

Sapiential Elements in the Joseph and Daniel Narratives vis-à-vis Woman Wisdom – Conjunctions and Disjunctions

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ABSTRACT

While similarities have been established between the wisdom in the Joseph narrative and in the Daniel narrative, this paper shows that disjunctions also exist between the two narratives. Both Joseph and Daniel may be considered as representative characters of Israelite wise men. That their wisdom functioned effectively in a Diaspora context indicates the universal appeal of wisdom, but that wisdom is limited to what has been recognized as pietistic and inspired wisdom. It is argued here that the two narratives appear to represent related but also different strands in the development of wisdom thought and that the character of the Woman Wisdom represents a contemporaneous and all-encompassing or comprehensive face of wisdom.

A INTRODUCTION

The association of both the Joseph narrative (Gen 37-50) and the Daniel narrative (Dan 1-6) with wisdom is well known. However, there is much debate on whether these narratives could be classified as Wisdom Literature or whether they simply contain elements of or influence of the wisdom tradition.¹ The publication of Von Rad's² short but influential article on the Joseph narrative and ancient wisdom generated much argument in scholarly circles in the two decades which followed its publication. This is because of its claims (among others) that the Joseph story could be linked to the Solomonic Enlightenment era, that Joseph himself could be seen as a wisdom ideal and that the theological assumptions in the story are rooted in the wisdom of Wisdom Literature. Although Von Rad's claims have been faulted on various grounds by several

¹ Gerhard Von Rad, "The Joseph Narrative and Ancient Wisdom," in *Studies in Ancient Israelite Wisdom* (ed. James L Crenshaw; New York: KTAV, 1976), 439-447. George W. Coats, "Joseph Story and Ancient Wisdom: A Re-appraisal," *CBQ* 35/3 (1973): 285-297; Lawrence M. Wills, *The Jew in the Court of the Foreign King: Ancient Jewish Court Legends* (HDR; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990).; John J. Collins, *Daniel: A Commentary on the Book of Daniel* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993). Michael V. Fox, "Wisdom in the Joseph Story," *VT* 51/1 (2001): 26-41.

² Von Rad, "Joseph Narrative."

scholars,³ what remains indubitable is the fact that Joseph is called wise in the narrative.⁴ In the case of the narrative part of the book of Daniel, sapiential elements have also been attested.⁵ In fact, some scholars have arrived at the conclusion that the whole of Daniel is a wisdom book or a part of Wisdom Literature.⁶

The assumption in this paper is that conjunctions and disjunctions could be established between the Joseph narrative and the Daniel narrative on a sapiential level. However, the disjunctions that some scholars presuppose between the wisdom in the two narratives and that of Wisdom Literature may not be seen as disjunctions *per se*, but as contemporaneous streams in ancient biblical wisdom. The two wise characters of Joseph and Daniel will therefore be examined vis-à-vis another character in Wisdom Literature – Woman Wisdom.⁷

B A WORD ON OLD TESTAMENT WISDOM

Fox has rightly pointed out that "(a) central flaw in Von Rad's reasoning—one not entirely avoided by his critics—is an insufficiently nuanced understanding of wisdom."⁸ In order to understand the sapiential elements in the Joseph and Daniel narratives, a holistic definition of wisdom would be required. Most research on OT wisdom in the last two decades has shown a good degree of coherence in the definition of wisdom as a multifaceted concept. Wisdom in the OT has been defined variously as a literary corpus or distinct genre, a living

³ Compare James L. Crenshaw, "Methods in Determining Wisdom Literature," *JBL* 88 (1969): 129-142; James L. Crenshaw, *Old Testament Wisdom: An Introduction* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster: John Knox, 1998); Donald B. Redford, *A Study of the Biblical Story of Joseph: Genesis 37-50* (Leiden: Brill, 1970); Stuart Weeks, *Early Israelite Wisdom* (Oxford Theological Monograph; New York: OUP, 1994). For different views on the nature of the Joseph Narrative, see Fox, "Joseph Story," 26-41.

⁴ Wilson sees Joseph as a "wisdom figure"; Lindsay Wilson, *Joseph, Wise and Otherwise: The Intersection of Wisdom and Covenant in Genesis 37-50* (Paternoster Biblical Monographs; Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2004), 8.

⁵ Wills, *The Jew in the Court*, 23-38; John J. Collins, "The Book of Daniel," *ABD* 2: 29-37. Collins, *A Commentary*, 39-50.

⁶ Compare Collins, "Book of Daniel," 35; Leo Perdue, *The Sword and the Stylus: An Introduction to Wisdom in the Age of the Empires* (Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, 2008).

⁷ Although the German expression "*Frau Weisheit*" for the female personification of wisdom in Wisdom Literature is sometimes translated as Lady Wisdom, the alternative translation of Woman Wisdom is preferred in this article (cf. Roland E. Murphy, *Proverbs* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998); Richard J. Clifford, *Proverbs: A Commentary* (OTL; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1999).

