acknowledgment of Boaz's kindness in the field (Ruth 2).²¹¹ Therefore, her marriage proposal to Boaz, as a גאל, depicts the custom of redeeming property and levirate marriage and making her the object of redemption.²¹²

In Ruth 3:12–13, Boaz acknowledges that he is a גאל; however, there is a גאל closer to Ruth than himself. The term גאל means “redeemer” in both instances, but the thrust of Boaz's statement is that the closer גאל must cede his redemption rights before Ruth and he can get married.²¹³ In verse 13, Boaz speaks of the levirate custom and duty for a dead husband's family, primarily concerned with the widow's welfare and care.²¹⁴ Boaz calling himself and another male relative גאל reveals that Boaz considers himself a part of that group and is willing to take on the duties and responsibilities. However, out of respect, he knows that the closer גאל has the rights and responsibilities, and he does not want to infringe on those.²¹⁵ Whether it is the other גאל or himself, Boaz assures Ruth that she will be redeemed (Ruth 3:13).²¹⁶ Boaz's actions and words in verse 13 reflect his character. While Boaz is intent on becoming Ruth's and Naomi's גאל, he

53. Derek Beattie disagrees, stating that the context reveals an invitation to a sexual relation. Beattie contends that marriage is not in view in Ruth 3:9 unless it is used as a euphemism for sexual purposes. See Derek Beattie, “Ruth III,” *JSOT* 3, no. 5 (Feb. 1978): 43. Jack Sasson counters by stating that 3:9 does concern a marriage proposal because Ruth has become a member of Boaz's clan (“אֲנִי רֹתֵךְ אֶמְתָּהּ,” “I am Ruth your handmaiden”), spread your covering is reminiscent of Deut. 22 and Ezek. 16:2 which involve marriage proposals, and Ruth calls Boaz גאל (“redeemer”). See Jack Sasson, “The Issue of Ge'ullāh in Ruth,” *JSOT* 3, no. 5 (Feb 1978): 53.

²¹¹ Beattie, 44.

²¹² Campbell, Jr., 132.

²¹³ Hubbard, Jr., “גאל,” 776; Ringgren, “גאל,” 352. See also Josh Ketchum, “The Go'el Custom in Ruth: A Comparative Study,” *Restoration Quarterly* 52, no. 4 (2010): 238.

²¹⁴ Ketchum, 240; Campbell, Jr., 136.

²¹⁵ Bush, 175.

²¹⁶ Hubbard, “The GO'EL in Ancient Israel,” 14.

carefully observes the ethical and moral norms exhibited by Yahweh's people; additionally, he is cognizant and respectful of the community's social and legal practices.²¹⁷ His words in verse 13 reflect a promise backed up by an oath. Boaz promises that Ruth will be redeemed, and he is willing to suffer divine punishment if he fails to keep his word (see the oath formula in Ruth 1:17).²¹⁸

In Ruth 4:1, a nuance is detected using the biblical Hebrew term **לֹאֵל**. *HALOT* notes that in the Ruthan context, **לֹאֵל** is a person who is “the redeemer.”²¹⁹ In this verse, Boaz acknowledges that the other male relative is the designated **לֹאֵל**. Therefore, Boaz is using the legal sense of the word, which denotes the terminology of Israelite family law.²²⁰ The opening verse of Ruth 4 affirms Boaz's character by being a law-abiding citizen and faithful to his promises. With Boaz waiting at the city gate, he is reflecting diligence to ensure Ruth's redemption occurs.²²¹ The **לֹאֵל** that Boaz is speaking with is Elimelech's nearest relative; he has the right of redemption.²²² In Ruth 4:3–4, the biblical Hebrew verb **לֹאֵל** is used five times, denoting “to redeem.” In verse 3, Boaz tells the closest relative that Naomi is about to sell the family's land; therefore, it is the closest relative's responsibility and duty to **לֹאֵל** the family property.²²³ In the Mosaic Law, the

²¹⁷ Block, 695.

²¹⁸ Hubbard, Jr., *Ruth*, 219.

²¹⁹ Koehler, and Baumgartner, “**לֹאֵל**,” 169. Howell clarifies that the **לֹאֵל** in 4:1 is the male relative that Boaz has spoken about in an earlier conversation (Ruth 3:13), not a person he has spoken with. See Howell, 245.

²²⁰ Hubbard, Jr., “**לֹאֵל**,” 775.

²²¹ Jackson, 442–3. Jackson additionally comments that with Boaz waiting at the gate and the close relative walking by at the same time indicates a “sovereign serendipity.”

²²² Waard, and Nida, 62.

²²³ Stamm, “**לֹאֵל**,” 290. Howell explains that **לֹאֵל**, in verse 3, is in a participle form acting as a substantive. Therefore, “to redeem” becomes “redeemer.” See Howell, 250.

family property was not to leave the family, and the role of the לָאֵל was to prevent this from happening. The land belonged to Yahweh, and each clan was assigned a plot.²²⁴ In keeping with Yahweh's decisions, laws were implemented to protect property and people.²²⁵ Sasson comments that the focus of the לָאֵל is not on Ruth but Naomi. In 4:3–4, Boaz mentions Naomi and her association with Elimelech's land, which he reminds the closest relative is his duty as לָאֵל to redeem.²²⁶ Thus, in verse 4:4, Boaz highlights the לָאֵל duty and responsibility. He does so in an administrative setting, with the elders and the people at the city gate. He further elaborates on the “pecking order” between them.²²⁷ Even though the apparent focus is on Elimelech's property, Naomi is a factor in the closest relative's decision. Redeeming the property also entailed caring for Naomi, probably from the field's profits.²²⁸ The last use of לָאֵל does not signify that the closest relative redeemed the property but highlights his intention.²²⁹

A change in the closest relative's decision as לָאֵל occurs in Ruth 4:6 after Boaz adds the proposal to marry Ruth in the לָאֵל duty and responsibilities. The closest relative reneges on his

²²⁴ Bush, 207.

²²⁵ Block, 708.

²²⁶ Sasson, 54.

²²⁷ Brad Embry, “‘Redemption-Acquisition’: The Marriage of Ruth as a Theological Commentary on Yahweh and Yahweh's People,” *Journal of Theological Interpretation* 7, no. 2 (Fall 2013): 260. See also Block, 708; Ketchum, 244. Campbell states, “In the absence of any clear explanation of why Boaz uses this way of speaking when there is indeed another besides the near redeemer who can function, it is fruitless to speculate about whether there were “ranks” or concentric circles of relatives (blood or covenant), with the near redeemer the only one left of one rank and Boaz the first of the next rank. We cannot even tell whether the words mean Boaz was the last available candidate, although it would heighten the drama of the story if he were to be so seen.” See Campbell, Jr., 145–6.

²²⁸ Hubbard, Jr., *Ruth*, 241.

²²⁹ Bush notes that the expressed willingness leaves open the possibility for future proposals from Boaz. See Bush, 210.

intention to redeem Elimelech's property with this new inclusion.²³⁰ Therefore, the door is open for Boaz to step in and take on the **לגא** duty and responsibilities, which include marrying Ruth (an intention that he is willing to do, Ruth 3:13).²³¹ Boaz's willingness to marry Ruth solves two problems: the provision for two widows (Ruth 3:1) and to provide an offspring (Ruth 4:10).²³² The use of **יגאלתי** in verse 6 represents the rights, privileges, and responsibilities associated with the **לגא** status.²³³ The closest relative is last heard from in Ruth 4:8, where he tells Boaz to become the **לגא** and seals the deal by removing his sandal. His refusal allowed Boaz to "do the part of the next of kin."²³⁴ Boaz is now allowed to acquire Elimelech's property and take Ruth in

²³⁰ Sasson, 55. Bush explains that the closest relative is caught between an economic and ethical dilemma. He would incur costs for redeeming the property and Ruth or face dishonor if he redeems the property but ignores marrying Ruth. Therefore, he cedes his **לגא** rights and responsibilities. See Bush, 232.

²³¹ Dvora Weisberg notes that Boaz's intention to marry Ruth is not from a sense of responsibility to the deceased kinsmen; however, it reflects his positive view of her because of their previous interactions. See Dvora Weisberg, "The Widow of Our Discontent: Levirate Marriage in the Bible and Ancient Israel," *JSOT* 28, no. 4 (June 2004): 405.

²³² *Ibid.*, 418. Boaz's statement in Ruth 4:5 indicates that he views "redeem" and "acquire" as functions of the **לגא**. Thus, "acquire" can be viewed as a technical term for marriage. The closest relative's decision to not act as a **לגא** may indicate that he does not comprehend "acquire" as a master-slave relationship but a marital relationship, which may endanger his inheritance. See Embry, 260–2. See also Ketchum, 244; Jackson, 443; Howell, 262. Hubbard explains, "That both the imperative and its object (*ge'ullâ*, redemption right) derive from *g'l* made the statement all the more emphatic. He said, in essence, "I cannot do it, you do it." *ge'ullâ* ("right/duty to buy back") is a technical term drawn from Israelite family law." See Hubbard, Jr., *Ruth*, 246.

²³³ Block, 717. *HALOT* comments that **יגאלתי** pertains to the "right and obligation of repurchase." See Koehler, and Baumgartner, "**יגאלתי**," 170. See also Hubbard, Jr., "**לגא**," 774.

²³⁴ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, "**לגא**," 145.

a levirate marriage.²³⁵ These two לָאֵל actions ensured to keep the family whole.²³⁶ Hubbard notes that since no money changed hands in this scene, the thought is that Boaz's acquisition is a redemption of ancestral land and Ruth.²³⁷ Boaz, as לָאֵל, served the family by protecting its solidarity, honoring its ancestors, perpetuating the dead's names, protecting ancestral property, and taking care of the widows. Since protection is an underlying value of לָאֵל, Boaz's protection of Ruth is unsurprising.²³⁸ Embry suggests that the biblical author is purposely using select biblical Hebrew terms to make a "powerful theological comment." Thus, Boaz represents Yahweh, and Naomi and Ruth represent Israel. Yahweh is quick to redeem Israel, like Boaz is quick to redeem Naomi and Ruth. In addition, Israel expresses kindness like Ruth's kindness towards Naomi and Boaz.²³⁹

The last use of לָאֵל in the Book of Ruth is read in Ruth 4:14, which refers to Naomi's grandson.²⁴⁰ A distinction in the use of לָאֵל in this verse versus the previous usages is that it

²³⁵ Bush notes "Since no "purchase" is taking place, this is the clearest possible evidence that the verb קָנָה in this passage bears the meaning "acquire the right to." The use of קָנָה instead of לָאֵל underscores a transactional formula. See Bush, 237. See also Ringgren, "גֵּאֵל," 353.

²³⁶ Stamm, "גֵּאֵל," 290. Boaz describes the function of a לָאֵל to perpetuate the deceased's name on his estate, which involves acquiring the deceased's property and his wife. In the Ruthan context, acquiring the wife included taking care of Naomi and Ruth. See Weisberg, 418.

²³⁷ Hubbard, Jr., "גֵּאֵל," 776.

²³⁸ Ketchum, 245.

²³⁹ Embry, 267. In other words, the human-human relationship becomes the means to comprehending the divine-human relationship. Thus, while it appears that Yahweh seems to be silent in the Book of Ruth, His redemptive acts speak volumes within the Ruthan text. Ibid., 268. See also Jackson, 446.

²⁴⁰ This use of לָאֵל is the only instance found in the OT that refers to a baby. See Hubbard, "The GO'EL in Ancient Israel," 15. He additionally notes that the לָאֵל in verse 14 plays a climatic part in Yahweh's reward to Ruth for her kindness (Ruth 1:8; 2:12; 3:10). Ibid., 18. See also Hubbard, Jr., "גֵּאֵל," 776.

conveys a general sense of the term, not a legalistic sense (Ruth 4:15, “restorer” and “sustainer”).²⁴¹ The grandson as a לָאֵל is the fulfillment of redeeming family property, heritage, and heir. For Naomi, her redemption takes the form of “a restorer of life and a sustainer of your old age.” Jackson explains a Pentateuchal thematic connection with Ruth 4:14, the Abrahamic offspring, and the emergence of a Judahite king. He suggests that the biblical author alludes to Genesis 38 by involving Tamar. Therefore, by this allusion, the biblical author is revealing that what Yahweh did for Tamar, He can do for Ruth.²⁴² The notion that Boaz is the לָאֵל is reflected throughout the Book of Ruth; however, there is an ideal that the לָאֵל is Yahweh. Yahweh ultimately provides for Naomi, and His name will be perpetuated in Israel.²⁴³ Whether it be Yahweh, Boaz, or the newborn child, the role of לָאֵל has been fulfilled by the redemption of Elimelech's property, the family name, Naomi's provision, and the marriage to Ruth. The Book of Ruth serves as a covenant connector in which לָאֵל is reflected through Abraham, the exodus, Sinai, and, eventually, Boaz, Ruth, David, and Christ.²⁴⁴

²⁴¹ Bush, 253. Boaz gained the legal right to function as לָאֵל. In court he had gained the privilege and obligation to redeem the estate of Elimelech and to rescue the name of Mahlon from annihilation. Therefore, the newborn child is not a solution to a legal problem but is the solution to Naomi's insecurities. See Block, 727.

²⁴² Jackson, 450.

²⁴³ Howell, 289. However, Bush states that the לָאֵל must be the newborn child. See Bush, 253. Brotzman and Tully acknowledge that debate concerning the identity of the לָאֵל. They state, “There is some debate as to whether the לָאֵל in this verse refers to Boaz or to the newborn child. It is more likely that it refers to the child because Ruth bore him (v. 13), this is the day of his birth (v. 14), and he will care for Naomi in her old age (v. 15).” See Brotzman, and Ellis, 183.

²⁴⁴ Jackson, 454.

Fear of Yahweh in the Old Testament

The fear of Yahweh is a religious expression conveying faithfulness, obedience, devotion, piety, or a dread of divine punishment. It can be expressed corporately, individually, or be a characteristic of a religious person.²⁴⁵ The fear of Yahweh finds its prominence in Wisdom literature, with Proverbs 1:7 stating that the fear of Yahweh is the beginning and essence of wisdom through submission to His will. Before the religious expression can be evaluated by its use in the OT, time will be taken to comprehend the two elements of the expression, “fear” and the divine name “Yahweh.”

The biblical Hebrew term for “fear” is יָרָא. H. F. Fuhs comments that few traces of יָרָא can be found in Semitic languages. However, יָרָא may pertain to a Canaanite gloss in the Tell el-Amarna Tablets.²⁴⁶ H.-P. Stähli notes that an instance may be found in the Ugaritic.²⁴⁷ *HALOT* interprets יָרָא as “to fear, be feared.”²⁴⁸ The content of יָרָא varies by context and covers the entire

²⁴⁵ Corporately, the fear of Yahweh is central to Israelite theology, which is expressed by faith. Individually, the fear of Yahweh is expressed by personal obedience through reverence or the threat of divine punishment. As a personal characteristic, the fear of Yahweh is a self-identity. In Gen. 42:18 and Jon. 1:9, both Joseph and Jonah identified themselves as Yahweh-fearers. See James Knox, “Fear of the Lord,” *LBD*, ed. John Barry et al. (Bellingham: Lexham Press, 2016), “Biblical Relevance.”

²⁴⁶ H. F. Fuhs, “יָרָא,” in *TDOT Vol. 6*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David Green (Grand Rapids.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 292.

²⁴⁷ H.-P. Stähli, “יָרָא,” in *TLOT Vol.2*, ed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 568. See also M. V. van Pelt, and W. C. Kaiser, Jr., “יָרָא,” in *NIDOTTE Vol. 2*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 519.

²⁴⁸ Koehler, and Baumgartner, “יָרָא,” 433. See also Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “יָרָא,” 431. The biblical Hebrew verb יָרָא is a primitive root denoting “to fear.” The range of meanings include afraid (100 times), awesome (twenty-one times), awesome acts (one time), awesome things (four times), became afraid (one time), became...frightened (two times), become frightened (one time), cautious (one time), dismayed (one time), fear (sixty-five times), fear and awesome (one time), feared (thirty-six times), fearful (one time), fearful thing (one time), fearfully (one time), fearing (five times), fears (nine times), frighten (four times), frightened (one

semantic range from an alarm to everyday threats, fear of numerous powers, and the fear of Yahweh.²⁴⁹ The verbal root frequently appears in the qal stem, conveying “fear, respect, worship.”²⁵⁰ Fear can be experienced in everyday life. For instance, in Genesis 19:30, Lot was afraid to reside in Zoar, Elihu was afraid to speak to people older than him (Job 32:6), fear was associated with breaking an oath (1 Sam. 14:26), a king’s authority was something to be feared (Dan. 1:10), Ecclesiastes 12:5 associates fear with traveling, and other people could be feared, which include armies and other nations. The term ירא can be associated with respect. In Leviticus, a person is to ירא, or respect, their parents (Lev. 19:3) and Yahweh’s sanctuary (Lev. 19:30). The Israelites respected Joshua’s leadership (Josh. 4:14), and Solomon’s wisdom was respected (1 Kgs. 3:28). Finally, ירא denotes worship, with worshipping Yahweh the prominent use. In a few uses, however, ירא conveys terror when there is a threat of divine wrath or judgment.²⁵¹

The “names of God” should not be comprehended by the contemporary ideas of person, personality, existence, or identity. However, the “names of God” should be understood by how Israel fundamentally used Yahweh’s divine names and through the larger context of the ANE

time), have...fear (one time), made me afraid (one time), revere (ten times), revered (three times), reverence (three times), showed reverence (one time), stand in awe (one time), terrible (three times), terrible things (one time), terrifying (two times). See *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*, “ירא,” 1406. The derivatives of ירא are ירא and יראָה.

²⁴⁹ Fuhs, “ירא,” 295. In almost eighty percent of the passages that use the verb ירא, the object is the fear of Yahweh. The nature is modified by the context that includes “fear of Yahweh.” Ibid., 296. See also Pelt, and Kaiser, Jr., “ירא,” 520.

²⁵⁰ Pelt, and Kaiser, Jr., “ירא,” 519.

²⁵¹ Ibid., 521.

and their gods.²⁵² Therefore, the divine names of Yahweh are distinguishing marks. When associated with Yahweh, the distinction between a divine name and the name's distinguishing marks can have substantial theological implications, especially when His transcendence and immanence are involved.²⁵³ J. Oswalt notes that the divine name God is used 404 times in Psalms, and Yahweh is used in the tetragrammaton form²⁵⁴ 731 times.²⁵⁵ The YHWH form occurs more than 6,000 times in the OT.²⁵⁶ In Exodus 3:14–15, Moses learns that God is “I AM WHO I

²⁵² Martin Rose, “Names of God in the OT,” *AYBD*, ed. David Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 1002.

²⁵³ Rose, 1002. “The “theology of the name” is then also appropriate in order to facilitate a theological reflection beyond the cultic sphere as it opens the way for a distinction between the earthly “dwelling of the name of *Yahweh*” and the heavenly dwelling of *Yahweh*. This amounts to a theological differentiation between the immanence and transcendence of *Yahweh*.” *Ibid.*, 1003.

²⁵⁴ When it stands alone, and with prefixed prepositions or the conjunction *wa-*, “and,” the name is always written with the four Hebrew letters *yod, he, waw, he*, and is for that reason called the Tetragrammaton. See Henry Thompson, “Yahweh (Deity),” *AYBD*, ed. David Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 1011.

²⁵⁵ J. Oswalt, “God,” in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Wisdom, Poetry & Writings*, ed. Tremper Longman III, and Peter Enns (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 246. Additionally, Oswalt notes that “In the Wisdom literature (Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes) there is a striking reversal of the frequency of the occurrences of these names in Proverbs on the one hand and Job and Ecclesiastes on the other. “God” appears only six times in Proverbs, while “the LORD” occurs eighty-seven times. In Job “God” occurs 118 times and “the LORD” only thirty-three times, and almost all of those in the prologue (Job 1–2) and the epilogue (Job 42:7–17). In Ecclesiastes “God” appears forty-one times and “the LORD” not at all.”

²⁵⁶ Thompson, 1011. The theological significance of the divine name Yahweh parallels Exod. 3:14–15, which denotes that the divine name Yahweh is associated with the concept of being or existence. See McComiskey, 507. Norman Walker that Jews were exhorted to greet their neighbor with God's divine name. The shorter form *Jāh* was used. The short form *Jāh*, to which the contraction doubled *yodh* corresponds with or without the prosthetic *aleph*, signifying consonantal *yodh*. See Norman Walker, “The Writing of the Divine Name in the Mishna,” *Vetus Testamentum* 1, no. 4 (Oct. 1951): 310. Therefore, the doubling of a name gives it emphasis.

AM,” or Yahweh, which is derived from the biblical Hebrew verb הָיָה (“to be”).²⁵⁷ It is a play on words that signifies permanence.²⁵⁸

A brief discussion is presented on Yahweh and El.²⁵⁹ The reason for focusing on the divine name Yahweh and the Canaanite El is because of the period roughly the same period that Yahweh told Moses His name in Exodus 3:14–15. What is the relationship between Israel’s Yahweh and the Canaanite El? Some scholars contend that Yahweh and El are the same.²⁶⁰ However, a distinction has been made between Yahweh and El. El is perceived as a benevolent deity, whereas Yahweh can be slow to anger and exacts divine wrath and punishment.²⁶¹ Another

²⁵⁷ Raymond Bowman explains that there is an objection made by some scholars who contend that Yahweh did not derive from the biblical Hebrew verb “to be.” Instead, Yahweh derives from the Arabic “to befall, to be.” Therefore, Exod. 3:14–15 is comprehended as a probable gloss in the text. See Raymond Bowman, “Yahweh the Speaker,” *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 3, no. 1 (Jan. 1944): 3. Albright, Oesterley, Robinson, and Meeks support this understanding.

