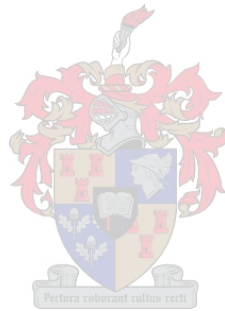


**THE SEARCH FOR ORDER  
AND THE MAINTENANCE OF MYSTERY  
IN OLD TESTAMENT WISDOM LITERATURE**

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## **DECLARATION**

I, the undersigned, hereby certify that the work contained in this thesis is my original work and has not previously, entirely or in part, been submitted at any University for a degree.

Signature.....

Date.....

## **ABSTRACT**

The aim of this dissertation is to investigate the concept of 'wisdom' in the Old Testament Wisdom Literature. This dissertation argues that the concept of 'wisdom' is both the search for order and the maintenance of mystery. The coexistence of order and mystery is suggested as a coherent theme of Wisdom Literature, and the various relationships between the two themes are explained as the particular voices in Wisdom Literature. Proverbs 16, Job 28, Ecclesiastes 3, and Sirach 24 exhibit the coexistent relationship between the two themes. While Proverbs 16 reveals an order prevailing coexistence, Ecclesiastes 3 exhibits a mystery prevailing coexistence. While Job 28 shows a dialogical coexistence, Sirach 24 illustrates a mysterious integrated coexistence between order and mystery.

This coexistence of order and mystery is investigated by means of socio-rhetorical criticism. The voices of various textures such as inner texture, intertexture, social and cultural texture, and ideological and theological texture in Wisdom Literature reveal the coexistence and various types of coexistent relationships between the search for order and the maintenance of mystery. Inner texture analyses the literal and rhetorical nature of each text, revealing the themes such as the potential and the limitation of human beings and the fear of the Lord. Intertexture elaborates the themes as the search for order and the maintenance of mystery. Social and cultural texture explains the social and cultural setting of the theme, depending on the social topics such as the manipulationist and thaumaturgical response and the cultural categories such as dominant culture and contraculture. Based on this social cultural milieu, the sages or the authors of Wisdom Literature formulate a creation theology comprising of the search for order and the maintenance of mystery, criticising various ideologies such as royal ideology and the doctrine of retribution, and dominant cultures such as Hellenism and Judaism in each period.

## OPSOMMING

Die doel van hierdie dissertasie is om die konsep 'Wysheid' in die Ou Testamentiese Wysheidsliteratuur te ondersoek. Hierdie dissertasie voer aan dat die begrip 'Wysheid' sowel die soeke is na orde as na die behoud van misterie. Die saambestaan van orde en misterie word voorgelê as 'n tema wat alle Wysheidsliteratuur saamvat. Die verhoudings tussen die twee temas word verduidelik as die verskillende stemme van elke vorm van Wysheidsliteratuur. Spreuke 16, Job 28, Prediker 3 en Sirach 24 toon die samehangende verhouding tussen die twee temas. Terwyl Spreuke 16 'n vervlegtheid toon waarin orde oorheersend is, toon Prediker 'n saambestaan waarin misterie oorheersend is. Waar Job 28 'n samehang van dialoog toon, toon Sirach 24 'n misterie-geïntegreerde saambestaan van orde en misterie.

Hierdie vervlegtheid van orde en misterie word ondersoek deur middel van sosio-retoriese kritiek. Die stemme van verskillende teksture soos binne-tekstuur, intertekstuur, sosiale en kulturele tekstuur asook ideologiese en teologiese teksture in die Wysheidsliteratuur wys op die saambestaan van verskillende tipes verhoudings tussen die soeke na orde en die behoud van misterie. Binnetekstuur ontleed die letterlike en retoriese aard van elke teks, en toon temas soos die potensiaal en die beperktheid van die mens asook die vrees van God. Intertekstuur brei die temas uit as die soeke na orde en die behoud van misterie. Sosiale en kulturele tekstuur van die tema word toegelig deur die sosiale en kulturele tekstuur, afhangende van die sosiale temas soos die manipulerende en thaumaturgiese response en van die kulturele kategorieë soos dominante- en kontrakulture. Gebaseer op hierdie sosiale en kulturele milieu druk die outeurs van die Wysheidsliteratuur die skeppingsteologie uit as die soeke na orde en behoud van misterie en kritiseer verskeie ideologieë soos die ideologie van konings, die vergeldingsleer, asook Hellenisme en Judaïsme in elke periode.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

AB	The Anchor Bible
ABD	The Anchor Bible Dictionary
ANE	Ancient Near East
ANET	Ancient Near Eastern Texts (Pritchard, J B (ed) 1974)
BCE	Before the Common Era
BTB	Biblical Theology Bulletin
BWL	Babylonian Wisdom Literature (Lambert, W G 1975)
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
CBQ	Catholic Biblical Quarterly
JBL	Journal of Biblical Literature
JBQ	Jewish Bible Quarterly
JJS	Journal of Jewish Studies
JNSL	Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages
JSNT	Journal for the Study of the New Testament
JSOT	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament
NASB	New American Standard Bible
NIB	The New Interpreter's Bible
NKJV	New King James Version
LXX	Septuagint
NICOT	The New International Commentary on the Old Testament
NIDOT	New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis
NIB	The New Interpreter's Bible
NIDB	The New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible

