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DISCREPANCIES BETWEEN THE MASORETIC TEXT AND THE SEPTUAGINT VERSIONS OF THE BOOK OF PROVERBS: A TEMPTING NEW SOLUTION

Summary

Discrepancies between the versions of the Book of Proverbs in the Masoretic Text (MT) and Septuagint (LXX) have occupied scholars for centuries. Some solutions are briefly outlined in this article, together with a new proposal for resolving these discrepancies, based on the premise that the Book of Proverbs may have originally contained three independent textual collections: Proverbs 1–24, associated with King Solomon; Proverbs 25–29, associated with King Hezekiah, and an independent section, Proverbs 30–31, which could have been part of either Solomon’s or Hezekiah’s collection. It is further proposed that the redactors of the Masoretic Text simply appended Proverbs 30–31 to the end of the Book of Proverbs, i.e., Hezekiah’s collection, whereas the LXX translators adapted Proverbs 30–31 to be part of Solomon’s collection, within the new context of the LXX Proverbs 24.

Introduction

One of the ways to understand the actual composition of the Book of Proverbs is according to the Masoretic division of the opening and closing portions of the paragraphs. The opening portion or section is called the *parashah petuhah*, while the closing portion is the *parashah setumah*.¹ Chapters 2, 5, 10, 29 and 30 of Proverbs have

¹ These paragraphs are identified by either the Hebrew letter for “s” or “p,” indicating either a closed paragraph, “s,” or an open paragraph, “p.” Cf. Emanuel TOV, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible* (2nd revised edition; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 50–51.

only one *parashah petuhah* each, while Chapters 1, 4, 7, 9, 22, 23, 24, 25 and 28 have two *parashahs petuhah* each. Chapter 8 has three, Chapter 3 has four and Chapter 6 has six *parashahs petuhah*. Finally, Chapter 30 of Proverbs has eight opening sections. No other chapter of the Hebrew text in the entire Masoretic Text (hereinafter MT) of the Book of Proverbs has as many opening sections as Chapter 30. The MT Proverbs 30 is opened by the first *parashah petuhah* in the very last verse of Proverbs 29 and concluded by Prov 30:6. The following opening portions of the chapter are found in vv. 9, 14, 17, 20, 23 and 28.

The *parashah setumah* or closing section is not marked in the last part of the Book of Proverbs (Chapters 25–31) but earlier, in Prov 24:22, specifically between vv. 22 and 23. It is possible to speculate that in Prov 24:22, even before the Masoretic punctuation was inserted into the text, some sort of concluding section may have already existed, which is why the Septuagint (hereinafter LXX) translators inserted Prov 30:1–14 precisely after the *parashah setumah* in Chapter 24 of the LXX and not where it is found in the MT. The LXX division of Proverbs 30 into Prov 30:1–14 and Prov 30:15–33 is probably the major reason why later scholars generally divide the Chapter 30 into two independent sections.²

It may be presumed that the LXX treated Prov 24:23–34; 30:1–14; 30:15–33; 31:1–9 and 31:10–31 as self-contained proverbial units.³ The LXX translators may have deleted the title “Proverbs of Solomon” at the beginning of Chapter 10, altered the headings at the beginning of Prov 30:1; 30:15; 31:1 and elaborated Prov 22:17, “Words of the wise,” and 24:23, “These *things* also *belong* to the wise.”⁴ In doing so, the LXX translators may have also adapted independent sections of the Book of Proverbs, implementing them into a coherent proverbial *corpus*, as follows: Prov 24:1–22e; 30:1–14; 24:23–34; 30:15–33; 31:1–9; 25:1–18; 26:1–28; 27:1–17; 28:1–28; 29:1–27; 31:10–31.

² Cf. Antoine J. BAUMGARTNER, *Étude critique sur l'état du texte du Livre des proverbes: D'après les principales traductions anciennes* (Leipzig: Drugulin, 1890), 240–242.

³ Cf. Alfred RAHLFS (ed.) – Robert HANHART (rev.), *LXX. Proverbs* (Editio altera; Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2006).

⁴ Cf. Jehoshua GRINTZ, “The Proverbs of Solomon: Clarifications on the Relationship among the Three Collections in the Book of Proverbs attributed to Solomon” [in Hebrew], *Lešonēnu* 33 (1968), 243–269.