²⁵⁸ Osborn, and Hatton, 68. Carpenter states, “It can be summed up as, “I will be all that I need to be to effect all that I have committed myself to for you and my people; I will be present with you and I will work my purposes, goals, and wonders in words and in deeds according to my covenant. Thereby you shall be able to ‘know’ me; I am your God.” See Carpenter, 234. See also Hamilton, *Handbook on the Pentateuch*, 144.

²⁵⁹ The divine name Yahweh involves a comprehensive investigation, which is beyond the scope of this dissertation. However, the divine name Yahweh has been extensively studied with its relation to ANE deities.

²⁶⁰ J. Wellhausen, F. M. Cross, and J. C. de Moor.

²⁶¹ John Day, *Yahweh and the Gods and Goddesses of Canaan* (London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 13. F. Løkkegaard, P. D. Miller, and Philo of Byblos take this position. Gérard Amzallag comments that Yahweh expresses a warlike character, who has power over storms. However, El is a deity that remains distant from human affairs and was neutral in weather phenomena. See Gérard Amzallag, *Yahweh and the Origins of Ancient Israel: Insights from the Archaeological Record* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023), 178. Bowman comments that the Arabic has a root meaning for *hwy* for Yahweh to denote “to blow.” Therefore, Yahweh as a storm God means “the Blower.” See Bowman, 2. However, Bowman concludes that Yahweh does not mean “Blower,” “Feller,” “Destroyer,” “Faller,” or “Creator,” but the divine name denotes “Speaker,” “Declarer of His will,” “Revealer,” and “Counselor of His people.” See Bowman, 8.

distinction is that Yahweh was a god coming from the south, and El was contained in the mountainous regions in the north. A contention has been made that Yahweh and El were equal, unlike the opposition to Yahweh equating to Baal. The contention is based on El's attributes: a supreme deity, a creator, and possessed wisdom.²⁶² Deuteronomy 32:8 presents a relationship between Yahweh and El. In the OT, the name El would transition into a general word for God without any reflection from the Canaanite background.²⁶³ The influence of El on Yahweh is read in Jonah 4:2 and Nehemiah 9:31, where Yahweh is referred to as 'a God gracious and merciful,' in Exodus 34:6; Psalm 103:8, where He is referred to as 'a God merciful and gracious,' and in Deuteronomy 4:31, where Yahweh is referred to as 'a merciful God.'²⁶⁴ Deuteronomy 4:35, 39:7:9; 2 Samuel 7:28; 1 Kings 8:60; 18:37–39; Isaiah 37:16, 1 Chronicles 17:26 indicated that Yahweh and Elohim are identical. This equation reveals that Yahweh and El were merging.²⁶⁵ Another emergent is the divine title El-Shaddai. A plausible interpretation of El-Shaddai is "El, the mountain one." The plausibility for this interpretation is an understanding that El is viewed as the god from the mountainous north.²⁶⁶ Another construction is Yahweh-El, "My El be present (as helper)."²⁶⁷ The concern with relating Yahweh to El is due to the nature of identification and

²⁶² Day, 15. Amzallag notes that supreme position, residence, liturgy, and communication are similar affinities between Yahweh and El. See Amzallag, 179.

²⁶³ Day, 25.

²⁶⁴ Ibid., 26.

²⁶⁵ Amzallag, 182.

²⁶⁶ F. M. Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973), 56.

²⁶⁷ J. C. De Moor, *The Rise of Yahwism: The Roots of Israelite Monotheism*, 2nd ed. (Leuven: University of Leuven Press and Peeters, 1997), 237–9.

the divine type to which Yahweh belongs.²⁶⁸ Some non-Yahwistic divine names and titles are *El* (Divinity), *El-Elyôn* (God Most High), *El-‘Olām* (Everlasting God), *Shaddai* (Almighty), *Abîr* (Mighty One), *Paḥad* (Fear), *Adonai* (Lord), and *Şebaoth* (Hosts).²⁶⁹ Even though Yahweh is known by many divine titles, it is hard to comprehend Him through a divine name, title, or image.²⁷⁰

The one divine name that is associated with Israel is Yahweh. It would not be until the monarchic period that Yahweh would become Israel’s God. King David and Solomon recognized Yahweh as Israel’s God when they enlarged Saul’s kingdom.²⁷¹ In the biblical tradition, Yahweh is cultically appealed to.²⁷² The significance of the divine name Yahweh is that He is the God of the covenant. He maintains and provides for His creation, which includes His chosen people, the Israelites, with whom Yahweh entered covenants.²⁷³ The origin of the divine name Yahweh is obscure; however, some scholars suggest that the divine name has Midianite

²⁶⁸ K. Van Der Toorn, “Yahweh,” in *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, 2nd ed., ed. Karel van der Toorn, Bob Becking, and Pieter W. van der Horst (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 917.

²⁶⁹ Rose, 1002. The patriarchs worshipped one God; they were concerned with one God, and no other appears. They may have identified their one God with El of Canaan. But God was one, though of many titles: El Elyon (God, the most high), El Qoneh (God, the creator), El Roi (God, the [one] seeing me?), El Olam (God, the eternal), El Bet-el (God, [the one of] Bethel), El Elohe Yisrael (God, the God of [the patriarch] Israel), Anoki hā El (I am God himself), El Shadday (God, the steppe one). This was at least monolatry. See John Scullion, “God: God in the OT,” in *AYBD*, ed. David Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 1048.

²⁷⁰ Toorn, 913. Bowman notes that the divine name Yahweh refers to God’s revelations of Himself to His people or it can denote the people’s conduct towards Him. See Bowman 5.

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 918.

²⁷² 2 Kgs. 17:24–28 indicates how the fear of Yahweh cannot be separated from the cultic realm. The biblical passage shows how the deportees brought in by the Assyrian king were plagued with lions because they did not know or fear Yahweh. See Michael Barré, “Fear of God’ and the World View of Wisdom,” *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 11, no. 2 (Apr 1981): 42.

²⁷³ Thompson, 1012.

and Kenite origins.²⁷⁴ Fretheim notes a problem with using “Lord” instead of Yahweh in some English bible translations. First, Yahweh is a divine name, not a title or an epithet like Lord. Furthermore, the use of the Lord in place of Yahweh is a post-OT Jewish practice.²⁷⁵ Norman Walker comments that it was forbidden for a Jew to utter and that if someone did, they deserved death.²⁷⁶ The divine name Yahweh references the patriarchal ties of God to a specific history. Therefore, Yahweh’s history is integrated with the history of His people and the commitment made to Israel, an intimate relationship that makes communication and encounters possible.²⁷⁷

²⁷⁴ David Freedman, Helmer Ringgren, and M. O’Connor, “יהוה,” in *TDOT Vol. 5*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David Green (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 521. F. Horst, W. Vischer, K.-H. Bernhardt, M. Weippert, K. Heyde, W. H. Schmidt, H. H. Rowley, H. J. Gunneweg, R. de Vaux, and A. Cody are some scholars who support this origin. See also E. Jenni, “יהוה,” in *TLOT Vol.2*, ed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 524. An interesting source of originality is derived from the ejaculatory cry *ya*. Therefore, it was shouted during moments of excitement or ecstasy. The term *ya* would become the prologue to *ya(h)wá(h)*, *ya(h)wá(h)y*, or the like. See T. McComiskey, “God, Names of,” in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 2nd ed., ed. Walter Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001), 505. See also G. R. Driver, “The Original Form of the Name Yahweh: Evidence and Conclusions,” *Zeitschrift Für Die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft Und Die Kunde Des Nachbiblischen Judentums* 5 (1928): 24. S. D. Goitein comments that the divine name Yahweh implies that He was a jealous God, by divine name and nature. See S. D. Goitein, “YHWH the Passionate: The Monotheistic Meaning and Origin of the Name YHWH,” *Vetus Testamentum* 6, no. 1 (1956): 2. K. Van Der Toorn comments that the Victory Stela written by Mesha may be the earliest West Semitic text mentioning Yahweh, which represents Him as the official God of Israel. See Toorn, 911.

²⁷⁵ Terrence Fretheim, “Yahweh,” in *NIDOTTE Vol. 4*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 1293. Osborn and Hatton note that “The substitution of the title “Lord,” with four capital letters, is the usual way in English of handling this four-letter word that was long considered too holy to pronounce. It translates the oral tradition of substituting the word *'adonay*, “lord,” when reading aloud, rather than pronouncing the name Yahweh, which was the written text.” See Osborn, and Hatton, 69. K. Van Der Toorn explains that since the Achaemenid period, religious sects discontinued pronouncing Yahweh’s name in the liturgy and everyday life. Instead, they would use Lord. See Toorn, 910.

²⁷⁶ Walker, 310.

²⁷⁷ Fretheim, “Yahweh,” 1294. Even though there is an intimate relationship between Yahweh and His people, there is still a shroud of mystery that about who Yahweh is. With Yahweh’s forgiving love comes divine justice. The paradox of divine justice and forgiving love

The religious expression “fear of Yahweh” is a compass point for a person’s moral readings. Thus, the beginning of wisdom and the revelatory knowledge obtained from the Torah stems from fearing Yahweh. It is a person’s proper response to Yahweh derived from an attitude of reverence and awe.²⁷⁸ It equates to faithfulness, obedience, service, wisdom, covenant, trust, and rejecting evil. Job Jindo comments that the fear of Yahweh is a reflective response through a certain kind of knowledge, recognizing a person’s status in Yahweh’s absolute authority.²⁷⁹ The expression implies accountability felt by distress stemming from falling short of Yahweh’s moral approval. It does not note disobedience to Yahweh; however, it shows a diminished confidence towards earning moral approval.²⁸⁰ However, to fear Yahweh is to revere Him by giving Him the respect, honor, love, and obedience due to Him.²⁸¹

In 1 Samuel 12:14, Samuel tells the people that if they fear Yahweh, serve Him, listen to His voice, and not rebel against Him, then the king and the people will follow Yahweh. For the people to serve, listen, and not rebel, they must revere Yahweh.²⁸² Moser comments that the

go together and cannot be separated. Without divine justice, Israel could not be Yahweh’s chosen people. See Freedman, Ringgren, and O’Connor, “יהוה,” 519. Goitein indicates that the basic meaning of the biblical Hebrew *hwy* is passionate love and equally passionate self-assertion or devotion. Thus, Yahweh depicts these characteristics in the OT. See Goitein, 3. Therefore, according to Goitein, Exod. 3:14 should be interpreted as “I love whom I love.”

²⁷⁸ Leland Ryken, James Wilhoit, and Tremper Longman III, “Fear of God,” in *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 277.

²⁷⁹ Job Jindo, “On the Biblical Notion of Human Dignity: ‘Fear of God’ as a Condition for Authentic Existence,” *Biblical Interpretation* 19, no. 4–5 (2011): 449.

²⁸⁰ Paul Moser, “The Fear of the Lord: The Beginning of Reconciliation,” *The Irish Theological Quarterly* 87, no. 2 (2022): 151. The distress associated with the fear of Yahweh fits a person’s moral condition when that person tends to avoid or oppose Yahweh’s moral character or will. *Ibid.*, 155.

²⁸¹ S. Porter, “Fear,” in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander and Brian Rosner (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 497.

²⁸² Omanson, and Ellington, 244.

people are to fear Yahweh because He has authority over them, and they are accountable to Him.²⁸³ The fear of Yahweh is seen in its positive and negative context. Positively, 1 Samuel 12:14 denotes reverence, which leads to obedience. However, in 1 Samuel 12:15, Samuel's statement reveals the negative sense that Yahweh would be against the people if they rebelled against His command. Thus, the reverent fear of Yahweh is also an emotional response to the threat of divine wrath and punishment.²⁸⁴ The point of Samuel's statements is that Israel already had a king, Yahweh. If the people and the human king submitted to Yahweh's rule, they would prosper; if not, they would incur Yahweh's hand against them.²⁸⁵

1 Samuel 12:14 reveals what happens when people fear Yahweh; additionally, there is a call to commitment in Deuteronomy 10:12–13. In verse 12, Moses asks the people if they are to fear Yahweh. In this context, Moses alludes to the reverence and awe that befits Yahweh's transcendence and holiness.²⁸⁶ Block comments that fearing Yahweh, walking in His ways, loving Him, serving Him, and obeying Yahweh's commands relate to a person's response to divine grace. These Mosaic phrases indicate an allegiance to Yahweh, the covenant partner. Fearing Yahweh is the framework for covenantal commitment. Without these responses to divine grace, the people's efforts would be legalistic and useless.²⁸⁷ Moses reiterates the proper attitude

²⁸³ Moser, 150.

²⁸⁴ Rachelle Gilmour, "From Anxiety to Reverence: Fear of God's Retribution and Violence in the Book of Samuel," *Die Welt Des Orients* 51, no. 1 (2021): 89.

²⁸⁵ John Woodhouse, and R. Kent. Hughes, *1 Samuel: Looking for a Leader* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2008), "18. Kingdom Renewal II. The Ultimatum (vv. 14–18)." See also Bill Arnold, *NIVAC: 1 and 2 Samuel* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 189.

²⁸⁶ Robert Bratcher, and Howard Hatton, *Deuteronomy* (New York: United Bible Societies, 2000), 90.

²⁸⁷ Daniel Block, *NIVAC: Deuteronomy* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), "Deuteronomy 10:12–11:1. Moses' First Answer (vv. 12b–15)."

shown by a person standing before the King of kings and the Lord of lords, which disposes the person to worship and obey Yahweh.²⁸⁸ In essence, Moses is telling the people how to fear Yahweh. To fear Yahweh is to have a sense of overwhelming awe in the presence of divine love and power. The natural response is to surrender to Yahweh's will.²⁸⁹

After Jonah's flight from Yahweh's presence, Yahweh caused a great storm on the sea that frightened the sailors while Jonah slept. The sailors cast lots to see who was responsible for the calamity, and the lot fell on Jonah. When confronted by the sailors, Jonah tells them that he is a Hebrew and that he fears Yahweh (Jonah 1:9). Jonah's אָרַא ("fear") is a "fear, honor, reverence" of Yahweh.²⁹⁰ Stähli indicates that Jonah's use of אָרַא conveys a limited and technical meaning denoting a "cultic, religious membership."²⁹¹ Therefore, Jonah is not expressing reverence towards Yahweh; however, he implies that he belongs to the Israelite religion.²⁹² However, Pelt and Kaiser state that Jonah is telling the sailors that he אָרַא ("worships")

²⁸⁸ Michael Grisanti, *Deuteronomy*, ed. Tremper Longman III and David Garland (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), "Yahweh Deserves and Demands Israel's Undivided Loyalty (10:12–11:32). Commentary. 12–13." Von Rad comments that fearing Yahweh is simply obedience, the acceptance of His commands with a proper response of love and full surrender. In Deut. 10:12, Moses is redefining Israel's relationship to Yahweh. See Gerhard von Rad, *Deuteronomy* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1966), 83–4.

²⁸⁹ Duane Christensen, *WBC Vol. 6a: Deuteronomy 1–21:9*, 2nd ed. (Nashville; Thomas Nelson, 2001), 205.

²⁹⁰ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, "אָרַא," 431.

²⁹¹ Stähli, "אָרַא," 576.

²⁹² Jonah declares that he is a Hebrew; therefore, it is assumed that he is a worshipper of Yahweh. See Brynmor Price, and Eugene Nida, *Jonah* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1978), 61. From his perspective, Jonah links being a Hebrew with a religious affiliation, with the emphasis on the religious affiliation and not on his ethnicity. See Carl Bosma, "Jonah 1:9—An Example of Elenctic Testimony," *Calvin Theological Journal* 48, no. 1 (Apr 2013): 69.

Yahweh.²⁹³ In Jonah 1:9 and subsequent verses, the fear of Yahweh reveals a fear of the numinous. Yahweh's divine power is revealed in His controlling nature, which conveys a sense of the numinous and results in fear (Jonah 1:16; the sailors feared Yahweh greatly).²⁹⁴ However, Jonah's use of fearing Yahweh amounts to a feeble lip service, which contrasts with the sailor's numinous awe that Jonah does not seem to share.²⁹⁵ However, James Bruckner states that Jonah's admission to being a Hebrew and that he fears Yahweh is meaningful in fulfilling his calling as a prophet. His declaration reveals Yahweh's reality and the center of traditional faith.²⁹⁶ Therefore, Jonah's response to the sailors can be read as a rudimentary confession of faith or testimony, which is generally true and to the point.²⁹⁷ Jonah's declaration that he is a Hebrew and a person

²⁹³ Pelt, and Kaiser, Jr., "אֱלֹהִים," 520. See also Knox, "Fear of the Lord," "Biblical Relevance."

²⁹⁴ Fuhs, "אֱלֹהִים," 302. "The experience of the sailors in the book of Jonah provides a good illustration of this and of the difference between terror of God and saving fear of him. When Jonah tells the sailors that it is the Lord "who made the sea and land" who has sent the storm upon them, they are terrified (Jon 1:9–10). But once the storm has abated, they "greatly feared the LORD" (Jon 1:16) in the sense of being filled with awe and reverence, making sacrifices and vows to him." See Ryken, Wilhoit, and Longman III, 277.

²⁹⁵ Allen, 209. Elizabeth Achtemeier states that Jonah's confession of faith is ironic. His declaration of fearing Yahweh contrasts his disobedience and failure to revere Yahweh. Therefore, according to Achtemeier, Jonah knows the right words but fails to exercise them. See Elizabeth Achtemeier, *Minor Prophets I* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2012), 373. However, Jonah's awareness of the storm indicates that he realizes that it came from Yahweh and that his attempt to flee Yahweh was futile. Therefore, Jonah's confession of faith is genuine and an open admission of Yahweh's divine power. See Stuart, 461. While Jonah readily admits to Yahweh's divine power, does he really fear Yahweh? The idea of repentance and pleading for forgiveness does not seem to cross Jonah's mind, which leads to a contention that what Jonah fears is an unequal occurrence of Yahweh's wrath on all who are guilty. See Alan Hauser, "Jonah: In Pursuit of the Dove," *JBL* 104, no. 1 (Mar 1985): 27.

²⁹⁶ James Bruckner, *NIVAC: Jonah* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 46.

²⁹⁷ Billy Smith, and Frank Page, *NAC Vol. 19b: Jonah* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1995), 233.

who fears Yahweh reinforces his calling as a prophet and that he was not a Baal worshipper, which the sailors probably were.²⁹⁸

The wisdom psalms have a related major theme of fearing Yahweh.²⁹⁹ While there are related expressions concerning “fear” and “Yahweh” (Ps. 112:1; 128:1; 128:4), only Psalm 34:10 [11] expresses “the fear of Yahweh.” In this psalm, David instructs the people concerning the righteous path to a long life, “I will teach you the fear of Yahweh” (Ps. 34:10 [11]). The fear of Yahweh is rooted in the theological foundation that Yahweh, the God of Israel, is the Sovereign who justly rules over the earth.³⁰⁰ David’s use of the fear of Yahweh encompasses the prescribed force behind Psalm 34. The expression is a psalmic and sapiential literature theme that expresses divine reverence. For the psalmist, the fear of Yahweh establishes the refuge from evildoers, a salvational aspect.³⁰¹ Thus, the אָרַךְ David uses is not a “trembling, shaking” fear; however, it refers to remaining faithful to Yahweh, who will overcome evildoers. David’s fear of Yahweh is

²⁹⁸ Stuart, 461.

²⁹⁹ Psalms 1, 32, 34, 37, 49, 112, 127, and 128 indicate a similarity to Wisdom literature in form and content. The psalmist uses the “better” proverb, alphabetical structure, numerical saying, the “son” formula, and the rhetorical question for wisdom forms. The fear of Yahweh is a prominent content used by the psalmist. See Johannes Burger, “The Law of Yahweh, the Fear of Yahweh, and Retribution in the Wisdom Psalms,” *Old Testament Essays (New Series)* 2, no. 3 (1989): 93. Crenshaw notes on four wisdom psalms (37, 39, 49, and 73). See Crenshaw, 171. Von Rad indicates that the psalms to be included in this group are 1, 34, 37, 49, 73, 111, 112, 119, 127, 128, 139. See Rad, *Wisdom in Israel*, 49. The fear of Yahweh, and its related expressions, occurs over forty times always in a positive sense. For the psalmist, salvation is paramount shown through a willful submission to Yahweh. See Tremper Longman III, “Fear of the Lord,” in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Wisdom, Poetry & Writings*, ed. Tremper Longman III and Peter Enns (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 204.

³⁰⁰ Estes, 151. Through his experiences, David is teaching the people that the fear of Yahweh is the beginning of wisdom (Ps. 34:12) and the guarantee of success (Ps. 34:10). See Phil Botha, “Annotated History: The Implications of Reading Psalm 34 in Conjunction with 1 Samuel 21–26 and Vice Versa,” *Old Testament Essays (New Series)* 21, no. 3 (2008): 613.