NIV	New International Version
NIDOT	New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis
NKJV	New King James Version
OT	The Old Testament
OTL	Old Testament Library
SBL	Society of Biblical Literature
SBLMS	Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series
TDOT	Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament
TDNT	Theological Dictionary of the New Testament
TLOT	Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament
VT	Vetus Testamentum
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WMANT	Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum alten und neuen Testament
WWII	Second World War
ZTK	Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche

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# CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Background

Although Wisdom Literature<sup>1</sup> forms an essential part of the Old Testament, the quest for a theological centre in the Old Testament made the Wisdom Literature almost marginalised (Clements 1998:270). Unlike other biblical texts, Wisdom Literature did not contain the promises to the patriarchs, the exodus and Moses, the covenant and Sinai, and so on. The Wisdom Literature did not represent the action of God in Israel's history. Rather it dealt with daily human experience and observation in the world created by God (Dell 2002:107). On account of these differences from other biblical texts, such Wisdom Literature was regarded as wholly secular (Preuss 1995:22).<sup>2</sup>

Fortunately, the trend to disregard the Wisdom Literature has reversed itself. New interest in wisdom has been increased and deepened by a scholarly appreciation of the importance of wisdom thinking and Literature among Israel's neighbours (Day 1998:1). Wisdom Literature has renewed our appreciation for the understanding of reality expressed in traditions. Reflecting on this trend, recent scholarship has attempted to

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<sup>1</sup> The Old Testament contains 'Wisdom Literature' which consists of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Job. Among the Apocrypha two more books: Sirach and Wisdom of Solomon are also considered as Wisdom Literature. However, there is an opinion that Job is questioned as Wisdom Literature. According to Dell (2009:872), the genres of Job- narrative tale, dialogue, lament, and theophany- are very different from anything found in Proverbs. Job can be seen to reflect other genres from the Old Testament tradition, notably psalmic laments and legal genres. Nevertheless, Job belongs to Wisdom Literature, since the genre of dialogue can be regarded as Wisdom Dialogue, and Job 28 as Wisdom poem (Newsom 2003:24). In Wisdom dialogue and Wisdom poem the topic of wisdom was a main issue with the concept of the doctrine of retribution. Furthermore the doctrine of retribution prevails in Proverbs. Thus the researcher follows a traditional opinion that the book of Job belongs to Wisdom Literature, with the possibility of other genres.

<sup>2</sup> Preuss (1995:25) holds that the centre of the Old Testament is God's historical activity of electing Israel for communion with his world and the obedient activity required of this people, and even a modest degree of reflection leads to the critical question of how this centre relates to the wisdom literature.

investigate the influence of wisdom in other biblical books as well as Wisdom Literature in the Old Testament (Lucas 2003:87). Wisdom Literature has moved towards the centre of interest among current scholars.

In a certain sense, the marginalisation of the Wisdom Literature was found in conservative Korean churches to which the researcher belongs.<sup>3</sup> When Korean churches read Wisdom Literature in the Bible, they sought for the unity and the theological centre of the Bible (Lee 2002:24). However, Wisdom Literature showed the diversity of the theme and contained the universal themes which other religions shared. This difficulty of finding the theological centre in Wisdom Literature has led the Korean scholars to neglecting the study of Wisdom Literature itself.

On the other hand, on account of the universal themes in Wisdom Literature, the understanding of Wisdom Literature for Korean readers, including the conservative churches could not escape from the influence of neighbouring religious contexts, such as Buddhism, Confucianism and Shamanism (Chung 1997:34). Rather they could show a compromised voice with other ideas or religions. According to Buddhism, since the world exists as a result of multiple causes and conditions, the concept of 'wisdom' (*Panna*) consists of the direct apprehension of transcendent truths concerning the nature of the world and human existence (Brandon 1970:468). In order to break this law of cause and effect (*Karma*), a large number of good works are required, attaining *Nirvana*

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<sup>3</sup> The researcher belongs to a Conservative Korean church that believes in the Bible as the word of God with no error and revealing the uniqueness of the Christianity against other religions. This view regarding the Bible is inherited from the teaching of foreign missionaries. Other religions were regarded as equivalent to worshipping idols (Oosterrom 1990:79). Nevertheless, other religions still had an effect on the interpretation of the Bible.

(Markham 1996:127).

Similar to the view of world of Buddhism, Korean Confucianism has a kind of view of the world which is composed of *Li* and *Ki* (Chung 1997:6; Lee 2002:22). A perfect human being is a sage who is conscious of the will of Heaven, which is *Li*, and who makes an effort to possess the original state of *Li*. The original state can be attained only through obeying the will of Heaven and conducting oneself and relating to others properly. Korean Shamanism also has a view of the world in which human beings can have access to the supernatural world through the shaman who exercises priestly functions. They seek fortune, happiness, ousting calamities, and healing through communication between the deity and human beings (Clark 1961:173; Kim 1996:42-46).

