

## Aspects of Demeanour in Qohelet 8:1

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### ABSTRACT

*A novel approach is being suggested for the interpretation of Qoh 8:1, which views Qoh 8:1-3a as dealing with a person's demeanour. In particular, it is shown that these verses provide advice regarding one's facial and oral expression when in an audience with a high ranking official. Qohelet 8:1-3a consists of four parallel lines anchored on the two keywords: פנים and דבר. Recognition of the underlying structure of 8:1-3a, and similarities with Elephantine Ahiqar and Sir 13:26, points to some minor scribal errors. Correction of these errors restores the contextual sense of the verse. In particular, it is being suggested that in 8:1 the impossible פֶּשֶׁר דְּבַר should be emended to read שֶׁפֶר דְּבַר "speak well," and the two rhetorical questions in 1a refer to facial and oral expression. A parallel line is obtained in 1b, if instead of פָּנָיו one reads פִּי[ו] or פִּי "his mouth," assuming the ligature נַי = מַי or an extra נ, respectively. The proposed interpretation suggests that the population of Yehud had considerable access to higher officialdom during the Ptolemaic period, making the advice in 8:1 rather useful.*

### A INTRODUCTION

Qohelet 8:1, reading,

<i>Who is like the wise?</i>	מִי כֶּהַחֲכָם
<i>And who knows the interpretation of a thing?</i>	וּמִי יוֹדֵעַ פֶּשֶׁר דְּבַר
<i>A person's wisdom illumines his face,</i>	חֲכִמַּת אָדָם תִּאִיר פָּנָיו
<i>and the impudence of his face is changed</i>	וְעַז פָּנָיו יִשְׁנָא

presented commentators with significant problems. The awkward nature of the verse is apparent in the indefinite nature of the questions asked, and in the answer being unrelated to these questions. It is not obvious in the first question what the criterion for comparison is, and the general sense of דבר in the second question obscures its meaning.

Graetz correctly noted the nebulous nature of the first question and commentators' illusion of understanding it. He says: "מי כהחכם" ist in dieser Fassung nicht zu verstehen, und alle Versuche es zu erklären, beruhen auf Selbsttäuschung. Es fehlt offenbar das Prädikat."<sup>1</sup> The questions in 1a indicate a search for a person of some qualifications, but the answer in 1b is an

<sup>1</sup> Heinrich Graetz, *Kohelet* (Leipzig: C.F. Winter'sche Verlagshandlung, 1871), 100.

unrelated comment about a person's demeanour. Fox rightly says: "MT's 'and the impudence of his face is changed' is awkward, ... . It does not introduce a solution to a riddle supposedly asked in v. 1 (Gordis)."<sup>2</sup> What could possibly be the thematic relation between 1a and 1b? The frustrating nature of 8:1 can be sensed in the words of Stuart:

The article [in כהחכם] specifies a particular man, viz. the man wise enough to make explanation. But of what? Of a דְּבַר, word, maxim, apothegm, etc. But what one? I see no answer to this but one, viz. the דְּבַר exhibited in the sentence or apothegm (such I take it to be) that follows. What follows this apothegm does not point us to any explanation of *preceding* difficulties, namely those in Chap. VII. *Wisdom* then will be shown, in case a proper explanation of the apothegm can be made out. In fact, it needs some wisdom to make it out; as the endless variety of opinions about the latter clause may serve to show.<sup>3</sup>

This approach, of viewing 1a as suggesting that no one except the wise could possibly understand the apothegm presented in 1b, provides structural coherence to the verse and is favored by a number of commentators.<sup>4</sup> However, Nowack noted: "in diesem Fall würde man die Determination von דבר vermissen und, was die Hauptsache ist, das folgende wort 1b bedarf eines פֶּשֶׁר d. i. einer Deutung nicht."<sup>5</sup> Moreover, nowhere in the Tanach is the meaning "apothegm, adage, maxim" for דבר attested. While use of the article in the Qohelet corpus is somewhat inconsistent, the absence of the article here is a decided objection to this approach.<sup>6</sup> In the immediately following vv. 2-4 and possibly v. 5, the root דבר is used in the sense of words, or speech. Furthermore, MT speaks in 1a of "knowing" (יודע פשר), not "making it out" or "deciphering." A person could know the meaning of an apothegm without being a student of wisdom. However, it seems that Qohelet is looking for a person who is *both* wise and knows the meaning of the adage in v. 1b. Why would he insist on *both* conditions? Finally, even if it is assumed that Qohelet means "make it out" when he uses יודע, why would knowing the meaning of 1b epitomize wisdom?

<sup>2</sup> Michael V. Fox, *A Time to Tear Down and A Time to Build Up* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 276.

<sup>3</sup> Moses Stuart, *Commentary on Ecclesiastes* (New York: G.P. Putnam, 1851), 230.

<sup>4</sup> Ernst Elster, *Prediger Salomo* (Göttingen: Verlag der Dieterichschen Buchhandlung, 1855), 102; Ferdinand Hitzig and Wilhelm Nowack, *Der Prediger Salomos* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed. KEHAT 7; Leipzig: Hirzel, 1883), 267; Stuart, *Commentary*, 230; New Jewish Publication Society; James L. Crenshaw, *Ecclesiastes* (Westminster: John Knox Press, 1987), 149; etc..

<sup>5</sup> Hitzig and Nowack, *Prediger*, 267.

<sup>6</sup> Charles H. H. Wright, *The Book of Koheleth* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1888), 395.

Commentators are also divided on where v. 8:1 should be included. Many commentators think that 8:1, or at least 8:1a, is the conclusion of the preceding unit.<sup>7</sup> They view 8:1a as concluding that acquisition of a complete understanding of everything is impossible, which is the point of 7:23-29.<sup>8</sup> However, the flow of logic in unit 7:23-29 does not require a concluding remark about the limitations of a person's wisdom.<sup>9</sup> Attachment of v. 1 to unit 7:23-29 would be gratuitous.

Some claim 8:1 belongs to some glossator. For instance, Barton following Siegfried and McNeile denies Qohelet authorship of 8:1. He says: "This verse, which consists of two gnomic sayings, has been rightly regarded by Siegfried and McNeile as from the hand of the *Hokma* glossator."<sup>10</sup> Unfortunately Barton does not explain why the *Hokma* glossator was compelled to make this addition. Delitzsch takes a somewhat intermediate position, saying: "Wenn nun v. 1 nicht als außer Zusatz stehender Spruch gelten soll, so wird er sich gewissermaßen prologisch zum Folgenden Verhalten."<sup>11</sup>

Seow is definite in stating that 8:1 has a natural place as the leading verse of unit 8:1-17.<sup>12</sup> He says,

<sup>7</sup> For instance, the following think that 8:1 alludes to the preceding material: Stuart, *Commentary*, 230; Hans W. Hertzberg, *Der Prediger* (KAT n.s., 17, 4; Gutersloh: Mohn, 1963), 156-163; Kurt Gallig, "Der Prediger," in *Die fünf Megilloth* (2nd ed.; ed. Max Haller; HAT 18; Tübingen: Mohr/Siebeck, 1969), 108-110; Norbert Lohfink, *Kohelet* (NEchtB; Würzburg: Echter Verlag, 1980), 56-59; Aare Lauha, *Kohelet* (BKAT 19; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchen Verlag, 1978), 146; Diethelm Michel, "Qohelet-Probleme: Überlegungen zu Qoh 8,2-9 und 7,11-14," *ThViat* 15 (1979/80): 81-103; Roger N. Whybray, *Ecclesiastes* (OTG; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989), 128; James A. Loader, *Polar Structures in the Book of Qohelet* (BZAW 152; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1979), 50-54; Tremper Longman, *The Book of Ecclesiastes* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 209; Klaus R. Baltzer, "Women and War in Qohelet 7:23-8:1a," *HTR* 80 (1987): 127-32; Oswald Loretz, "'Frau' und griechisch-jüdische Philosophie im Buch Qohelet (Qoh 7,23-8,1 und 9,6-10)," *UF* 23 (1991): 245-64; Michael V. Fox, and Bezalel Porten, "Unsought Discoveries: Qohelet 7:23-8:1a," *HS* 19 (1978): 26-38; etc.