³⁰¹ William Brown, “‘Come, O Children...I Will Teach You the Fear of the Lord’ (Psalm 34:12): Comparing Psalms and Proverbs,” in *Seeking Out the Wisdom of the Ancients*, ed. Ronald Trexel, Kelvin Friebel, and Dennis Magary (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2005), 91–2.

instructed to the people so they may know how to live righteously and receive deliverance, protection, and provision.³⁰²

In Wisdom literature, the fear of Yahweh is an essential concept. It is associated with wisdom to instruct people how to live a properly conducted life, which focused on Yahweh's sovereignty in a secular world where laws, traditions, possessions, and life were self-esteemed.³⁰³ The fear of Yahweh evokes a commitment to knowledge about Yahweh. It allows a person to acquire and train for wisdom.³⁰⁴ Thus, in Wisdom literature, the fear of Yahweh has a moral meaning, denoting that fearing Yahweh is an upright behavior.³⁰⁵

In Job 28:28, Job declares, "the fear of Yahweh, that is wisdom," expressing holy respect and reverence to Yahweh while rejecting evil.³⁰⁶ It additionally conveys that a person's access to wisdom is only through Yahweh, which is normally inaccessible.³⁰⁷ In this scenario, wisdom is second place to the fear of Yahweh.³⁰⁸ However, wisdom can only be discovered through a devout relationship with Yahweh. Yahweh will give wisdom to people who show obedience to

³⁰² Christine Jones, "When I am Afraid: Fear in the Book of Psalms," *Review and Expositor* 115, no. 1 (2018): 18–9.

³⁰³ Fuhs, "אָרֶיךָ," 311.

³⁰⁴ Rad, *Wisdom in Israel*, 66.

³⁰⁵ Henri Blocher, "The Fear of the Lord as the 'Principle' of Wisdom," *Tyndale Bulletin* 28 (1977): 7.

³⁰⁶ Estes, 95. Wisdom cannot be found by human ingenuity alone because it only exists in Yahweh. Therefore, a relationship with Yahweh, expressed through obedience and reverence, is the only avenue to acquiring wisdom.

³⁰⁷ Fuhs, "אָרֶיךָ," 312. People can do astounding things like mining for gems and metal; however, they are unable to find wisdom. Wisdom resides in the fear of Yahweh. See Longman III, "Fear of the Lord," 204. See also Crenshaw, 101; Burger, 81.

³⁰⁸ Of the five forms of wisdom expressions found in Wisdom literature, Job 28:28 is the simplest form. However, while it seems like a simple statement to be read, Yahweh and wisdom cannot be identified with each other. See Rad, *Wisdom in Israel*, 66.

Him.³⁰⁹ The wisdom that people receive is not absolute but wisdom about morality, life, and appropriate conduct, and that is what people should know.³¹⁰ Longman comments that the biblical author does not denote a trembling fear in Job 28:28, nor is it simply an idea of respect. However, fearing Yahweh is the awe that a person feels when in the presence of an all-powerful and benevolent Yahweh. This fear removes pride and replaces it with humility, which is a prerequisite for wisdom and compels obedience.³¹¹ Therefore, the fear of Yahweh is the humble recognition of the limits to comprehending wisdom and an acknowledgment of His freedom and

³⁰⁹ Hartley, 383. John Walton and Kelly Vizcaino note that trust is implied with Job 28:28. Since wisdom is inaccessible, people must trust Yahweh, it is codependent on Him and derived from His wisdom. See John Walton, and Kelly Vizcaino, *NIVAC: Job*, ed. Terry Muck et al. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 291–2. See also Konkel, 175. Blocher explains that the fear of Yahweh is wisdom’s principle, which reveals that wisdom has a religious foundation. Therefore, a person can know reality in truth and steer their course in life if they proceed in Yahweh’s knowledge and acknowledge His sovereignty. See Blocher, 17. See also Rad, *Wisdom in Israel*, 61.

³¹⁰ Konkel, 174. Absolute wisdom is the means that the natural world was achieved. It governs the forces of creation like wind, rain, and storms. This type of wisdom is what Yahweh possesses and is inaccessible to people. Pope states, “The divine wisdom by which God created and regulates the cosmos is beyond man’s grasp and ken. For man there is only the practical wisdom of piety. “See Pope, 207. David Clines comments that v. 28 reveals how a person can know the complete content of wisdom, by fearing Yahweh. It takes an active effort to cultivate and nurture wisdom; however, fearing Yahweh reveals wisdom’s content simplicity. See David Clines, *WBC Vol. 18a: Job 21–37*, ed. Bruce Metzger et al. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2006), 922.

³¹¹ Tremper Longman III, *BCOT: Job* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 333. See also Blocher, 9. Shimon Bakon comments that fearing Yahweh is the result of Job’s resignation, based on the inability to comprehend Yahweh’s ways and wisdom. See Shimon Bakon, “Two Hymns to Wisdom: Proverbs 8 and Job 28,” *Jewish Bible Quarterly* 36, no. 4 (Oct 2008): 229.

ability to cloud what is understood.³¹² Wisdom is available to people through the fear of Yahweh, just as it was available to Yahweh through creation.³¹³

While Job 28:28 states that fearing Yahweh is wisdom, Proverbs 1:7 declares that fearing Yahweh is the beginning of wisdom.³¹⁴ Wisdom's preeminence is stated in Proverbs 1:7, "The fear of *Yahweh* is the beginning of knowledge; Fools despise wisdom and instruction."³¹⁵ The reverence for Yahweh is the starting point and essence of wisdom expressed by obedience and faithfulness to Him. It additionally denotes allegiance and ethical behavior, and אֵרָא is qualitatively different from elsewhere in the OT.³¹⁶ Wisdom is not acquired by human ingenuity but through a righteous relationship with Yahweh.³¹⁷ The biblical Hebrew term חָכְמָה ("wisdom") is a skill of living life the way Yahweh intended, connected by understanding and knowledge,

³¹² C. Davis Hankins, "Wisdom as an Immanent Event in Job 28, Not a Transcendent Ideal," *Vetus Testamentum* 63, no. 2 (2013): 226. The religious expression "fear of Yahweh" acts as a metonym circumscribing wisdom that eludes signification, and inscribes transcendence, which keeps the pursuit of wisdom indefinite. *Ibid.*, 227.

³¹³ *Ibid.*, 228

³¹⁴ The fear of Yahweh is a fundamental theological element in the Book of Proverbs, which teaches the reader wisdom and discipline. To fear Yahweh is to take a subservient position that entails dependence on Him, which leads to humility. See Longman III, "Fear of the Lord," 201–2. See also Crenshaw, 69.

³¹⁵ Fear is not an emotional response to make people run away; however, it is a response that makes people pay attention, listen, and be humble. Therefore, the fear of Yahweh leads to obedience and follow Yahweh's advice. Tremper Longman III, *The Fear of the Lord is Wisdom* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017): "Fearing God: The Theological Level."

³¹⁶ Matthew O'Kelly, "Wisdom and Fear of YHWH: Rethinking Their Relationship in Proverbs 1–9," *JSOT* 47, no. 1 (2022): 105. See also R. N. Whybray, *The Book of Proverbs* (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 136–7.

³¹⁷ Longman comments that Prov. 1:7 is a foundational truth that declares that wisdom can only come through a proper attitude and relationship with Yahweh. Therefore, Proverbs acknowledges the radically relational and theocentric nature of wisdom. See Longman III, *Proverbs*, 100.

and embracing all aspects of life.³¹⁸ While Proverbs uses “teachings” and “instructions” throughout its pages, “fools” should not be understood as uneducated persons. Chou-Wee Pan explains that a אָוִיל (“fool”) describes a morally deficient person.³¹⁹ Reyburn and Fry explain that a “fool” is an uninstructed person who will mislead others and think that wisdom is worthless.³²⁰ The necessity to attach אָוִיל to verse 7 is to make people realize that there will be some individuals who despise wisdom and discipline and will encourage other people to join them.³²¹ However, unlike the אָוִיל, a wise person knows that the right relationship with Yahweh is to have effective knowledge about Him.³²² The fear of Yahweh is the root to which all wisdom is built; it is by honoring and revering Yahweh and accepting His authority that wisdom is obtainable.³²³

³¹⁸ Estes, 221. See also Gerald Wilson, “הָכֵם,” in *NIDOTTE Vol. 2*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 129; H.-P. Müller, and M. Krause, “הָכֵם,” in *TDOT Vol. 4*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David Green (Grand Rapids.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 380.

³¹⁹ Chou-Wee Pan, “אָוִיל,” in *NIDOTTE Vol. 1*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 304. The characteristics of a אָוִיל are foolishness (Prov. 16:22), despises discipline and correction (Prov. 15:5), having bad manners in speech (Prov. 10:8), lack self-control (Prov. 12:16), are rude and disrespectful (Prov. 12:15), unable to manage finances and material possessions (Prov. 21:20), and are punished for their folly (Prov. 26:3). See also Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “אָוִיל,” 17; Henri Cazelles, “אָוִיל,” in *TDOT Vol. 1*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David Green (Grand Rapids.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 139.

³²⁰ Reyburn, and Fry, 30–1.

³²¹ Garrett, 68.

³²² Rad, *Wisdom of Israel*, 67–8. He states, “Israel attributes to the fear of *Yahweh*, to belief in *Yahweh*, a highly important function in respect of human knowledge. She was, in all seriousness, of the opinion that effective knowledge about *Yahweh* is the only thing that puts a man into a right relationship with the objects of his perception, that it enables him to ask questions more pertinently, to take stock of relationships more effectively and generally to have a better awareness of circumstances.” Ibid.

³²³ Reyburn, and Fry, *Proverbs*, 30. The beginning of wisdom can mean either temporally or logically. However, the basic assumption common to them is that the fear of Yahweh is the source of wisdom. Thus, the reverse can be said that wisdom leads to the fear of Yahweh. See O’Kelly, 106–7. See Fuhs, “יָרָא,” 311.

The religious expression appears throughout Proverbs with the authority to highlight a specific dimension or attitude; without it, there can be no instruction in wisdom.³²⁴

The Book of Ecclesiastes advises the reader to focus on the eternal by acknowledging Yahweh's sovereignty and appreciating Yahweh's life blessing. The key is found in Ecclesiastes 12:13, which is to fear Yahweh.³²⁵ The two instructions in verse 13 are the reasons for Qohelet's teachings. The righteous and obedient follower will "fear Yahweh" and "keep His commandments."³²⁶ This is not a new OT concept, but one addressed in Wisdom literature. It additionally solves the *יִרְאָה* problem.³²⁷ Longman comments that to fear Yahweh (the foundation of true wisdom) is to establish a righteous relationship with Him and to obey His commandments (using wisdom to be obedient to Yahweh), which is how that relationship is maintained.³²⁸ The dual injunction of "fear Yahweh" and "keep His commandments" are not found anywhere else in Ecclesiastes; however, 12:13 reveals an affiliation between wisdom and the Torah.³²⁹ Everything

³²⁴ Koptak, 62. The fear of Yahweh leads to knowledge of Yahweh (2:5; 9:10); hatred of evil, pride, and arrogance (8:13); long life (10:27); avoidance of death (14:27); and wisdom, humility, honor, and wealth (15:33; 22:4). See also Scullion, 1047; Fuhs, "יִרְאָה," 311.

³²⁵ Pelt and Kaiser state, "In Ecclesiastes the absolute sovereignty of God [*Yahweh*] is a reason for such fear (Eccl 3:14). Both wise decision-making and appropriate behavior are also closely associated with this concept (5:7; 7:18). Once again the duration of life, and even eternal life, are a part of this vital theme (8:12–13). After all other options and possibilities of fulfillment have been investigated, the author of Ecclesiastes concludes: "Fear *Yahweh* and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man" (12:13)." See Pelt, and Kaiser, Jr., "יִרְאָה," 523.

³²⁶ Michael Fox notes that verse 13 reflects an attitude that is close to traditional Wisdom epistemology. He explains that "The words of sages steer us in the direction, but in fact knowledge of this principle is accessible to everyone from the start." See Michael Fox, *Qoheleth and His Contradictions* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc., 1989), 328. This statement rings some truth by comprehending Yahweh's general and special revelation.

³²⁷ Estes, 383.

³²⁸ Tremper Longman III, *CBC: Ecclesiastes*, ed. Philip Comfort (Carol Stream: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 2006), 333–4.

³²⁹ Roland Murphy, *WBC Vol. 23a: Ecclesiastes* (Dallas: Word Books, 1992), 126. See also Richard Fuhr, Jr., "An Analysis of the Inter-Dependency of the Prominent Motifs within the

that Qoheleth has talked about in Ecclesiastes points to Yahweh's sovereignty, the limits of human wisdom, the abuse of wealth and power, and life's brevity leads to the command to the fear of Yahweh. To keep Yahweh's commands is not a religious piety or a self-satisfied arrogance; however, it is the most profound expression of humility and acceptance of being a human before Yahweh.³³⁰ Michael Eaton explains that to fear Yahweh is to acknowledge His immutable power and justice. It leads to rejecting evil, a hatred of sin, and the beginning of wisdom.³³¹ Thus, Qoheleth instructs in Ecclesiastes how to live reverently and enjoy life, believing that Yahweh will judge every human deed. To fear Yahweh is to reverence Him with the knowledge that there is accountability to how a person lives their everyday life.³³² For Qoheleth, the counterpart of הַבָּל ("futility") is to fear Yahweh. It is the only option for a relationship with Yahweh and to navigate life's meaningfulness.³³³

The fear of Yahweh is a central concept in OT religion. For wisdom literature, the fear of Yahweh was a means to make sense of Yahweh's sovereignty and justice in a secular world that lived by its laws and attitudes.³³⁴ Therefore, the sages analyzed and explained this complex reality so people could live a life with proper conduct that stems from the fear of Yahweh. The

Book of Qohelet," Ph.D. Diss., Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2008, EBSCO (F6C663770DFD78AD), 91; Allan Bornapé, "'Fear God and Keep His Commandments': The Character of Man and the Judgment of God in the Epilogue of Ecclesiastes," *DavarLogos* 17, no. 2 (Jul 2018): 49.

³³⁰ Garrett, 345. See also Walter Kaiser, *Toward an Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), 169.

³³¹ Michael Eaton, *TOTC Vol. 18: Ecclesiastes*, ed. Donald Wiseman (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1983), 176–7.

³³² Iain Provan, *NIVAC: Ecclesiastes* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 228–9. See also Crenshaw, 132; Rolex Cailing, "Fear God and Keep His Commandments: Foundation for a Relationship with God," *Review and Expositor* 115, no. 2 (2018): 256; Bornapé, 56–7.

³³³ Cailing, 262.

³³⁴ Fuhs, "נָרָא," 311.

wise person looks and depends on Yahweh to facilitate the challenging distinction between right and wrong.³³⁵ In wisdom theology, the fear of Yahweh is associated with wisdom, viewed as a gift from and a revelation of Yahweh.³³⁶ While the expression of the fear of Yahweh can be found explicitly in the OT, it is implied in the Book of Ruth. The fear of Yahweh entails proper conduct and attitude that allows a relationship with Him. Ruth 1:16–17 is a passage that implies Ruth’s fear of Yahweh.

In Ruth 1:16–17, Ruth’s sense of family duty reaches new heights. Bush comments that Ruth’s vow to Naomi goes beyond racial origins and national religion by abandoning her homeland to embracing Naomi’s people and Yahweh. The force of 1:16 reaches beyond familial duty to her mother-in-law; it conveys a sense of duty to Naomi’s Yahweh.³³⁷ Ruth’s awareness of Yahweh stems from her relationship with Elimelech’s family, which may have made her aware of the Moabite god’s insignificance. Additionally, Ruth would have seen how Naomi and Yahweh were inseparable.³³⁸ *HALOT* notes that the biblical Hebrew noun אֱלֹהֵי denotes the Yahweh of an individual (Naomi in v. 16).³³⁹ Ringgren explains that when Ruth willingly accepts

³³⁵ Rad, *Wisdom in Israel*, 68.

³³⁶ Daniel Estes, *Hear, My Son: Teachings and Learning in Proverbs 1–9* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Pub., Co., 1997), 22–3.

³³⁷ Waard, and Nida, 17. The authors state, “The very emphatic form of this declaration may require the use of certain adverbial attributives such as “certainly,” “surely,” “indeed,” etc.; for example, “your people will certainly be my people.” Thus, Ruth will certainly adjoin with the Israelites and Yahweh. *Ibid.*, 18.

³³⁸ LaCocque, 52. Ruth’s decision “effects a voluntary change of identity and unforced submission to a new orientation. It calls forth commitment that defies the fear of the unknown and willingly accepts the consequences of the ultimate. To be devoted to Yahweh is to be devoted to Israel, Yahweh’s chosen people (Zech. 8:23). See also Hubbard, Jr., *Ruth*, 117.

³³⁹ Koehler, and Baumgartner; “אֱלֹהֵי,” 53. See also Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “אֱלֹהֵי,” 44; W. Schmidt, “אֱלֹהֵי,” in *TLOT Vol.1*, ed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 122.

Naomi's people and Yahweh, she is rejecting her ethnicity and religion to embrace Naomi's. The phrase "my Yahweh" denotes a personal relationship between Yahweh and the person (cf. Ps. 31:6, 15).³⁴⁰ Ruth's responses in subsequent chapters will indicate that she has been converted to Yahweh.³⁴¹ Ruth's declaration has radical implications. If ethnicity can be changed by a change in religious devotion, then this opens the door for other pagan people to submit to Yahweh.³⁴² However, LaCocque comprehends Ruth's statement as a voluntary displacement, which characterizes Ruth's change in status.³⁴³ Ruth further solidifies this commitment by mentioning Yahweh's name, that if she does not keep her solemn oath, she will accept divine punishment.³⁴⁴ To signify the importance of her decision, Ruth states in verse 17 that where Naomi dies, she

³⁴⁰ Helmer Ringgren, "עַל־יְהוָה," in *TDOT Vol. 1*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David Green (Grand Rapids.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 279. Campbell comments that Ruth's statement is decisive. Further cementing her decision is read in 1:17 where she uses the personal divine name Yahweh in her oath formula. This shift from a common divine name, God, to a personal divine name, Yahweh, occurs only here and in 1 Sam. 20:13. See Campbell, Jr., 73–4.

³⁴¹ Block, *Ruth*, 642. In the Targum, Ruth's conversion is prominent and made elevated above her other good deeds. Her familial faithfulness and kindness play a subordinate role to her conversion and becoming a proselyte. See Cristian Brady, "The Conversion of Ruth in Targum Ruth," *Review of Rabbinic Judaism* 16, no. 2 (Feb 2013): 135. According to the Targumist, Boaz's acknowledgment of Ruth's good deeds does not entail her kindness to Naomi; however, it is her conversion that is meant, which is Ruth's willingness to obey Yahweh's commandments in lieu of her original nationality. *Ibid.*, 136, 139. See also Campbell, Jr., 80. Campbell mentions the Targum and Ruth's conversion; however, he resists the idea that it is implied.

³⁴² Lewis Hawk, *Ruth* (Nottingham: Apollos, 2015), 61. A decision to enter a new community involves a change in a person's religious identity, and a change in religious devotion will result in a new ethnicity.

³⁴³ LaCocque, 52–4. LaCocque contends that Ruth's expression reflects a relationship expressed in treaties or covenants. This idea is attested by Mark Smith. Smith explains that Ruth's statement is implicated by the concepts of covenant and family. Therefore, her words represent a covenantal relationship across family lines that have been split due to the death of a male who was responsible for Ruth's and Naomi's relationship. See Mark Smith, "Your People Shall Be My People': Family and Covenant in Ruth 1:16–17," *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 69, no. 2 (Apr 2007): 255. See also Hubbard, Jr., *Ruth*, 72, Campbell, Jr., 29–30.

³⁴⁴ Bush, 87. See Jack Sasson, *Ruth*, 2nd ed. (Sheffield: JSOT, 1995), 30.

will die and be buried. Including a burial area solidifies her devotion to Naomi, Israel, and Yahweh.³⁴⁵ Choices have consequences. In the case of Ruth, she chooses to be with Naomi (family duty), Israel (community duty), and Yahweh (religious duty). Proverbial wisdom teaches that wise choices stemming from a fear of Yahweh yield His blessings, and foolish choices result in Yahweh's curses.³⁴⁶

³⁴⁵ De Waard and Nida explain that for Ruth to make this expression it reinforces her loyalty to family, land, and Yahweh. See De Waard, and Nida, 18. LaCocque notes that the grave was significantly important for a person because they would want to be buried in ancestral ground (Gen. 29:29–31; 50:13, 24–26; Josh. 24:32). It was believed that when a person was buried in their ancestral ground that they would “sleep with the fathers” (1 Kgs 2:10; 11:43; 14:31). Therefore, Ruth chooses to be with Naomi, Israel, Yahweh, and be buried with Naomi's family. See LaCocque, 54.

³⁴⁶ Dell, *The Solomonic Corpus of 'Wisdom' and Its Influence*, 176.