Even though Buddhism, Confucianism and Shamanism in Korea have different views of the world, they reflect the Oriental system of the world, and a prevailing aspect of the concept of Wisdom for them is recognising the reality of cause and effect and trying to break the cycle of the evil consequence by means of human efforts.<sup>4</sup> This Oriental view of the world might have an effect on the interpretation of Korean readers of the concept of Wisdom. The view of the world as cause and consequence could be overemphasised in the interpretations of the Korean scholarship, even though the cause and consequence is undeniable in some parts of the Bible (Proverbs 10:4; 25:23; 26:27). God's blessing

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<sup>4</sup> It does not mean that the Oriental religions show the only voice of cause and effect. According to Jones and Culliney (1998:398), Confucius looked at the interactions and the resulting manifestations of *Li* and affirmed that the process was essential to the establishment of social order. There is also a mysterious element in Confucius's teachings which extends far beyond the original meaning of *Li* as "holy rite" (Fingarette 1972:4). Nevertheless, generally the Oriental religions can be characterised by cause and effect.



can be understood only as a response to good works such as prayers and offerings for building churches (Chung 1997:34).

Taking these phenomena into account, one can recognise that the neglect of the study of Wisdom Literature has brought about this undesirable result in the understanding of wisdom in the Bible. The lack of wisdom theology might have yielded the ideology as the doctrine of cause and effect without exception. Various voices in biblical Wisdom Literature require to be heard by the Korean churches and society, and the voices can provide Korean churches and society with a new idea of the concepts such as wisdom, coexistence, and diversity. Thus this dissertation has as its purpose the understanding of the various concepts related to wisdom in Old Testament Wisdom Literature that perhaps even Korean churches have hitherto neglected.

## **1.2 Problem**

With the interest in biblical Wisdom Literature, various topics such as the origin and concept of wisdom and the theology of Wisdom Literature have been discussed by current scholarship. The topic of the origin<sup>5</sup> of wisdom is related to the topic of the concept of wisdom. Dealing with the current discussion about various origins of wisdom, Crenshaw (1998:77) presented three kinds of wisdom concepts in the Wisdom Literature. Firstly, family wisdom, or folk proverbs, aimed at accomplishing a single

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<sup>5</sup> According to one opinion regarding the origin of Wisdom, biblical wisdom emanates from the effort to discover order in human life and natural world. Gerstenberger (1965) insisted that biblical wisdom emanated from the effort to discover rules that had governed tribal life in pre-Monarchical Israel. However, Hermisson (1968) contradicted him, saying that biblical wisdom emerged from the royal court with its wisdom school. Against this, Whybray (1999:321) insisted that the collections of proverbial wisdom may have been intended for the edification of a class of educated farmers, since the royal and court sayings are far less numerous than those concerned with general topics.

goal: the mastering of life. As a means of achieving this valuable ambition, observant individuals combined their talents in order to understand nature and human relationships. They developed insights from nature and practical wisdom. Secondly, court wisdom focused on human relationships in an ordered society or state. Court wisdom was restricted to a select group of potential rulers and advisers to people in power. The chief means of communicating court wisdom was didactic. Lastly, theological wisdom was suggested. The most distinctive features in the theological wisdom are the concepts of the fear of the Lord and the personification of wisdom. The fear of the Lord becomes the beginning and fundamental principle of all knowledge, since without a vital relationship with God, no one could attain sufficient Wisdom.

How can the phenomenon of various concepts of wisdom in the Old Testament be explained? It has been explained as a linear development from proverbial sayings to theological wisdom. According to McKane (1970), religious theological wisdom represents a reinterpretation of secular saying at a later stage in the history of the Old Testament wisdom tradition. In the late pre-Exilic period the wise men who stood in an international tradition of wisdom were beginning to come to terms with Yahwism (McKane 1970:19). That wisdom had begun to make its bow to distinctively Israelite biblical traditions and the wise men were on the way of becoming biblical scholars, devoted to 'sacred learning.'

Recently Fox (2009:480) also argued for the development of religiosity in the book of

Proverbs in three stages: the Egyptian, the Yahwistic and the theological stage.<sup>6</sup> The religiosity of the Egyptian stage is virtually identical to that encountered in Egyptian instructions, with the main emphasis on a concept of order and a remote deity only indirectly involved in the world of human beings. The Yahwistic stage is characterized by the introduction of Yahweh as the source of wisdom, by the identification of wisdom with the fear of Yahweh, by Yahweh's liberation from the world order and the description of him as being in control of humankind's fate, and finally, by the call for trust in Yahweh. The theological stage represents an elaboration on the divine origin of wisdom and is found in the passages that personify wisdom.