<sup>8</sup> Choon-Leong Seow, *Ecclesiastes: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New York: Yale University, 2008), 290.

<sup>9</sup> Aron Pinker, "Qohelet's Views on Women—Misogyny or Standard Perceptions? An Analysis of Qohelet 7:23-29 and 9:9," *SJOT* 26/2 (2012): 157-191.

<sup>10</sup> George A. Barton, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Ecclesiastes* (ICC; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1908), 149. Cf. also Lauha, *Kohelet*, 144.

<sup>11</sup> Franz Delitzsch, *Hoheslied und Koheleth* (BKAT 4; Leipzig: Dorffling & Franke, 1875), 331.

<sup>12</sup> Many consider 8:1 the beginning of a new unit. See, for instance, Ernst W. Hengstenberg, *Commentary on Ecclesiastes* (Philadelphia: Smith, English & Co., 1869), 191; Delitzsch, *Hoheslied*, 330; August Knobel, *Commentar über das Buch Koheleth*

...the rhetorical question 'who knows' anticipates the assertion that 'no one knows' (v 7) and, eventually, also the admission at the end of the passage that the wise who think they know are not able to discover anything (v 17). In short, the references to the wise and their quest for knowledge frame the literary unit.<sup>13</sup>

On the other hand, Crenshaw seems to lean toward splitting 8:1, and linking 1a with the preceding text and 1b with the following text. He says,

The use of the equivalent term פתרון in Gen. 40:5 in the setting of discovering the answer, as well as the meaning of הפשר in Egyptian Aramaic, suggests that a relationship with what precedes is not out of the question.<sup>14</sup> However, the second part of the verse anticipates the discussion of behaviour in the royal court (8:2). Probably the reference to one's countenance concerns conduct before the king and his officials.<sup>15</sup>

In addition to the difficulties regarding 8:1 that have been mentioned, commentators were also challenged by the referent of פניו in 1b $\alpha$  and 1b $\beta$ . Do the two פניו in v. 1b have the same referent? Is this referent חכמת אדם? If חכמת אדם is the referent of פניו in 1b $\beta$  and a man's wisdom brightens his face, why was it harsh in the first place? If the two פניו in v. 1b have different referents what are they? How does 1b relate to 7:3 and 7:2, where seemingly a somber or sad face is suggested as being the proper demeanour for the wise?

The purpose of this paper is to provide answers to the questions that were posed, assuming the unit intends to advise Judeans on proper and useful behaviour when appearing before rulers. In this context, it is being suggested that the impossible פִּשֶׁר דְּבַר should be emended to read שֶׁפֶר דְּבַר "speak well." Thus, in 1a the two questions refer to *facial* and *oral expression*. A parallel response is obtained in 1b, if instead of פָּנָיו one reads פִּי[מִו], "his mouth," assuming the ligature נִי = מ, or פִּיו, assuming an extra ו. It will be argued that these minor emendations more aptly fit the context.

## B ANALYSIS

### 1 Early Exegesis

It seems that already the ancient versions encountered considerable difficulty with 8:1. This can be sensed from the various implicit emendations that their translations contain. The Septuagint apparently adds יודע to 1a $\alpha$  rendering τίς

(Leipzig: Verlag von Johann Ambrosius Barth, 1836), 269; Seow, *Ecclesiastes*, 290; etc.

<sup>13</sup> Seow, *Ecclesiastes*, 290.

<sup>14</sup> Charles. F. Whitley, *Koheleth: His Language and Thought* (BZAW 148; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1979), 71. Whitley notes that in Egyptian Aramaic הפשר occurs with the meaning "to settle an account."

<sup>15</sup> Crenshaw, *Ecclesiastes*, 150.

οἶδε σοφούς ("who knows the wise?") and drops the כ of comparison from כהחכם. The rendering of פשר דבר by λύσις ῥήματος ("interpretation of the word, or saying") gives 1aβ some definiteness, though "saying" is not in the semantic field of דבר and "word" gives a meaningless expression. Aquila reads ὠδε σοφούς (כה חכם) instead of οἶδε σοφούς, and so does Symmachus (οὕτως σοφός).<sup>16</sup> However, the phrase מי כה חכם never occurs in the Tanach, nor do the sub-phrases מי כה and כה חכם. The Targum understands v. 1 as the challenge to comprehend God's word as it appears in the scriptures, saying: "who is the wise man, who can stand before the wisdom of God, and fathom the words of the prophets?" The Targum is even more definite than the Septuagint regarding פשר דבר, it homiletically renders דבר by מיליא בנביאיא ("words in the prophets").

The Septuagint also reads μισεθήσεται ("will be hated" = ישנא) instead of ישנא ("will be changed"), and so does the Peshitta (נסתנא).<sup>17</sup> On the other hand the Targum's מתחלפן reflects the MT reading ישנא "will be changed," where the verb שנה "change" is conjugated like ל"א verbs with a *segol*.<sup>18</sup> The Vulgate's *commutabit* also implies the reading ישנה. The Vulgate's rendition of 1bβ by *et potentissimus faciem illius commutabit* ("and the omnipotent will change his face") leaves one with more questions than answers.

<sup>16</sup> This reading has been adopted by the Vulgate, as well as a number of modern commentators. Seow, *Ecclesiastes*, 277; H. Louis, Ginsberg, *Studies in Koheleth* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1952), 35; etc..

<sup>17</sup> There was apparently a tradition for such reading, as indicated in the passage: "Rabbah bar Rab Huna says, with respect to every man who has impudence of expression it is lawful to call him *wicked*, for it is written (Prov 21:29) 'a wicked man hardens his face.' Rab Nachman bar Isaac says, it is lawful to hate him, for it is written (Qoh 8:1) 'and the coarseness of his face is changed.' Read not *changed* (ישנא), but *hated* (ישנא)" (*bTa'anit*, 7b). This reading has been adopted by Graetz, *Kohelet*, 101; D. Carl Siegfried, *Prediger und Hoheslied* (HAT II, 3/2; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1898), 62; etc..

<sup>18</sup> Compare 2 Kgs 25:29 with Jer 52:33. א/ה confusion occurs often in the Tanach. See for instance, Lam 4:1 ישנא for ישנה; Gen 42:43 אברך for הברך; איך [Gen 26:9] but היך [Dan 10:17]; Lev 24:7 לאזכרה for להזכרה; Ruth 1:20 מרא for מרה; 1 Kgs 22:25, 2 Kgs 7:12 הבחלה but אבחלה in 2 Chr 18:24; Job 8:21 ימלא for ימלה; Isa 44:8 תראו for תרהו; Ezek 14:4 הב (K) but אב (Q); 2 Chr 20:35 אתחבר for התחבר; Ezek 14:3 ההדרש for האדרש; Jer 25:3 השכים for אשכים; Ps 76:6 השתוללו for אשתוללו; Isa 63:3 אגאלתי for הגאלתי; Jer 52:15 האמון for ההמון; Hos 12:9 און for הון; 2 Sam 20:24 and 1 Kgs 12:18 but הדרם in 2 Chr 10:18; נאק in Ezek 30:24 but נהק in Job 6:5; צנא Num 32:24 but צנה Ps 8:8; דכה (Deut 23:2) but דכא in some MSS (Tanach Koren [1983] 11 end); Dan 11:44 according to the Massorah, in the Land of Israel the reading was חמה and in Babylon חמא; etc..

Unlike the MT, where עז is the noun "boldness, impudence," the versions read the adjective עז, "harsh, impudent" (Deut 28:50, Prov 7:13).<sup>19</sup> As Gordis noted, this reading would necessitate the change of עז פניו to עז פנים.<sup>20</sup> The changes in the *Versions* do not imply use of a different *Vorlage* than MT, but they do reflect the challenges that 8:1 posed to them.

Classical Jewish exegetes also struggled with 8:1. Rashi (1040-1105) assumes that in 1a $\alpha$  the word "important" (חשוב) is implied, and in 1a $\beta$  the word פשר means "interpretation" and/or "compromise." It seems that Rashi understands עז in the sense of "fearful expression, frightening sight" exploiting Ex 34:30, which describes the shining face of Moses and the Israelites' fear to approach him. Unfortunately, adding חשוב does not make the question in 1a $\alpha$  more definite. Actually, in 9:15-16 Qohelet complains that the wise are not that important and their wisdom is not appreciated. Furthermore, the generality of דבר leaves "interpretation of a thing" or "compromise of a thing" nebulous.