⁸ Fox, "Joseph Story," 26.

tradition or movement in ancient Israel, an attitude towards reality or way of thinking, an epistemology or discipline, a faculty, *etcetera*.⁹

The fluidity of the term wisdom (*ḥokmā*) has also led to the recognition of various types of wisdom on account of several factors. Based on wisdom's social setting, for instance, distinctions are made between family wisdom, clan wisdom, scribal or school wisdom and royal court wisdom, while on formal grounds, proverbial wisdom, ethical or didactic wisdom, and apocalyptic wisdom are distinguished, *inter alia*.¹⁰ Other common distinctions include theological (as opposed to secular) wisdom, pietistic wisdom, and mantic wisdom.¹¹

Crenshaw has registered his concern about the tendency to associate diverse texts especially narratives to wisdom literature. Coats, commenting on the criticism of Von Rad's position on the Joseph story by scholars such as Crenshaw or Redford, itemises basic categories that may be used to qualify a text as wisdom namely genre, setting and intention.¹² He claims that, "A genre can be a wisdom genre... A setting can be a wisdom setting... An intention can be a wisdom intention."¹³

We would argue here that with respect to narratives, a character could also be a wisdom character. This position can be supported by the fact that the OT recognises bodies or groups of men and women as well as individuals called wise (*ḥākāmim/ḥākām/ḥākāmā*). However, before we proceed, it is salient to note that the development of wisdom thought in ancient Israel appreciates the characterisation of wisdom as a woman. The centrality of the character of Woman Wisdom to OT wisdom literature has been widely attested by schol-

⁹ Roland E. Murphy, *The Tree of Life: An Exploration of Wisdom Biblical Literature* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 920; Roland E. Murphy, "The Personification of Wisdom," in *Wisdom in Ancient Israel: Essays in Honour of J. A. Emerton* (ed. John Day, Robert P. Gordon and Hugh G.M. Williamson; New York: CUP, 1995), 222-233.; Murphy, *Proverbs*; Crenshaw, *Old Testament Wisdom*, 11. Katharine Dell, "Wisdom," in *The Biblical World* (ed. John Barton; London/New York: Routledge, 2002), 107; Leo Perdue, *Wisdom Literature: A Theological History* (Louisville/London: Westminster John Knox, 2007), 29-30; Perdue, *Sword and Stylus*, 10-13.

¹⁰ See Crenshaw, *Old Testament Wisdom*, 45; Anthony R. Ceresko, *An Introduction to Old Testament Wisdom: A Spirituality for Liberation* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1999), 16-20.

¹¹ Crenshaw identifies four kinds of wisdom namely juridical, nature, practical and theological; James L. Crenshaw, "Prolegomenon," in *Studies in Ancient Israelite Wisdom* (ed. James L. Crenshaw; New York: KTAV, 1976), 3. See Wills, *The Jew in the Court*; Fox, "Joseph Story."

¹² Crenshaw, "Methods in Determining Wisdom Literature"; Redford, *Story of Joseph*.

¹³ Coats, "Joseph Story," 286-287.

ars.¹⁴ The personification of wisdom as a woman is found in the book of Proverbs¹⁵ especially in chapters 1, 3, 8 and 9 where narratives written in poetic form introduce her. The characters of Joseph and of Daniel will therefore be examined vis-à-vis the character of Woman Wisdom to determine their position in wisdom study.

In the next two sections, a brief overview of the main characters in both the Joseph and the Daniel narratives will be provided to determine the wisdom elements in them. Subsequently, the conjunctions and disjunctions between the two narratives will be highlighted before relating them to the Woman Wisdom text.

C BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE JOSEPH NARRATIVE

The Joseph narrative (Gen 37-50), which is at times regarded as a part of the Jacob cycle,¹⁶ is a self-contained story classified as a novella.¹⁷ Some of the themes associated with the narrative include divine sovereignty in human affairs, dreams, famine, *et cetera*. The theme of wisdom is also recognised especially in chapters 39-41. Two settings are recorded in the story – Joseph's family setting in the land of Canaan and the land of Egypt. The story begins in Gen 37 with the lead character, Joseph, the eleventh son of Jacob. The young Joseph was resented by his brothers because not only was he their father's favourite, he had also shared two dreams with them. The dreams sounded prophetic¹⁸ and showed that he would rule over them. His brothers therefore conspired against him and sold him to the Midianites from whose hands he ended up in the household of Potiphar in Egypt. That way, his so-called prophetic dreams would also vanish (or so they thought).

In chapter 37, Joseph is portrayed as a spoilt brat who was also unguarded with his words (v. 8). His attitude aggravated the malicious feelings his brothers already had towards him. That his father loved him and got him a

¹⁴ Claudia V. Camp, *Wisdom and the Feminine in the Book of Proverbs* (JSOTSup; Sheffield: Almond, 1985). Christine Roy Yoder, *Wisdom as a Woman of Substance: A Socioeconomic Reading of Proverbs 1-9 and 31:10-31* (BZAW 304; Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2001); Dell, "Wisdom."

¹⁵ Wisdom's personification has been observed also in the book of Job and in the apocryphal books of Ecclesiasticus, Baruch and Wisdom of Solomon.

¹⁶ Some commentators omit Gen 38, the story of Judah and Tamar, from the Joseph Narrative, regarding it as an insertion. For instance, Westermann claims that, strictly speaking, the Joseph story in chapters 37, 39-45; see Claus Westermann, *Joseph, Studies of the Joseph Stories in Genesis* (trans. Omar Kaste; Edinburgh: Clark, 1996), viii. Elsewhere, he sees Gen 46-50 as part of the Jacob story; see Claus Westermann, *Genesis: A Practical Commentary* (Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, 1987), 256.