1. A Brief Overview of Solutions

Many scholars have tried to resolve the differences between the two versions of the Book of Proverbs. Rahlfs-Hanhart divided Proverbs according to its basic closing sections or the *parashahs setumah* at Prov 9:18, 22:16, 24:22, 30:14; 24:34; 30:33; 31:9; 29:27 and 31:31.⁵ Solomon Malan notes that several Jewish authorities have divided the Book of Proverbs into five sections: Introduction, 1:1–7; Preface, 1:8–19; First Division, 1:20–9:11; Second Division, 9:12–24:22; Third Division, 24:23–29:27; Fourth Division 30; Fifth Division 31:1–9 and Addition, 31:10–31.⁶

Paul De Lagarde explains the discrepancies between the LXX and the MT by the fact that the MT was written in adjacent columns, which the Greek translator incorrectly read horizontally rather than vertically.⁷ Emanuel Tov remarks that De Lagarde's theory might have been feasible if the differences had occurred only in Chapters 15, 16, 24 and 25. In fact, continues Tov, the LXX has many other omissions, additions, interpolations, “pluses and minuses in regard of the MT (cf. 1:7; 3:16; 4,27; 7:1a; 8:21a; 9:12a-c; 9:18a-d; 10:4a; 12:13a; 13:13a; 17:16a; 18:22a; 19:7; 22:14a; 24:22a-e; 25:10a; 26:11a; 27:20a; 27:21a; 28:17a; 31:26).”⁸

Whereas De Lagarde viewed the textual differences between the MT and LXX as due to translator error, Antoine Baumgartner focused on the possibility of disorder among the *Ur-manuscripts* that were primarily used by the LXX translators, which could have created perplexing difficulties in the rendering of the LXX.⁹

Thomas Cheyne asserted that the LXX transposition of Proverbs 30 and 31:1–9 “looks as if the translator had expunged all those peculiarities in the superscriptions which suggested a variety of authorship. The proper names in chaps. xxx and xxxi have been explained away and the heading in x. i, which limits the Solomonic

⁵ Cf. A. RAHLFS (ed.) – R. HANHART (rev.), *LXX Proverbs*.

⁶ Cf. Solomon C. MALAN, *Original Notes on the Proverbs: Mostly from Eastern Writings*, Vol. 3 (London: Williams and Norgate, 1893), 3:537.

⁷ Cf. Paul A. DE LAGARDE, *Anmerkungen zur griechischen Übersetzung der Proverbien* (Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1863) 51, 78, 90.

⁸ Emanuel TOV, *The Greek and Hebrew Bible: Collected Essays on the LXX* (VTSup 72; Leiden: Brill, 1999) 423–424, here 427.

⁹ Cf. Antoine J. BAUMGARTNER, *Étude critique sur l'état du texte du Livre des proverbes: D'après les principales traductions anciennes* (Leipzig: Drugulin, 1890), 149.

authorship too much for the translator, has been actually omitted.”¹⁰

In a similar manner, Johann Cook, corroborated by David-Marc Hamonville and Nancy Nam-Hoon Tan, proposes the same *Vorlage* for the MT and LXX, with additional interpretation by the LXX translators to make the text clear and congruous.¹¹ Michael Fox disagrees with Cook’s argument that the LXX “presents the earliest exegetical commentary on the Hebrew text.”¹² Instead, Fox claims that the LXX “does introduce additional elements for exegetical purposes, but only a few are really tendentious.”¹³ Thus, redacting the primary text with remarkable omissions, additions, interpolations and minus-plus adaptations of the MT, the translators (second century B.C.) reinterpreted Proverbs “for its own Greek context.”¹⁴ In that sense Anneli Aejmelaeus suggests that “only by tracing the trail of the Septuagint translators is it possible to gain a reliable picture of the different translators and of the Hebrew *Vorlage* their work was based on”.¹⁵ Tov instead notes that the many differences in the Proverbs in the LXX can only suggest a different *Vorlage* for the Greek translation and observes: “Furthermore, the type of parallelism of the verses (for example, Chapters 15, 16 or 24) in the arrangement of the MT does not make it a more coherent unit than that of the LXX.”¹⁶

Patrick Skehan, on the other hand, considers the LXX composition of Proverbs 30 to be original and exact, where the separation of Prov 30:1–6 as a part of the so-called “Solomon and Hezekiah collection” (Prov 25:2–31:31) from Prov 30:7–33 as a part

10 Thomas K. CHEYNE, *Job and Solomon: Or Wisdom of the Old Testament* (London: Kegan Paul Trench & Co., 1887), 175. Cheyene’s conclusion is accepted by David-Marc D’HAMONVILLE, *Les Proverbes* (La Bible d’Alexandrie 17; Paris: Cerf, 2000) 28.