Rashbam (c. 1085-1174) also assumes an implied חשוב in 1a $\alpha$ . He understands עז in the sense of "strength." It seems that Rashbam assumes that wisdom makes a person's face shine and brings him joy. This joy then increases the shining of the face. Rashbam's approach amounts to reading into the text a two stage process, which can be hardly justified.

Ibn Ezra (1089-c. 1164) notes that sometimes in biblical texts a word or letter is implied.<sup>21</sup> He suggests that this might be the case in v. 1, which should be read: מי כהחכם ומי [כ]יודע פשר דבר.<sup>22</sup> He also raises the possibility that v. 1 is a question and an answer: "Who is as the wise? One who knows the meaning of a thing." This would require deletion of the ו from ומי and addition of a ש to יודע. Ibn Ezra tries to imbue פשר דבר with some definiteness by explaining that it means understanding the utility of everything and why it is so (מה הפך יש בו) (ולמה כן). While this sounds reasonable, it is not anchored in the text. He also raises the possibility that פשר is the result of metathesis and should be read פרש, "make distinct, declare, interpret." In a vein similar to that of Rashbam, Ibn Ezra suggests that acquired wisdom would induce humility, and will remove anger and arrogance from a person's face. Again, such a two stage process is not indicated in the text.

<sup>19</sup> This reading has been adopted by a number of modern commentators. Cf. for instance, Barton, *Ecclesiastes*, 151; Siegfried, *Prediger*, 62; *BDB* 739a; etc..

<sup>20</sup> Robert Gordis, *Koheleth, the Man and his World: A Study of Ecclesiastes* (3rd ed.; New York: Schocken, 1968), 286.

<sup>21</sup> For instance תוכיחני [אל] בקצפך [אל] (Ps 38:2); יחי ראובן ואל ימת [ראובן] (Deut 33:6); מתן בסתר יכפה אף ושחד בחק [יכפה] חמה עזה מאל אביך ויעזרך ו[מ]את שדי (Prov 21:14); מישרים אהבוך [עלמות] (Gen 49:25); etc..

<sup>22</sup> The reading כיודע is also adopted by Knobel, *Buch Koheleth*, 269.

Qara (second part of 11th to first part of 12th century) expands the range of possible implications in 1a $\alpha$  by admitting חושב, "thinks," a word play on חשב. This in effect undermines Rashi's suggestion since it shows that many attributes can serve as the referent of the question in 1a $\alpha$ . Qara also undermines Ibn Ezra's explanation of פשר דבר suggesting that it refers to "any question that is asked" (פתרון כל דבר להשיב לשואל). In his view, acquisition of knowledge changes a person's face, making it bright and happy.

Sforno (1470-1550) assumes that the question in 1a $\alpha$  alludes to the wise in 7:28, and in 1a $\beta$  פשר דבר refers to the morals of mythological stories. He understands the change occurring in 1b $\beta$  as being that of mind controlling desires. Sforno's explanation, as well as that of the preceding Jewish commentators, highlights their unsuccessful attempts to accord v. 1 some definiteness and internal coherence. Their failures stem from resorting to extraneous elements for explaining the verse, rather than exploiting the text at hand.

## 2 Early Modern Exegesis

Qohelet 8:1 continued to challenge commentators to this day. Modern commentators, as their predecessors, continued to imbue 8:1 with extraneous notions. For instance, Ginsburg says regarding 1a: "The next lesson which this common sense view of life teaches is gentle submission. He who is truly wise, who understands the import of this matter, or of this view of life, has no compeer."<sup>23</sup> He explains that 1b gives the reason for the sentiment expressed in the former clause. Such a wise person has no equal "because his wisdom, or the prudent view of life according to which he regulates his conduct, makes him cheerful, and teaches him submission, to endure that which he cannot cure."<sup>24</sup> One would be hard pressed to detect in our verse any textual references to "gentle submission" in life.

Hengstenberg considers 1a $\beta$  the reason for 1a $\alpha$ . No one is equal to the wise man "because wisdom leads us into the nature, the essence of things, and thus furnishes a basis for right practical conduct."<sup>25</sup> In his view, "The reason of the joy afforded by wisdom may be found in the insight it gives into the nature of things, specially, into the providence of God; and in the assurance and decision with which, as a consequence, we can regard the practical question of life."<sup>26</sup> This wisdom changes the hard and rigid features of one's face, which

<sup>23</sup> Christian D. Ginsburg, *Cohleth* (London: Longman, 1861), 390. Ginsburg says, "The phrase פשר דבר exactly corresponds to the Hebrew נְבוֹן דְּבַר in 1 Sam 16:18." This does not seem to be the case. In 1 Sam 16:18 דבר is apparently referring to speech.

<sup>24</sup> Ginsburg, *Cohleth*, 391.

<sup>25</sup> Hengstenberg, *Commentary*, 191. Hengstenberg takes דבר = מה שהיה in 7:24 and designating the object of wisdom, but does not provide any justification.

<sup>26</sup> Hengstenberg, *Commentary*, 192.

express boldness and impudence. Hengstenberger, too, is reading much extraneous material into the Qoh 8:1.

A similar understanding of 1a is adopted by Delitzsch. He finds 1b being the reason for 1a and parallel to it. Delitzsch says:

Was nun 1b folgt könnte durch begründendes כִּי eingeführt sein, es stellt sich aber nach der Weise des synonymen Parall. Mit 1a auf gleiche Linie, indem daß der Weise so hoch steht und Niemand wie er das Innere der Dinge durchschaut in andere Form wiederholt wird: 'die Weisheit macht sein Angesicht licht' ist also nach Ps 119,130 und עֵינַיִם הָאֵיִר Ps. 19,9 zu verstehen, die Weisheit zieht den Schleier von seinem Angesicht und macht es helle, denn die Weisheit verhält sich zur Thorheit wie Licht zur Finsternis 2,13. Indes zeigt der Gegens. וְעַז פְּנֵיו יִשְׁנֵא daß nicht blos die Lichtung des Blickes, sondern im Allgem. Jene geistige und ethische Verklärung des Angesichts gemeint ist, an welcher wir sofort, wenn dieses auch nicht an sich schön sein sollte, den gebildeten und über das Gemeine hinausgerückten Menschen erkennen.<sup>27</sup>

However, it is doubtful that the highly intellectual attributes described in 1a (according to Delitzsch) are on a *par* with the physical expressions of the face in 1b.

Who is as the wise man? Plumptre believes that "[w]e find the probable explanation of this suggestive question in the fact that the writer veils a protest against despotism in the garb of the maxims of servility."<sup>28</sup> However, this fact is not a fact. Plumptre understands 1bβ expressing the transformation by culture of the coarse ferocity of ignorance, akin to Ovid's lines: "To learn in truth the nobler arts of life, Makes manners gentle, rescues them from strife."<sup>29</sup>

In Stuart's view, the questions in 1bα amount to: "Who, like a wise man, can explain the difficulties, or solve the questions that arise in respect to wisdom?" He understands the two last clauses as constructed alike and stating: "The wisdom of a man enlightens his face, and haughtiness or impudence disfigures his face."<sup>30</sup> Stuart also imbues 1a with his own notions. Unfortunately,

<sup>27</sup> Delitzsch, *Hoheslied*, 331.

<sup>28</sup> Edward H. Plumptre, *Ecclesiastes: or, the Preacher* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1881), 174.

<sup>29</sup> Publius Ovidius Naso (43 B.C.E. – 14 C.E.), *Epistulae ex Ponto* II (starting 9 C.E.), 9.47.

<sup>30</sup> Stuart, *Commentary*, 230. Stuart (231) believes that on a deeper level Qohelet is saying: "Wisdom preserves life, or imparts the light of life, while haughtiness brings on the disfigurement of death." The questions in 1a are Qohelet's uncertain sentiments on whether this deep thought would be understood by the reader. Indeed, there is much room to doubt!



the comparison in 1b suggested by Stuart is not antithetical, and Stuart is aware of that. Moreover, knowing about a wise man's ability to deal with fundamental problems of wisdom has nothing to do with facial expression. In other words, v. 1b can stand alone; it does not need 1a, as interpreted by Stuart.