¹⁷ Coats, "Joseph Story," 980. See for classification as *Märchen* or *Novelle*, Redford, *Story of Joseph*.

¹⁸ The term prophetic is used here to mean predictive (and similarly below).

colourful tunic was not his own doing; his dreams were not his own making; but his words and attitude emanated from him. In Potiphar's house in Egypt, however, we see a different Joseph—a clear leader, trustworthy, resolute in his convictions even to his own detriment. After the bitter experiences in Potiphar's house that took this "Hebrew slave" to prison for a crime he did not commit, it was evident that he had grown up fast. Even in prison, his leadership quality was unmistakable, but that ability was tempered with compassion (40:6-7). His spiritual endowments had also grown. He was not just a dreamer of dreams; he had also become an interpreter of dreams, as he interpreted accurately the dreams of Pharaoh's two courtiers – the butler and the baker. The dreams were prophetic – the baker would die, the butler would live. The butler would be restored to his former position.

Outside of prison, this ordinary Hebrew slave displayed extraordinary wisdom and counsel that caused even the Pharaoh to marvel (41:39). Joseph finally became second-in-command to Pharaoh, having provided interpretations to Pharaoh's troubling dreams and strategic counsel to counter the impending economic crisis on Egypt. The dreams of Pharaoh were also prophetic and they came to pass according to Joseph's interpretation. The story progresses with Joseph's encounter with his brothers and the decision to relocate the entire family of Jacob to Egypt, ending with scenes of the final days of both Jacob and Joseph.

Although only Gen 41 contains clear references to wisdom, allusions to wisdom and wisdom influences have been proposed for the entire narrative by several scholars.

D BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE DANIEL NARRATIVE

Although the book of Daniel is classified among the Writings in the Hebrew Bible, in the LXX it is found among the Major Prophets.¹⁹ The story of Daniel has its literary setting in the exilic period in the courts of the kings of Babylon and Persia with Daniel as the protagonist. Based on the setting, it is generally regarded as a court tale.²⁰ Many textual difficulties are associated with the book

¹⁹ John I. Goldingay, *Daniel* (WBC 30; Dallas, Tex.: Word Books, 1989), xxv; Collins, "Book of Daniel," 31; Collins, *A Commentary*, 1. The book is divided into two parts—the Narrative (chs. 1-6) and the Apocalyptic (chs. 7-12) – but this discussion focuses only on the narrative aspect.

²⁰ Goldingay, *Daniel*, 37; Wills, *The Jew in the Court*, 55-70; Ernest C. Lucas, *Daniel* (Apollos Old Testament Commentary 20; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2002), 25. Some scholars regard Dan 1-6 as "a collection of originally independent stories" which all share a common theme and some level of literary relationship; see Collins, *A Commentary*, 24, 35; Michael Segal. "From Joseph to Daniel: The Literary Development of the Narrative in Daniel 2." *VT* 59/1 (2009): 123-149, 123. Here, the stories will be taken together.

of Daniel, such as those brought about by the variation in language, the discrepancies in the various versions (especially between the Masoretic and the Old Greek), problems of historical reference, *etcetera*.²¹

Daniel 1, which serves as introduction to the whole book, presents Daniel and his three friends who were young Jewish captives stationed in the royal courts of Babylon. They belonged to a group of "young men without any physical defect, handsome, showing aptitude for every kind of learning, well informed, quick to understand," who had been hand-picked to serve in the king's palace (Dan 1:4). In the royal court, Daniel and his friends exercised restraint in matters of food. They stood out among their peers because they were endowed with divine knowledge and understanding in all kinds of literature and learning but, in addition, Daniel could understand visions and dreams of all kinds (Dan 1:17).

In chapter 2, Daniel's understanding of visions and dreams was put to test when all the wise men and magicians of Babylon failed to recount and interpret Nebuchadnezzar's troubling dream. When the king commanded all the wise men, magicians and astrologers to be put to death, Daniel and his friends prayed and the answer to the problem was revealed to Daniel in the night (2:17-19). Daniel praised the God of heaven, acknowledging that wisdom and revelation come from him (2:20-23). He then went on to relate and interpret the king's dream to him. The king's dream was prophetic but there was no way he would know that until Daniel uttered the interpretation. The king therefore rewarded Daniel with many gifts and put him in charge of all the wise men of Babylon.

Daniel does not at all feature in the scene in chapter 3, which centres on his three friends Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego who refused to bow to the idol that was set up by King Nebuchadnezzar. They were thrown into the furnace of fire but delivered miraculously by God. After escaping the fire, the three young men were also promoted by the king. In chapter 4, Nebuchadnezzar had another dream that made him afraid, but this time it was a dream that warned of his downfall. Although he did not forget the dream, none of the wise men of Babylon could interpret it for him. That dream was also prophetic. Again, Daniel interpreted the dream and it was fulfilled twelve months later.