11 Cf. Johann COOK, *The LXX of Proverbs: Jewish and/or Hellenistic Proverbs? Concerning the Hellenistic Colouring of LXX Proverbs* (VTSup 69; Leiden: Brill, 1997), 293–296; Michael V. FOX, *Proverbs 1–9: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 19; Garden City: Doubleday, 2000), 361–364; David-Marc D’HAMONVILLE, *Les Proverbes*, 31, 42, 297.

12 J. COOK, *The LXX*, 35.

13 M. V. FOX, *Proverbs 1–9*, 361.

14 Nancy NAM-HOON TAN, “Where Is Foreign Wisdom to Be Found in LXX Proverbs?” *CBQ* 70 (2008), 699; cf. M. V. FOX, *Proverbs 1–9*, 361–364.

15 Anneli AEJMELEAUS, *On the Trail of Septuagint Translators. Collected Essays. Revised and Expanded Edition* (Biblical Exegesis and Theology 50; Leuven: Peeters Publishers, 2007), 71–106.

16 Emanuel TOV, *The Greek and Hebrew Bible: Collected Essays on the LXX* (VTSup 72; Leiden: Brill, 1999), 426–427.

of the “Wise Men Collection” (Prov 22:17–24:32) is correctly made.¹⁷ Cook has a good argument *contra* Skehan in his analysis of Prov 30:32–33 in the MT, pointing out that Proverbs 30–31 go together and that Proverbs 31 is logically preceded by Proverbs 30.¹⁸ Fox suggests that since “there are only two differently located blocks in the end of LXX-Prov, 30:1–14 (34 stichs) and 30:15–33 (45 stichs), the LXX order may have resulted from their accidental displacement, in a way that recalls the dislocation of Sir 30:25–33:13a in the Greek.”¹⁹

2. A Tempting New Solution

None of the aforementioned proposals is implausible. However, on a practical basis, it would be difficult for a translator to reorganize an already composed Hebrew text, simply because he would have been translating the Hebrew text sentence-by-sentence and section-by-section, directly from the original. Moreover, a translator would have needed the personal courage, extraordinary technical skill and profound knowledge of the subject matter in order to make major changes in the text, especially to relocate a section from its original place and fit it into a new syntactical and structural context.²⁰ Even today, it would be extremely difficult to shift one biblical section to another chapter in order to make the order of the biblical thought more coherent.²¹

Accordingly, if the translator used the already extant Hebrew Book of Proverbs, it is much more likely that he simply followed the available *Vorlage* (Tov), translating it section-by-section, including or excluding some additional words or interpretations for unspecified reasons in an attempt to follow the original text literally.²²

¹⁷ Cf. Patrick W. SKEHAN, *Studies in Israelite Poetry and Wisdom* (CBQMS 1; Washington, D.C.: Catholic Biblical Association, 1971), 38–40.

¹⁸ Cf. J. COOK, *The LXX*, 295.

¹⁹ M. V. FOX, *Proverbs 1–9*, 364.

²⁰ Cf. John C. ENDRES, William R. MILLER, John Barclay BURNS (ed.), *Chronicles and Its Synoptic Parallels in Samuel, Kings and Related Biblical Texts* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1998),

²¹ In additional study of M. Fox, “LXX-Proverbs as a Text-Critical Resource”, *Textus* 22 (2005) 95–128 the author is summarizing that “...when we see the translator pushing in a certain direction, but one component does not go there, we are probably dealing with a variant”, p. 100.

²² The diaspora of a nation jealously keeps the tradition, language and customs of its ancestors for centuries. Cf. Vladimir STANKOVIĆ (ed.), *Katolička crkva i Hrvati izvan domovine* (Zagreb: KS, 1980) 75–103.

2.1. An Alexandrian Version of the Book of Proverbs

It is possible that pagan and cultural Alexandria may have also possessed a manuscript of the Hebrew Proverbs, which the Greek translators utilized in the LXX translation. Compilations of extra-biblical and biblical literature confirm the possibility that some sort of accumulated literature, since it is wisdom literature, may have existed in ancient royal libraries.