Wildeboer views 1a as praise of wisdom—its indispensability, and 1b as description of two of its effects. He takes 1b $\alpha$  as referring in general to both of those effects: wisdom illumines one's countenance (*sie erleuchtet das Angesicht*) and wisdom makes the face bright (*macht das Gesicht hell*). The first effect is explicated in 1a, which Wilderboer assumes speaks about wisdom giving a clear and confident view (*sie gibt einen klaren, sicheren Blick*) as in Qoh 2:14, Ps 19:9 and 119:130. The second effect is explicated in 1b $\beta$ , suggesting that wisdom changes the coarseness of expression (*frechen, rohen Gesichtsausdruck*).<sup>31</sup> This explanation is too complicated to be obvious to the reader. Moreover, Wilderboer does not textually substantiate his assertions regarding wisdom's indispensability and its provision of a clear view.

Graetz finds it significant for the exegesis of 8:1 that the Septuagint and Aquila give essentially the same translation of 1a $\alpha$ . According to this indication the original construction might have been *מי כהחכם יודע פשר דבר*? In his view the meaning of *פשר* was misunderstood by all. It is not connected with *פתר*, but means "compromise," as in NH *פשרין* "lukewarm." Only the wise know how to find a compromise in a conflict. Graetz suggests that Qohelet specifically refers to a conflict arising from one's obligations to a ruler according to a loyalty oath, and participation in morally repugnant acts in case he is a tyrant. Graetz adopts the Septuagint's reading ("will be hated" = *ישנא*) and consequently considers 1b an antithetical parallelism, a wise man is liked and an impudent man is hated.<sup>32</sup> In this case one wonders why Qohelet adds in 1a the word *דבר*. Without it the text reads better and is less problematic. Moreover, the conflict described by Graetz has no basis in the text. Finally, nowhere else has it been asserted that a wise man is liked. Reading *ישנא* ("will be hated") destroys the parallelism between 1a $\alpha$  and 1a $\beta$ , since "hate" is not the opposite of "a bright face."

### 3 Recent Modern Exegesis

More recent exegesis did not produce new understanding of 8:1. For instance, Gordis surprisingly does not discuss 1a, except the word *כהחכם*. He suggests that 1b deals with a royal court setting, and in 1b $\alpha$  "the stress is not upon the gracious act, but upon appearing gracious toward one's associates in court,

<sup>31</sup> D. Gerrit Wildeboer, "Der Prediger," in *Die fünf Megillot* (Freiburg: Mohr, 1898), 149.

<sup>32</sup> Graetz, *Kohelet*, 100. Graetz understands 1b $\beta$  as meaning: "der Trotzige (der sich geradezu dem Könige widersetzt, wie die Verschworenen gegen Herodos) wird verhasst."

whatever may be one's real feelings. A court official cannot display his dislikes or anger at will. His wisdom will impel him to maintain his suavity and poise under all circumstances."<sup>33</sup> The next statement is a nuance of 1b $\alpha$ , "A courtier will avoid the appearance of being overbold and aggressive. His good sense will lead him to disguise such an expression."<sup>34</sup> In Gordis' view wisdom does not introduce lasting changes of demeanour, but rather enables control and manipulation of one's feelings. It is doubtful that such a sense can be deduced from the terms  $\text{תִּאֲרֵר}$  ("will brighten") and  $\text{יִשְׁנָא}$  ("will be changed").

Crenshaw explains that in 8:1 "Two rhetorical questions introduce a traditional wisdom saying. The first question asserts that no one is like a sage, and the second denies that anyone knows the meaning of a matter."<sup>35</sup> It would seem that in this explanation the two rhetorical questions contradict each other. Crenshaw does not elucidate this matter. As Gordis, Crenshaw too considers 1b $\alpha$  as referring to manipulative behaviour; however in 1b $\beta$  he detects a fundamental change. He says: "wisdom leads the wise to dissimulate, to hide their true feelings under a pleasant demeanour. The second image, a changed countenance, shows wisdom transforming an angry look into a gentler and less threatening one (cf. Sir 13:24)."<sup>36</sup>

Fox also leaves 1a unexplained. He considers 1b as describing the advantages of wisdom in the presence of a despot. Fox observes: "A man's wisdom will not make him actually happy in the presence of a despot, but it does teach him to affect a cheerful demeanour so as to ingratiate himself with whoever is in power and disarm his suspicions. Impudence, on the other hand, betrays itself by a scowl, and this could very well cause trouble with the ruler."<sup>37</sup> If Fox is correct, then the text should have been  $\text{חכמת אדם להאיר פנים}$ .

In Seow's opinion the pair of rhetorical questions in 1a introduces the sayings of the wise in 1b-5a, and 1b asserts that wisdom causes one to display a pleasant appearance and to change one's impudent look. The theme of 8:1 according to Seow is,

Before a superior, especially someone whose wrath is swift, it is wise not to display any animosity. Instead, despite one's feelings, it is smart to act pleasantly. The point seems to be that people ought not to incur the king's disfavor, for the king acts with the same arbitrary power as a high-god.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Gordis, *Koheleth*, 286.

<sup>34</sup> Gordis, *Koheleth*, 287.

<sup>35</sup> Crenshaw, *Ecclesiastes*, 149.

<sup>36</sup> Crenshaw, *Ecclesiastes*, 149.

<sup>37</sup> Fox, *Time to Tear Down*, 276.

<sup>38</sup> Seow, *Ecclesiastes*, 291.

While Seow's paraphrase expresses a useful thought, but it is not anchored in the MT.

The most extensive emendation of 8:1 has been suggested by Ginsberg. He makes the following three emendations: (1) *כה חכם* in 1a $\alpha$ ; (2) reads *חדות* (or *שמחת*) instead of *חכמת* in 1b $\alpha$ ; and, (3) vocalizes *ישנא* the final word in 1b $\beta$ .<sup>39</sup> With these emendations Ginsberg obtains the meaning: "Who here is wise (*or, or is acquainted with—see immediately*), and who knows the meaning of the saying: 'A man's pleasure lights up his face (cf. Prov 15:13 and the paradox in Koh 7:3), but fierceness darkens his face (cf. Job 14:20; Lam 4:1; Dan 5:6; 7:28)'" However, the suggested mechanism, by which the original Aramaic *חדות* was rendered as the Hebrew *חכמת*, is not convincing. It has been noted already, that the meaning "apothegm, adage, maxim, saying" for *דבר* is nowhere attested in the Tanach. Also, the sources cited in support of the meaning "darkens" for *ישנא* are not compelling. Ginsberg takes 8:2 being the answer to the question posed in 8:1; Qohelet answers a question about a proverb with a proverb. However, it is difficult to see how this could be the case, if Ginsberg rendition of 8:1 is correct and 8:2 means "Heed the face of a king, and in the matter of an oath of God be not over hasty." The watching of a king's face could only make sense if 8:1 is first understood.

Text analysis focused on the unusual phrase *מי כהחכם*, the meaning of the phrases *דבר פשר פנים* and *תאיר פנים*, and the vocalization of *עז* and *ישנא*. BHS notes that the reading *מי מוכיח כהחכם* has been proposed in an effort to create synonymous parallelism with 1a $\beta$ . It is notable that the expressions *מי חכם* and *מי כהחכם* occur several times in the Tanach (Hos 14:10, Ps 107:43, Jer 9:11), but not the comparative *מי החכם*.<sup>40</sup> The abnormal *כהחכם*, instead of the normal *בחכם*, with the *ה* dropped and its vowel under the *כ* comparison, is not of infrequent occurrence, especially in later books (Ezek 40:25; 47:22; 2 Chr 10:7; 25:10; 29:7; Neh 9:19; 12:38; 1 Sam 13:21; Ps 36:6).<sup>41</sup> It has been suggested that 1a $\alpha$  should be parsed *מי כה חכם*. Seow believes that the Greek traditions had a *Vorlage* that read *מי חכם מי כה* instead of *מי כהחכם*.<sup>42</sup> However, the phrase

<sup>39</sup> Ginsberg, *Studies*, 35. Ginsberg says: "*חכמת* is to be assumed to be original in the Hebrew, but to reflect there a *חכמת* which (under the influence of *חכ[י]ם* in the first half of the verse) had supplanted the correct *חדות* in the Aramaic original from which the Hebrew was made."