Chapter 5 tells the story of King Belshazzar's banquet and the mysterious handwriting that appeared on the wall which none of the wise men of Babylon could decipher. Daniel was summoned before the terrified Belshazzar and, once more, he unravelled the mystery to the king. Prior to his appearance before the king, the queen had testified that Daniel had "insight and intelligence and wisdom like that of the gods" as well as "a keen mind and knowledge and understanding, and also the ability to interpret dreams, explain riddles and

²¹ For detailed discussion of these issues, see Collins, *A Commentary*, 2-38.

solve difficult problems" (Dan 5:11-12). After reading and interpreting the prophetic message on the wall, Daniel was once again rewarded with many gifts and promoted.

The last chapter in the narrative section shows Daniel in the pit of lions after he had defied the decree by the king not to worship any other god except him. Like his three friends in chapter 3, Daniel was also delivered miraculously, and his accusers were delivered to the lions. While wisdom is recognised in Dan 1-6, some scholars distinguish between the kind of wisdom in chapters 3 and 6 (*courtly*), and the wisdom in chapters 2, 4 and 5 (*mantic*).²² It is argued that chapter 1 presupposes 2-6 and contains both types of wisdom (vv. 17, 20). Nonetheless, it should be noted here that clear references to wisdom in the unit are found only in chapters 1, 2, 4 and 5.

E CONJUNCTIONS AND DISJUNCTIONS BETWEEN THE TWO NARRATIVES

1 Conjunctions

Critics have long observed many parallels between the Joseph narrative and the narrative part of the book of Daniel.²³ Lucas affirms that "The most obvious affinities of the stories about Daniel are with the story of Joseph."²⁴ In fact, some scholars have suggested that some aspects of the Daniel narrative (in particular Dan 2) are midrashic comments on Gen 41 or a new version of the Joseph story.²⁵ However, beyond the stark similarities between Gen 41 and Dan 2,²⁶ each narrative block, taken as a whole, exhibits further correspondences with the other.

²² For details, see Wills, *The Jew in the Court*, 80.

²³ Williams McKane, *Prophets and Wise Men* (SBT 44; London: SMC, 1965); Goldingay, *Daniel*, 37-43; Wills, *The Jew in the Court*; Collins, *A Commentary*; Fox, "Joseph Story." Sharon Pace, *Daniel* (Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary; Marcon, Ga.: Smyth & Helwys Publishing Inc., 2008), 80-84.

²⁴ Lucas, *Daniel*, 24.

²⁵ See Collins, *A Commentary*, 155; Lucas, *Daniel*, 65, 83 for details. Note, however, Segal's claims that the two chapters are parallels and that the current suggestion is that "the Joseph story serves as a literary model for the Daniel tale," Segal, *From Joseph to Daniel*, 142; cf. John I. Goldingay. "Daniel in the Context of Old Testament Theology," in *The Book of Daniel: Composition and Reception* (vol. 2; ed. John J. Collins and Peter W. Flint; VTSup 83/2; Leiden: Brill, 2001), 657. He further argues that it is in the final details (Dan 2:15-24a) that the Daniel tale departs from the Joseph story.

²⁶ For instance, Segal shows that both Gen 41 and Dan 2 "describe a foreign king who dreams a dream and is troubled... because he does not understand it... Both kings summon the wise men or magicians to help them interpret (and recount in Daniel 2) their dream, and they are unable to do so... in each case, the youth is brought speedily

As a rule, narratives are governed by certain literary structures organised by plot, theme, characters, setting, language pattern, *etcetera*.²⁷ Therefore, in what follows, the perceived conjunctions and disjunctions between the two narratives in question will be examined from the perspective of their literary structures.

To begin with, Wills has identified both narratives as court legends.²⁸ He notes that the main characters in such legends often suffer persecution, fall and vindication, as did Joseph in the hands of his brothers and of Potiphar's wife.²⁹ However, one could make the same case for Daniel (and his three friends) who not only also went into captivity but were persecuted in Babylon for their uncompromising faith. They were equally vindicated and promoted by the king.

On a thematic level, in both the Joseph and the Daniel narratives are found common motifs of dreams, interpretation and rewards.³⁰ God's sovereignty and ability to work behind the scenes are also observable themes in the two narratives. Common settings, that is, the royal court as well as common expressions³¹ have also been identified in both plots.

However, it appears that the most prominent conjunctions between the two narratives lie in the characterisation of the two protagonists and their con-

before the king... and successfully fulfills the king's request" (Segal, *From Joseph to Daniel*, 142-143). Both dreams have implications for the kingdom and both youths are rewarded. For his part, Labonté argues that the dream motif common to both Gen 41 and Dan 2 shows that the stories could have been written in the same period: "*Il est donc possible que la texte de Dn 2 et l'histoire de Joseph, dont Gn 41, date de la même période de l'histoire d'Israël. On ne saurait être surpris de cette proposition après voir vu la grande ressemblance entre ces deux textes. Les motif des rêves comme matière pour presenter un message au sujet de Dieu a pu paraître attirant pour certains écrivains en un temps où la prophétie se faisait plus rare. L'apocalypse n'était pas très fermement établie,*" G. G. Labonté. "Genèse 41 et Daniel 2: Question d'origine," in *The Book of Daniel in the Light of New Findings* (ed. Adam S. Van der Woude; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1993), 271-284.