Chapter 8

Wisdom is a term applied to any book that deals with biblical wisdom, involves sages and instruction, or gives an insight into the comprehension of reality.¹ The biblical Hebrew *חָכְמָה* (“wisdom”) can be found throughout the OT; however, over half of the term’s occurrences are read in Wisdom Literature (Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Job).² Wisdom receives its function and power from Yahweh. Proverbs 1:7 states that the fear of Yahweh is the beginning of wisdom. Yahweh’s wisdom is revealed through His creative acts; however, He bestows wisdom on individuals who find favor with Him. Therefore, wisdom can be mysterious.³ The Book of Proverbs presents wisdom through proverbial sayings, admonitions, and exhortations. Proverbs handles wisdom as an intellectual and mental trait. It provides numerous instructions on the guidance of life through practical ability. However, Ecclesiastes and the Book of Job give speculative wisdom in understanding how life and justice work.⁴

The Book of Ruth is a biblical narrative focusing on the interactions between Ruth, Naomi, and Boaz. The prominent themes are *hesed* and *go ’el*. Ruth is not considered a didactic wisdom text. The Greek and Christian bibles place the Book of Ruth after Judges and before 1 Samuel, reflecting a transition in Israel’s history from the period of judges to the monarchical time, which provides a judicial and genealogical context. However, the Book of Ruth is one of

¹ H.-P. Müller, and M. Krause, “חָכְמָה,” in *TDOT Vol. 4*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David Green (Grand Rapids.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 385.

² Roland Murphy, “Wisdom in the OT,” *AYBD*, ed. David Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 920.

³ M. Sæbø, “חָכְמָה,” in *TLOT Vol. 1*, ed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 423.

⁴ Martin Shields, “Wisdom,” *LBD*, ed. John Barry et al. (Bellingham: Lexham Press, 2016), “Speculative Wisdom in the Old Testament.”

the festal scrolls, Megilloth, associated with wisdom in the Jewish realm.⁵ The notion that Ruth can have didactic wisdom can help to comprehend the concepts of lovingkindness and kinsman redemption within the scope of Yahweh's sovereignty and providence.

Research Problem and Objectives

Because of the perceived affiliation with Wisdom Literature, the dissertation evaluated and provided evidence that the Book of Ruth's didactic wisdom is better situated with Wisdom Literature. The dissertation does not aim to discredit the judicial and genealogical relevance; however, it contends that shared wisdom themes between the texts support Ruth's role in the Megilloth and its placement in the Hebrew Bible.

There were seven research objectives/questions controlling the research and flow of information in the dissertation:

1. Examine the Book of Ruth's background.
2. Examine the book's location within the Megilloth and its significance.
3. Examine intertextuality, its concepts, and methods.
4. Examine wisdom's role biblically and extra-biblically.
5. Examine the intertextuality, or inter-themes, between the Book of Ruth and Wisdom Literature.
6. How does the Book of Ruth's wisdom contribute to Wisdom Literature?
7. What are the implications for understanding *hesed*, *go'el*, and the fear of Yahweh?

The research methodology focused on using the OT as the primary source and used peer-reviewed sources to evaluate the biblical text and support the conclusions reached from the

⁵ The Book of Ruth's placement after Proverbs indicates that the question asked in Prov. 31:10, "who is a capable wife," is answered with Ruth's introduction.

evaluations. To interpret and comprehend biblical Hebrew terms, lexicons and aids were used to reveal the word's semantic ranges and intended use in the texts. This research methodology found key findings that satisfied the research objectives and questions.

Key Findings and Implications

1. *The Book of Ruth's background.* In the Hebrew Bible, the Book of Ruth is situated after Proverbs. Due to Ruth's contribution to didactic wisdom, the biblical narrative was composed during Israel's post-exilic period. The concept of inclusivity governs the crucial point for post-exilic dating. Ruth, a Moabitess, would have faced extreme challenges blending into the Israelite society. During Israel's pre-exilic and exilic periods, the inclusion of foreigners was prohibited. The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah strongly condemn the mixing of the Israelites and foreigners, which is denoted by their insistence on an ethnic holy boundary prohibiting foreigners. However, the Book of Ruth reveals no indication that Ruth was prejudiced or ill-treated during her time gleaning and gathering in the fields or interactions with the harvesters or Boaz, which may indicate a rebuttal against the Ezra-Nehemiah exclusivity stance. In retrospect, Ruth's public interaction with the harvest staff and Boaz reflects an Israelite period with an openness to foreigners. This openness is due to the Israelites being a diaspora during the Babylonian captivity, who successfully integrated into the Babylonian's home culture. Therefore, Ruth would have found integrating into the Israelite community easier during the post-exilic time than in the pre-exilic or exilic period. Linguistically, the Book of Ruth reflects a Late Biblical Hebrew (LBH) period rather than a Standard Biblical Hebrew (SBH). Frederic Bush performed a

linguistic study on the Book of Ruth focusing on ten grammatical features and found that eight grammatical features pointed to it being an LBH text.⁶

The Hebrew Bible places the Book of Ruth in the Kevutum section, which denotes a post-exilic canonical placement. Along with the canonical placement is the Book of Ruth's inclusion in the Megilloth. These two factors indicate a late date due to the Persian influence in the text. The Persian influence indicates securing a new identity for the community of returnees and homelander.⁷ During this time, Israel was restructuring, and women were gaining more pronounced roles in the community. This restructuring phase would indicate a less-than-hostile attitude towards Moab, as indicated by Elimelech moving his family there during the Bethlehem famine and Ruth's willingness to accompany Naomi back to the homeland after the famine. Extra-biblically, the Book of Ruth is similar to the Book of Tobit, written during the post-exilic period (400–175 B.C.). Ruth and Boaz share some of the same characteristics as Tobias and Sarah. The Book of Tobit includes the marriage to a foreigner, the *go'el* concept, and references to the Mosaic Law.⁸

Classifying a literary text, or its genre, is a contemporary literary tool. Wisdom Literature is categorized as a wisdom genre due to its strong affiliation with biblical wisdom, which seeks to guide a person to a moral, righteous, and pleasing stance according to Yahweh's standards. Traditionally, the Book of Ruth is viewed as a biblical narrative that uses an artistic literary style, fiction or non-fiction. However, a literary text cannot always be constrained to one genre type.

⁶ Frederic Bush, *WBC Vol. 9: Ruth* (Dallas: Word, Inc., 1996), 22–30.

⁷ Diana Edelman, and Ehud Ben Zvi, eds., *Remembering Biblical Figures in the Late Persian and Early Hellenistic Periods* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 308–9.

⁸ Edward Jones III, *Reading Ruth in the Restoration Period: A Call for Inclusion* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc., 2016), 129; Jocelyn McWhirter, and Sara Ferry, "Tobit, Book of," in *LBD*, ed. John Barry et al. (Bellingham: Lexham Press, 2016), "Date."

Some texts can involve multiple genres depending on how the biblical author wants to convey a message.⁹ Thus, the Book of Ruth deals with the changing Israelite socio-religious identity. From a wisdom standpoint, the Book of Ruth implies how inclusivity, kindness, redemption, and the fear of Yahweh are crucial for an emerging Israelite community identity. A wisdom characteristic is the practical application of knowledge for the guidance of life. Thus, the Book of Ruth uses a practical application to instruct how lovingkindness, redemption, and the fear of Yahweh yield a blessed and prosperous life.

Yahweh's sovereignty and providence are reflected through nature and personal actions.¹⁰ Yahweh caused the famine in Bethlehem, leading to Elimelech's familial relocation and, ultimately, Ruth's inclusion in the family. Yahweh's reversal of the Bethlehem famine allowed Naomi to return to her homeland, where Ruth joined her. Yahweh's providence led Ruth to Boaz's field to glean and meet with him. Boaz's kindness towards Ruth causes a stronger bond, especially when it is revealed that he is a close relative. The familial relationship would allow Boaz to act as the kinsman-redeemer after the closest relative renounces his obligation to marry Ruth, redeem the family property, and provide an heir.

The Book of Ruth's canonical placement in the Hebrew Bible is not dependent on a genre classification. Its placement after Proverbs and before Ecclesiastes in the Megilloth reveals that Israel viewed Ruth as a book that heightens the wisdom qualities found in Wisdom Literature. The placement after Proverbs indicates that the Book of Ruth is a real-life example of the worthy woman's qualities denoted in Proverbs 31. The Jewish community understood how the Book of

⁹ Grant Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral*, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2006), 200.

¹⁰ Daniel Block, *NAC: Judges, Ruth* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1999), 608–9.

Ruth complemented Wisdom Literature due to its wisdom qualities. Thus, the Israelites were concerned with Ruth's wisdom ideals in a post-exilic environment versus the salvational-historical aspect.¹¹

The research into the Book of Ruth's background implicates that it can be read as a didactic wisdom text instilling wisdom quality through practical applications. Its placement within the Hebrew Kevutum and Megilloth reveals how the Jewish community was more concerned with Ruth's wisdom influence. The post-exilic compositional date further implies that the Book of Ruth was used to help the Israelites during their community restructuring, which involved accepting foreigners and highlighting the essential qualities for moral and righteous behavior.

2. *The Book of Ruth's inclusion in the Megilloth and its significance.*

The Megilloth is a collection of five festal scrolls (Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, and Esther). The five scrolls are read during specific Jewish festivals: the Song of Songs during Passover, Ruth at Pentecost, Lamentations during the Ninth of Ab, Ecclesiastes at the Feast of Tabernacles, and Esther during Purim. Each festal scroll had a liturgical significance for the Jewish community. The Song of Songs teaches sensual, intimate, and exclusive love, developing into an understanding of marriage to Yahweh.¹² The Book of Lamentations is composed of laments remembering Jerusalem's destruction. The acrostical format allowed for easy memorization, was pleasurable to read, and conveyed messages that ordinary daily words

¹¹ Greg Goswell, "The Ordering of the Books of the Canon and the Theological Interpretation of the Old Testament," *Journal of Theological Interpretation* 13, no. 1 (Spring 2019): 15.

¹² Tremper Longman III, *CBC, Vol. 6: Song of Songs*, ed. Philip Comfort (Carol Stream: Tyndale House Publishers, 2006), 343.

could not encapsulate.¹³ Ecclesiastes handles the complex comprehension of wisdom and justice through Qoheleth's perception of a meaningless life. Therefore, the instructions reflect an association between wisdom and obedience, which personal methods cannot achieve. While a person cannot hold all true wisdom, what is learned provides a better outcome than what a foolish person will receive during judgment. The Book of Esther is a biblical novella telling how the Israelites were delivered from Persian destruction. Although Yahweh is not explicitly mentioned in Esther, His sovereignty and providence are fully displayed. The Book of Esther is a post-exilic counterpart to the exodus event in Exodus. Finally, the Book of Ruth speaks about how to fear Yahweh even though He is silent throughout it. The character's actions (lovingkindness, devotion, and redemption) reflect Yahweh's standards as His providence directs their paths. This subtle fear of Yahweh yields a levirate marriage, property redemption, and an heir.

The Book of Ruth's Megilloth placement hinges on its liturgical function or chronological aspect. Liturgically, Ruth follows the Song of Songs; however, chronologically, it follows Proverbs. The chronological placement is preferable because Ruth's textual connections to Proverbs 31 are considered a summation of Proverbs' wisdom teachings. The Hebrew Bible had no fixed order during the ancient Israelite period. OT books would be moved according to their meaning and affiliation with other books. Therefore, the Book of Ruth was in the Kevutum section due to its close ties with the other wisdom books, its inclusion in the Megilloth, and lexical considerations.¹⁴

¹³ Elmer Martens, *CBC, Vol. 8: Lamentations*, ed. Philip Comfort (Carol Stream, Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 2005), 560. Jerusalem's destruction was so devastating to the Israelites that ordinary words could not express the scope of the incident.

¹⁴ Julius Steinberg, and Timothy Stone, eds., *The Shape of the Writings* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2015), 181–2.

Each scroll in the Megilloth reveals a different aspect of Yahweh's relationship with His people. The Song of Songs implies Yahweh's love for Israel, represented by the love between Solomon and the Shulamite woman. It affirms Yahweh's divine decree for marriage and theologically reflects on Yahweh's interactions with Israel. When read during the Passover celebration, Song of Songs reminds the people of Yahweh's love for them. Lamentations responds to Jerusalem's immense destruction. It is a wisdom discourse indicating the proper response to Yahweh's divine wrath by taking and applying all the OT theological resources to the situation.¹⁵ Lamentations is read during the Ninth of Ab, which serves as a solemn reminder of Jerusalem's destruction in 587 B.C. In Ecclesiastes, Qoheleth is willing to voice his concerns and opposition to the view of traditional wisdom. However, liturgically, Ecclesiastes reveals how the Israelites are to recognize their worth by implying that properly enjoying life, fearing Yahweh, acknowledging wisdom's limits, and avoiding self-sufficiency is crucial to avoid the mistakes made in the past. The ability to eat, drink, and enjoy life is a blessing Yahweh bestows, not solely through human efforts. In the Book of Esther, Israel's deliverance is reminiscent of the Hebrew deliverance from Egypt. It reminds the people of Yahweh's covenantal promise to Abraham and reveals His sovereignty and providence. The Book of Esther is read during the Purim festival to celebrate Israel's deliverance from Persian. It is a counterpart to when Yahweh delivered the Hebrews from Egyptian enslavement. The Book of Ruth follows the Song of Songs in a liturgical order. The main reason is that the biblical narrative mainly occurs during a harvest season. The Pentecost celebration occurs seven weeks after the Passover celebration. The significance of the Book of Ruth being read during this celebration is its reminder of the laws

¹⁵ Barry Webb, *Five Festal Garments, Christian Reflections on The Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther*, ed. D. A. Carson (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 78.

concerning gleaning in the fields, redemption, and levirate marriage, which were given seven weeks after the Hebrew exodus from Egypt.

3. *Intertextuality, or inter-themes.*

Intertextuality is the meaningful and identifiable relationship between biblical and extrabiblical texts.¹⁶ It is an interpretation tool that can help to comprehend a text through an interrelation with other OT texts. Intertextuality can be either dialogically or semantically driven. Dialogically, intertextuality is based on a text's relationship with other texts and how it contributes to the other texts. A downfall of the dialogic approach is its subjective nature. The semantic approach removes subjectivity by shifting the interpretive responsibility from the users to the semantics of intertextual terms to aid in inner-biblical exegesis.

Three methods can be used to evaluate intertextuality: diachronic, synchronic, and canonical. The diachronic method emphasizes the text's historical and cultural setting.¹⁷ The diachronic method is at play when the interpreter tries to comprehend the biblical tradition and the scribe's role in correcting and transmitting the biblical text. Therefore, lexical similarities, themes, and shared genres and structures are relevant for diachronic intertextuality.

The synchronic method removes the historical and cultural understanding by focusing solely on literary criticism.¹⁸ It evaluates a term's full semantic range and field and correlates that information with inner-biblical texts. A concern with this method is its level of subjectivity due

¹⁶ P. E. Koptak, "Intertextuality," in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Wisdom, Poetry, and Writings*, eds. Tremper Longman III and Peter Enns (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 325.

¹⁷ Michael Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 10; Russell Meek, "Inner-Biblical Exegesis, and Inner-Biblical Allusion: The Ethics of a Methodology," *Biblica* 95, no. 2 (2014): 287; Geoffrey Miller, "Intertextuality in the Old Testament," *Currents in Biblical Research* 9.3 (2011): 284.

¹⁸ Miller, 284.

to an abundance of possible meanings. An interpreter may impose a meaning on the text which would diminish its theological significance. Therefore, the synchronic method can be reader-driven with a disregard for authorial intention.

Finally, the canonical method considers the biblical text's placement within a canonical framework. It is not concerned with historical-cultural or literary criticisms. However, when analyzed in the same biblical grouping, it emphasizes themes, motifs, or structural elements that support a holistic interpretation.¹⁹ The concerns with this approach are that the reader may impose a structure on the text that was not authorially intended and its anachronistic nature.

4. *Wisdom's role.*

Wisdom is a topic seen throughout the OT²⁰; however, a few biblical books make wisdom a prominent theme.²¹ The cultivation and nurturing of wisdom come from a fundamental, practical, and proper application, which leads to a moral and ethical life.²² The most crucial aspect is that wisdom does not come from a person but from Yahweh. Yahweh bestows wisdom to those who exhibit reverence, respect, and moral and ethical behavior to Him and others. Intertextuality helps determine whether a biblical text employs wisdom themes and ideas shared with other wisdom texts. Wisdom can be revealed by biblical Hebrew words conveying wisdom, instructions on guiding a person's life, practical applications, and how Yahweh interacts with His creation. Wisdom comes from Yahweh and controls a person's activity.

¹⁹ Jordan Scheetz, *The Concept of Canonical Intertextuality and the Book of Daniel* (Cambridge: James Clarke Co. Ltd., 2012), 32–3.

²⁰ Deuteronomy, Psalms, Song of Songs, Prophecy, and through Joseph, Daniel, Adam, and Solomon.

²¹ Job, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes.

²² Murphy, 920; James Crenshaw, *Old Testament Wisdom: An Introduction* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998), 3.

Biblical wisdom can be a proverb, a universally accepted and easily remembered statement. Proverbial sayings can help trace theology, are recognizable by catchwords, and can be grouped according to a theme or concern. Proverbs or sayings can be based on a person's lived experiences or didactic, which states a value to be learned. Biblical wisdom can take the form of an admonition followed by a motivational clause. Thus, a wise instruction is given, followed by the reason for obeying the instruction. Finally, a dialogue can be used to convey wisdom. The speeches between Job and his friends and Yahweh reveal interpreted biblical wisdom intended by the biblical author.

Wisdom through practical ability is not understood as intelligence but as a possessed skill used to cultivate and nurture it. Practical application is taught through lived experiences rooted in the fear of Yahweh, providing a religious tone to a model of life. An advantage to practical application is that it can be passed down from generation to generation.²³ Biblical wisdom guides one's life by making ethical and moral decisions. Guidance is not dictated by the Mosaic Law but through a moral character formation.²⁴ The Decalogue and the other civil and ceremonial laws were divinely designed to reflect obedience and faithfulness to Yahweh. However, wisdom concerns itself with moral behavior and Godly character formation.

In the Book of Job, wisdom is derived from how to handle personal suffering and injustice. Job's friends try to instruct traditional wisdom through its relevancy with retributive theology. The problem with their approach is that they are strictly adhering to the doctrine of retribution, which is that the good is rewarded and the bad punished. Therefore, they believe Job has committed a grievous sin against Yahweh to deserve the suffering. However, their fault with

²³ Murphy, 925.

²⁴ Ibid.

such a stance is that they do not consider Job's circumstances. Through Yahweh's speeches with Job, the traditional view of the retributive theology is faulty because Yahweh is in control. Circumstances in a person's life happen according to His will and purpose. Job learns a valuable lesson about handling life's circumstances with proper behavior and faithfulness towards Yahweh. Job develops a better understanding of wisdom because of his relationship with Yahweh.

The Book of Proverbs provides practical wisdom in a rational and ordered world. Proverbs gives insights, advice, and moral teachings on living by wisdom as a divine principle and practical knowledge for daily living. Proverbs 1:2–4 states the purpose of the biblical book so that the reader might know wisdom and allow it to govern their life. The Book of Proverbs claims, or teaches, how people should do, say, and act the right thing at the right time, grounded in the fear of Yahweh. Proverbs' wisdom is readily accessible and teachable, results in cheerfulness, cultivates sound decisions grounded in a Yahwistic character, exemplified by diligence and generosity, and governs a person's actions and words towards another person. The Book of Proverbs presents a holistic view of wisdom, encompassing both the moral and the practical. Its teachings provide a source and guidance for wisdom. The wisdom in Proverbs is both a challenge to live righteously and an invitation to discern the patterns and principles that govern life.

The Book of Ecclesiastes gives a skeptical and existential view of life's meaning; it is a speculative wisdom. Compounding Qoheleth's problem with wisdom is its limitability. It seems Qoheleth is saying that the more one knows, the more one realizes the inherent complexities and contradictions in life, leading potentially to existential despair rather than clarity or peace. Therefore, the problem arises that the more a person knows, the less they know, which is faculty

and knowledge. It is a faculty because it is an intellectual power that combines common sense, practical skills, and reason. It is knowledge, that which is the communicable content of knowledge. Hence, the more Qoheleth has learned about life, the worse life gets.²⁵ The conclusion reached by Qoheleth is to fear Yahweh and keep His commandments, which acknowledge His sovereignty and appreciate life's blessings.

The Book of Ruth shows wisdom elements that touch on loyalty, kindness, redemption, virtuous characters, and moral considerations. Ruth's character indicates a person who exhibits the ethical and moral behavior denoted by Wisdom literature—specifically, the interrelation between Ruth and the capable wife in Proverbs 31. While the fear of Yahweh is not explicitly addressed in the Book of Ruth, it is implied by Ruth's decision to forsake her homeland and religion to join Naomi to Bethlehem. She uses a vow formula to go with Naomi, accept Israel as her people, and Yahweh as her God.²⁶ To solidify this vow, she is willing to accept death if she does not honor it. The first step towards covenantal faith is to accept Israel as a community, which leads to reverence and obedience to Yahweh. Wisdom and blessings are bestowed on people whom Yahweh favors. In the Book of Ruth, Ruth is blessed with marriage and children.

²⁵ Roland Murphy, *WBC Vol. 23A: Ecclesiastes* (Dallas: Word Books, 1992), 14.