<sup>40</sup> Attempts to see in these expressions support for linking 8:1 to the preceding section cannot be justified.

<sup>41</sup> Note also Qoh 6:10 *שהתקיף* (Ketib) but *שתקיף* (Qere); Qoh 10:3 *כשהסכל* (K) but *כשסכל* (Q); and, 2 Kgs 7:12 *בהשדה* (K) but *בשדה* (Q). It has been suggested that the non-syncope of the *ה* is indicative of a Northern provenance. Cf. Gary A. Rendsburg, "The Northern Origin of the 'Last Words of David' (2 Sam 23,1-7)," *Bib* 69/1 (1988): 116.

<sup>42</sup> Seow, *Ecclesiastes*, 277, says: "As Euringer has argued, *tis oiden sophous* 'who knows the wise' in LXX may be the result of an inner Greek corruption from *tis hade*

מי כה חכם never occurs in the Tanach, nor do occur the sub-phrases מי כה and מי כה חכם. Zapletal thinks that the original reading might have been just חכם.<sup>43</sup>

The word פשר occurs in biblical Hebrew only in Qoh 8:1 but frequently in the Aramaic portion of Daniel (Dan 2:4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 16; 2:4, 6, 15, 21; 5:12, 16, *etcetera.*), mostly in contexts of mantic wisdom.<sup>44</sup> It occurs frequently in the Qumran texts, where it refers to the interpretation of biblical texts.<sup>45</sup> Most commentators take it to be an Aramaic loan word related to BH פתר and פתרון, and render it "interpretation."<sup>46</sup> In Daniel, the phrase פשר מלתא "meaning of the words" (5:15, 26) and פשר מליא "meaning of the thing" (7:16) are closest to פשר דבר in Qoh 8:1, and they refer to definite items or events. Qohelet uses דבר in the sense of "word, thing" in 1:1, 8, 10, 5:1, 2, 6, 6:11, 7:8, 21, 8:1, 3, 4, 5, 9:16, 17, 10:12, 13, 14, 20, 12:10, 11, 13, and three times in the form דברת. In the immediately following vv. 2-4 and possibly v. 5, the root דבר is used in the sense of words, or speech.

The phrase תאיר פניו has been interpreted by some commentators "gives a clearer view" (Ps 19:9, 119:130), and by some "makes the face pleasant." Most commentators understand תאיר פניו as reflecting the "brightness" which appears on a wise man's face when he correctly analyzes a matter (דבר). The concept "a bright face" or the effect of "brightening one's face, or eyes" is mentioned in Num 6:25; Isa 60:5; Ps 4:7; 19:9; 34:6; Prov 16:15; Job 29:24, *etcetera.* However, expressions similar to תאיר פניו are used in the Tanach only in reference to the deity (Ps 31:17; 67:2; 80:4, 8, 20; 119:135, Dan 9:17). A somewhat more remote use of "a bright face" in reference to a human is Prov 16:15, "in the light of the king's countenance is life," and Sir 13:26, טוב פנים אורים.

It was noted that the *Versions* read עז (adjective) instead of MT עז (noun).<sup>47</sup> This approach has been adopted by many. For instance, Delitzsch says that עז:

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*sophos* 'who is so wise' (as in Aq; cf. *tis houtos sophos* in Symm; also SyrH, OL), an error prompted in part by the next rhetorical question: *kai tis oiden lysin rhematos* 'who knows the solution of a saying' (see Euringer, *Masorahtext*, pp. 93-94)."

<sup>43</sup> Vincenz Zapletal, *Das Buch Kohelet* (Freiburg: O. Gschwend, 1911), 189.

<sup>44</sup> Scott C. Jones, "Qohelet's Courtly Wisdom: Ecclesiastes 8:1-9," *CBQ* 68/2 (2006): 211-228. Jones suggests that in 8:1a: "פשר דבר" refers to the prognostication of a divine oracle, and it belongs, as it does elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible, in the context of mantic wisdom in the royal court."

<sup>45</sup> H.-J. Fabry and U. Dahmen, "פשר," *ThWAT* 6: 810-816.

<sup>46</sup> The feminine form פשרה occurs in Sir 38:14, where it parallels רפאות and may mean "judgment," as the Samaritan פשרונה (Exod 21:1 and frequently).

<sup>47</sup> The MT idiom עז פניו is unique, but supported by a number of Hebrew MSS that have עוז, with the mater clearly indicating a noun. Seow, *Ecclesiastes*, 278-79, argues

... ohne Zweifel nach עַז פָּנִים Dt. 28,50. Dan. 8,23 und הָעֵז פָּנִים Spr. 7,13 oder בְּפָנִים Spr. 21,29 zu verstehen ist, so daß also עַז פָּנִים das selbe was nachbiblische עֲזוּת פָּנִים Starrheit, Härte, Roheit, des Gesichts = Frechheit, Unverschämtheit, Rücksichtslosigkeit.<sup>48</sup>

Ginsburg argues that Deut 28:50 shows ועַז פָּנָיו cannot mean "the impudence of his face," since one could not say that the enemy is impudent to the young, and therefore עַז must mean a foe treating with "vigor" both old and young.<sup>49</sup> Gordis observes that "The change is unnecessary. The suffix in פָּנָיו refers back to אָדָם (so most comm.) or possibly may be rendered impersonally as 'one's boldness.'" <sup>50</sup> BHK raised the possibility that ועַז פָּנָיו should be emended to ועַז אָפָיו. Such an emendation is orthographically untenable.

Comparison of 2 Kgs 25:9 with Jer 52:33 shows that יִשְׁנָא is the result of a א/ה confusion.<sup>51</sup> Indeed many Hebrew MSS have יִשְׁנָה. The revocalization יִשְׁנָא has been suggested to harmonize with the Active תִּאִיר.<sup>52</sup> This emendation is not necessary, since the Passive gives a more fitting sense.<sup>53</sup> The idiom פָּנִים שָׁנָה "to change (one's) face" = "to change (one's) expression" is attested in Job 14:20, Sir 12:18 (יִשְׁנָא פָּנִים), and 13:24 (פָּנָיו יִשְׁנָא). Knobel raised the possibility that יִשְׁנָא reflects the Arabic *šana'*, "brighten, lighten." He says: "Vielleicht könnte man auch das arab. *šana'* splenduit, luxit vergleichen und übersetzen: der Unmuth seines Angesichts wird heller, geht in Heiterkeit über."<sup>54</sup> This suggestion would only introduce redundancy into 1b.

The awkwardness of אָנִי in the following v. led a number of commentators to include it in 8:1.<sup>55</sup> The words יִשְׁנָא אָנִי are then read as the single word יִשְׁנָנוּ = <נּו>[א], "one changes it." This emendation requires assuming that dittography of א and ו/י confusion occurred. Dahood thinks that the confu-

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that "the unique expression עַז פָּנִים is to be preferred, since it is likely that the other reading merely conforms to the more common idiom."

<sup>48</sup> Delitzsch, *Hoheslied*, 331. Cf. *b. Ber.* 16b; *b. Šabb.* 30b; *b. Beṣah* 25b; and *b. 'Abot* 5:20.

<sup>49</sup> Ginsburg, *Cohemoth*, 391.

<sup>50</sup> Gordis, *Kohemoth*, 286-287. Cf. 7:1, יוֹם הוֹלְדוֹ, "the day of one's birth," and Gordis' note there.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. Sir 9:18, 12:18, and 13:25.

<sup>52</sup> Vulgate; Hitzig and Nowack, *Prediger*, 268; Zapletal, *Kohélet*, 190; BHS; Galling, *Prediger*, 108-110; Ginsberg, *Studies in Kohemoth*, 35; etc.

<sup>53</sup> In this case it would be necessary to change יִשְׁנָא to הִשְׁנָא.