Evidence of a symbiosis between biblical and extra-biblical wisdom literature is found in an Aramaic text in Demotic script, known as *P. Amherst 63*, where the Egyptian poetic text of the liturgy of the New Year's festival is addressed to an "Aramaic-speaking community in Upper Egypt ... possibly at the beginning of the 3rd century B.C. Veneration of the Lord is represented by prayers in cols. XI–XII that contain Hebrew words and Israelite divine names (Adonai, 7 times, Yaho, once)."²³ In this section of the prayer, there are several close parallels to Ps 20:2–6 that resemble a copy of the Hebrew Psalter translated into Aramaic and adapted into Egyptian Demotic script.²⁴

It may be presumed that the Jewish history and law in the Torah and the monotheistic prophetic literature in *Nevi'im* were not as interesting to the Alexandrian Greek pagan world as the wisdom literature in the *Ketubim*, especially the collection of poetry in Psalms and the proverbial literature in Proverbs, which incorporate not only Jewish but also the entire West Semitic wisdom literature tradition and even ancient Egyptian wisdom (cf. Prov 22:17–23:14 and *Amenemope*).²⁵

²³ Richard C. STEINER, "The Aramaic Text in Demotic Script (1.99)," *The Context of Scripture: Canonical Compositions from the Biblical World* (ed. W. W. Hallo and K. L. Younger, Jr.; Leiden/New York/Cologne: Brill, 1997), 309–323, here 310.

²⁴ Cf. Richard C. STEINER, "A Selective Glossary of Northwest Semitic Texts in Egyptian Script," *Appendix to J. Hoftijzer and K. Joengelin, Dictionary of the North-West Semitic Inscriptions* (Leiden/New York/Cologne: Brill, 1995), 2:1249–1266; Walter FARBER, "Rituale und Beschwörungen in akkadischer Sprache," *Texte aus der Umwelt des Alten Testaments: Orakel, Rituale, Bau- und Votivinschriften, Lieder und Gebete* (ed. Otto Kaiser; Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus Mohr, 1991), 2:212–281, here 230–232.

²⁵ Cf. Maurice GILBERT, *La sapienza del cielo: Proverbi, Giobbe, Qohèlet, Siracide, Sapienza* (Cinisello Balsamo: Edizioni San Paolo, 2005), 29–32; see the so-called *popular proverbs* in Proverbs by Gerhard VON RAD, *Theologie des Alten Testaments: Die Theologie der geschichtlichen Überlieferung Israels* (München: C. Kaiser Verlag, 1957), 1:98–105 and 457–465; Riad A. KASSIS, *The Book of Proverbs and Arabic Proverbial Works* (VTSup 74; Leiden: Brill, 1999), 247–249.

Thus, the Jewish Diaspora or Royal Library of Alexandria²⁶ could have had a version of a previously composed Hebrew Proverbs, which the Greek translators could have utilized and translated for the LXX.²⁷

2.2. *Separate Collections of Proverbs*

If the Greek translator did not use a previously composed Book of Proverbs in Hebrew, it could be presumed that the Hebrew manuscripts kept by the Jewish Diaspora had separate collections of Proverbs, especially those of Solomon (Prov 1:1–22:16) and Hezekiah (Proverbs 25–29). In that case, it would not be difficult to attribute the separate collections of Prov 22:17–24:32 and Proverbs 30–31 either to Solomon’s or to Hezekiah’s collection. In addition, the composition of the MT Proverbs follows the same order, which suggests that a Hebrew redactors in Palestine simply incorporated the proverbial collections chronologically:

- 1) Solomon’s collection (Prov 1:1–22:16)
- 2) A separate collection attributed to Solomon (Prov 22:17–24:32)
- 3) Hezekiah’s collection (Proverbs 25–29)
- 4) A separate collection of Proverbs 30–31.

Thus, according to the MT redactors, Proverbs 30–31 are not from Solomon’s time but rather from Hezekiah’s. However, the LXX redactors saw the separate proverbial collections of Prov 22:17–24:32 and Proverbs 30–31 not as Hezekiah’s later collection but rather as part of an earlier one, i.e., Solomon’s collection and, adapting Prov 24:22, 30:1 and 31:1, incorporated Prov 30:1–31:9 into the last chapter of Solomon’s collection of Proverbs 24. Therefore, the LXX redactors composed the Book of Proverbs in the following way:

- 1) Solomon’s collection (Prov 1:1–22:16)
- 2) A separate collection attributed to Solomon (Prov 22:17–24:32 and Prov 30:1–31:9)

²⁶ Theodore VRETTOS, *Alexandria, City of the Western Mind* (New York: The Free Press, 2001) 93–94; Monica BERTI and Virgilio COSTA, *La Biblioteca di Alessandria: storia di un paradiso perduto* (Tivoli/Rome: Edizioni Tored, 2010); Alexander STILLE, *The Future of the Past* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2002), 246–273.