²⁶ Robert Hubbard explains that Ruth's words and tone point to a confession. The use of the covenantal name Yahweh instead of Elohim by Ruth suggests that her vow meant beyond the physical life and included the afterlife. See Robert Hubbard, *NICOT: Ruth* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1988), 120. André LaCocque comments that Ruth knew that Yahweh was Naomi's God and that she would have had some knowledge about Yahweh. Therefore, her decision to live her homeland and her god to go with Naomi, to accept Israel as her home, and to accept Yahweh as her God meant that Ruth was willing to convert to Yahwism out of fear for Yahweh. See André LaCocque, *CC: Ruth* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014), 52. Block disagrees and sees Ruth's vow as a transference of cultural membership rather than a Yahwistic conversion. See Block, 641.

Biblical wisdom is not confined to Ruth; it is indicated through Boaz's actions, exhibited through his morals, proper behavior, and Godly character.²⁷

5. *Intertextuality between the Book of Ruth and Wisdom literature.*

To support the dissertation's thesis, fifteen didactic themes were chosen to show wisdom's intertextuality between the Book of Ruth and Wisdom literature.²⁸

A. The concept of a proper portion involves the idea of moderation, balance, and equitable distribution grounded in ethical living and fearing Yahweh.²⁹ The Proverbial proper portion is revealed through temperance of speech (Prov. 10:19), financial prudence (Prov. 13:11), and restraint in desires (Prov. 23:20–21). While eating and drinking during celebrations were considered as expressing thanks to Yahweh for His providence and blessings, too much consumption could lead to temptation. It clouds the mind, confuses emotions, and diminishes the ability to use wisdom. Therefore, self-control was taught to help lay a base for moral living. An aspect of self-control is indicated by a person's actions and the consequences incurred. Proverbs handles acts and consequences by contrasting the wise and fool, rich and poor, diligence and laziness, and righteous and wicked. Foolishness, laziness, greed, and wickedness were detrimental to a person's moral character. In Proverbs 30:8, Agur prays to Yahweh to only provide life's necessities, so he does not fall into immoral behavior.

²⁷ Ben Ollenburger, ed., *Old Testament Theology: Flowering and Future* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2004), 335.

²⁸ Proper portion, discipline and hope, friendship and family loyalty, hard work, entreaty, inappropriate touching, true reward, humility, generosity of spirit, kindness, redemption, obeying instructions, worthy woman/wife, city gate, and building up a house were analyzed.

²⁹ Anthony Harvey notes that Ex. 16:4 provides the authority for proper portion. The manna that Yahweh provided was to be shared equally and never hoarded. See Anthony Harvey, "Daily Bread," *JTS* 69, no. 1 (Apr. 2018): 29.

In Ecclesiastes, Qoheleth instructs the reader to enjoy life by eating and drinking, which is proper and bestowed by Yahweh (Eccl. 5:18). For him, something is proper when it is the perfect good. In Ecclesiastes 3:11, Qoheleth acknowledges that Yahweh has made everything proper in its time. Furthermore, Qoheleth comprehends a proper portion as something Yahweh gave based on His will and should be enjoyed. Therefore, Yahweh properly portions wealth and possessions to a person so they can enjoy life and reflect on His divine actions, which provides happiness in a meaningless life.

In Job 23:14, Job declares that Yahweh has performed what is appointed for him. In this context, a sense of measure or portion is denoted. The concept of a proper portion read in Job 23:14 aligns with Proverbs 30:8 and 31:15, which deal with an allotment of bread and food portions for the household and maidens, respectfully.³⁰ “What is appointed for me” in 23:14 reflects a similar idea read in Job 23:12, “my necessary food.”

Ruth 1:1 implies a proper portion. Yahweh caused a famine in Bethlehem that forced Elimelech to relocate his family to Moab to secure the necessary daily food ration. Yahweh bestows a proper portion when people are faithful and obedient to Him. Thus, famine was a divine curse that removed the proper portion of food. In verses 6–7, Naomi receives word that Yahweh has blessed Bethlehem by allowing crops to grow and be harvested. The blessing of food indicates that Bethlehem had found favor in Yahweh’s eyes. In the shadow of Exodus 16:4, the community would only gather what was a necessary portion for the day.

B. Discipline and hope are used in Wisdom literature to cultivate and nurture moral, ethical, and spiritual development for a successful life. The Book of Proverbs uses instruction, discipline,

³⁰ Helmer Ringgren, “קִיָּן,” in *TDOT Vol. 5*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David Green (Grand Rapids.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 141–2.

correction, and reproof in a father/mother and son context, a familial setting reflecting Yahweh's parental devotion to Israel. In Proverbs 3:11–12, the familial metaphor is indicated by Yahweh's love and discipline towards Israel, like a father loves and disciplines his son. Yahweh's disciplining Israel is a punishment, and it provides hope that Israel will not continue its disruptive behavior against Him. Proverbs 19:18 instructs the parents to discipline their child while there is still hope to save him. However, neglecting discipline can bring about the child's destruction.

Qoheleth provides a unique approach to discipline and hope. It does not straightforwardly endorse the strict moral discipline found in Proverbs. Instead, it presents a more nuanced view that intertwines discipline with a realistic acceptance of life's enigmas and Yahweh's sovereignty.³¹ For Qoheleth, discipline is a form of self-restraint. It is a self-restrained acceptance of what cannot be changed through the fear of Yahweh and keeping His commandments (Eccl. 12:13). Ecclesiastes 3:12 implies a hope for a good life bestowed by Yahweh. Therefore, a person's hope is based on their ethical and moral doings consistent with Yahweh's standards, resulting from discipline. In 9:4, the living have hope, which allows for confidence and trust in Yahweh's sovereignty and providence through His bestowal of gifts that cultivate and nurture enjoyment and happiness in life.

In the Book of Job, Eliphaz tells Job that blessed is the person that Yahweh reproves and that they are wise in accepting His discipline. Eliphaz's use of reproves in Ecclesiastes 5:17

³¹ Ecclesiastes is concerned with righteousness. "The wisdom teachers' goal is to promote a life of righteous wisdom which is pleasing to *Yahweh*. They know that wise living does not guarantee a life free from poverty or suffering: 'Better is a little with righteousness than large income with injustice' (Prov. 16:8; cf. 15:16; 28:6; Eccles. 4:13; 9:15)." See E. Schnabel, "Wisdom," in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander and Brian Rosner (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 844.

indicates chastening. It denotes evidence of the influence of wisdom that uses suffering as a means for Yahweh's education. The fault with Eliphaz is that he perceives Job's suffering because of Yahweh's retribution. However, Job's suffering tests his faithfulness and obedience to Yahweh. Therefore, Yahweh instructs Job to trust in His sovereignty and providence. In 5:17, Yahweh's instructing Job is reminiscent of a father instructing his son through discipline. Hope is not a forlorn notion in the Book of Job. In Ecclesiastes 5:16, Eliphaz correctly states that the helpless have hope. This hope is Yahweh's care and provision for those people who are unable to do so for themselves. Yahweh helps and provides hope for the impoverished suffering from emotional distress, closing the mouths of those who speak iniquity against the helpless (Ps. 107:42).

In the Book of Ruth, hope is implied in Ruth 3:18 when Naomi tells Ruth that whether the closest relative or Boaz performs the kinsman-redeemer role does not matter because the matter would be settled, and the family and family property would be redeemed. The realization of that hope is read in Ruth 4 when Boaz ultimately becomes the kinsman-redeemer by redeeming the familial property, marrying Ruth, and providing an heir. Boaz plays a pivotal role in nurturing hope. His kindness, generosity, and willingness to act as the kinsman-redeemer reflect the moral and ethical obligations outlined in the Mosaic Law, offering Ruth and Naomi renewed hope.

C. Friendship and familial loyalty are recurring themes in Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Job. Wisdom literature guides how to navigate complex social relationships. Friendship is a necessary element of social and personal well-being. Family loyalty is represented by the responsibilities associated with the immediate family and ancestors. While friendship and family loyalty are integral in an individualistic viewpoint, maintaining healthy friendships and family loyalties

contribute to the moral fabric of the community. Proverbs 17:17 mentions a friend and a brother. In the Proverbial context, a friend's devotion is exhibited during the good and bad times, and it resembles a brother's love.³² Thus, Proverbs 17:17 reveals the depth of friendship and family loyalty. Proverbs 18:24 is reminiscent of 17:17 because it reflects a friend's devotion. However, verse 24 cautions that having too many acquaintances can be detrimental. A true friend possesses a loyalty and affection that can be deeper than a brother's or sister's loyalty and affection.

Ecclesiastes denotes how it is better to live life with companionship. In Ecclesiastes 4:9–12, Qoheleth declares that having a friend makes labor easier because each complements the other to perform the task. Friends help each other. When one friend falters, the other provides support and help. When adversity or tragedy is encountered, friends help each other through challenging times. Friendship allows people to endure the world's challenges and temptations. Ecclesiastes 4:9–12 reveals that friendship is desirable when dealing with life's challenges, the world's coldness, and for support.

In the Book of Job, familial devotion is indicated by the size of Job's family (seven sons and three daughters) and his priestly actions by offering sacrifices for any sins they may have committed. The leading male in the family, usually the father, was responsible for providing authority and security to all family members. The family was held together by duty, responsibility, and traditional concerns.³³ In Job 1:5, it is read that Job performs a vital function as the head of the family, acting as a priest. In the traditional home setting, the home was church, and the father was the priest; therefore, Job was responsible for teaching his children the wisdom

³² Crawford Toy, *ICC: The Book of Proverbs* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1899), 346.

³³ J. Drane, "Family," in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. T. Alexander, and Brian Rosner (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 494.

and religious values he upheld.³⁴ A priestly duty that Job performed was consecrating his sons and daughters by offering burnt sacrifices.³⁵ With friendship, Job understood that friends were to be trustworthy, honest, and loving. The cycles of speeches between Job and his friends reveal that Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar did not exhibit these characteristics. However, Job's friends cultivate an increasing vehemency, self-righteousness, and an unqualified condemnation of Job. They attack Job with ferocity on all sides, expecting to break his will.

In the Book of Ruth, familial devotion is revealed through Ruth's actions towards Naomi and Boaz's actions in Ruth 4. In Ruth 1:16–17, Ruth makes her intentions known that she will leave Moab to accompany Naomi to Bethlehem. Therefore, making Israel her homeland and Yahweh her God. Ruth's devotion to Naomi is further indicated by her willingness and diligence to work in the fields to gather grain (Ruth 2:2–3) and obey Naomi's instructions in Ruth 3:1–4. Boaz displays an intimate friendship in Ruth 2:20. Boaz's words and actions towards Ruth are a willful act on Boaz's part, and it involves Boaz going beyond a legal duty because of the kindness he has shown to Ruth.³⁶ Selflessness, loyalty, and mutual care are the hallmarks of Ruth's and Naomi's friendship and devotion, exemplified in Exodus 20:12 and Proverbs 23:22.

D. Hard work is a character trait that leads to prosperity and a good life. The wisdom trait is reflected in Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Job, and Ruth. The narration concerning the industrious ant in Proverbs 6:6–12 indicates how laziness is not a desirable trait. An ant is used as a lesson against laziness. The ant is shown to be industrious, and self-discipline, foresight, and industry are taught

³⁴ John Goldingay, *Job for Everyone* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2013), 9.

³⁵ Robert Alden, *NAC Vol. 11: Job* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1993), 52.

³⁶ Bush, 135.

by observing its work.³⁷ Through its self-discipline, foresight, and industry, the ant does not need a ‘supervisor’ or a work plan. Yahweh endowed the ant with natural wisdom to work diligently. Additionally, Yahweh provided the food for the ant, but the ant had to perform work to harvest it.³⁸ Proverbs 10:4 contrasts hard work and laziness. Poverty and destitution are the inevitable outcomes for a lazy person. The refusal to perform hard work is a disgrace to oneself and the community. Therefore, a person must work hard to stave off poverty and accumulate food and prosperity. Hard work is a personal endeavor and should also be committed to Yahweh. The commitment of a person’s hard work to Yahweh implies trust. When people can trust Yahweh because of the fruit of their hard work, they can trust Yahweh in any of life’s challenges.

In Ecclesiastes 2:24, Qoheleth states that “labor is good.” The verse yields a positive view of hard work because its rewards are seen as Yahweh’s gifts. Yahweh’s bestowed gifts are by His sovereignty and providence. The wisdom taught is that it is foolish to work hard for selfish gains; however, the wise person who works hard recognizes that the gains come from Yahweh. Ecclesiastes 9:7–10 indicates that hard work is not a burden if the right attitude is maintained and is accomplished with one’s might. The right attitude entails performing a task vigorously and continuously, whether or not they succeed.

In the Book of Job, it is read how Yahweh blesses hard work. In Job 1:10, Satan acknowledges that Yahweh has blessed Job’s hard work—Yahweh’s blessings on Job result from his character. For Job to receive Yahweh’s blessings, he must show Yahweh that he deserves them. The knowledge that Yahweh blesses hard work is read in Ruth 2:12. In this verse, Boaz entreats Yahweh to repay Ruth for her hard work. Ruth’s hard work is revealed by her

³⁷ Bruce Waltke, and Ivan De Silva, *Proverbs: A Shorter Commentary* (Chicago: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2021), “Admonition to Learn Wisdom from the Ant (6:6–8).”

³⁸ *Ibid.*

willingness and diligence to work (Ruth 2:7). Ruth takes the initiative to glean grain from the field, and the amount that she gleans draws Naomi's interest in 2:19 when she sees the quantity that has been gleaned. This implies that Ruth was very active in acquiring grain for them. Ruth 2:17 further indicates the longevity of Ruth's work and the reward. The verse reveals that she worked until evening and gathered an ephah of grain. Ruth 2:23 additionally tells that Ruth worked both the barley and wheat harvests.

E. Entreaty is an earnest request or petition. It can serve many functions, such as a request for wisdom, being involved in a social justice conversation, or an inquiry into the limitations of human understanding. In the Book of Proverbs, an entreaty is a proactive search for wisdom through instructions or sayings. In Proverbs 2:3, the student is to appeal or call for wisdom. An active appeal plays a pivotal role in the student's education; they are to call out to wisdom as if their life depended on it.³⁹ Proverbs 8:17 alludes to a person who is willing to seek wisdom. It reveals a type of entreaty in which a person who loves wisdom actively seeks it: a petition. This entreaty involves the right attitude and a willingness to pursue it. Proverbs 18:23 reveals a form of entreaty where the impoverished plead to the wealthy. It is a situation where the lower-status class is looking for aid from the higher-status class—however, the wealthy answer roughly to the entreaties. The wisdom gained from this verse is that the poor, being Yahweh's creatures, should not be subjected to exploitation degradation. Yahweh is deeply involved with the poor and is angered when they are mistreated or humiliated.

In the epilogue for Ecclesiastes, Qoheleth makes an entreaty that a person should not go above and beyond placing stock in a person's wise words (Eccl. 12:12). Qoheleth has demonstrated a remarkable understanding of the hard work of comprehending life. Therefore, he

³⁹ Paul Koptak, *NIVAC: Proverbs* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 98.

does not want the student to burden himself with additional work by refusing what Qoheleth has already stated. Thus, the student should exercise humility and discernment when engaging in the rigorous learning task.⁴⁰

In the Book of Job, Job entreats Yahweh to grant his longing for death (Job 6:8). With Yahweh referenced in the third person, Job is pleading with a superior. Job's present circumstances are too hard to bear, and it is his entreaty for death. In conjunction with a plea for death, Job desires death so that he does not succumb to blaspheming Yahweh because of the moral lack of strength. A different form of entreaty is encountered in Job 40:10, where Yahweh issues imperatives with His confrontation with Job. In 40:10, Yahweh tells Job to exhibit the same divine attributes that He possesses. However, it is impossible for Job to do so, and it reveals that Job cannot govern the universe in His moral and legal categories of right, wrong, innocent, and guilty. While *ʾn* is commonly encountered in polite addresses, a forceful emphasis is indicated in verse 10.

In the Book of Ruth, entreaty's concept is indicated in Ruth 2:7, where she asks permission to glean in the fields. Her entreaty in verse 7 is distinct from Ruth 2:2. In 2:2, Ruth enforces her entreaty by a willing desire to glean in the fields. However, in verse 7, the entreaty takes the form of a permissive request; it hinges on Boaz's generosity. Ruth recognizes that she is a stranger, foreigner, and impoverished; therefore, her ability to glean in the field depends on her entreaty to be pleasant and permissive. The distinction between Ruth's use of entreaty versus Wisdom literature is that Ruth imposes an Israelite tradition of social justice. While social justice

⁴⁰ Daniel Estes, *Handbook on the Wisdom Books and Psalms* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 382.

is not an explicit wisdom theme, it is implied through the interactions between a wise person and others.

F. Inappropriate touching can take the form of sexual misconduct or violence. In Proverbs 5:15–23, young men are admonished from being tempted by immoral women. Adultery is a sexual sin that presupposes Yahweh’s divine decree for marriage. In the Proverbial text, figurative language is used to express the designed sexual relationship with a lawful wife, which is a physical act of love and functions for the procreation of children. Cisterns and springs are metaphorically used to denote a wife and a sexual life. The instruction indicates that a young man is to enjoy the company of his wife and her youthfulness and sexual attractiveness. The act-consequence of straying from one’s wife is indicated in verses 20–23, which stresses that Yahweh sees everything, and that adultery leads to destruction. In Proverbs 6:29–32, adultery’s immorality is further denoted. Adultery violates the Seventh Commandment and reveals a wicked person’s character. Adultery ruins two families. It is a severe sin that cannot be repaid, resulting in destruction.

Qoheleth describes an immoral woman whose heart is snares and chains in Ecclesiastes 7:26. She is a huntress who looks to entice and entrap men who are not faithful to Yahweh. Qoheleth understood adultery as sinful and detrimental. Therefore, he is instructing against the wanton and illicit sexual desires of the seductress. The woman in 7:26 is a bad or loose person who is shameless and exhibits confidence in her ability to satisfy a man’s desire; therefore, she is

wicked in using her methods to control men.⁴¹ Therefore, she is outside the family boundaries and poses a risk to men who should be faithful to their wives, whom Yahweh gifted.⁴²

In Job's speeches concerning his life (Job 29–31), he declares that he has not gazed at a virgin. In this context, gazing implies a mental behavior that denotes unwarranted gazing. Since Job is blameless and upright, he diligently keeps the commandments against adultery and coveting a neighbor's wife. Thus, he is making a diligent effort and a moral decision not to gaze at a virgin, which could lead to sexual desires. The avoidance of sexual immorality is furthered in Job 31:9, going from gazing to a sinful act. The seriousness of Job's statements reflects that he is guarding his eyes (31:1) and heart (31:9). He is protecting his moral self by controlling what his eyes see, leading to the heart's intentions and desires. Job's oaths of innocence in Job 31:1 and 9 indicate wisdom ethics rather than legality; preferred wisdom involves correct sexual ethics.⁴³

In the Book of Ruth, Boaz commands his servants not to touch Ruth while she is in the field gleaning (Ruth 2:9). It is uncertain if Boaz is thinking about sexual misconduct or violence. However, due to her single status, being a foreigner, and attractiveness, unwanted advances are firmly in mind with this verse. Boaz was concerned with Ruth's safety and, therefore, the seriousness of his commands. While working in the field, Ruth would have been under Boaz's care, and he saw a defenseless stranger and widow in her. Regardless of whether the servant's

⁴¹ Aron Pinker, "Qohelet's Views on Women—Misogyny or Standard Perceptions? An Analysis of Qohelet 7:23–29 and 9:9," *Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament* 26, no. 2 (2012): 185.

⁴² Kyle Dunham, "The Woman Who Is a Snare: The Identity and Nature of the Female Figure in Ecclesiastes 7:25–29," *Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal* 27 (2022): 48–9.

⁴³ Michael Dick, "Job 31, the Oath of Innocence, and the Sage," *Zeitschrift Für Die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 95, no. 1 (1983): 49.

possible actions were considered adulterous or not, any sexually immoral act is reprehensible and is to be avoided.

G. In Wisdom literature, a true reward is bestowed when a person exhibits ethical and moral behavior that befits Yahweh's standards. In the Book of Proverbs, the contrast between a wise person and a fool indicates how one is rewarded, and the other is not. Proverbs 8:19 speaks about how good fruit is better than gold. Due to acts-consequences, a person will receive what they deserve. In Proverbs 11:18, the wicked receive no blessings while the righteous are given an enduring reward. Yahweh rewards people who are obedient to Him. The true reward for the righteous is life, while the wicked receives death. In Proverbs 13:21, the wickedness that sinners try to impose on others turns on them, and they will endure adversity. However, the righteous will be rewarded with prosperity.

Qoheleth declares in 2:24; 3:13, 22; 5:19; 8:15; 9:7–9 that finding pleasure in one's everyday activities and living life to its fullest is a gift from Yahweh, who has given life to people who are obedient to Him. It is an alternative to the meaningless life when a person works hard and enjoys the blessings Yahweh bestows. Yahweh rewards people based on His sovereignty and providence. Enjoyment as a gift from Yahweh is described phenomenologically by Qoheleth. When a person is happy, life's meaninglessness and brevity retreat into their subconscious; therefore, Yahweh's gift of enjoyment can be perceived as an ecstasy emanating from the heart.⁴⁴ Yahweh's blessings are additionally a result of approving a person's work. Qoheleth states in Ecclesiastes 9:7–9 that Yahweh approves a person's work and bestows rewards.

⁴⁴ Iain Provan, *NIVAC: Ecclesiastes* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 128.