²⁷ See Shimon Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art in the Bible* (Sheffield: Almond, 1989);

David M. Gunn and Danna N. Fewell, *Narrative in the Hebrew Bible* (New York/Oxford: OUP, 1993).

²⁸ They are otherwise called court tales (cf. Collins, *A Commentary*, 42, 173).

²⁹ Wills, *The Jew in the Court*, 52-54).

³⁰ Lucas, *Daniel*, 24 notes that "both heroes are taken into captivity, both rise to prominence because of a God-given ability to interpret dreams and both become courtiers of foreign kings; and there are similarities in words and phrases in the stories (though much of this may be due to common subject matter rather than to any literary dependence)." See also Goldingay, *Daniel*, 42-43.

³¹ For example, "his spirit was troubled" (Gen 41:8//Dan 2:1). See Collins, *A Commentary*, 39, for other examples.

nection with wisdom. Joseph and Daniel, both of whom were forced into contexts of Diaspora by circumstances beyond their control, exercised uncommon piety in exile – Joseph in his refusal to lie with Potiphar’s wife and Daniel in his refusal to partake of the food from the pagan king’s table and to petition the king rather than God. Both men eventually succeeded by demonstrating outstanding wisdom in situations where other so-called wise men in their land of exile failed. Each of the two men offered to the king counsel that was meant to avert danger or disaster (Gen 41:33-36; Dan 4:27). The two characters admitted that their wisdom and ability to interpret dreams were God-given (Gen 40:8, 41:16, Dan 2:20-23, 27 and 30).³² Others also acknowledged that the abilities of both men were from God (Pharaoh understood Joseph’s wisdom as coming from God in Gen 41:38-39; Nebuchadnezzar, the queen and Belshazzar all recognized Daniel’s divine endowment – Dan 4:18; 5:11, 14).

More importantly, each of the two characters is called wise (Gen 41:39; Dan 1:17, 20; 2:14, 23, 48; 5:11, 14). Joseph is depicted as a wise man in the sense that he was divinely endowed to interpret dreams and visions. Several scholars have argued that such charismatic endowment has nothing to do with the individual because it is inspired or revealed and not cultivated or based on personal competence. The same observation has been made in the case of Daniel.³³ Daniel acknowledged that the wisdom to interpret the king’s dream came from God (Dan 2:20-21, 23)³⁴, even as Pharaoh also implied that the wisdom demonstrated by Joseph came from God (Gen 41:39). For this reason, the wisdom exercised by both Joseph and Daniel in interpreting dreams has been classified as mantic wisdom or esoteric knowledge.³⁵

2 Role of speech in the narratives

Another remarkable feature of the narratives is the narrators’ ingenious use of speech or dialogue. Alter claims that in biblical narratives, the writer often permits each character to manifest himself or herself not only through action

³² The point ought to be taken also that in both narratives, interpretation of dreams and visions not only come from God, dreams also come from God. Twice in his conversation with Pharaoh, Joseph pointed out that “God has revealed to Pharaoh what he is about to do” (Gen 41:25, 28). In the Daniel narrative, Nebuchadnezzar’s dream was revealed to Daniel in a night vision (Dan 2:19, 23). Like Joseph, Daniel also declared to Nebuchadnezzar, “The great God has shown the king what will take place in the future” (Dan 2:45).

³³ McKane, *Prophets and Wise Men*, 49; Redford, *Story of Joseph*, 103; Wills, *The Jew in the Court*, 29; Stuart, *Early Israelite Wisdom*, 96; Fox, “Joseph Story,” 40.

³⁴ In fact, the queen also averred that Daniel’s wisdom was comparable to that of the gods (Dan 5:11).

³⁵ Collins, “Book of Daniel,” 35; Collins, *A Commentary*, 49-50; Fox, “Joseph Story,” 38; Goldingay, “Daniel in the Context,” 655.

but also through dialogue.³⁶ Throughout the Joseph's story, dialogue is used to heighten tensions in the plot and project different images of the characters in the story which are otherwise unexplained by the narrator. Joseph related his dreams to his brothers and his father. The brothers' responses confirmed their feelings of resentment and his father's response, his fears. The brothers plotted to kill and later to sell Joseph. His complete silence throughout the ordeal points to his helplessness at that point. More dialogues ensued between the brothers and their father, between Joseph and Potiphar's wife, and between Potiphar's wife and the other household servants as well as her husband. Her speech shows her to be a liar who turned to hold Joseph in contempt, namely, from her description of him as "that Hebrew slave" (Gen 39:17).

In prison, Joseph's enquiry about the welfare of his fellow prisoners opened the door of dream interpretation. His parting word to the butler was that he should not be forgotten in prison. The butler would later confess his shortcoming to Pharaoh; he had forgotten about Joseph after leaving prison (Gen 41:9-13). The extensive conversation between Pharaoh and Joseph shows that Pharaoh decided to appoint Joseph because Joseph's speech had actually nudged him in that direction – "...look for a wise and discerning man and give him authority over all the land of Egypt" (Gen 41:33). The rest of Pharaoh's speech in that chapter reveals his perception of Joseph as a wise and discerning man who possesses God's spirit: "there is no one as wise and discerning as you are"! (Gen 41:39). His reward to Joseph was also communicated via a pronouncement (Gen 41:40-41, 44).