²⁷ Cf. E. TOV, “Post-Modern Textual Criticism?” *Greek Scripture and the Rabbis*, 1–18, here 6–13.

3) Hezekiah's collection (Proverbs 25–29).

A most interesting fact is that the hymn אִשְׁת־חַיִל (°*ēšit-hayil*) or γυναῖκα ἀνδρείαν (*gūnaika andreian*), popularly called *Worthy Woman* in Prov 31:10–31, written in Hebrew acrostic, is used by both the MT and LXX redactors as the masterful final chapter, which justifies the literal conclusion of the Book of Proverbs.

The LXX redactors may have incorporated Prov 30:1–14 immediately after the literary intermission or later Masoretic break with the *parashah setumah* in 24:22, where, after the clear distinction between a righteous son with understanding and wisdom and an unrighteous son without understanding or wisdom (24:3–7, 15–16), there is the sage's teaching in Prov 30:1–14 and Prov 31:1–9. Understanding the subject of Prov 30:1–14 as a king's ungodliness and repentance, the Greek redactors added Prov 30:1–14 to Proverbs 24 while adapting Prov 24:22. After the first *parashah petuhah* in 24:23, the Greek redactors would have included Prov 24:23–34 as a coherent theme of social justice, which is also found in Prov 30:15–33. For Prov 31:1–9, it seems that Cook rightly argues that 25:1–7 was placed before 31:1–9 because the king is the major theme of both passages.²⁸ It is quite obvious that the Greek redactors inserted Prov 30:1–14 after the teaching concerning good and bad sons, as an example of righteousness. Therefore, he changed the perspective of Prov 30:1–4 from highly negative to highly positive.²⁹

²⁸ Cf. J. COOK, *The LXX*, 303, 307

²⁹ Cf. Lorenzo CUPPI, "The Treatment of Personal Names in the Book of Proverbs from the LXX to the Masoretic Text," *Greek Scripture and the Rabbis* (eds. T. M. Law and A. Salvesen; CBET 66; Leuven: Peeters, 2012), 35–36.

The MT's negative perspective of Prov 30,1–14³⁰

¹I became disturbed by the interpretation of the matters by the Youth of the Observer.

This is the master's provocation: "Ungodliness!"

If ungodliness, then even worse: "Nothingness!"

²Subsequently, I am a being without mind and not a human being, and without my human intelligence

³and without my obtaining human qualities, (how) shall I comprehend transcendental perception?

⁴(But) who is that dominating the heavens who came down?

Who restrained the wind with (the strength of) his forearms?

Who compressed the waters in a bundle?

Who spread all the extremities of the earth?

What is his name?

And what is the name of his son?

Now, you will understand.

⁵Every announcement of God is appropriate. He is life-saving armor for those protected by him

The LXX's positive perspective of Prov 30,1–14³¹

¹My son, fear my words, and repent when you receive them; this is what the man says to those who believe in God: Now I stop,

²for I am the most foolish of all people and I have not the prudence of people.

³God has taught me wisdom and I have gained knowledge of holy things.

⁴Who has ascended to the sky and come down?

Who has gathered the wind in a fold?

Who has wrapped the water in a garment?

Who has taken control of all the ends of

the earth?

What is his name?

Or the name of his children that you may know them?

⁵All divine words are tried by fire, and he himself shields those who revere him.

³⁰ The translation is taken from Dubravko TURALIJA, *Literary Structure and Character in Proverbs 30* (Dissertation; Washington D.C.: CUA, 2014), 343–344.

³¹ The translation is taken from Johann COOK, *Proverbs*, in: <http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/nets/edition/25-proverbs-nets.pdf>.

⁶Don't distort his words lest he reprove you and you would prove yourself to be deceptive.

⁷Two I ask of you. Do not withhold (them) from me before I die,

⁸Keep far from me heresy and deceit.

Do not curse me with misery or abundance

but bless me with the suitable providence concerning myself.

⁹Lest having in excess, I behave hypocritically

and proclaim: "Who is the Lord?"

Likewise, lest I take what does not belong to me and commit desacralization and thus desecrate the name of my God.

¹⁰Do not speak ill of a servant to his lord, lest he curse you so that you would be punished

¹¹like a generation that curses his father,

and does not bless his mother.