The origin and development of the wisdom concept in Old Testament Wisdom Literature continues to be debated. It is undeniable that some proverbial wisdom found its beginnings in family and clan life. Furthermore, it is convincing that the existing biblical Wisdom Literature contains elements from a long historical interaction between popular sayings, court wisdom and theological wisdom (Wilson 1997:1277).<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, a question arises regarding the development of wisdom in a linear way from popular sayings or practical wisdom to theological wisdom. Is it impossible to possess the theological meaning of wisdom in family or clan life? Is the theology of wisdom only a phenomenon of a late period?

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<sup>6</sup> In the Anchor Yale Bible, *Proverbs 10-31* (2009), Fox analysed the book of Proverbs according to editorial divisions.

<sup>7</sup> Although biblical wisdom has diverse origins such as family and court, it does not mean that the origin of Wisdom Literature is not God. The text of Wisdom Literature is still the Word of God and it belongs to the canon of the Old Testament, since the authors inspired by God could make use of those oral or literal sources for the purpose of revealing the word of God regarding everyday life of the believer.

The assumption that the concept of wisdom has been developed in a linear way affects the understanding of Wisdom Literature. Many scholars (Whybray 1999:323) currently agree that Proverbs 10-22 and 25-29 belong to the Monarchic period in Israelite history period. In that part, one can find the expression of a view of the world as a divinely ordered system within which all things work for the best, but which it is folly to transgress. Yet the theological wisdom that was contained in the book of Proverbs was attributed to the later addition. On the whole Proverbs takes the optimistic position regarding the search for order. Righteous conduct is frequently equated with wisdom and the wisdom is generally attainable by those who pursue it, reaps its own reward, while the wicked and foolish will perish miserably. Scholars focused on the aspect of the search for order in the study of Proverbs, despite various interpretations.

Yet the books of Job and Ecclesiastes that belonged to a much later period than Proverbs exhibited different voices about the order of life. Job experienced that suffering often came to the righteous man who had done all in his power to follow the path of wisdom. He felt that there was no order in this world. Qohelet also challenges traditional wisdom. Qohelet admits that he never attained the wisdom he sought (7:23-24), and he clearly rejects many of the claims of the sages. Reflecting on this trend, many current scholars believed that the books of Job and Ecclesiastes resist the search for order as the concept of wisdom and suggested transcendent wisdom such as the fear of the Lord and the personification of wisdom. According to Lohfink (1980), observations of social injustice and fragmentation reinforce the anthropology and the fear of the Lord. Qoheleth also offers a critical evaluation of piety. The basic dogma of wisdom as the doctrine of retribution is undermined (Loader 1979:122). The fear of God can only

guide humankind.

In a much later period, responding to the voices of Job and Ecclesiastes, Sirach shows another level of wisdom, which is the identification of wisdom with the Torah. Wisdom is not separated from the Torah and the 'sacred' history. The keeping of the Torah is at the centre of the wisdom exercise (Corley 2009:290). The wisdom is also hidden in the 'sacred' history as the means of the revelation of that law. Thus current scholars came to assume that Sirach is suggesting Judaism which resists Hellenism regarding the concept of wisdom. The wise can mean the one who is in a close religious relationship with God. Only the wise with the fear of the Lord can control his/her life. Both the search for order and the maintenance of mystery seems to be prevailing. The keeping of the Torah becomes following the order of God.

However, resisting this linear development of the concept of wisdom, some scholars (Von Rad 1972; Murphy 1996:11) argued that the Wisdom Literature from the beginning to the late period contained both elements that refer to the search for order and the maintenance of mystery. In *Wisdom in Israel* (1972), Von Rad held that the sages of Proverbs recognised the limitations of human understanding as well as the search for order. Proverbs was sensitive to the ambiguities and mysteries in human affairs. It recognised the uncertainties that experience and observation yield, and the recognition gave birth to the fear of the Lord as an element of wisdom. Following Von Rad, current scholars came to recognise that Proverbs deals with both the search for order and the maintenance of mystery such as the fear of the Lord, even though the debate about the relationship between them is still continuing.

Based on the insistence of Von Rad (1972:142), Murphy (1996:55) goes one step further. Von Rad had claimed that Qohelet had lost the trust that characterised traditional wisdom. However, Murphy suggested that “Qohelet rejected the easy acceptance of tradition, questioning it severely, but ultimately he accepted God on God’s terms” (Murphy 1996:115). Traditional wisdom as the search for order continues even in the book of Ecclesiastes, since Qohelet does not reject wisdom *per se* any more than the book of Job does. Therefore, for Murphy, it is misleading to claim that wisdom is simply bankrupt. The search for order does not stop, even though Qohelet faces the reality where inscrutable mystery prevails.

Reflecting on this understanding of order and mystery in the Wisdom Literature, recent scholars have expressed diverse opinions. In his book ‘*Wisdom Literature*’, Perdue (2007:343) made a remarkable suggestion relating to the study of Wisdom Literature. Israel’s religion and piety were diverse enough to include expressions that were based on a theological understanding that was not limited to ‘salvation’ history and covenant. Revelation is not limited to special forms, but also includes a more general one that is open to all.<sup>8</sup> Order in world and life can be discerned adequately in the ancient religious contexts. However, it is also recognised that there are contingencies in life that are not under human control or that cannot be anticipated. There are mysteries regarding both the reality experienced and the world.