<sup>54</sup> Knobel, *Commentar*, 270.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. Graetz, *Kohélet*, 101; BHS; Fox, *Time to Tear Down*, 276; Seow, *Ecclesiastes*, 278; etc.. Some follow the Versions deleting אָנִי. Cf. William A. Irwin, "Ecclesiastes 8:2-9," *JNES* 4 (1945): 130-31.

sion between שְׁנֵה and שְׁנֵה arose from a dittography of ש in an original Phoenician orthography שְׁנֵה (שְׁנֵה אֵה).<sup>56</sup>

It has been suggested that the second half of the verse is a quotation of a proverb praising wisdom, and that the order of 1a and 1b should be reversed, in order to make the verse more meaningful. The flow of logic would be: praise of wisdom, followed by the comment that truly wise men are few and far between. Verse 8:1 would then be linked to the preceding section.<sup>57</sup>

A review of the exegesis on Qoh 8:1 shows considerable agreement on the interpretation of its keywords and phrases. The major difficulties that commentators encountered were of a thematic nature: giving meaning to 1a; deciphering the inner structure of 1b; and, identifying the logical continuity of the verse. In the following, a novel approach for resolving these difficulties will be proposed.

### C PROPOSED SOLUTION AND CONTEXT

It has been noted that many commentators viewed 8:1 as the beginning of the unit that follows. This position is bolstered by the observation that unit 8:1-4 deals with a wise person's demeanour and his behaviour in an audience with a king or ruler. It was easy in Qohelet's time for a person to irritate a capricious ruler and incur his wrath. A person who knows to wisely behave in such circumstances is considered by Qohelet to be unique. In this context, v. 1 is a general introductory statement about demeanour, particularly facial and oral expression, which is followed by three verses dealing with specific interactions with the king, or someone of equivalent authority.<sup>58</sup>

The general statement in v. 1 opens with the question "Who is as the wise?" which intrigues the reader in its indefiniteness and challenge, initiating contemplation and anticipation. Qohelet's reference set for this question will become clear only later, after v. 2 has been read, and particularly after the structure of 8:1-3a becomes obvious. The understanding of the second question, as it appears from the analysis, depends on the meaning of פֶּשֶׁר דְּבַר and is disputed.

<sup>56</sup> Mitchel J. Dahood, "Canaanite-Phoenician Influence in Qoheleth," *Bib* 33 (1952): 41.

<sup>57</sup> Hertzberg, *apud* Gordis, *Koheleth*, 286.

<sup>58</sup> The working definition of *demeanour* is: *The outward physical behaviour and appearance of a person*. Demeanour is not merely what someone says, but the manner in which it is said. Factors that contribute to an individual's demeanour include tone of voice, facial expressions, gestures, and carriage. Cf. David Friedlander and Stan Franklin, "LIDA and a Theory of Mind," in *Artificial General Intelligence 2008* (ed. Pei Wang, Ben Goertzel and Stan Franklin; Amsterdam: IOS Press, 2008), 141.

Ginsburg noted that the phrase פֶּשֶׁר דְּבַר exactly corresponds to the Hebrew נְבוֹן דְּבַר in 1 Sam 16:18.<sup>59</sup> The phrase נְבוֹן דְּבַר is usually given the sense "skilled in speech."<sup>60</sup> Delitzsch rightly observed, "Ginsburg vergleicht 1S. 16,18., was aber nicht den Sachkundigen, sondern den Redekundigen bedeutet."<sup>61</sup> Indeed, the parallelism of דְּבַר and יֹאמֵר in v. 4 suggests that some confusion with respect to vocalization of דְּבַר occurred in the unit 8:1-4 and perhaps elsewhere in the Qohelet corpus.<sup>62</sup> For instance, in v. 3 דְּבַר is awkward in its indefiniteness while דְּבַר makes good sense (cf. Josh 23:14-15); in 1:8 (see Rashi) the reading דְּבַר is supported by the paronomasia; in 1:10 Tur-Sinai suggest reading דְּבַר instead of דְּבַר;<sup>63</sup> in 5:1-2 דְּבַר clearly refers to speech; *etcetera*.<sup>64</sup> These instances demonstrate that it is impossible to exclude in 1aβ the understanding of דְּבַר in the sense of דְּבַר.

If the reading דְּבַר is adopted, the noun פֶּשֶׁר is awkward; an adjective would give a better fit. Such an adjective can be obtained from פֶּשֶׁר by transposing the first two letters. The phrase שְׁפַר דְּבַר "speak nicely" makes good sense. It is akin to the expression אִמְרֵי־שֹׁפָר in Gen 49:21 and reflects Qohelet's principle in 3:7b about there being a time for keeping quiet and a time for talking. The first part of v. 1 then says: *Who is as the wise? Who knows to speak nicely?* It is notable that a wise person's capability to speak nicely is highlighted by Qohelet (9:17; 10:12 and 12:10).

Clearly, 1bα speaks about the *effect* that wisdom has on a person's demeanour. It cannot mean a wise man's *capability to manipulate his facial expression*. In that case Qohelet would have used the ל of purpose with the infinitive הָאֵיר (cf. 5:5). Qohelet says that wisdom brightens one's face, gives it a pleasant expression. Various opinions have been offered on what תֹּאֵיר פְּנֵיו specifically refers to. Demeanour has historically played an important role in establishing a person's veracity, and is consequently often applied to a witness during a trial. Demeanour evidence is quite valuable in shedding light on the credibility of a witness. This is one of the reasons why personal presence at tri-

<sup>59</sup> Ginsburg, *Coheseth*, 390. Variants of the phrase נְבוֹן דְּבַר occur in Dan 10:11 and 9:23.

<sup>60</sup> This seems to be the general understanding of the phrase. Cf. P. Kyle McCarter, Jr. *I Samuel* (AB 8; Garden City: Doubleday, 1980), 279; Yehudah Kiel, *ספר שמואל א* (Jerusalem: Mosad HaRav Kook, 1981), 163, who translates *מְדַבֵּר בְּבִינָה וּבִהְשָׁכָל או* (Jerusalem: Mosad HaRav Kook, 1981), 163, who translates *מְדַבֵּר בְּבִינָה וּבִהְשָׁכָל או*; Elia S. Artom, *שמואל* (Tel-Aviv: Yavneh, 1959), 55, who translates *רְגִיל לומר דברי בינה*; etc.

<sup>61</sup> Delitzsch, *Hoheslied*, 33.

<sup>62</sup> This confusion is probably caused by the fact that the semantic field of דְּבַר includes *word* and *thing*.

<sup>63</sup> Naphtali Tur-Sinai, *הספר והלשון* (vol. 2 of *הספר*; Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 1959), 404.

<sup>64</sup> Zer-Kavod, *קהלת*, in *חמש מגילות* (Aaron Mirski, et al. (eds.); Jerusalem: Mosad HaRav Kook, 1973), 3, note 18. See also 6:11 and 7:21. Cf. Job 15:11.

al is considered to be of paramount importance, and has great significance concerning the *Hearsay rule*. To aid a judge or jury in determining whether to believe or not believe particular testimony, they are provided with the opportunity to hear statements directly from a witness in court whenever possible. It is likely that Qohelet refers to this aspect of a pleasant demeanour—one associated with truthfulness.

The difficult 1bβ deals with a person's tone of speech. This view is based on the assumption that פניו in 1bα affected the reading 1bβ. Specifically, it is being posited that the original 1bβ read ועז פִּמּוֹ יִשְׁנֶא "and the forcefulness of his mouth will be changed." In the original text the מ was misread as נִ under the influence of the preceding פניו. There is evidence that scribes sometimes wrote two letters so close to each other that confusion arose. For instance, in 11QPs<sup>a</sup> (Plate 8<sup>\*</sup>, Column X, lines 1 and 6) עו, עז, and עי, look like ש, and נו looks like ם.<sup>65</sup> The ligature מ = נו is well attested in the Tanach, and there is considerable evidence of the ו/י confusion.<sup>66</sup> For instance, one finds in Jos 5:2 עברנו (Ketib) but עברם (Qere); 2 Kgs 22:4 ויתם but in 2 Chr 34:9 ויתנו; Jer 49:19 אריצנו but in Jer 50:44 אריצם (Qere) and ארוצם (Ketib); *etcetera*. The ligature מ = נִ is probably attested in Job 15:27, where פִּמּוֹ would not only be more meaningful but also form a paronomasia with פִּימָה. The form פִּי[נִ]מוֹ occurs in Ps 17:10 and 59:13, and the prefixed form in Ps 58:7. There are numerous cases in the Tanach where the י is missing.