In the Book of Job, true reward is indicated in Job 1:1–3 and 42:10. In 1:1–3, due to Job’s character, he has been blessed with children, possessions, and was the greatest of all the men of the east, which entailed his spiritual and moral qualities. By his testing, he lost all that was rewarded to him. However, in Job 42:10, his initial rewards were restored doublefold. Yahweh’s rewarding Job was not a restitution, but gifts given by grace. It was not until after Job humbled himself before Yahweh that he was blessed. His humility and character were rewarded by Yahweh and increased due to Yahweh’s acceptance of Job. Thus, Job fearing Yahweh yielded an abundant life.

Ruth’s true reward stems from her decision to abandon her homeland and religion to accept Naomi’s homeland and Yahweh (Ruth 1:16–17). Through Yahweh’s sovereignty and providence, Ruth meets Boaz, which leads to redemption and prosperity. Yahweh’s providence is the basis for Ruth’s and Boaz’s reward for their moral and ethical behavior. For instance, in Ruth 2:3, Yahweh’s divine providence causes the initial encounter between Ruth and Boaz. In Ruth 2:12, Boaz entreats Yahweh to reward Ruth for her lovingkindness and devotion to Naomi. Ruth’s familial devotion and hard work are necessary for caring for Naomi and reflect Yahweh’s standards.

H. Humility is the foundation for wisdom, understanding, and finding favor with Yahweh. It stems from ethical and moral behavior exhibited by a wise person. The humble person recognizes their status under Yahweh. The relationship between wisdom and humility is read in Proverbs 11:2. The humbled person will receive wisdom and honor by acting justly and with loving mercy. They can accept criticism and modify their behavior to align with Yahweh’s standards. The humble will heed the advice and apply it appropriately. Proverbs 1:7 and 2:5 state that fearing Yahweh is the beginning of wisdom. To fear Yahweh is to revere, worship, and

honor Him. This fear can only be accomplished with a humbled heart. By exhibiting humility before Yahweh, He will bless a person with life, riches, and honor (Prov. 22:4). A person's awareness of their life not being the center of the universe is recognizing Yahweh's creative process for life and subjecting themselves to His purpose.

In Ecclesiastes 5:2 and 4–7, Qoheleth advises against making rash statements or vows with Yahweh. Humility is a necessary component for thoughtful words when praying to Yahweh. Humility indicates self-control and is a characteristic of a wise person. The fear of Yahweh begins with a humble heart, which generates pleasing behavior. The wise person cannot bargain, impress, or be equal with Yahweh. Human's limited wisdom prevents them from fully comprehending Yahweh's will and purpose. Therefore, trust must be placed in Him, which comes from humility. The ability to recognize Yahweh's control without knowing the reasons why implies a sense of humility. The humble person recognizes their place in the cosmic order and acquires a proper self-estimation. Humility is the recognition of inadequacy, defined in terms of selflessness, and is the basis for all wisdom.⁴⁵

In Eliphaz's third speech, he states that Yahweh will save the humble person. Eliphaz insists that Job's pride prevents him from humbly accepting Yahweh's instructions. Thus, according to Eliphaz, Yahweh is humbling Job so he can acknowledge that his sin is the cause of the suffering. However, Eliphaz is incorrect in assuming the source of Job's circumstances. In Job 42:1–6, Job implies humility by expressing that he knows nothing, wants to be instructed by Yahweh, and see Him. Job did not get any resolution as to why he was made to suffer; however, humility forced him to recognize that Yahweh was in control of His creation.

⁴⁵ W. Dumbrell, "עָנָו," in *NIDOTTE Vol. 3*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 459.

Ruth exemplifies humility in her response to Boaz in Ruth 2:13. Her humility is revealed by how she views herself as below Boaz's maidservants. Her statement indicates her respect for Boaz's position and reflects her low status as a maidservant. The biblical author is painting a portrait of Ruth as a hard-working woman who takes nothing for granted and appreciates the acts of kindness given to her. Ruth's response is wrapped with gratitude and humility. Her humility is indicated in her response to Boaz in that she realizes she is below his maidservants, yet she is humbled because what he has granted her is more significant than someone of her low status would have expected.

I. A person with a generosity of spirit freely blesses others and is rewarded. In Proverbs 11:24, the teacher contrasts the person who scatters and the one who withholds. It is a character trait that shows a willingness to be generous to others without a self-serving purpose. For the sage, a generous person gives humbly and compassionately to a needy person, following Deuteronomy 15:7 and 11. In Proverbs 19:17, it is revealed how Yahweh will reward the generous person who freely gives their possessions and food to help a needy person. A generosity of spirit is indicated by a person's actions towards another person and is considered an action taken towards Yahweh. Yahweh repays generosity with wisdom.

Ecclesiastes 11:1 pertains to generosity, or a person's philanthropy and liberality. Qoheleth's observation in verse 1 evolves from wisdom teaching that governs charitable giving and helping the impoverished. An added characteristic of generosity is that it is given without expecting a return or personal benefits. Qoheleth's observation about generosity is furthered in Ecclesiastes 11:2, where he states that assisting several people is beneficial if the giver needs help.

In Job 6:14, the generous person has a kind heart. For Job, friends should display kindness towards each other in all circumstances, which stems from a generous heart. However, Job's friends counter his view by attacking and intensifying the problem. Job explicitly states generosity in Job 29:12. He has been accused of withholding from the people, and verse 12 conveys his rebuttal against the allegation. Job resisted using his judicial position and power for personal gain. His desire to protect and provide for the afflicted, widows, orphans, and needy made him respectable in the community.⁴⁶ Job's blameless and upright character is bolstered by his righteousness and compassion when dealing with people in his community. He offers compassion and generosity, contributing to his ethical and moral character. Job 31 contains Job's oaths of innocence. In this section, he states that he has tended to the needs of the widow and orphan (31:16–21), has not caused anyone to perish due to a lack of clothing (31:19), and has not caused any harm to the orphan (31:21). In all of these instances, Job exhibits a generosity of spirit by his actions towards the needy, widow, and orphan.

Boaz's actions towards Ruth indicate a generosity of spirit. A generous spirit indicates a person's concern for a less fortunate individual, resulting in their willingness to help. In Ruth 2:14–16, Boaz invites her to eat with him and his field workers, generously heaps food on her plate, and commands the workers to leave extra grain for Ruth to glean. The extra grain exceeded the legal amount required for an impoverished person to glean. By placing extra food on Ruth's

⁴⁶ Goldingay, 139. Pope notes that it was Job's prime duty as a ruler to protect the impoverished, widows, and orphans (see Ps. 72:12). See Marvin Pope, *AYB Vol. 15: Job* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965), 212. Mark Hamilton explains that there is an emphasis on the ruler's protection of the ruled, a use of power by seeming to distribute power and wealth more widely. See Mark Hamilton, "Elite Lives: Job 29–31 and Traditional Authority," *JSOT* 32, no. 1 (Sept. 2007): 78. However, Job's actions went beyond the call of duty. His moral and spiritual character dictated how he responded to people in times of trouble (see Job 1:1–5; 23:11–12).

plate, Boaz ensured that there would be enough to take home to take care of Ruth and Naomi. A simple act of a meal invitation reveals that Boaz has a generous and loving heart. These are moral and ethical traits that are pleasing to Yahweh and reflect the comprehension of generosity in Wisdom literature.

J. Humility is a basis for a generous spirit and allows for kindness. Kindness reflects a moral trait of righteous living and yields a prosperous and productive life. A compassionate, truthful, and faithful person exhibits it. Proverbs 11:24 reveals how kindness results in generosity. The person who freely gives does so out of compassion and not by necessity. It reflects the desire to help family, friends, and the community. The person who scatters possesses a kind and generous nature. Proverbs 19:17 states that someone who shows kindness to a fellow person in need reflects an act done towards Yahweh. In this scenario, Yahweh will repay the person's kindness. While Yahweh commands that the impoverished be taken care of, a kind person will do so out of compassion and giving heart while obeying Yahweh. In Proverbs 31:26, kindness is attached to the capable wife. In this verse, the wife teaches kindness. She is being generous with words of wisdom and instructions of kindness. The capable wife's wisdom is derived from common sense, good judgment, and discretion, which she freely shares with family, servants, and friends (instruction of kindness).⁴⁷

In the Book of Ecclesiastes, Qoheleth infers kindness when discussing companionship. In Ecclesiastes 4:10, The sharing of work, traveling together, and keeping each other warm indicates kindness between two people who are genuinely concerned about each other. This moral trait can lead to an enjoyable and rewarding life. Kindness between friends stems from shared loyalty, which concerns longevity, protection, and participation. Therefore, Qoheleth

⁴⁷ Toy, 547.

perceives companionship, with its related characteristics, as a solution to a miserable and meaningless life.

Job believes that one characteristic of a friend is kindness. It involves faithfulness and a steadfast love between companions. In Job 6:14, kindness indicates a willingness and self-sacrifice to help someone accomplish a good deed. The kindness exhibited to family, friends, strangers, and people in need reflects the same kindness bestowed by Yahweh towards His people. Job's problem with his friends is that they do not give a kindness indicative of covenantal partners with true piety. They presume he is guilty without considering the underlying causes of Job's suffering. They exhibit a callous attitude, which is the antithesis of kindness. In Job 10:12, Job acknowledges Yahweh's kindness in the divine-human realm. He credits Yahweh for bestowing life, lovingkindness, and the source of preserving his spirit. Job's statement counteracts death's dynamic power to drag down and shorten a person's life.

In the Book of Ruth, two types of kindness are encountered (Ruth 2:13 and 16). In Ruth 2:13, Ruth responds to Boaz, indicating his comforting words and kindness towards her. In her distressed state, Boaz's words provide reassurance and encouragement. In this verse, kindness is shown from one person to another. However, in Ruth 2:16, Boaz commands his field workers not to touch Ruth while she is gleaning. In essence, individualistic kindness is transformed into a type of group kindness. The kindness to be bestowed by the field staff is an extension of Boaz's generosity and kindness. His kindness derives from her present societal circumstances, and her need for protection while working in his field. Boaz's kindness towards Ruth indicates Yahweh's kindness towards Israel.

K. The principle of redemption was restoring people, property, or animals from bondage. Redemption is not mainly concerned with status; it helps restore a person's social, physical, and

spiritual welfare. Redemption has a human-human and a divine-human aspect. The Book of Proverbs focuses on redemption from foolishness, danger, and misfortune. In Proverbs 23:10–11, the sage focuses on the exploitation of the orphan and the consequences if such an action is taken. In this context, the divine-human aspect is specified because Yahweh is titled the Redeemer. Like the human counterpart, Yahweh will protect the orphan's interest. The orphan could be oppressed by having familial property boundaries moved by unlawful legislative actions or wealthy landowners greedy for more land. Like a human kinsman-redeemer who protects familial property, Yahweh protects the helpless and defenseless by punishing the oppressors and reinstating familial property boundaries.

In Ecclesiastes 7:29, redemption is implied because it is necessary for Yahweh to restore people who have been corrupted by their foolish pleasures or self-satisfaction. The possible background to Ecclesiastes 7:29 is Genesis 3:1–7, which chronicles the act-consequence of the first sin. Therefore, “upright” in verse 29 equates to creation, and foolish pleasures equate to sin. Because of Adam's and Eve's sin, Yahweh instituted His plan for redemption (Gen. 3:15). The goal is to make people upright (Eccl. 7:29), which is characterized by wisdom and righteousness (Eccl. 7:18). Thus, Qoheleth has in mind that through Yahweh's redemption, people can be restored to a pre-Fall status.

In the Book of Job, redemption is reflected in Job 5:20 and 19:25. In 5:20, Eliphaz states how Yahweh will redeem someone from death; specifically for Job, it is redemption from famine and war. Redemption's use in verse 20 lacks the legalistic roots usually associated with the concept. Therefore, the idea is that a person is not being restored but set free. One may be set free from enemies (Psa. 69:19[18]) or oppression (Psa. 119:134). In Psalm 34:23(22) and 44:27(26), it is the psalmist whom Yahweh sets free. Thus, redemption's comprehension is

salvatory or deliverance, not restoration. In Job's second reply to Bildad, he acknowledges that Yahweh is his Redeemer. Unlike 5:20, Job 19:25 indicates Yahweh's redemptive power. Job's use of the divine title Redeemer is his understanding of Yahweh's deliverance and love, His ability to restore. As Yahweh acts as the orphan's Redeemer in Proverbs 23:11, Job envisions Yahweh as his Redeemer.

The previous paragraphs focused on the divine-human realm of redemption. In the Book of Ruth, the human-human realm is the primary focus between Boaz and Ruth. Boaz is Ruth's and Naomi's kinsman-redeemer. After the closest relative renounces his obligation, Boaz redeems the family property, marries Ruth, and provides a familial heir. However, before the events of Ruth 4, Naomi tells Ruth that Boaz is a kinsman-redeemer (Ruth 2:20). Naomi no longer visualizes Boaz as a prominent and generous Israelite landowner but a near relative that can take care of Ruth and her by fulfilling the obliged kinsman-redeemer responsibilities. On a socio-legal plane, Boaz's actions reflect the Israelite legal tradition of protecting the widow and needy. However, on a theological plane, Boaz's actions indicate Yahweh's redemptive acts in His providence and care for Israel.

L. In Wisdom literature, obedience involves hearing, understanding, and acting on an instruction. Since Yahweh acted on behalf of His people, He called for their obedience to Him. Obedience can additionally be based on a person's lived experiences. In Proverbs 1:8, the father tells his son to obey his instructions. In other words, the father implores the son to carefully attend to his words because they are a wise person's hallmark. A wise person obeys because it produces wisdom. In contrasting wise and foolish people, the father's instruction teaches the son who he can and cannot listen to. Listening to foolish people leads to moral degradation and possibly destruction. In the sexual morality realm, the father teaches his son to avoid adultery by

obeying the Seventh Commandment (Prov. 6:20). Obeying and being faithful to Yahweh's Commandments protects and guards a person's heart. An effectual observation of Yahweh's Commandments is pleasing to Him and produces an ethically and morally significant life. Proverbs 7:1 continues the actions associated with obedience (hearing, understanding, and acting) by the father instructing his son to keep his words and treasure the commandments. The son has heard and understood the father's instructions; now, he must act on them or keep them in his heart. Keeping the words and commandments is not a one-time instance but a diligent effort throughout a person's life.

The beginning of wisdom is to fear Yahweh, which includes obeying Him. In Ecclesiastes 3:14, Qoheleth states that people should fear Yahweh. Fearing Yahweh does not denote a terror but a reverential awe. It is expressed through worship, prayer, faithfulness, and obedience. Fearing Yahweh cultivates wise decision-making and produces behavior that is pleasing to Him. The most implicit use of obedience by Qoheleth is read in Ecclesiastes 12:13: fear Yahweh and keep His commandments. Obedience is a sign of proper reverence. Humanity sought to become like Yahweh through disobedience (Adam's and Eve's sin), and by disobedience, people lost the one thing that makes them genuinely human: obedience.⁴⁸

In Eliphaz's third speech to Job, he implores Job to receive Yahweh's instructions and to keep His words in his heart. Eliphaz's statement is considered a standard wisdom fare seen in Proverbs 3:9–10; 8:10–11, 18; 21:21; 22:4. Job is being told to yield to Yahweh's authority and submit to His judgments. Therefore, Job's role, according to Eliphaz, is subordination to Yahweh, which is a requirement for a relationship with Him. Job must receive what Yahweh

⁴⁸ Duane Garrett, *NAC Vol. 14: Ecclesiastes* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1993), 344.

gives him and take it to heart. Eliphaz alludes to obedience, which is indicated by hearing, understanding, and action. Job will only receive peace if he listens to and obeys Yahweh's instructions. In Job 36:11, obedience is the source of prosperity and pleasure. Therefore, Elihu tells Job to obey and practice what Yahweh has taught him. Serving Yahweh signifies a relationship with Him and acknowledging that He is responsible for a person's existence. Elihu implies that faithfulness, or obedience, to Yahweh's instruction will effect a gracious change in Job's life.

In Wisdom literature, obedience primarily focuses on wisdom, which stems from fearing Yahweh. Therefore, obedience is associated with the divine-human realm. In the Book of Ruth, a human-human aspect of obedience is encountered. In Ruth 3:1–4, Naomi instructs Ruth on preparing for her encounter with Boaz on the threshing floor. Ruth 3:6 states that Ruth did all that her mother-in-law commanded her. In this Ruthan context, the human-human aspect is revealed to denote how Ruth's obedience secured her marriage proposal to Boaz (Ruth 3:9). The biblical Hebrew term *הִשְׁמַע* is used frequently to note the fulfillment or performance of a law or command either between Yahweh and people or between two people.⁴⁹ Ruth has heard, understood, and acted on Naomi's commands, such as the father's instruction to his son to obey his words. Ruth's actions indicate an unwavering loyalty and obedience to Naomi. As Yahweh blesses those who are obedient to Him, He blesses Ruth's obedience to Naomi by the eventual kinsman-redeemership by Boaz.

M. Proverbs 31:10–31 illustrate the essential qualities of a capable wife. The husband, children, and household are the recipients of the capable wife's extraordinary traits. She is a

⁴⁹ Tyler Williams, "הִשְׁמַע," in *NIDOTTE Vol. 3*, ed. Wilem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 546.

capable wife who sees to her husband's needs, the family, and the household. She is a hard worker who maintains and increases the family's wealth and exhibits qualities that bring honor and status to her husband. The capable wife is excellent (Prov. 31:10). Thus, her excellence stems from her concern for others placed above her concern and determination. In 31:11, she is trustworthy. Her husband can trust her with household affairs and make ethically and morally wise decisions. A capable wife is good. Her goodness is indicated by the household's economic success through wise management of materials and land acquisition (Prov. 31:12). The goodness that she bestows on her husband, family, and household indicates the virtue exhibited throughout her life. A capable wife is a hard worker and industrious (Prov. 31:13). She can secure materials and manufacture linens. Proverbs 31:20 reveals that a capable wife is generous. Her generosity is indicated by her willingness to distribute the textiles she makes to the poor and needy. Her obedience to Deuteronomy 15:7–8 indicates an attitude and behavior befitting Yahweh's standard of conduct towards the impoverished. Finally, in Proverbs 31:31, a capable wife fears Yahweh. Her fear of Yahweh is the root of her other essential qualities. While charm and beauty are admirable qualities in a woman, they are meaningless if she does not fear Yahweh. The young man who fears Yahweh must choose a woman who fears Yahweh and exhibits wise virtues. Just as fearing Yahweh yields the beginning wisdom, fearing Yahweh will reap the blessing of a capable wife.⁵⁰

In Ecclesiastes, Qoheleth is concerned with the moral fabric of a woman. In Ecclesiastes 7:28, Qoheleth observes that he has been unable to find an upright and wise woman. However, he is possibly inferring that a woman is a figuration of wisdom. Therefore, Qoheleth sees wisdom as positive (Eccl. 7:19), can achieve unexpected things (Eccl. 9:15), and has limitations

⁵⁰ Garrett, 252.

(Eccl. 7:23–29). In contrast, Qoheleth’s woman in verse 28 can be a continuation of the woman whose heart is a snare and a trap. Thus, While alluring women are Qoheleth’s focal point, the young men are responsible for avoiding her snares and nets. Therefore, the woman in 7:26, 28 is a literal person who resides outside the family boundaries and poses a risk to the male wisdom-seeker. An implication for denoting an unworthy woman with an immoral fabric is indicating the moral fabric of a worthy woman. If credence is given that Qoheleth is Solomon, then verse 28 reveals his futile attempts to find a worthy wife out of the numerous wives and concubines he collected.⁵¹

As Qoheleth concentrated on the immorality of a woman in Ecclesiastes 7:28, Job 2:9 reveals the negativeness of an uncommitted wife that contrasts with a capable wife. After Job succumbs to tragedy and suffering, his wife urges him to curse Yahweh and die. In hindsight, she is viewed as a tool used by Satan to force Job into forsaking Yahweh. Another view is that Job’s wife sees her security under attack with Job’s loss and suffering. In Proverbs 31, a capable wife supports her husband and is trusted to care for the household. However, in Job 2:8, Job’s wife is antithetical to the capable wife. She does not display any trust in her husband and does not indicate that she can take care of the household. Job’s response to his wife is to call her foolish in 2:10. She is foolish because of her choice of words, but also, her actions may reveal that she is acting foolishly because she has no religious or moral sensibility. Thus, Job is calling her morally deficient.

⁵¹ Daniel Estes comments that Qoheleth not finding an explanation (Eccl. 7:28) is comparable to the fool not finding wisdom in Prov. 1:28. Additionally, Qoheleth’s inability to find a woman in 7:28 mirrors the warnings against folly under the guise of women in Proverbs and the wounds and disgrace the adulterer will find in Prov. 6:33. See Daniel Estes, “Seeking and Finding in Ecclesiastes and Proverbs,” in *Reading Ecclesiastes Intertextually*, ed. Katharine Dell and Will Kynes (London: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2014), 126.

Like Proverbs 31, the Book of Ruth highlights the positiveness of a capable wife. In Ruth 3:11, Boaz declares that the town has recognized Ruth as a “woman of excellence.” The word “excellence” can additionally denote capable. Thus, Ruth 3:11 can be viewed as the answer to the question in Proverbs 31:10, “An excellent wife, who can find?” Excellence indicates a quality of character; a capable or good wife demonstrates a sterling quality who helps her husband succeed, cultivate a good reputation, respect, and acquire an influential position in the community. Ruth has proven she is devoted, humble, and hard-working to the community, which outshines her politeness. Her virtuous character and moral behavior have elevated Ruth from a foreigner to a woman worthy to marry Boaz.