Despite the recognition of coexistence or tension in Wisdom Literature on the whole,

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<sup>8</sup> In this case, one need not always explain this as the term of ‘natural theology.’ One who disagrees with ‘natural theology’ can understand it as the term of ‘common grace’ that the researcher prefers.

many current scholars still do not agree that both the search for order and the maintenance of mystery coexist in each book of Wisdom Literature. For even Perdue (2007:344), Job questions the justice of God that is never answered even in the Yahweh speeches. Qohelet denies the justice of God and prefers to speak of mysterious power residing outside the human ability to know or to influence. Only the mystery of wisdom is revealed in Job and Qoheleth, and the order of world and life disappears. Furthermore, it was assumed that Sirach developed the science of the opposite to Job and Qoheleth (Perdue 2007:344). The concept of wisdom was identified with the keeping of the Torah. The Wisdom of Solomon takes this a step further by arguing that each act of divine salvation reconstitutes the creation of the world in rewarding the righteous and punishing the wicked. Thus *the problem that this dissertation recognises is that the concept of wisdom has not been considered as both the search for order and the maintenance of mystery in each book of the Wisdom Literature in the Old Testament.*

### **1.3 Hypothesis**

Facing this problem, the researcher argues for the coexistence of the search for order and the maintenance of mystery in each book of Wisdom Literature. Proverbs maintains the coexistence, although the search for order prevails explicitly in Proverbs (Proverbs 16). Job can also continue to reveal the coexistence between the search for order and the maintenance of mystery in his wisdom poem after desperate conflict between them (Job 28). Even Qoheleth can recognise that the world is ordered by God (Ecclesiastes 3). He feels that the system of opposites exists everywhere. For Sirach it seems that both the search for order and the maintenance of mystery (Sirach 24) are integrated, since wisdom seems to be integrated into Torah and the 'sacred' history.

Therefore, in this dissertation,

1. The first hypothesis is that *the understanding of wisdom in the Old Testament Wisdom Literature can be explained as the coexistent relationship between the search for order and the maintenance of mystery*. Wisdom Literature: Proverbs, Job, Qohelet, Sirach, (and Wisdom of Solomon)<sup>9</sup> can show examples of this relationship.

2. The second hypothesis is that *the relationship between the search for order and the maintenance of mystery in Proverbs 16, Job 28,<sup>10</sup> Ecclesiastes 3, and Sirach 24 reveals different types of coexistence, responding to their respective related contexts*. The different types of coexistence can be related to the theological response to various ideologies in the social and cultural contexts of the texts.

## **1.4 Methodology**

The methodology of this dissertation rests on socio-rhetorical criticism. By means of the socio-rhetorical criticism, the researcher approaches the text of Wisdom Literature as though it was a thickly textured tapestry. Like an intricately woven tapestry, the researcher agrees that a text contains complex patterns and images. By often changing

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<sup>9</sup> In this dissertation, the research on Wisdom of Solomon will not be included, since it represents a later stage in the development of early Jewish wisdom and will be dealt with in future researches. With Wisdom of Solomon, Baruch can also be studied for the sake of comparison.

<sup>10</sup> In a MTh thesis, *Current Perspectives on Wisdom in Job 28*, the researcher (2007) dealt with the concept of wisdom in Job 28. While the Prologue (Job 1-2) shows the traditional wisdom where the search for order prevails, Job in the dialogue (Job 3-27) begins the dialogue with traditional wisdom, sometimes against it, or other times acknowledging it. Job 28 reflects the result of the dialogue, anticipating God's speeches (Job 38-41). Job 28 criticises the extreme aspects of traditional wisdom. As a result the researcher argues for a dialogical coexistence in Job 28, which implies that both order and mystery coexist ambivalently.



the interpreter's angle, this methodology enables the interpreter to bring multiple textures of the text into view. In this dissertation, the researcher will exhibit four different angles to explore multiple textures within texts: inner texture, intertexture, social and cultural texture, and ideological and theological texture.<sup>11</sup>

Inner texture is the entry level of analysing the argumentation of the text. The analysis functions as looking at and listening to the words themselves as literally as possible. Thus inner texture becomes the context for meanings that an interpreter analyses with the other readings of the text. Robbins (1996:7) identifies several modes of inner texture in a text: repetitive; progressive; narrational; openings-middle-closing; argumentative; and sensory-aesthetic texture.