It is also possible that the word פִּי, under the influence of the preceding פניו, was spelled פניו. A similar error might have occurred in Prov 15:14 where ופני was written under the influence of פנים in Prov 15:13. The Massorettes corrected this error in the Ketib-Qere apparatus, making the Qere ופני instead of the Ketib ופי.<sup>67</sup> Whichever emendation mechanism is adopted 1bβ would refer to the tenor of one's speech, akin to הן יתן בקולו קול עז (Ps 68:34), "who thunders forth with his mighty voice." Understanding 1bβ as referring to the tenor of one's speech is also supported by Sir 13:26, often cited as a paraphrase of Qoh 8:1. While Sir 13:26a, as 8:βα, states that the visible effect of a good heart

<sup>65</sup> Emanuel Tov, *The Textual Criticism of the Bible: An Introduction* (Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 1990), 199.

<sup>66</sup> Raphael Weiss, "On Ligatures in the Hebrew Bible (ם = נו)," *JBL* 82 (1963): 188-194. Qimchi, in his commentary on 1 Chr 1:7, says: וכן תשתנה הקריאה בוי"ו וביו"ד לפי שהם קרובים בכתיבה. Cf. Rabbinic Bibles (*Mikraot Gedolot*).

<sup>67</sup> The following are instances of extra/missing נ in the Tanach: Judg 4:11 בצענים (K) but בצעננים (Q); Job 19:2 ותדכאוני for ותדכאוני; Prov 3:15 מפניים (K) but מפנינים (Q); Prov 15:14 ופני (K) but ופי (Q); 2 Sam 21:6 ינתן (K) but יתן (Q); 1 Kgs 17:14 תתן but תת (Q); Jer 42:6 אנו (K) but אנחנו (Q); Prov 8:17 ימצאני instead of ימצאני; Ruth 3:4 תעשין instead of תעשי, etc.



is a shining face (עקבת לב טוב פנים אורים), Sir 13:26b states that the effect of evil thought is contentious speech (ושיג ישיח מחשבת עמל).<sup>68</sup>

Verse 8:2 is critical for the understanding of 8:1, since together with 8:1b it establishes the dominant parallel scheme for the two verses. To develop the dominant parallel scheme, Ginsberg's emendation of **פי אני** = **אנפי** "the face of" in 8:2a is adopted. The single Aramaic word **אנפי**, "the face of," corresponds to the Biblical Hebrew **אף**, from **אנף**, which is well attested in the Tanach.<sup>69</sup> It is notable that the line **על אנפי מלך אלתקום ... השתמר לך** occurs in the *Elephantine Ahiqar*, which surprisingly echoes 8:2a.<sup>70</sup> It would appear that **אנפי מלך** underlies **פי-מלך** in 8:2a. Ginsberg noted that

V. 1 and the Elephantine parallel combined suggest very strongly that the first five letters of v. 2, which no ingenuity has yet succeeded in rendering plausibly as they stand, be emended to **אנפי** 'the face of,' and a close examination of the whole of vv. 1-5a renders the emendation practically unavoidable.<sup>71</sup>

If the interpretation of **פי אני** as **אנפי** is correct, 8:2a as 8:1b $\beta$ , will also refer to the "face" or to the expression of the face.<sup>72</sup> The second part of 8:2, however, seems to refer to speech, as the term **דבור = דברת** "utterance" (Job 5:8) indicates. The specific nature of this "utterance" is not clear. Commentators suggested that this "utterance" related to the "oath of loyalty" (unmentioned in the Tanach, cf. 1 Chr 11:3, 29:24),<sup>73</sup> "swearing by the name of God"

<sup>68</sup> The meaning of the *hapax legomenon* **שיג** (1 Kgs 18:27) is in doubt. I assumed that it refers to a contentious interaction.

<sup>69</sup> Whitley, *Koheleth*, 71.

<sup>70</sup> Arthur E. Cowley, *Aramaic Papyri in the Fifth Century B.C.* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1923), 215, line 101: **חזי קדמתך מנדעם קשה [על אנפי מלך] אלתקום זעיר כצפה מן ברק אנת השתמר לך** (Look before thee: Something harsh (=a harsh expression) [on the f]ace of a k[ing] (means) 'Stand (=tarry) not!' His wrath is swifter than lightning: do thou take heed unto thyself). Cf. Mitchel J. Dahood, "Qoheleth and Recent Discoveries," *Bib* 39 (1958): 311; Ginsberg, *Studies*, 34-36.

<sup>71</sup> Ginsberg, *Studies*, 34-35.

<sup>72</sup> Panc C. Beentjes, "'Who Is Like the Wise?': Some Notes on Qohelet 8,1-15," in *Qohelet in the Context of Wisdom* (ed. Anton Schoors; BETL 136; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1998), 306. Beentjes suggests that the questions in 8:1 are not rhetorical, and they are answered by the **אני** in 8:2. However, a single word answer does not occur in the Tanach.

<sup>73</sup> Elster, *Prediger*, 103; Wildeboer, *Prediger*, 149; Ginsburg, *Koheleth*, 391-392; Hitzig and Nowack, *Prediger*, 269; Knobel, *Buch Koheleth*, 272; Graetz, *Kohelet*, 101-102; Plumptre, *Ecclesiastes*, 175; Stuart, *Commentary*, 232; Wright, *Koheleth*, 396; Zapletal, *Kohelet*, 190; Barton, *Book of Ecclesiastes*, 149; Marcus A. Jastrow, Jr. *A Gentle Cynic, Being a Translation of the Book of Koheleth* (Philadelphia: Lipincott, 1919), 227; Gordis, *Koheleth*, 288; Crenshaw, *Ecclesiastes*, 148, etc.. Accord-

(Exod 22:10),<sup>74</sup> and “King’s/peoples’ oath to God,” (2 Kgs 11:17).<sup>75</sup> The structural analysis that follows suggests another possibility; that one should be sensitive to a king’s change in tenor of speech—to his inclusion of swearing by God. Swearing obviously expresses much emotional involvement and is intended to convey irrational commitment and ultimate credulity.

From this discussion emerges the basic structure of the four lines in 8:1-3a. All the lines deal with *demeanour*, and in each line the first colon relates to *facial expression* while the second colon refers to *manner of speech*:

### DEMEANOUR

	<i>Manner of Speech</i>	<i>Facial expression</i>
8:1	ומי יודע שפר דבר (Who knows to speak well?) ועז פימו / פיו ישנא (and the forcefulness of his mouth will change)	מי כהחכם (Who is as the wise?) חכמת אדם תאיר פניו (A person’s wisdom illumines his face)
8:2	ועל דברת שבועת אלהים (and [watch] the utterances of swearing by God)	אנפי מלך שמר (Watch a king’s face)
8:3a	תלך אל־תעמד בדבר רע (leave, don’t persist in a bad argument)	אל־תבהל מפניו (Don’t be disturbed by his face)

The first column refers to the wise (חכם), a person (אדם), a king (מלך), and both a wise person and king. Since the first two are also the referents in the corresponding cola of the second column, it is reasonable to assume that that the referent in 8:2b is the king’s speech, and 8:3aβ refers to both the wise and king; i.e., to a bad argument made by the wise person to the king. In that case, one is advised in 8:2b to watch for a change in the king’s tenor of speech indicated by his use of emotionally high-charged language, such as swearing. In 8:3aβ one is advised to leave the king’s presence when he sees that his words have a bad effect on the king. Since the last three cola in the first column deal with facial expression one would have expected the first colon also to refer to the face. In Modern Hebrew 1bα should have something akin to מי יודע כהחכם מבע פנים “who is as the wise knows facial expression.” Unfortunately, Qohelet did not have the appropriate Hebrew phrase for “facial expression.” He left it unsaid, assuming that it would be sensed from the parallel cola.

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ing to Josephus, Ptolemy Lagi demanded an oath of loyalty from the Jews (*Ant.* XII, 1 and XI, 8, 3).

<sup>74</sup> Hengstenberg, *Commentary*, 163; Fox, *Time to Tear Down*, 277; Ginsberg, *Studies*, 105; Oswald Loretz, *Qohelet und der Alte Orient: Untersuchungen zu Stil und theologischer Thematik des Buches Qohelet* (Freiburg: Basel, 1964), 74; Seow, *Ecclesiastes*, 279; Longman, *Ecclesiastes*, 209, etc..