More speeches are recorded – between Jacob and his sons, between Joseph and his brothers, between Joseph and his servants, between Joseph's servants and his brothers, between Jacob and Joseph, between Jacob and Pharaoh, between Joseph and the citizens of the land as well as among the brothers. The various conversations, which generally revolve around Joseph, reveal a web of relationships and attitudes on the part of the characters.

Similarly, the narrative part of the book of Daniel is punctuated by several dialogues. Actually, all the chapters in the narratives contain various dialogues. In chapter 1, Daniel and his three friends pleaded with their supervisor that they be exempted from partaking in the king's delicacies (1:12-13). Chapter 2 details the dialogue between Nebuchadnezzar and the Chaldeans. The arguments reveal the severity of the king's demands and his resolve to carry out his threats against Babylon's wise men and the Chaldeans. Daniel also spoke to Arioch who later introduced Daniel to the king. The dialogue that ensued between Daniel and Nebuchadnezzar is very much akin to that between Joseph and Pharaoh in Gen 41. The king acknowledged the captive and they got to the business at hand – the dream and its interpretation. One comes to understand

³⁶ Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 1981), 87.

that God is the source of Daniel's wisdom through his own confession that "wisdom and might are His... He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding... You have given me wisdom" (Dan 2:20-21, 23).

In Dan 3, conversations took place between the king and his officials and between the king and Daniel's three friends. In chapter 4, Nebuchadnezzar told his own story which included the dialogue between him and Daniel. The next chapter includes the speech of Belshazzar to the wise men, astrologers and Chaldeans, the queen's speech to the king as well as the dialogue between Daniel and the king. An example of the acknowledgement of Daniel's wisdom by others is found in the queen's speech to Belshazzar:

There is a man in your kingdom in whom is the Spirit of the Holy God. And in the days of your father, light and understanding and wisdom, like the wisdom of the gods, were found in him... an excellent spirit, knowledge, understanding, interpreting dreams, solving riddles, and explaining enigmas were found in this Daniel (Dan 5:11-12).

Belshazzar's promise of reward is also recorded in direct speech (Dan 5:16). Chapter 6 records the petitions of Daniel's colleagues to the king, the conversation between Darius and Daniel as well as the king's praise of Daniel's God.

Of course, it could be argued that the use of speech is a familiar feature in OT narratives. Alter shows that in biblical narratives:

The intersection of characters through their own words matters before all else in this narrative definition of the human predicament, but such intersection does not take place in a trackless void.³⁷

In the Joseph and Daniel narratives, the recurrence of speech is unmistakable, especially its use to highlight the wisdom of the two protagonists. The acknowledgement of their wisdom by other *dramatis personae* in the narratives is made via speech.³⁸

³⁷ Alter, *Art of Biblical Narrative*, 87.

³⁸ On a technical level, the introduction of speech also slows down the narrative tempo, hence emphasising the point being made, in this case, regarding the wisdom of the protagonists.

3 Disjunctions

Although scholars often readily point out the conjunctions between the two narrative blocks, the disjunctions between them are often unacknowledged.³⁹ For instance, both narratives point out different aspects of Diasporan life at two separate periods of Israel's existence – before nationhood and after its collapse. Joseph's career in the mantic field began with his dreams. He was the dreamer who later became a dream interpreter in the prison. His credentials there would eventually thrust him into the presence of Pharaoh. In the case of Daniel, his foray into the mantic world began with his successful recall and interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dreams. He started out as an interpreter but beyond the narratives, we would later see this same Daniel as a dreamer and visioner in the apocalyptic section of the book of Daniel (Dan 7:1-12:13.). Again, while Joseph's mantic skill was limited to dreams and their interpretation, Daniel's skill included the ability to decipher portents (Dan 5). Joseph was able to interpret the king's dream spontaneously but Daniel had to seek God's face (Dan 2) to obtain an answer to the king's request even though he was later able to solve Belshazzar's riddle spontaneously.

Further, Daniel is said to undergo formal academic training in Babylon along with his three friends (Dan 1:4, 17-20). The curriculum included courses in wisdom and in literature in which all four excelled. The narrator notes that their excellence in the academic disciplines came from God. By contrast, there is no indication in the Genesis account that Joseph went through any form of formal training other than the experience in the "school of hard-knocks."

Whereas Joseph was a lone captive in Egypt, Daniel was part of a group of exiled Jews and he had friends (and possibly family) in Babylon. While Pharaoh took Joseph's advice in Gen 41, Nebuchadnezzar apparently paid no attention to Daniel's counsel in Dan 4:27-31. Although there were conflicts in both narratives, Joseph's dealings with the king were amicable throughout the story. His conflicts were with his brothers and with Potiphar's wife. For his part, Daniel not only rebuked Belshazzar (Dan 5:17-23), he spurned his initial offer of gifts. He and his three friends were also at loggerheads with envious colleagues who incited kings against them (Dan 3, 6). The hermeneutical importance of the disjunctions will be addressed in the conclusion below.

F WOMAN WISDOM AND THE TWO NARRATIVES

As noted earlier, the name Woman Wisdom is used to refer to the personified character of wisdom as a woman especially in several portions of Prov 1-9. In the first of the poems, that are designated as wisdom poems (Prov 1:20-21),

³⁹ Note, however, that Goldingay identifies some differences between Gen 41 and Dan 2. He claims that the "distinctive features... give Dan 2 a more heightened tone. It is like Gen 41, only more so" (Goldingay, *Daniel*, 42-43).