Intertexture deals with the way in which the material outside the text is interpreted. Two important questions guide this type of analysis: "From where has this passage adopted its language?" "With which texts does this text carry on a dialogue?" For Robbins (1996:40), "there are five basic ways in which language in a text uses language that exists in another text: recitation, recontextualization, reconfiguration, narrative amplification, and thematic elaboration." The researcher can include repetition in this oral-scribal intertexture, since repetition in Wisdom Literature is a dominant and

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<sup>11</sup> One of the hallmarks of this socio-rhetorical interpretative method which was introduced and defined by Robbins is that it is interdisciplinary, pulling together praxes from a number of areas (Tate 2007:342). It involves an extremely detailed analysis of texts through the grids of multiple disciplines, i.e., literary, rhetorical, socio-scientific, cultural anthropological and theological approach. As Robbins puts it (1996:166), 'socio-rhetorical' method approaches a text, as an anthropologist 'reads' a village and its culture. The term "rhetorical" is understood to refer to the text as a literary object that must be read as a strategy for persuasion, and the term "socio" to refer to the text as a cultural artifact that must be opened to the past, present, and future. Robbins argues that the task of interpretation is so large that no single person can achieve the insights necessary for interpreting any text.

significant phenomenon. The repetition will be dealt with in each chapter.

Social and cultural texture involves theories of both anthropology and sociology. Cultural anthropology and sociology have provided substantial contributions to the study of society and culture of the ancient Israelites. It focuses on the social and cultural nature behind the text. According to Robbins (1996:72) the social and cultural texture of a text can be exhibited by “specific social topics and cultural categories.” Wilson (1973:18) and Robbins (1996:72) classified seven types of specific social topics as conversionist, revolutionist, introversionist, manipulationist, thaumaturgical, reformist, and utopian responses. Robbins (1996:86) also introduced cultural categories such as dominant culture, subculture, counterculture, contraculture, and liminal culture.

Ideological texture is based on the assumption that every text inscribes an ideology consciously or unconsciously. An ideology is the body of ideas upon which a culture’s values, thoughts, and judgment are based. The ideology may be political, economic, social, or religious. A special characteristic of ideological analysis is its focus on the relation of individual people to groups. Rather than one person’s particular way of thinking, a person’s ideology concerns his or her conscious or unconscious enactment of presuppositions, dispositions and values held in common with other people (Robbins 1996:95). Thus ideological texture deals with the social, cultural and individual location and perspective of writers and readers.

Theological texture focuses on the sacred nature of the text. People who read the Old Testament as a religious canon are interested in finding insights into the nature of the

relation between human life and the divine. In other words, these readers are interested in seeking the ways the text speaks about God or talks about realms of religious life. Throughout the long history, the readers have developed both systematic and creative ways to explore texts regarding their divine nature. According to Robbins (1996:130), the sacred texture includes aspects concerning deity, holy persons, spiritual beings, divine history, human redemption, human commitment, religious community and ethics. This theological texture emerges from a detailed examination of the first four textures.

Even though the researcher uses the socio-rhetorical criticism of Robbins, it does not mean that the researcher agrees with all his socio-rhetorical assumptions. He would rather agree that a text should be seen and heard through many perspectives. The researcher will analyse the inner texture of Wisdom Literature from the literary and rhetorical perspective as a basis of other perspectives. Then he will deal with intertexture for clarifying the meaning of the inner texture. Social and Cultural texture will provide the social and cultural background and deal with social topics and cultural categories, since all Wisdom Literature responds to a specific society and culture. Lastly the researcher will describe the ideological and theological texture of Wisdom Literature, which will explain why the text was written.

## **1.5 Clarification of Concepts in the Title**

The title of this dissertation refers to *The search for order and the maintenance of mystery in Old Testament Wisdom Literature*. When the researcher uses the term 'order', it is the basic concept that current scholars deal with in Wisdom Literature. The concept

of order has become a familiar concept in scholarly works and one of the main coherent themes in Wisdom Literature (Böstrom 1990:91). The opposite of the concept of order lies in the concept of mystery. Von Rad (1972) utilised this term with the mystery in *Wisdom in Israel*. Murphy (1996:115) also agreed that the sage discovered both order and mystery in the realm of experience of Ancient Israel.

This concept of order can be related to the theory of deed and consequences suggested by Koch (1955:42). But the researcher does not accept the concept of order as Koch suggested. According to Koch, there is an intrinsic connection between the good and its reward, between the bad and its consequence. God does not intervene, since God has set up reality in this way, and God acts as a midwife watching over the operation of this law. Such a mechanical correspondence is perceived to operate in the fortunes of the wise and foolish. Koch and his followers removed God altogether from involvement in the world or reduced him to a first cause within a deistic view of reality.

Even though the researcher utilises the term of order, he does not presuppose divine inactivity. That is the main reason why whenever he mentions the term of order, he seeks it to be accompanied by the term of mystery which belongs to the sphere of God. Since the ancient Israelite times God has been located as the centre in the understanding of reality. God controls deed and consequence. God rewards and punishes. God is directly involved in success and failure that human beings experience. The prophets recognised this in the area of history. There is no zone of order that separated the Israelite from the Lord. Nevertheless, the connection of deed and consequence is not a completely wrong opinion. It can also be aspects of one reality. Furthermore one can

find many sayings in Proverbs that reflect such correspondence (Proverbs 26:27). Thus the researcher assumes that the capacity of accepting both divine control and the order is a particular Israelite way of seeing the world.