N. The city gate served as a point of entry and exit to and from a city and was a defense focal point (gatehouse). During peacetime, the gate was the center of city life; it was where people met, talked, made announcements and demonstrations, elders sat to oversee judicial business, and prominent business and government officials sat to meet the people.⁵² Legal activities were conducted at the city gate, especially legal negotiations between two people. Wisdom is seen at the city gate, inviting all to come to her and learn (Prov. 1:21). Wisdom is not content with being confined to the home, so she goes to the streets to encounter all the people. The personification of wisdom indicates that it is the center of human activity in the city. Her rewards of wealth, prosperity, and good fortune mirror the city’s associated financial success and power. Therefore, wisdom can be found in all areas of the city.⁵³ The legal-judicial function is read in Proverbs 22:22. However, the negative sense is envisioned because the needy and the

⁵² “Gate,” in *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, ed. Leland Ryken, James Wilhoit, and Tremper Longman III (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 321.

⁵³ Katharine Dell, “Wisdom and Folly in the City: Exploring Urban Contexts in the Book of Proverbs,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 69, no. 4 (Nov. 2016): 396–7.

poor are exploited. The sage's admonition is not to pervert the legal system against the poor and needy because Yahweh will come to their defense (Prov. 22:23). Finally, in Proverbs 31:23, it is revealed that the capable wife's husband is known at the city gate, which implies that he serves a judicial role. The husband's function at the city gate instills community respect and honor. The capable wife, who supports her husband, would not do anything to tarnish her husband's community standing.

The city gate was an easily recognizable structure for a city. However, in Ecclesiastes 10:15, Qoheleth observes that a foolish person cannot find their way to the city. Since the city gate was a prominent feature of the community, not knowing its way was a sign of laziness. The wise person may not know everything about the world or why things happen the way they do, but they do know the geography of the land to navigate a way to the city, which was the center of everyday life.

Job 29:7 provides a glimpse into Job's past. He was a respectable person who sat at the city gate. Job was known for his kindness, blamelessness, wisdom, and record of caring for widows, needy, and orphans. He was a person who ruled justly, helped the impoverished, and determined people's destinies. Therefore, people found hope in Job. However, Job is now placing his hope in Yahweh because he feels that his communal respect has been lost, which is more painful than his loss of health and wealth.

In the Book of Ruth, the city gate served the same function noted in Wisdom literature. It would be at the city gate where Ruth's fate would be determined. Would she be redeemed by the closest relative or by Boaz? Boaz is led to the gate by Yahweh's providence and his recognition of the gate's functions. For Boaz, his roles at the gate shift from a negotiator (Ruth 4:2–6) to a legal representative (Ruth 4:7–11a) and finally to a kinsman redeemer (Ruth 4:11b–13). A

distinction with the Ruthan account is that a group of citizens was part of the civic administration. Therefore, it was necessary for the Council of Elders and the citizen assembly to be present with Boaz.

O. Finally, building up a house was evaluated. The home could be considered where a newly married couple resided, or it could refer to the father's home. In some contexts, building up a house is used to denote the building of a dynasty. Within the home was the immediate family and sometimes the extended family. In Proverbs 9:1, the sage teaches that Wisdom has built her house, which is built with wisdom and good sense. Wisdom builds her ideally constructed home (seven pillars) that is inviting to everyone, including a banquet to feed everyone who accepts her invitation. Proverbs 14:1 states how a wise woman cultivates and nurtures the material and spiritual aspects of the home. The wise woman can be a further elaboration of Wisdom from Proverbs 9:1, or it can refer to a wife who raises the children and takes care of the household's economy, like the capable wife in Proverbs 31. The foolish woman will tear down a home. The foolish woman could be an immoral woman who, in adulteress affairs, destroys a man's home that she entices.

In Ecclesiastes, Qoheleth broaches the topic of building up a house by likening it to amassing material and financial possessions. He looks at this topic through the lens of life's meaninglessness. In Ecclesiastes 2:4–11, Qoheleth reflects on his pursuit of happiness by amassing material possessions and wealth only to find it futile. He has built grand parks (Eccl. 2:5), and his possessions include bought and free slaves, precious metals, and he amassed many wives and concubines. The result of his large material possessions and wealth was that they did not bring him enjoyment; they were as fleeting as wisdom. (Eccl. 2:11). Qoheleth concludes that true pleasure and wisdom can only come from Yahweh. Ecclesiastes 2:24 indicates that wisdom

comes from the knowledge that people can only enjoy life when it is blessed with Yahweh's divine gifts.

Job's home is a Yahwistic blessing due to his blameless and upright character. Yahweh blessed Job with a large family and many possessions (Job 1:1–3). The mention of seven sons and three daughters reveals a complete and perfect family. A wise person who exhibits an ethical and moral character pleasing to Yahweh will be richly blessed. This is exemplified by Job. Therefore, building up a house in the Book of Job is not reliant on a literal physical structure but on the familial blessings bestowed by Yahweh, which result from a person's behavior befitting Yahweh's standards. Job was diligent in taking care of his blessings. Job oversaw the farming and herding tasks, provided wisdom instruction, invoked religious and social traditions, and strove to protect the family's honor.

Specific actions taken by Ruth and Boaz reflect the concept of building up a house. In Ruth 2:19, Naomi states that the person who took notice of Ruth should be blessed. The concept of blessing in verse 19 includes material, wealth, and family. Thus, Naomi is appealing to Yahweh to bless someone by conferring good upon them (a blessing can take the form of land, offspring, food, clothing, and health). In Ruth 4:11, building up a house is reflected through the entreaty made that Ruth would be like Rachel and Leah, who were the matriarchs of Israel. In this context, building up a house denotes the building of a dynasty, the bestowal of a large family. The entreaty is realized through Ruth's and Boaz's genealogy, including David and Jesus.

6. *The Book of Ruth's contribution to Wisdom literature.*

The implication is that the Book of Ruth's comprehension of a proper portion aligns with how Wisdom literature treats the concept. Proverbs contrasts groups of individuals, where the

wise, diligent, and righteous people accept what is bestowed to them by Yahweh. Agur prays for life's necessities, nothing more or less. In Ecclesiastes, Qoheleth instructs the reader to enjoy the properly portioned food, drink, and life Yahweh bestows. Finally, in Job 23:12, 14, Job acknowledges that Yahweh gives him the necessary food and that his sufferings are properly portioned according to Yahweh's will.

The Book of Ruth reinforces the comprehension of discipline and hope by Ruth's obedience to Naomi's commands concerning Ruth's encounter with Boaz on the threshing floor. Hope in the Book of Ruth is inferred through Naomi's recognition of Boaz as a kinsman-redeemer. The hope is that Boaz will fulfill the redeeming obligations that would provide care and protection for Naomi and Ruth. Proverbs 1:8–9 teaches the insistence on discipline, where the father contrasts the wise and foolish person. A characteristic of a wise person is listening to wise instruction and acting on it. In Ecclesiastes 3:12–13, doing good is consistent with Yahweh being good. Therefore, doing good is taking a disciplined approach to life that reflects a fear of Yahweh. Discipline is exemplified by Job's character in Job 1:1, which states that Job was blameless and upright. In Job 5:17, Eliphaz uses the word discipline to denote Yahweh's education by using suffering.

Ruth's familial loyalty and devotion are reflected through her willingness and desire to accompany Naomi and care for her (Ruth 1:16–17, 2:2, 18). Family devotion primarily involves social relationships but can sometimes involve a religious aspect. In Ruth's case, her devotion to Naomi included accepting Naomi's people and God as her own. Ruth's devotion to Naomi is reminiscent of Qoheleth's observations about companionship. Ecclesiastes 4:9–12 reveals Qoheleth's conclusions about how companionship is better than individualism. The sage teaches in Proverbs 17:17 how a friend's devotion is more substantial than a brother's. This loyalty is

given during good and bad times and provides the basis for support during adversity. Job's willingness to offer burnt sacrifices on his son's behalf reflects a familial devotion. Job desires to right any wrongs his sons could have committed against Yahweh.

Hard work is a trademark of a wise person. It results in prosperity, satiates hunger, and is blessed by Yahweh. Ruth does not avoid hard work. Her willingness to go to Boaz's field to glean is indicated by the longevity and yield of her hard work. She started work in the morning (Ruth 2:7) and continued to the evening (Ruth 2:17). She worked both the barley and wheat harvests (Ruth 2:23), and she brought home an ephah of grain (Ruth 2:17). The necessity for hard work is illustrated by the industrious ant in Proverbs 6:6–11. The ant's diligence contrasts with the sluggard, who is ridiculed and unwilling to work. Hard work is to be enjoyable. Qoheleth notes that labor is good (Eccl. 2:24). This positive view stems from the understanding that Yahweh blesses hard work. Hard work's results are divine blessings Yahweh bestows, which are indicated in Job 1:1–3.

In Wisdom literature, a recurring theme is entreaty, an earnest request or petition. It can serve many functions, such as a request for wisdom, being involved in a social justice conversation, or an inquiry into the limitations of human understanding. In Ruth 2:2 and 7, entreaty is used as an intention and a permissive request to glean in the field. Boaz entreats Yahweh to reward Ruth for her kindness in devotion to Naomi (Ruth 2:12), which additionally includes protection. Proverbs 2:3 alludes to entreaty when the sage states that the listener cries for discernment and lifts their voice for understanding. In Ecclesiastes 12:12, Qoheleth entreats the son to avoid going above and beyond his statement in verse 11. It is an earnest plea to exercise judgment and responsibility toward wisdom. In Job 6:8, Job pleads passionately to

Yahweh to grant his desire to die. Job's plea recognizes that he does not have the moral strength to keep living and does not want to jeopardize his faith in Yahweh.

While not an explicit theme, inappropriate touching is inferred in Wisdom literature and the Book of Ruth. Ruth 2:9 records Boaz's command to his field workers not to touch Ruth. While the context of 'touching' is debated in this verse (whether sexual or violent), the concept of inappropriate touching remains. It is through Boaz's command that he is protecting Ruth. In the Book of Proverbs, inappropriate touching is handled by instructions to avoid the immoral woman and adultery. Proverbs 6:29–32 provides the relevant link between the sage's instruction against adultery and the Seventh Commandment. A wise person will avoid a situation that involves an adulterous affair because it is a severe sin and destroys two families. The association between immorality and inappropriate touching is continued with Qoheleth's description of the immoral woman in Ecclesiastes 7:26. The woman in 7:26 is a bad or loose person who is shameless and exhibits confidence in her ability to satisfy a man's desire; therefore, she is wicked in using her methods to control men. Within the oaths of innocence, Job declares that he has not gazed on a virgin or committed adultery (Job 31:1 and 9). For Job, unwanted gazing leads to sinful desires and intentions in the heart. It is sexual immorality that Job is guarding himself against. In verse 9, coveting a neighbor's wife leads to adultery. While both verses stem from a sexual ethic, they are more concerned with wisdom ethics.

In Wisdom literature, true reward is realized by how a person lives their life: morally, ethically, and according to Yahweh's standards. A reward can be a Yahwistic blessing or a warranted punishment. It is associated with retributive theology in Wisdom literature. In Ruth 2:12, the true reward is indicated by Boaz's entreaty for Yahweh to reward Ruth. The basis for the entreaty is the acknowledgment of Ruth's kindness and loyalty towards Naomi. Because of

Ruth's ethical and moral character, Boaz asks Yahweh to truly reward her. Proverbs 11:18 reveals that the righteous will receive a true reward, and the wicked will get destruction. Verse 18 alludes to the doctrine of retribution to justify a reward, which may include blessings, prosperity, sustenance, children, and marriage. Qoheleth states that Yahweh's gifts are the rewards in life (Eccl. 9:9). True rewards cannot be pursued; however, they are to be embraced when bestowed by Yahweh. Job 1:1–3 and 42:10 reveal Job's true rewards. In verses 1–3, his blameless and upright character is rewarded by Yahweh through the blessings of a large and complete family and the amount of his possessions. In 42:10, Yahweh rewards Job by doubly restoring what was taken from him. Thus, Job's reward was from an exhibition of humility, fearing Yahweh, and being wholly accepted by Yahweh.

Humility is the foundation for wisdom and knowledge derived from fearing Yahweh. In Proverbs, humility and wisdom go together. Proverbs 11:2; 15:33; 18:12 reveal that humility is a source of wisdom and that Yahweh rewards humble persons. In the Book of Job, humility is indicated through Job's responses to his suffering. While he maintains a humble stance with Yahweh, it is in Job 42:1–6 that humility enables Job to realize the limitations of his knowledge about Yahweh's divine purpose. In Ecclesiastes, the book stresses human limitations and life's chaotic order. In this view, humility is supported as a crucial approach to existence (Eccl. 3:19–21). In Ruth 2:13, Ruth expresses humility in her response to Boaz. After acknowledging his comforting and kind words, Ruth states that she is at a lower status than Boaz's maidservants. It reveals Ruth's humble state and reflects that she does not deserve Boaz's attention or generosity. However, her humility indicates that she realizes what Boaz does for her is above what a low-status person would receive.

Stemming from humility is generosity. Generosity describes beneficial actions freely given to help another person or further a relationship; it is a generosity extended to those in need, poor, widowed, disadvantaged, or suffering. Boaz exemplifies a generosity of spirit through his actions in Ruth 2. In Ruth 2:14–16, Boaz invites Ruth to a meal, has her sit with the workers and himself, heaps food on her plate, and commands the field workers to let her glean in an area not customarily slated for grain gathering and to leave out extra grain for her to pick. Ruth's selfless actions in Ruth 1:16–17 infer a generosity of spirit when she forsakes her homeland to join Naomi to Bethlehem. In the Book of Proverbs, a generous person is one who freely scatters (Prov. 11:24), Proverbs 22:9 indicates that generosity stems from a person's active interest in the impoverished, and Proverbs 19:17 states that Yahweh will bless the person who is generous to the poor. Benevolence is a willingness and desire to contribute to a person's well-being. Ecclesiastes 11:1 deals with charitable giving. In this context, a wise person diligently seeks to help others through food, provisions, or favors. Job declares that he was not an ungenerous man (Job 29:12). He used his position in the community to help the widow, orphan, and impoverished by tending to the orphan's needs (Job 31:16–21), not withhold from the impoverished (Job 22:7) and has not caused anyone to perish due to a lack of clothing (Job 31:19).

Another derivation of humility is kindness. Kindness is a quality frequently addressed in Wisdom literature. While it is morally necessary for righteous living, it is crucial for a harmonious and productive life. Proverbs 19:22 states that kindness is a desirable trait in a person, and in Proverbs 31:26, kindness is admired in various roles and genders. In Job 31:16–22, Job defends his righteousness by noting his acts of kindness and hospitality. Ecclesiastes 4:9–12, while not explicitly stating kindness, infers kindness when it is better to have a partner or friend who can assist and protect. Ruth exhibits kindness by forsaking her homeland to go with

Naomi to Bethlehem (Ruth 1:16–17). It denotes a selfless and self-sacrificial concern for her mother-in-law. Boaz's kindness towards Ruth in Ruth 2 indicates a genuine concern for someone in distress. His kindness is exhibited by his reassuring and encouraging words and his generous actions towards Ruth.

Redemption in the OT involved restoring family property or redeeming someone from debt slavery. It involves two realms: human-human and divine-human. In Proverbs 23:10–11, Yahweh is called the Redeemer because he restores the orphan's familial boundaries and defends them. Yahweh is instituting the action of redeeming a person and property. In Ecclesiastes 7:29, redemption is inferred by associating Qoheleth's observations with Genesis 3. Because of the initial sin, a plan of redemption was necessary to make humans upright again. Therefore, redemption is necessary to acquire wisdom and righteousness, characteristic of people before the Fall and Curse. In Job 42:10, the concept of redemption is inferred when Yahweh restores Job's family and possessions. In Job 19:25, Job acknowledges that Yahweh is his Redeemer. In this context, Job knows that Yahweh will help him in his time of need: restore his health and resurrection. In the Book of Ruth, redemption is revealed through interhuman actions, specifically between Boaz, Ruth, and Naomi. In this context, redemption is comprehended through socialistic and legalistic means. In Ruth 2:20b, Naomi recognizes Boaz as a close relative. She refers to Boaz as a kinsman-redeemer who has obligations to redeem Ruth and Naomi and protect their interests; however, he is not the closest relative. The full force of his obligations is not revealed until Ruth 4:9–10: he redeems the family property, marries Ruth, and provides an heir—Ruth 4:9–10 highlights the essential characteristics inherent in a redeemer: motivation and ability. Boaz demonstrates a selfless element because he acts to benefit people in need.

Associated with discipline in Wisdom literature is obedience. Obedience involves hearing, comprehending, and acting on instructions received from another person. In Wisdom literature, obeying instructions enabled moral and ethical behavior and guided living a practical life, whether with another person or Yahweh. Following instructions contributes to the well-being of a person, whereas forsaking instructions could lead to detrimental consequences. A prime example of obedience in the Book of Ruth is read in Ruth 3:1–6. In verses 1–4, Naomi instructs Ruth on preparing for and during her encounter with Boaz on the threshing floor. In verses 5–6, the biblical narrator reveals that Ruth did all Naomi commanded her to do. In Ruth 3:6, Ruth fully obeys Naomi’s command, ultimately leading Ruth to get a husband and a home. Moreover, her steadfast obedience reveals moral and ethical behavior through family devotion and loyalty to Naomi. Proverbs 1:8 encompasses the concept of obedience by the father’s words to the son to hear the instructions and not forsake the mother’s teachings. This verse denotes that hearing and not forsaking indicate an attentiveness to instruction on wisdom, comprehending its meaning, and acting accordingly. Obedience is an effectual adherence to the Seventh Commandment in Proverbs 6:20, which admonishes adultery. Another instance of commandment obedience is read in Ecclesiastes 12:13: fear Yahweh and keep His commandments. The Israelites would have the commandments read and taught to them, and their complete obedience was required. However, obedience additionally stemmed from fearing Yahweh. A person who feared Yahweh displayed reverential awe and was a faithful and obedient person. It was not a display of terror but worship, honor, and glorification. In Job 36:11, Elihu declares that a person who hears and serves Yahweh will enjoy pleasure and prosperity. In this Joban context, Elihu uses hearing and serving to convey a sense of obedience. The obedient

person will receive prosperity and pleasure. Those who fear Yahweh will hear and serve Him. They are willing to submit to and obey His divine instructions.

The Book of Ruth is closely affiliated with Proverbs in identifying the capable wife. Proverbs 31:10 asks about a capable wife, and the Book of Ruth provides the answer. Proverbs 31:10–31 does not describe one capable wife but is a collection of desired traits for a capable wife. The capable wife in Proverbs 31:10–31 exhibits the virtues of trustworthiness, goodness, laboriousness (hard worker), resourcefulness, generosity, speaking wisely, kindness, and fearing Yahweh. In Ruth 3:11, Boaz calls Ruth a woman of excellence. She displays loyalty and trust in her decision to leave Moab to go to Bethlehem with Naomi. Ruth 2 reveals how Ruth is a hard worker—her willingness to forsake Moab’s religion to accept Yahweh as her God reflects her righteousness. Kindness is acknowledged by Boaz in Ruth 2:11. Fearing Yahweh is implied by the biblical narrator when it is told that Ruth institutes a vow formula in 1:16–17, that if she does not do what she has vowed, then let Yahweh punish her. In Ecclesiastes, the worthy woman is illicitly described by the explicit descriptions of the immoral woman. The woman in Ecclesiastes 7:28 is observed not to be wise and upright. She is potentially the immoral woman whose heart is a snare and trap that tempts men who are not faithful to Yahweh. An inference can be made, then, that a worthy woman is upright, wise, devoted to her husband, and faithful to Yahweh. Similarly, in Job 2:9–10, the counterpart of a worthy woman is seen in Job’s wife, who tells Job to curse Yahweh and die. This is the same woman that Job calls foolish, which conveys the sense of being morally and spiritually deficient. In the Joban context, Job’s wife is unsupportive, unloving, foolish, religiously, and morally deficient. Job’s wife is the antithesis of the capable wife in Proverbs 31 and the woman of excellence in Ruth 3:11.

The city gate was a recognizable structure for a city. It served as a part of the city's fortification, social engagements, civil administration, and judicial system. In Proverbs 1:21, woman wisdom makes her invitation known to all people, and in 31:23, it is where the capable wife's husband sits and conducts business. Qoheleth observes that lazy people cannot find their way to the city. In an urbanized society, the city is the center of commercial and social intercourse. The way to the city is, therefore, common knowledge. Therefore, lazy people do not possess the common sense and intelligence to get to the city. In the Book of Job, Job sat at the city gate and was respected by the community. His position allowed him to take care of the community's needs and protect the widow, orphan, and impoverished (Job 29:7). The city gate in Ruth 4:1 plays an integral role in Ruth's fate. The civil and judicial functions are highlighted by Boaz calling for the Council of Elders, assembly of citizens, and witnesses. Boaz's knowledge about the city gate's community functions confers legitimacy to the interactions between the closest relative and himself. At the city gate, Boaz performs the roles of negotiator, legal representative, and kinsman-redeemer.