¹²Generation pure in its eyes, despite not having washed its filth.

¹³Generation: look at those eyes, how haughty they are, while blinking with its eyelids.

¹⁴Generation with its teeth like swords, its molars like knives to consume (bring to nothingness) the unprotected of the land or the needy (for the God) of humanity

¹⁵Suck! Suck!— like a leech with two suckers.

⁶Do not add to his words, lest he rebuke you and you become a liar.

⁷Two things I ask of you; do not remove my favor before I die.

⁸Put far from me a vain word and lies,

and give me neither riches nor poverty,

but order what is necessary and sufficient for me,

⁹lest I be filled and become a liar and say:

"Who sees me?" Or lest I become poor and steal and swear by the name of God.

¹⁰Do not deliver a domestic in the hands of a master lest he curse you and you vanish.

¹¹Wicked progeny curses its father and does not bless its mother.

¹²Wicked progeny judges itself righteous but did not wash off its anus.

¹³Wicked progeny has lofty eyes, and it raises its eyebrows.

¹⁴Wicked progeny has daggers for teeth and knives for molars in order to destroy and to consume the humble from the earth and their needy from among mankind.

the first part of Proverbs 1–24, where righteousness, mercy and truth, as well as respect for the king are cited, while in the second part, Proverbs 25–29, Hezekiah’s collection, already at the beginning (Prov 25:2–3) there is mention of the unfathomable heart of a king. This theme continues with the motif of the influence of the wicked on a king (Prov 25:6), with a righteous king who builds up the kingdom and an unrighteous one who tears it down.³⁶ The unrighteousness of a king is not mentioned in the first part, Proverbs 1–24, while it is openly presented in the second part, Prov 28:15, 16; 29:2, 4, 12; 30:11–14. Thus, the shift from a righteous king in Proverbs 1–24 to a king who is influenced by wickedness and unrighteousness toward his subjects in Proverbs 25–29 is further elaborated in Proverbs 30 and Proverbs 31,³⁷ where the attitude of an ungodly son toward a godly believer is openly exposed. In this regard, Proverbs 30–31 constitute part of the second collection of Proverbs 25–29 because both correspond to each other thematically.³⁸

3.1 *The Godly Father and Repentant Son in the LXX Version of Proverbs 30*

The presentation of the king in the MT version of Proverbs, while exclusively positive and favorable in Chapters 1–24, becomes negative and critical in Chapters 25–31. This shift from an approving to a critical perception of the king is also evident in the LXX translation of Proverbs. Moreover, according to the MT, Proverbs 30 is part of Hezekiah’s collection,³⁹ where the negative presentation of the king predominates, while in the LXX it is the last chapter of Solomon’s collection, Proverbs 24, where a positive presentation of the king

³⁶ In Prov 29:14, the king’s righteous behavior toward his subjects is mentioned as characteristic of a righteous king.

³⁷ The advice of a righteous mother to an inexperienced son is also a warning against behavior that is not fitting for a king.

³⁸ William P. BROWN, “Pedagogy of Proverbs 10:1–31:9,” in: *Character and Scripture: Moral Formation, Community, and Biblical Interpretation* (ed. W. P. Brown; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 150–82, here 177. Brown also claims that social arrogance corresponds to the moral view of Hezekiah’s collection (Prov 26:12, 17; 27:2, 21).

³⁹ In the superscriptions of the Book of Proverbs, there are only two actual proper names, i.e., Solomon and Hezekiah. Thus, Solomon’s collection comprises Proverbs 1–9 but also 10–24, including the two additional sections in 22:17 and 24:32. Hezekiah’s collection in Proverbs 25–31 also includes two additional sections in Proverbs 30 and 31.

predominates.⁴⁰

The LXX represents Prov 30:1 as depicting a relationship between a good father and a repentant son. Given the verbal imperatives of v. 1 φοβήθητι (*fobēthēti—fear*) and μετανόει (*metanoēi—repent*), the translators focus primarily on the father's teaching. The imperatives *fear* and *repent* indicate a godly father and a repentant son who is ready to take instruction from his father. The LXX places the godly father and teachable son within Solomon's collection of Proverbs 1–24. The father who is instructing the son may represent Solomon himself, as the son of his father, David, or as the father of his son Rehoboam. The advice from David to his son Solomon⁴¹ is already cited in 1 Kings 2. By contrast, there is no biblical account of such advice from King Solomon to his son Rehoboam. The possibility of Solomon's being the author of the content of Proverbs 30 is unlikely because the LXX presents the father in Proverbs 30 as an obedient and religious man, unlike the description of Solomon in 1 Kings 11. In addition, the description of the son Rehoboam in 2 Chronicles 10 does not correspond to the son who accepts the father's counsel presented in the LXX Prov 30:1.