Woman Wisdom is first introduced by another before she begins her speech, and in two other poems (Prov 1:20-33 and 8:1-36), she speaks for herself in the first person. In Prov 9:1-6 the narrator describes her before she takes over in direct speech. The setting for her proclamation is the public places. Her operational base is found in the city gates, city squares, streets, highways, market-places, and highest places of the city (Prov 1:20-21; 8:3; 9:3).

The poems are direct speeches by Woman Wisdom to address an audience that consists of the masses, the gullible, the uncommitted and untutored, as well as fools.⁴⁰ Her speech is an open invitation to these groups of people as well as a rebuke to those who reject the invitation. In the speeches, which are of interest to us here, Woman Wisdom not only provide details of her identity and curriculum vitae, she promises great rewards to those who heed her call (Prov 8:14-21).⁴¹ Earlier in Prov 3:13-18, the narrator has spelt out Woman Wisdom's rewards to those who seek and find her.⁴² In the poem of chapter 8, Woman Wisdom now appears to use her personal speech to accentuate the sureness of those rewards. Furthermore, Woman Wisdom's speech discloses her relationship with YHWH. She has been with him from the beginning. She indeed emanated from YHWH (Prov 8:22-31). Thus, she exhorts that the fear of this same YHWH is the beginning of wisdom (Prov 9:10; cf. 1:7).

It is remarkable that the text itself makes a clear connection between Woman Wisdom and speech. She is portrayed as a speaker:

Wisdom calls aloud in the street, she *raises her voice* in the public squares; at the head of the noisy streets; she *cries out*, in the gateways of the city she makes her speech (Prov 1:20-21).

Does not wisdom *call out*? Does not understanding *raise her voice*?
²On the heights along the way, where the paths meet, she takes her

⁴⁰ Bruce K. Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 1-15* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 395-396.

⁴¹ "Counsel and sound wisdom belong to me; I possess understanding and might. ¹⁵Kings reign by means of me, and potentates decree righteousness; ¹⁶by me princes rule, as well as nobles and all righteous judges. ¹⁷ I love those who love me, and those who seek me find me. ¹⁸Riches and honor are with me, long-lasting wealth and righteousness. ¹⁹My fruit is better than the purest gold, and what I produce is better than choice silver. ²⁰I walk in the path of righteousness, in the pathway of justice, ²¹that I may cause those who love me to inherit wealth, and that I may fill their treasuries" (Prov 8:14-21).

⁴² "Blessed is the one who finds wisdom, and the one who obtains understanding. ¹⁴For her benefit is more profitable than silver, and her gain is better than gold. ¹⁵She is more precious than rubies, and none of the things you desire can compare with her. ¹⁶"Long life is in her right hand; in her left hand are riches and honor. ¹⁷Her ways are very pleasant, and all her paths are peaceful. ¹⁸She is like a tree of life to those who obtain her, and everyone who grasps hold of her will be blessed" (Prov 3:13).

stand; ³beside the gates leading into the city, at the entrances, she *cries aloud* (Prov 8:1-3).

She has sent out her maids, and she *calls* from the highest point of the city (Prov 9:3) (*Italics added*).

Clifford has noted that "The most important organ in Proverbs is the mouth (or tongue or lips). Words express the person better than anything else and words are the medium through which discipline and knowledge are imparted." Particularly noteworthy also is Gitay's claim that in terms of arguing a case and building a dialogue or conversation, speech is the manifestation of *Sophia*.⁴³ Since speech is certainly integral to the characterisation of Woman Wisdom in Prov 1-9, the implication of its use for the Joseph and Daniel narratives will therefore be summarised in the concluding section below.

G SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In the foregoing discussion, we have provided a brief overview of the Joseph narrative as well as of the narrative portion of Daniel. The similarities and the dissimilarities in the two narrative blocks have also been outlined. Although various arguments have been mounted by scholars to discredit wisdom in the Joseph story, internal witness in the story, as well as conjunctions with wisdom elements recognised in the story of Daniel, seems to point out that wisdom is integral to the story. The characterisation of Joseph as a wise man (especially in his adulthood in the land of Egypt) suggests a link with wisdom. Besides, the reception of the narrative in the ancient period tends to associate Joseph with wisdom. For instance, the retrospective reference to Joseph in Ps 105:16-22 ties him to wisdom. Actually, v. 22 of that Psalm states that Joseph taught wisdom to the elders/nobles of Pharaoh. The NT also attributes wisdom to Joseph (Acts 7:9-16).⁴⁴ Joseph not only demonstrated administrative wisdom and talent, he exhibited mantic or preferably revelation wisdom.

In the case of Daniel, the depiction of him as a wise man is consistent. In fact, not only was he inducted into the league of Babylon's wise men following his training in the academy of wisdom, he was later appointed the chief of all the wise men of Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar after demonstrating superior wisdom before the king. The conjunctions evident in the two narratives seem to highlight the setting of wisdom in the royal court as well as the qualities of a wise person. The peculiar operation of revelation wisdom in both characters also point to a particular stream of wisdom tradition which is not well defined in Wisdom Literature.