This concept of order can be understood in the context of the Ancient Near East. This order has been compared with *Maat* in the Egyptian Wisdom Literature (Murphy 1996:115). *Maat* can be translated as ‘justice’ or ‘truth’ or ‘order.’ *Maat* is the correct order in nature and society, as established by the act of creation. This Egyptian mentality could be shared by many biblical scholars as part of the ancient worldview. Their sayings and admonitions are aimed at establishing the order that governs the world. The Greek term *kosmos* has no exact verbal equivalence, since the world they lived in differs from one another. Nevertheless, the term *kosmos* can be a similar expression of the search for order in a later period.

The relationship between the search for order and the maintenance of mystery can be compared with the relationship between order and chaos in complexity theory<sup>12</sup> in which current scholars try to understand the society and world through in a post-modern way. According to complexity theory, the understanding of the world is considered as

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<sup>12</sup> Complexity theory is a recent development emerging from chaos theory (Waldrop 1992:12). Since the late twentieth century, many scholars thought complexity theory as scientific advances with application in such diverse fields as biology, anthropology, economics, and history. Even though complexity theory developed in physics and computational mathematics, the relationship between complexity theory and religion lacks in the scholars. In *Complexity and Postmodernism*, Cilliers (1998) explored the general understanding of complex systems in biology and social spheres. The comparison of complexity theory with oriental philosophies such as Confucianism and Daoism was done. For Jones and Culliney (1998:398), Confucius affirmed a natural development of order from the possibility of chaos. A mysterious element in Confucius’s teachings was considered as “holy rite” (Fingarette 1972:4). It is an invisible power that makes the emergence of order possible. This dynamic relationship between order and chaos in complexity theory can provide interdisciplinary dialogue between Old Testament wisdom thought and complexity system.

the process between order and chaos (Cilliers 1998:97). The nature of a complex system will try to balance itself at a critical point between rigid order and chaos. If a system only behaves chaotically, it is useless. On the other hand, a system that is too stable is also handicapped. A complex system is interaction among units of the system, and the interaction between the system and its environment. Thus the study of the relationship between order and mystery in Old Testament Wisdom Literature can provide a biblical voice to the complexity theory.

Order is something that should be 'searched for'. Israelites were sensitive to certain regularities in the world, understanding all the pervasive causality of God in human affairs. For Crenshaw (1998:11), at some moment in remote antiquity, God created the universe orderly, enabling human beings to assure the hidden secrets in that creation. Those who tried to learn the universe's secrets and to live in accordance with those secrets fared well. Those who refused to do so suffered grievous consequences. Human beings possessed the means of their wellbeing and virtue was recognised as its own reward. Thus the fundamental assumption in Wisdom Literature is a conviction that being wise should 'search for' the order. Once the order of such events could be discovered, wisdom could be discovered.

The search for order can be explained in the relationship with 'the maintenance' of mystery. Mystery should 'be maintained.' Even though the wise men do not speak of a mystery of the world in a metaphysical sense, they 'maintained' the mystery of God. Israel's intellectual powers have never escaped from the shadow of the great mystery of God. The maintenance of mystery in God and his created world gave birth to the fear of

the Lord which appeared as the concept of wisdom in Wisdom Literature (Job 28:28). Consequently, this dissertation attempts to read Wisdom Literature, focusing on dynamic coexistence between the search for order and the maintenance of mystery.

## **1.6 Table of Chapters**

**Chapter 1 Introduction** described background, problem, hypothesis, methodology, and the clarification of the concepts in the title. The question concerns the relationship of order and mystery in Old Testament Wisdom Literature. The hypothesis was the coexistent relationship between the search for order and the maintenance of mystery. The methodology suggested the socio-rhetorical criticism. In **Chapter 2** the researcher will survey the understanding of scholarship concerning wisdom throughout history. This survey will focus on the interpretation of Wisdom Literature during the pre-modern period, modern period, and the post-Second World War period.

In **Chapter 3** Proverbs 16 will be discussed, since Proverbs 16 is attributed to the late Monarchic period. In **Chapter 4** Job 28 will be investigated, since Job 28 is attributed to the post-Exilic period (6-5<sup>th</sup> century BCE). In **Chapter 5** Ecclesiastes 3 (Persian period, 5-4<sup>th</sup> century BCE), in **Chapter 6** Sirach 24 (Hellenistic period, 3-2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE) will be investigated.

In each chapter the study of inner textures will reveal the topic or the theme of the chapter, which will be the potential of human beings such as the search for wisdom and limitations of human beings and the fear of the Lord. In the study of intertexture, the

topic of the potential of human beings as the search for wisdom will convey the meaning of the search for order, while the topics such as limitation of human beings and the fear of the Lord will reveal the maintenance of mystery, even though both order and mystery can be found in the topics such as the search for wisdom and the fear of the Lord.