<sup>75</sup> Delitzsch, *Hoheslied*, 333; Siegfried, *Prediger*, 62; T. Anthony Perry, *Dialogues with Kohelet: The Book of Ecclesiastes* (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993), 135; etc.

The second column refers to manner of speech, which is indicated by use of the root דבר and the organ of speech (פיו / פימו) in lieu of speech. In the first and last colon the quality of speech is addressed, and in the following two cola the change in tenor is mentioned. In 8:1-3a Qohelet alludes to a range of capabilities that a wise person has regarding demeanour. In particular, a wise man's pleasant facial expression is a basic asset in reducing animosity and promoting rationality and sincerity; he can "read" the facial expressions of others; he is articulate; he can modify the tenor of his speech; he is capable of noticing variation in tenor of speech; and he knows to assess their effect.

Each of the lines in 8:1-3a can be characterized as follows:

- 8:1a: General statement about a wise person's capabilities regarding facial expression and articulation, which is formulated as two rhetorical questions;<sup>76</sup>
- 8:1b: Wisdom makes a person's face look more pleasant, and it modifies the forcefulness of his speech;
- 8:2: A wise petitioner should watch a king's facial expression, and he should watch the change in the king's speech, such as use of swearing words;<sup>77</sup> and,
- 8:3a: A wise petitioner should not be disquieted by a change in the king's facial expression. However, seeing that his arguments badly affect the king he should leave.

<sup>76</sup> Roland E. Murphy, *Ecclesiastes* (WBC; Dallas: Word Inc, 1992), 82. In Murphy's view vv. 2-4 modify v. 1.

<sup>77</sup> Diethelm Michel, "Qohelet-Probleme," 87-92. Michel suggests that 8:2-5 is a quotation of traditional wisdom that is critiqued in vv. 6-9. A similar position is adopted by Schwienhorst-Schönberger who states: "In der literarischen Gestaltung dieser Texteinheit thematisiert Kohelet sein Verhältnis zur Tradition. Zum Thema 'Weisheit und Macht' lässt er die Tradition (in Form einer Schülerantwort) zu wort kommen (V 2-5), um sie anschließend kritisch zu relativieren (V 6-9)." Cf. Ludger Schwienhorst-Schönberger, *Kohelet* (HTKAT; Freiburg: Herder, 2004), 413. Krüger introduces an artificial ambiguity into 8:2 saying: "The semantic ambiguity of this admonition is in contradiction to its pragmatic function: the text gives its readers an instruction how to behave vis-à-vis a king, but it does not make clear to its readers how they are supposed to behave. Thus, the text looks like a caricature of the opportunism of a courtly wisdom: the wise man sees himself as the sovereign master of the situation (cp. verse 1) and yet is only the king's plaything and the object of his moods." See Thomas Krüger "Meaningful Ambiguities in the Book of Qoheleth," in *The Language of Qohelet in Its Context: Essays in Honour of Prof. A. Schoors on the Occasion of his Seventieth Birthday* (ed. Angelika Berlejung and Pierre van Hecke; OLA 164; Leuven: Peeters, 2007), 68. However, the obvious asymmetry between man and king fully undermines the possibility that "man sees himself as the sovereign master of the situation." Qohelet's advice tries to optimize the outcome in an unfavourable situation.

It is notable that the opposite phrases שפר דבר in 1b $\beta$  and דבר רע in 3a $\beta$  form a thematic *inclusio* in the unit, which ends with the conclusion in 3b-4.<sup>78</sup>

## D CONCLUSION

Irwin observes regarding Qoh 8:1-9 that

By common consent we have here a series of more or less disconnected comments perhaps in some way gathered about the general theme of monarchs and despots. There is no agreement, however, on even this modest measure of unity ... But in reality the passage is a well-organized unit treating of a single theme that is developed consistently to its conclusion in verse 9.<sup>79</sup>

This study is in full agreement with Irwin's position with respect to the sub-unit 8:1-3a. It has been shown in this study that the theme of 8:1-3a is human demeanour in particular one's *facial* and *oral expression*. The four lines of 8:1-3a form a clear parallelism, which is anchored on the two keywords: פנים and דבר.<sup>80</sup>

The structure of 8:1-3a, as well as Sir 13:26, imply that 1b $\beta$  has to refer to speech.<sup>81</sup> It has been demonstrated that such a reading is possible, since there is evidence that פניו could be a corruption of פימו/פיו, the organ of speech. The

<sup>78</sup> Commentators usually consider vv. 3, 5, and 6 having a moral or religious connotation. However, more often in Qohelet רע means "discomfort," "misfortune," or "unhappiness." Jones, "Qohelet's Courtly Wisdom," 222, note 43, notes that "the phrase [דבר רע] could also be rendered as a 'bad word.' This sense is supported by Qohelet's advice in v. 4." Waldman suggests that that the phrase דבר רע in 8:3 refers to a conspiracy or rebellion against the king. It should be noted that ancient treaties consider rebellion to begin with the thought, proceeding on to the spoken word, that is, fomenting of sedition, and then the actualization in deeds. Thus, דבר רע could be understood as words that can be interpreted in a bad sense. See Nahum Waldman, "The *dābār ra'* of Eccl 8:3," *JBL* 98 (1979): 407.

<sup>79</sup> Irwin, *Ecclesiastes*, 130.

<sup>80</sup> Christian Klein, *Kohelet und die Weisheit Israels: Eine formgeschichtliche Studie* (BWANT 132; Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1994), 75, note 13. Klein considers Qoh 8,1b the only maxim in the entire *Book of Qohelet* that can be defined as synthetic parallelism. However, Lauha, *Kohelet*, 144, note 11, felt "die beiden Sticho... sind also synonym parallel."

<sup>81</sup> It is notable that *word* and *speech* are keywords in the often quoted parallel between the Ahiqar text (Cowley, *Aramaic Papyri*, 215, lines 101-104) and Qoh 8:2-4. For instance, Ahiqar *twice* emphasizes that the word of the king (מלת מלך) is to be soothing to the heart of the subordinate; *once* emphasizes the urgency of fulfilling the king's command (פקיד); *twice* emphasizes the paradoxically gentle but destructive force of the king's speech (ממלל מלך), and, by metonymy, his tongue ([לשן מ]); and, *once* the subordinate is warned to watch his speech.

parallelism of דבר and אמר in v. 4 indicates that in the entire section the term דבר should be understood as "speech, utterance, words."

Moreover, the structure of 8:1-3a implies that 2b must refer to the king's face as 3a does. It has been demonstrated that such a reading is not only possible, but also elegantly resolves the problem of the awkward אני in 2a. The reading אנפי, instead of אני פי, introduces an Aramaism.<sup>82</sup> However, this is not the only Aramaism in the book.

Finally, the unit structure implies that the abrupt 1α must allude to facial expression. Unfortunately Qohelet did not have a proper Hebrew term for "facial expression."<sup>83</sup> He left 1α undefined, assuming the reader would deduce the alluded sense from the concrete examples in 1β, emended 2a, and 3a.

Difficulties encountered in interpretation of 8:1 forced many commentators to use extraneous notions for imbuing this verse with definiteness and internal coherence. Recognition of the underlying structure of 8:1-3a, and similarities with Sir 13:26 and *Elephantine Ahiqar*, point to some minor scribal errors. Correction of these errors restores the contextual sense of the verse. The proposed interpretation of 8:1 and understanding of 8:1-3a suggests that the population of Yehud had considerable access to higher officialdom during the Ptolemaic period, making the advice given rather useful.

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<sup>82</sup> Seow, *Ecclesiastes*, 279, says: "Even less likely is the proposal to read אנפי מלך "before the king" instead of אני פי מלך in MT (so Ginsberg, *Studies*, 35, and Whitley, *Koheleth*, 71). To account for the unassimilated נ in אנפי, one would have to assume an Aramaism here." In this study, אנפי מלך is understood as "the king's face."

<sup>83</sup> The phrase הכרת פניהם in Isa 3:9 refers to what can be discerned from the face. It does not mean "facial expression."

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