⁴³ Clifford, *Proverbs*, 21. Yehoshua Gitay, *Methodology, Speech, Society, The Hebrew Bible* (Stellenbosch: SUN MeDIA, 2011), 65.

⁴⁴ Several references to Joseph are found also in Apocrypha texts (Sir 49:15; 1 Macc 2:53; Wis 10:1).

The conjunctions could further be said to underline the international character of wisdom, its accessibility and its acceptability. Both Joseph and Daniel operated their divine wisdom in the courts of foreign kings and that wisdom brought them success and fame where local wisdom failed. The demonstration of piety by both figures could permit that their characters be tied to the piety demanded by the Torah (even though the story of Joseph is supposed to pre-date the Torah, literally). More pointedly, however, is the fact that the dialectic between the narratives containing the two characters from the Torah and the Prophets could be mediated by insight from another character in the Ketuvim, the Woman Wisdom.

The fact that Joseph and Daniel operated their wisdom in royal courts corresponds well with Woman Wisdom's claim that by her kings, potentates, princes and nobles reign, make decrees and pass judgements (Prov 8:15-16). Equally remarkable is the assumption that the voices of these two male characters could be mediated by the voice of a female character—the Woman Wisdom. Through speech, both Joseph and Daniel provided counsel to kings in the same way that Woman Wisdom's speech offers counsel not just to kings but also to the various categories of people in her audience. In fact, she claims that she is the source of counsel and sound judgement (Prov 8:14).

The assumption that there is a relationship between wisdom and prophecy (although the two also differ) is also significant here.⁴⁵ The conjunctions in the two narratives examined above offer evidence that links both Joseph and Daniel not only to wisdom but also to prophecy. It could be argued that their wisdom utterance lent voice to the prophetic dreams of both Pharaoh and Nebuchadnezzar and to the mysterious handwriting on the wall of Belshazzar's royal court, that is, in addition to the fact that Joseph himself had prophetic dreams in Gen 37. Their mantic wisdom operated with features of the prophetic. For that reason, one could safely presuppose that in these two characters, a specific strand of wisdom (mantic) intersects with a specific strand of prophecy (predictive).

Interestingly, the prophetic nature of Woman Wisdom's speeches has also been noted. For instance, Sinnott notes that prophetic motifs and styles particularly from the exilic period are common in Woman Wisdom speeches and that the scenes in Prov 1-9 echo the teachings of exilic and post-exilic

⁴⁵ For a discussion of the similarities and differences between wisdom and prophecy, as well as between prophets and sages, see Martin A. Shields, "Wisdom and Prophecy," in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Wisdom, Poetry and Writings* (eds. Tremper Longman III and Peter Enns; Downers Grove, Ill: IVP Academic, 2008), 876-884.

prophets.⁴⁶ In fact, she compares Woman Wisdom to a prophet.⁴⁷ Should the intersection of wisdom and prophecy in the two characters of Joseph and Daniel be considered coincidental with the interaction of wisdom and prophecy in Woman Wisdom? Otherwise, is it not conceivable that the garments of fine linen and purple with which these two men are clothed are woven from the same thread as that which the wise woman makes for herself and sells (Gen 41:42; Dan 5:29; Prov 31:21, 24)?

On the other hand, some of the disjunctions help to uncover the different nuances that mantic wisdom entails; for example, the fact that Daniel was able to discern portents in addition to interpreting dreams and visions. The fact that Joseph first began to dream before he interpreted while for Daniel, it was the other way round, may indicate that the two could occur together rather than in a gradient which dreaming would be regarded as elementary or inferior to interpreting dreams. Interpretation could also be done spontaneously or be received through revelation with the help of prayers.

In addition, although Daniel underwent formal training but Joseph, apparently not, both of them received divine wisdom to accomplish particular tasks. This point shows that revelation wisdom does not require training in esoteric knowledge before it could manifest. It comes from YHWH. The difference in time setting – before nationhood and after its collapse – may also indicate that the particular type of wisdom operative in the two men has early origins and continues to flourish not only later but even in and out of the land of Israel.

However, the copious use of speech brings to the fore wisdom features in both narratives. The fact that through their speech other *dramatis personae* in the narratives affirm the wisdom in these two characters and the presence of God in their lives points up the importance of speech in the texts. Moreover, the pronouncements of rewards for the two men by the kings on account of their superlative wisdom seem to tally well with Woman Wisdom's personal promise of reward to those who choose her. Her identification with YHWH also corresponds with the recognition of the wisdom of both Joseph and Daniel as divine.

To sum up, the stream of wisdom in both Joseph and Daniel narratives may not be explicitly identified as part of Wisdom Literature but its shared affinities with Woman Wisdom especially on the level of speech hint that they

⁴⁶ Alice M. Sinnott, *The Personification of Wisdom* (SOTSMS; Hants: Ashgate, 2008), 52, 68-71, 171. See also Murphy, *Proverbs*, 8; Clifford, *Proverbs*, 43; Michael V. Fox, *Proverbs 1-9: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 98.

⁴⁷ Sinnott, *Personification of Wisdom*, 102.

all spring from the same source. Is not this (Woman) Wisdom then justified by her children?

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