The question arises as to why the LXX included Proverbs 30 as part of Solomon's collection and not Hezekiah's. It may have been in order to present Solomon in a positive light. The LXX's translation, on the basis of the positive encouragement in Prov 30:1 and the acquisition of superhuman wisdom in Prov 30:3, attributes the material of Proverbs 30 to King Solomon as a fearer of God who gained divine knowledge. This God-fearing attitude of King Solomon is not unique to the LXX collection of Solomon's proverbs, as it also occurs in 1 Kings 11 and Neh 13:26, where the authors try to mitigate Solomon's sins with an excuse.⁴² The LXX presentation of Solomon as a God-fearing person who is not an apostate but rather a believer who transmits his belief in God's words to his son as a crown (cf. v.5) may have been the reason for moving Proverbs 30 in the LXX to the end

⁴⁰ The LXX understands the main subject of Prov 30:1 in positive way, while the MT presents it in very negative way. See Chapter One of this dissertation.

⁴¹ Ibn Ezra sees Prov 30:6 “as reproving Solomon for his actions in marrying more women than prescribed and attempting to judge people without the requisite witnesses.” See Leonard S. KRAVITZ and Kerry M. OLITZKY, *Mishlei: A Modern Commentary on Proverbs* (Pirke Avot/Shemonah Perakim; New York: UACH Press, 2002), 295.

⁴² The excuse for the negative behavior of Solomon given in 1 Kings 11 and Neh 13:26 involves the negative influence of those surrounding him.

of Solomon's collection (Proverbs 24), in keeping with the positive presentation of the king in Proverbs 1–24, where Solomon is seen as a fearer of God, observer of God's Law and gainer of divine knowledge (cf. Prov 30:1–4).

3.2 *The Ungodly Son of a Godly Believer in the MT Version of Proverbs 30*

Like the LXX, the MT narrows the theme of Proverbs 30 according to its understanding of the very first verse, where the construction *bin-yāqê*—*Youth of the Observer* and the noun *hagebr*—*master* occur as the oxymoron of a godly father and ungodly "Youth," in which the discrepancy between serving God's people in righteousness on the one hand and disobedience to God's precepts and social injustice on other hand plays a main role. Moreover, the *Youth of the Observer* is presented as the son of a godly believer. Thus, the apostate seems to be the son of a godly father.

Proverbs 25ff. is attributed to the period of the king Hezekiah, who is presented by the MT as an obedient and good sovereign over Israel (cf. 2 Kings 18–20). By contrast, Hezekiah's son, as well as other subsequent kings of Israel (or properly, Judah), are presented as having forsaken God's commandments.⁴³

Hezekiah's son and successor, King Manasseh, succeeded Hezekiah when he was twelve years old and showed himself to be an apostate and persecutor of the righteous (cf. 2 Kgs 21:1–26; 2 Chr 33:1–20).⁴⁴ In this regard, Manasseh's behavior is compatible with the description of the *Youth* in Proverbs 30, who is ungodly (v. 1), a persecutor of the righteous (vv. 11–14) and accursed (v. 17) but also called to repentance and conversion (vv. 5–6, 32–33).⁴⁵ The calls to faithfulness in v. 6 and turning away from sin in v. 32 are invitations to return to the righteous way of the father.

⁴³ John N. OSWALT, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 40–66* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 676.

⁴⁴ Cf. Bernhard W. ANDERSON, *Understanding the Old Testament* (4th ed.; Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1986), 358–65; T. R. HOBBS, *2 Kings* (WBC 13; Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1985), 306. Cf. John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 1–39* (NICOT; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1986), 676; Peter C. CRAIGIES, Page H. KELLEY, Joel F. DRINKARD, *Jeremiah 1–25* (WBC 26; Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1991), 204.

⁴⁵ Cf. Edwin T. THIELE, *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings* (3rd ed.; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983), 155–61; T. R. Hobbs, *2 Kings*, 304–305.