Finally, building up a house can be seen as a physical structure, used figuratively, or denote a dynasty. In Proverbs 9:1, Wisdom builds a house. The house's function was to be complete and inviting. It was where everyone who accepted Wisdom's invitation could come to enjoy a banquet. While Wisdom builds up a house, Folly destroys it (Prov. 14:1). Therefore, the sage instructs the student to seek a virtuous and wise woman for a wife. Proverbs 24:3–4 involves a moral element in building a house or the family. It takes wisdom, understanding, and knowledge to be a cohesive force in the family. In Ecclesiastes 2:4–11, Qoheleth records the numerous buildings, parks, wives, and concubines to see happiness and enjoyment. However, he realizes that it is all futile. Genuine enjoyment and happiness stem from the divine gifts bestowed

by Yahweh. True pleasure comes from enjoying the things that Yahweh bestows on obedient people who please Him (Eccl. 3:12–13; 3:22; 5:18–19; 8:15; 9:7–9). Job 1:1–3 indicates that building a house constitutes the family. Since Job was a blameless and upright person who feared Yahweh, he was blessed with a large family with material possessions and wealth. Not only was he blessed with a family, but he tried to take care of it. Just like a home needs maintenance, Job would offer sacrifices to Yahweh each morning to atone for any sins his sons may have committed (Job 1:5). Building up a house takes on a dynastic form in the Book of Ruth. In Ruth 4:11, the people entreat Yahweh to bless Ruth like Rachel and Leah. From a wisdom perspective, Ruth's ethical and moral behavior pleased Yahweh and allowed her to be redeemed by Boaz. The fruit of this redemption is the blessing of children. From a matriarchal perspective, Ruth would be the matriarch of a family line that would include David and Jesus.

7. *Understanding *hesed*, *go'el*, and the fear of Yahweh.*

Wisdom literature and the Book of Ruth handle three aspects of wisdom: kindness, redemption, and the fear of Yahweh. These action-related wisdom aspects control a person's behavior, which is pleasing to Yahweh. In Wisdom Literature, Proverbs searched for knowledge, Ecclesiastes sought the meaning of life, and Job quested for Yahweh's presence.⁵⁴ The Book of Ruth does not fit neatly within Wisdom Literature; however, it does reveal how action-related wisdom affects the characters.

A. *Hesed.*

The concept of kindness is rooted in Israelite society and emphasizes the virtue's value in familial and personal settings, which denotes gratitude. In the ethical-religious realm, Yahweh shows kindness in His covenant with Israel. It is based on Yahweh's grace and exhibits His

⁵⁴ Crenshaw, 50.

power and strength. In Genesis 19:19, Lot acknowledges the kindness extended to him by the angels. However, in this context, kindness denotes the protection, confidence, and assurance shown to a person. Therefore, the angel's kindness indicates the protection they are affording to Lot and his family by providing an avenue of escape before Sodom's destruction. In Genesis 20:13, a different form of kindness is exemplified. This kindness refers to loyalty between a husband and wife. Two distinct meanings for the biblical Hebrew word are highlighted: חֶסֶד describes an intimate marital bond, and it is applied to covenants and other willing agreements.⁵⁵ Kindness can refer to an agreement or covenant between two parties. In Joshua 2:12 and 14, Rahab extends kindness towards the spies by hiding them in the family home and allowing them to escape through the window. However, she asks that her kindness be repaid by sparing her family and herself when the city is destroyed. Another covenantal form is expressed between David and Jonathan in 1 Samuel 20:14–15. In this context, Jonathan asks for kindness based on the love he expressed to David in 1 Samuel 20:8. This kindness is covenantal and expresses a steadfast love expressed by Yahweh towards Israel. In the human-human realm, kindness is expressed when family, friends, host-guest relationships, nonacquaintances, and the king-subject relationships are the subject and object.

In the divine-human realm, Yahweh's kindness is to be exhibited by His people to Himself. In the OT, Yahweh delights more in a person's loyalty than through strictly required sacrifices (Hos. 6:6). Sacrifices amount to meaningless rituals when covenantal loyalty is not their basis. Kindness conveys the sense of devotion in Jeremiah 2:2. In this text, a marriage metaphor is used to denote how Yahweh remembers Israel's devotion to Him like a wife is

⁵⁵ Brian Britt, "Unexpected Attachments: A Literary Approach to the Term חֶסֶד in the Hebrew Bible," *JSOT* 27, no. 3 (2003): 304.

devoted to her husband. Micah 6:8 records Israel's proposal to show kindness towards Yahweh to counteract their committed sins. The kindness to be shown includes humility, steadfast love, and justice. Their *hesed* was to be shown towards Yahweh and expressed to their fellow countrymen. The root of Israel's proposal is the recognition that Yahweh bestowed mercy on them, a reciprocal virtue that should be shown to others. Therefore, Micah stresses covenantal faithfulness and reliability towards Yahweh and the people. In Psalm 119, the psalmist entreats Yahweh to show His lovingkindness and remembrance of the covenantal promises. The obedient psalmist believes that Yahweh's kindness will result in his salvation. Isaiah 16:5 reveals the kindness that a king possesses. It is an ethical and religious conduct cultivated and nurtured by the king towards his people modeled after Yahweh's sovereignty and providence towards His people. From a retributive perspective, the king would rule justly, protecting the oppressed and punishing the wicked.

In Wisdom literature, kindness can be expressed as a spiritual value that involves action. Proverbs 21:21 notes how a person pursues kindness and righteousness to obtain honor. Life, prosperity, and honor are divine gifts bestowed by Yahweh to those people who exhibit kindness and faithful obligations. The capable wife expresses kindness through her generous wisdom teachings to the family and household (Prov. 31:26). She speaks at great length, carefully, and correctly about wisdom. In the Book of Job, Job implies that a character trait of a friend is kindness (Job 6:14). It is a willingness to do a good deed for or to be there with a friend during the good and bad times. A friend's kindness should reflect Yahweh's kindness. A further stipulation made by Job is that a person who freely gives kindness is justified in receiving it.⁵⁶

⁵⁶ Zobel states, "In view of the impressive evidence for the mutuality of *hesed*, we may venture the conjecture that even in cases where the context does not suggest such mutuality it is nevertheless implicit, because we are dealing with the closest of human bonds. In the case of

Qoheleth observes the kindness crucial for companionship in Ecclesiastes 4:9–12. In this context, it is implied that kindness denotes faithfulness, loyalty, participation, protection, and longevity. Kindness is participation when two friends work together to accomplish a task (Eccl. 4:9). The reward from a joined effort is more significant than what can be achieved by one person. Kindness is loyalty and faithfulness when viewed as the selfless willingness and desire to help the other friend during adversities (Eccl. 4:10). The support can be physical, moral, or spiritual. Kindness implies longevity in Ecclesiastes 4:11. A person battling the cold elements of the night will not last as long as two friends who warm each other. This practical use of kindness is reflected in 1 Kings 1:1, where a Shunammite woman warms an aged King David. Finally, kindness is protection. In Ecclesiastes 4:12, Qoheleth observes that protection is better when shared with friends against an enemy.

In Ruth 1:8, Naomi prays that Yahweh would deal kindly with Ruth and Orpah because of the kindness they have shown to her. The kindness expressed by the daughters-in-law is familial loyalty. However, Ruth expresses a different type of kindness when she decides to leave Moab forever to join Naomi to Bethlehem. This kindness expresses self-willingness, not familial obligation (Ruth 1:16–17). Naomi acknowledges Boaz’s kindness in Ruth 2:20. This form reflects a virtue exhibited by a familial relationship that parallels Yahweh’s kindness towards His covenant people. The kindness extended by Ruth towards Naomi and Boaz towards Ruth reflects what Yahweh expects from people. Just because kindness is shown through human relationships,

Abraham and Sarah (Gen. 20:13) as well as Orpah/Ruth and Mahlon/Chilion (Ruth 1:8), it is the relationship between husband and wife; in the case of Israel and Joseph (Gen. 47:29), it is father and son; in the case of Laban/Bethuel and Isaac (Gen. 24:49), it is next of kin; and in 2 S. 16:17, it should be noted that Hushai’s relationship to David is called that of a “friend” (*rēa*’).” See Hans-Jürgen Zobel, “רֵעָא,” in *TDOT Vol. 5*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David Green (Grand Rapids.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 47–8.

the thrust of the term's meaning is not lost; it still reveals lovingkindness, loyalty, and faithfulness. Ruth 3:10 initially indicates that kindness is a familial obligation. However, one observation is that it refers to the kindness shown to Ruth's dead husband, Mahlon. This kindness takes the form of Ruth leaving her homeland, marrying Boaz, and producing an heir to the family name. This kindness would be an honor shown to her late husband. The probable observation is that Ruth's kindness reflects a loyalty to Boaz by proposing marriage to him instead of one of the younger men.

B. *Go'el*.

Redemption is the practice of one person paying the price to redeem the family property or to deliver someone from debt slavery. This comprehension encapsulates the socio-legal sense of a redeemer. However, in the divine-human realm, redemption is theologically understood as Yahweh, the Redeemer, who rescues, restores, and delivers His people.

Leviticus 25:25–34 highlights the socio-legal sense of redemption. The text belongs to the Holiness Code and provides instructions on restoring Israelite property or people to its original condition. Leviticus 25:25 details how family property can be redeemed if the landowner succumbs to financial struggles. The Israelites understood that they did not own the land they inhabited. However, it was Yahweh's land, and He portioned out property to clans for their use. Land redemption was vital because it was not to be lost or sold to outsiders. The redeemer was a relative with the financial means to restore the land to its rightful property owner. Leviticus 25:25 denotes the importance of the גאֵל. It was a close relative with the right and duty to protect anyone facing any difficulty. Thus, the term גאֵל brings out the kinship and responsibility of

redeeming his relative or his relative's property.⁵⁷ In Leviticus 25:39–55, debt slavery is dealt with. An Israelite could not be enslaved to another Israelite or his family. However, the financially struggling Israelite could willingly work for another as a skilled laborer to pay off his debts. The גאל does not redeem the debt slave; however, they could restore the debt slave to his original status by paying off his debts. In Leviticus, the redeemer was a relative who implemented Yahweh's rights and policies towards His people and land. It was a restorative act that allowed Israelites to retain their original status in the community.

The king, as a גאל, rescues his people from oppression by restoring their legal rights (Ps. 72:14). Additionally, as a redeemer, he protects his people by delivering them from oppression. The concept of the king as a גאל stems from the comprehension that Yahweh is Israel's גאל by redeeming, restoring, delivering, and protecting them. Therefore, Yahweh passes the גאל function to the king to serve his people in the same capacity. By ensuring his people's financial prosperity, he is securing the country's prosperity. Moreover, as the גאל, the king defends his people who cannot defend themselves. In the Pentateuch and historical books, the גאל retained a social and commercial comprehension. However, later in the Prophets and Psalms, גאל came to be understood theologically. Exodus 6:6 is the prime example of Yahweh as the גאל. In this context, Yahweh declares that He will deliver the Hebrews from Egyptian bondage. Yahweh's deliverance highlights His desire to make the Hebrews His people. It is a salvific activity that causes internal and societal change. The Hebrews will be Yahweh's people, and Yahweh will be the Hebrew's God. In Isaiah 44:23, the Babylonian exile provides the background to Yahweh's deliverance of His people. In this context, Yahweh as גאל functions as a glorification of Him

⁵⁷ René Péter-Contesse, and John Ellington, *Leviticus* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1990), 384.

with all His creation rejoicing. Yahweh's glorification reveals to the pagan nations who He is and the futility of worshipping idols. Yahweh's deliverance of Israel from Babylonian captivity involves a salvific element that restores Israel to its original condition. Psalm 78 is a didactic psalm that remembers Israel's time in the wilderness. In verse 35, the psalmist calls Yahweh, the Redeemer, who freed the Hebrews from Egyptian bondage. However, the exodus is not the only לִלְבָּד function the psalmist remembers. Israel went through numerous cycles of sin, punishment, and repentance. Thus, Yahweh, as the לִלְבָּד , reflects His merciful nature by forgiving their sins.

In Wisdom literature, Yahweh is called the Redeemer in Proverbs 23:10–11 by defending the orphan against greedy people. Yahweh's redemptive actions closely parallel the legal tradition He instituted for the restoration of family property and Israelite debt slaves. It acknowledges Yahweh's providence in protecting the defenseless against oppressors. Job proclaims that Yahweh is his Redeemer in Job 19:25. Thus, Job envisions Yahweh as his לִלְבָּד , who will ensure a fair trial and defend his innocence. Because Job cannot defend himself, he is looking to Yahweh to be his לִלְבָּד . Job's use of Redeemer indicates a confessional theology in Israel. It alludes to Yahweh's love for and deliverance of His people. Qoheleth's observation about redemption is inferred in Ecclesiastes 7:29 by the statement that Yahweh made people upright, but they sought out many devices. Qoheleth may have had Genesis 3 in mind when he made this observation. Initially, Yahweh made people after His image; however, they sinned because of their foolish desire to become wise. Thus, Yahweh needed to devise a redemptive plan to restore people to their original condition. The only way to acquire wisdom and righteousness is to be restored to a pre-sin condition, an upright person. Yahweh is the לִלְבָּד , who, through His mercifulness and graciousness, effects the ethical and moral character change in those who are faithful and obedient to Him. In Job 19:25, Job acknowledges that his Redeemer

lives. Giving the title Redeemer to Yahweh, לֹאֵל denotes that Yahweh is laying claim to a person by redemption. The Redeemer's identity has been the subject of scholarly debate; however, לֹאֵל is likely Yahweh. This comprehension is in line with Proverbs 23:10–11, that the לֹאֵל is Yahweh who defends the defenseless orphan. Job identifying Yahweh as his Redeemer denotes a special recognition of Yahweh's love and deliverance.

In the Book of Ruth, the לֹאֵל is explicitly associated with Boaz. Initially, Naomi's acknowledgment that he is a close relative who could fulfill the לֹאֵל obligations. Finally, Boaz is the לֹאֵל who redeems the family property, marries Ruth, and provides an heir with Yahweh's blessing. Naomi's acknowledgment of Boaz in Ruth 2:20 as a לֹאֵל is a recognition of his familial closeness and is a praise response for Yahweh's kindness and providence by providing a person who can redeem both Ruth and her. Naomi's inclusion of Ruth to be redeemed indicates a societal shift. Before the encounter with Boaz, Ruth was a Moabitess and a stranger in the community. However, with Naomi's statement, Ruth has solidified her position in the family and transitioned into Naomi's community. In Ruth 4:1, Boaz states that the closest relative is the לֹאֵל . This legal designation denotes that the closest relative can redeem the family and property. However, once the stipulation was made that he would need to marry Ruth, the closest relative renounces his obligation, and Boaz becomes the לֹאֵל . As the kinsman-redeemer, Boaz fulfills the obligation to redeem the family property, the intention to marry Ruth (Ruth 3:13), take care of Naomi and Ruth (Ruth 3:1), and provide a familial heir (Ruth 4:10). Boaz's לֹאֵל role restores the family into a complete unit, which reciprocates what Yahweh, as the Redeemer, does for His people.

C. *Fear of Yahweh.*

The fear of Yahweh is a religious expression that denotes reverential awe, faithfulness, obedience, piety, and a terror of divine wrath and punishment. The sage declares in Proverbs 1:7 that the fear of Yahweh is the beginning of wisdom. Job states that the fear of Yahweh is wisdom in Job 28:28. The biblical Hebrew word אִירָא conveys the sense of to be afraid or being afraid. The word's literal comprehension is a terror or dread. However, אִירָא can convey a sense of respect and worship. Leviticus 19:3 states that a person is to respect, אִירָא , their parents. Moreover, in Leviticus 19:30, Israel was to אִירָא Yahweh's sanctuary. The names of God are to be understood by how Israel fundamentally used the divine names. The distinction between the divine names are distinguishing marks with theological implications. God's personal and intimate name is Yahweh, which reflects His covenant relationship with Israel. Yahweh provides for and maintains His chosen people. The intimacy of the Yahwistic name allows for a personal relationship with Him that allows for communication and encounters.

The religious expression, the fear of Yahweh, denotes a reverential awe that produces worship. A person's proper response to Yahweh is derived from ethical and moral behavior based on His standards of conduct. The fear of Yahweh, additionally, indicates His superiority and benevolent power. The person who fears Yahweh recognizes His status and willingly submits to His absolute authority. Samuel tells the people, in 1 Samuel 12:14, that if they fear Yahweh or revere Him, they will willingly follow Him. In verse 14, אִירָא denotes reverential awe and worship; however, in the following verse (1 Sam. 12:15), the reciprocal of אִירָא is used. In this verse, אִירָא refers to terror because it is an emotional response to Yahweh's wrath and punishment. In Deuteronomy 10:12, the Mosaic phrase, to fear Yahweh, indicates an allegiance to Yahweh, Israel's covenant partner. It denotes a proper response that produces worship and

obedience to Yahweh. In the light of Yahweh's divine glory and love, a person's response should be to submit to Him willingly. To fear Yahweh is not exclusive to the Israelite community. In Jonah 1:16, the sailor's fear of Yahweh is an emotional response to His numinous power. This response contrasts Jonah's declaration that he fears Yahweh in Jonah 1:9, which amounts to feeble lip service. The sailor's response is natural; however, Jonah's response does not indicate a humbled response to Yahweh's great storm. In Psalm 34:10 [11], David states that he will teach the people the fear of Yahweh. David's use of the religious expression reflects a theological foundation rooted in the knowledge and hope that Yahweh will vanquish evildoers. Therefore, David's fear of Yahweh alludes to His provision, protection, and deliverance.

In Wisdom literature, the fear of Yahweh is the beginning of wisdom (Prov. 1:7). A person's obedience and faithfulness to Yahweh produces a reverential awe, which is the beginning and the essence of wisdom. Human wisdom is limited. Yahweh's wisdom can only be received through righteous behavior with Yahweh. To reinforce the necessity of fearing Yahweh to gain wisdom, the sage contrasts the wise person with the foolish one. The foolish person is morally deficient. They despise wisdom and discipline and endeavor to entice people to their thinking. However, the wise person exhibits an attitude that instills effective knowledge about Yahweh, which leads to the desire for wisdom and discipline. Qoheleth reflects the reverential attitude in his exhortation to the son to fear Yahweh and keep His commandments (Eccl. 12:13). It is necessary to fear Yahweh first so that following His commandments is a willful submission to His sovereignty and power. For Qoheleth, to fear Yahweh is the ultimate expression of humility and the acceptance of being a human dependent on Him. It is the solution to a meaningless life. While the sage states that the fear of Yahweh is the beginning of wisdom (Prov. 1:7), Job states that the fear of Yahweh is wisdom (Job 28:28). In the Joban context, to fear

Yahweh provides access to wisdom, which cannot be obtained through human methods. In the context of Job's tragedy and suffering, the fear of Yahweh instills an attitude about morality, life, and appropriate conduct in the face of adversity.

In the Book of Ruth, the fear of Yahweh expression is not explicitly used; however, its principles are inferred through the character's actions. In Ruth 1:16–17, Ruth uses a vow formula that provides for divine punishment if she does not do what she says. Ruth's vow to Naomi stems from her familial devotion and loyalty. Ruth would have known Yahweh through her relationship with Elimelech's family and noticeably through Naomi's interactions with Yahweh. Therefore, when Ruth vows to make Naomi's Yahweh her God, she acknowledges a willingness to have a relationship with and submit to Yahweh. While familial faithfulness and kindness serve a function in the Book of Ruth, the inference of Ruth's fear of Yahweh ultimately guides Ruth's character traits and actions. Ruth's vow involves a religious duty punishable by death if she forsakes that responsibility. For Wisdom literature, the fear of Yahweh was a means to make sense of Yahweh's sovereignty and justice in a secular world that lived by its laws and attitudes. In the Book of Ruth, the fear of Yahweh is denoted by righteous conduct and an attitude that allows for a relationship with Yahweh.

Contributions and Future Research

The dissertation aimed to add to the discussion about the Book of Ruth and its didactic relationship with Wisdom literature. However, the dissertation does not claim that Ruth should be recategorized as a wisdom genre; the genre is a modern concept that would not have been known to biblical authors. However, the dissertation leans on intertextuality or family resemblance to indicate Ruth's contribution to didactic wisdom. It supports the Jewish placement of Ruth in the Hebrew Bible and its relevance in the Megilloth, which attests to the Book of Ruth

within a wisdom framework. Through a litmus test of fifteen wisdom topics, the Book of Ruth showed affiliation with Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Job comprehension and use of the topics. The didactic wisdom contained in Wisdom literature was shown to be parallel with the Book of Ruth's treatment. Therefore, Ruth's didactic wisdom aligns with Wisdom literature, rooted in the fear of Yahweh and the handling of conventional wisdom.

The dissertation's limiting factor is that it did not consist of exhaustive research into didactic wisdom's role in the Book of Ruth and the text's association with Wisdom literature. Further research must reveal how an OT book's function extends beyond its designated genre. The Book of Ruth's use of wisdom opens new avenues of comprehension that extend beyond literary categories. Biblical wisdom is no longer an environment for sages or schools but can be taught through lived experiences and practical applications in other OT books. Future research would involve a continuation into a detailed look at wisdom's family resemblance in the Book of Ruth.

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