

Hindy Najman, Jean-Sébastien Rey and Eibert J.C. Tigchelaar, eds. *Tracing Sapiential Traditions in Ancient Judaism* (Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism, Volume: 174). Leiden: Brill, 2016. Pp. vi + 239. ISBN 978-90-04-32467-1. €115.00.

This volume has its origin in the International Symposium on Jewish and Christian Literature from the Hellenistic and Roman Period conference held in Metz, France in October 2014. The basic aim of its contributions is to problematize the current view on wisdom as a clear-cut conception in ancient Near Eastern literature and especially ancient Jewish traditions. For this reason, relevant texts in the Hebrew Bible, the Dead Sea Scrolls, Hellenistic Jewish texts, Rabbinic texts, and the Cairo Geniza are reconsidered from philological, conceptual, and philosophical standpoints.

Stuart Weeks, “Is ‘Wisdom Literature’ a Useful Category?” (pp. 3-23), introduces this new approach after a helpful overview of recent research on wisdom literature. James Kugel, “The Theme of Long-Range Planning in the Joseph Narrative and Some Second Temple Period Writings” (pp. 24-42), pays ample attention to the use of the term *chokmah* and to the phenomenon of divine long-range planning, showing that this once specifically wisdom-related theme became broadly incorporated in Second Temple Judaism and thus no longer connected to wisdom literature alone. Stéphanie Anthonioz, “A Reflection on the Nature of Wisdom: From Psalm 1 to Mesopotamian Traditions” (pp. 43-56), differentiates biblical wisdom from ancient Israelite wisdom. The wisdom in the Bible is limited primarily to ethical knowledge.

Elisa Uusimäki, “Spiritual Formation in Hellenistic Jewish Wisdom Teaching” (pp. 57-70), points to the parallels between Jewish wisdom and ancient philosophical schools, especially with regard to the view that the study of wisdom text is regarded as a spiritual exercise. Benjamin G. Wright III, “Ben Sira and Hellenistic Literature in Greek” (pp. 71-88), demonstrates that it is very likely that Ben Sira knew Greek, was open to the Hellenistic world around him, and made use of its wisdom to complement his own. Samuel L. Adams, “Sage as Prophet? Allusion and Reconfiguration in Ben Sira and Other Second Temple Wisdom Texts” (pp. 89-105), maintains that Ben Sira did not see himself as a prophet.

Arjen Bakker, “Sages and Saints: Continuous Study and Transformation in *Musar le-Mevin* and *Serekh ha-Yahad*” (pp. 106-18), compares *Musar le-Mevin* (4QInstruction) with *Serekh ha-Yahad* with regard to their concepts of wisdom and holiness, which appear to be very similar. Both indicate that wisdom belongs to heavenly spheres and that only the holy ones have access to it. Matthew Goff, “Searching for Wisdom in and beyond 4QInstruction”

(pp. 119-37), discusses the genre classification of 4QInstruction. He has no problems with the label “wisdom,” as long as it is clear that texts like this “are instructions written by the teachers who drew upon a common body of pedagogical traditions, including Proverbs and the Torah” (p. 137). Patrick Pouchelle, “The Simple Bare Necessities: Is *Pss. Sol.* 5 a Wisdom Prayer?” (pp. 138-54), shows that the Solomonic psalmist imitated biblical Psalms, and used the genre of lamentation next to reflections, resulting in “a prayer in an academic style” (p. 154).

Maurice Gilbert, “*Pirqé Avot* and Wisdom Tradition” (pp. 155-71), discusses the question whether the Saying of the Fathers are rightly considered as wisdom literature. He points to the influence of Ben Sira, Wisdom of Solomon, early Christian traditions about apostolic succession, and Greek doxographers. In the second part of his contribution he discusses the tripartite form of many sentences in *Pirqé Avot*. Ishay Rosen-Zvi, “The Wisdom Tradition in Rabbinic Literature and Mishnah *Avot*” (pp. 172-90), suggests that the rabbis viewed themselves as part of the ongoing wisdom tradition. Gideon Bohak, “Manuals of Mantic Wisdom: From the Dead Sea Scrolls to the Cairo Genizah” (pp. 191-216), presents a number of intriguing examples of popular and learned divination in the ancient Jewish world. Indexes of ancient sources and of authors conclude the volume.

Having read the different contributions, which are all of high academic standards and most of which contain a wealth of data about the ancient Jewish sapiential traditions, it will be clear that it is wise to be reluctant in using the term “wisdom” as a coherent literary genre. A positive result of this collection of studies is that it covers a very broad field, showing many relationships and making interesting comparisons. In this way, many good examples are given of the way the texts functioned in their historical context.

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