In this sense, according to the MT Proverbs 30, the king whose father lived a God-fearing life would correspond to Manasseh. “Manasseh was considered the epitome of a wicked king”⁴⁶ and was also known as a shedder of innocent blood and for “the martyrdom of faithful.”⁴⁷ In a special way, Manasseh was known as the king of “religious innovations.”⁴⁸ God’s decision to put Judah out of his sight (2 Kgs 24:4; Jer 15:4) according to the Deuteronomist (S) was wholly due to Manasseh’s sin and stubborn refusal to repent, and thus “it was just Manasseh’s sin that entailed the inevitable calamity (cf. 2 Kgs 21:10–15; 23:26–27).”⁴⁹ The Judean kings after Manasseh regularly followed the way of apostasy (except King Josiah, cf. 2 Kings 22ff).

The period after King Hezekiah (sixth century B.C.) was a period of rebellious fathers and sons (cf. Ezek 20:18), which also corresponds to the ungodly society presented in Proverbs 30.⁵⁰ Thus, since Proverbs 30 is attributed to Hezekiah’s time; since Manasseh was the king of Israel who strayed from his father Hezekiah’s religion and the official statutes of Israel, and since after Hezekiah the prevailing society was ungodly, hypothetically there are indications for seeing Manasseh as the *ungodly Youth of the Observer*, son of the *Obedient* of Proverbs 30, who promoted ungodliness, scorned Israel’s official religion and practiced wickedness. The call to return to the path of righteousness does not receive a response. In 2 Chronicles 33, Manasseh does repent, but in Proverbs 30 it is uncertain whether the *ungodly Youth of the Observer* ever repented.

Conclusion

Besides the dislocation of Prov 30:1–14; Prov 30:15–33 and Prov 31:1–9 from their places in the MT to Chapter 24 of the LXX, in Prov 1:7; 3:16; 4:27; 7:1a; 8:21a; 9:12a–c; 9:18a–d; 10:4a; 12:13a;

46 P. C. CRAIGIE, P. H. KELLEY, J. F. DRINKARD, *Jeremiah 1–25*, 204.

47 Cf. John A. MONTGOMERY and Henry S. GEHMAN, *The Books of Kings* (ICC; Edinburgh: Clark, 1976), 520.

48 *Ibid.*, 520.

49 J. A. MONTGOMERY and H. S. GEHMAN, *Kings*, 553; Percy S. F. VAN KEULEN, *Manasseh through the Eyes of the Deuteronomists* (OTS 38; Leiden: Brill, 1996), 212–222.

50 Cf. Jeremy HUGHES, *Secret of the Times: Myth and History in Biblical Chronology* (JSOTSup 66; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990), 223; Leslie C. ALLEN, *Ezekiel 20–48* (WBC 29; Nashville: Thomas Nelson 1990) 11; Hugh S. PYPHER, *An Unsuitable Book: The Bible as Scandalous Text* (BMW 7; Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2005), 106.

13:13a; 17:16a; 18:22a; 19:7; 22:14a; 24:22a–e; 25:10a; 26:11a; 27:20a; 27:21a; 28:17a; 31:26 of the LXX, there are other omissions, additions and interpolations that are inconsistent with the MT. Taking all this into consideration, it is possible to conclude that the Book of Proverbs may have originally contained three independent textual collections: Proverbs 1–24, which would have been ascribed to King Solomon; Proverbs 25–29, which would have been ascribed to King Hezekiah, and an independent section of Proverbs 30–31, which could have been ascribed to either Solomon’s or Hezekiah’s collection. The MT redactors simply appended Proverbs 30–31 to the end of the Book of Proverbs, while the LXX translators viewed the section of Proverbs 30–31 as part of Solomon’s collection. In doing so, the LXX translators embellished the text of Prov 24:23, changing it from “These things also belong to the wise...” to “Now these things I also say to you who are wise...,” in order to be able to insert Prov 30:1–14 into Chapter 24. In addition, the LXX translators also deviated from the Hebrew text in Prov 30:1–14 in order to harmonize the themes of Proverbs 24 and Proverbs 30 by providing a positive and coherent description of King Solomon, who rules over the nation. The MT in Proverbs 30 also describes a royal person but not in positive light. The ungodly son or *Youth* and the godly father or *Observer* in Prov 30:1 may allude to the disobedient King Manasseh and his pious father, Hezekiah. This would be the reason why the MT included Proverbs 30–31 as part of Hezekiah’s collection rather than Salomon’s, where King Hezekiah is presented as a positive figure and King Solomon is presented as the author of the wisdom contained in the Book of Proverbs.