In social and cultural texture, the social setting of each chapter will be dealt with, providing the social topics such as thaumaturgical and manipulationist response and the cultural categories such as dominant culture and contraculture. The search for order and the maintenance of mystery will be explained by these social topics and cultural responses. Finally ideological and theological texture will reveal the ideology and theology of the sage or the scribe that produced each chapter, suggesting the creation theology against the ideology of each chapter. Even though the coexistence is found in each chapter, the relationship between the search for order and the maintenance of mystery will be different in each chapter.

**Chapter 7 Conclusion** will summarise the previous discussion and will compare the four texts in terms of their search for order and the maintenance of mystery. One will see whether the hypotheses of this dissertation are correct or not. A retrospect and prospect related to this dissertation will deal with the contribution of this dissertation in the current scholarship and will form the final suggestion of this dissertation.



## **CHAPTER 2 SURVEY OF WISDOM LITERATURE**

### **2.1 Introduction**

The Old Testament contains Wisdom Literature, which refers to Proverbs, Job, and Ecclesiastes. In Apocalypa, there are two Wisdom Literature books: Sirach and the Wisdom of Solomon. In order to search for general trends in the study of Wisdom Literature, this survey will be done according to the date of each book. The starting point is the book of Proverbs. Even though Proverbs as a book belongs to a much later period (the post-Exilic period), most parts of Proverbs (chapters 10-29) are attributed to the Monarchic period. After the survey of Proverbs, the survey of Job, Ecclesiastes, and Sirach will be done. The book of Job reflects the Exilic or post-Exilic period (6-5<sup>th</sup> century BCE), while the book of Ecclesiastes is attributed to the Persian or the early Hellenistic period (5-4<sup>th</sup> century BCE). Sirach is attributed to the late Hellenistic period (3-2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE) and the Wisdom of Solomon to the later than Sirach (1<sup>st</sup> century BCE).

In this chapter, the history of interpretation of Wisdom Literature will be discussed before investigating specific chapters (Proverbs 16, Job 28, Ecclesiastes 3, and Sirach 24). Even though the title of this chapter is referred to as Survey of Wisdom Literature, this survey will exhibit especially Christian interpretations of Wisdom Literature. After a general discussion of the date and the author of the book, the status of canon, and the interest of the readers on each book, this survey will focus on the problem of the contradiction regarding the concept of wisdom, which will provide a background for the specific chapters for further discussion. The epoch was divided according to pre-modern,

modern and post- the Second World War periods.

## **2.2 The Book of Proverbs**

### **2.2.1 Pre-Modern Interpretation of Proverbs**

In the history of the interpretation of Proverbs, one presupposition prevailed over many centuries. That was the authorship of the book of Proverbs by Solomon.<sup>13</sup> Origen showed a patristic view of “the books of Solomon.” Solomon wrote three books: Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Canticles, so that humankind would be instructed in three stages of the spiritual life. Proverbs dealt with the first stage and was meant for beginners, teaching them to live virtuously in the world (Murphy 1998: xxviii). Ecclesiastes was for the more proficient and was meant to withhold them from the vanity of the world. Canticles was a mystical introduction to the love of God for the advanced reader. Thus, the readers gave far more attention to Canticles than to Proverbs (Garrette 2008:570).

For pre-modern Christian readers, Woman Wisdom in Proverbs 8 was a very important topic on account of its relation to Christ (Garrette 2008:570). Citations of Proverbs 8 are found in the writings of the great scholars such as Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and Augustine. Their unanimous viewpoint was that the Logos was the Wisdom

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<sup>13</sup> It is not easy to solve the problem of the author and the date of the book of Proverbs, since the book itself mentions several authors and the headings of the book divide the book into several sections. The headings in 1:1; 10:1; 22:17; 24:23; 25:1; 30:1 and 31:1 indicate different authors or compilers. Proverbs 10:1-22:16 is titled ‘the Proverbs of Solomon.’ The heading of Proverbs mentions that they were compiled by the men of Hezekiah. Between 10- 22:16 and 25-29, Proverbs 22:16-24:22 is inserted. Proverbs 30 mentions Lemuel, the mother of a foreign king as the author or editor of Proverbs 30. Since Proverbs 1:1 ascribes the book of Proverbs to Solomon, Solomon has been considered as the originator of the process of composing and compiling many parts of the book of Proverbs traditionally.

of Proverbs 8. Arius (AD 256-336) conceded that Christ could be identified with Woman Wisdom. Furthermore he argued that only God the Father was truly and innately eternal. Athanasius (AD 293-373) responded by pointing out that Proverbs 8:22 is 'proverbial' in nature and that Woman Wisdom cannot be applied directly to Christ without first working through its figurative elements.

The early and medieval interpretations did not always seek for Christian doctrine from the text of Proverbs (Garrette 2008:569). Frequently their comments directly expounded on the practicalities of virtuous living described in the text. Ambrose (Duties of the Clergy 1.3.10-11) used Proverbs 4:23<sup>14</sup> as a basis for an exhortation to keep close watch over one's thoughts and speech. Augustine, in Sermon 36, used Proverbs 13:7<sup>15</sup> for a discourse on wealth and on the dangerous pride that it engenders. A favourite passage for early and medieval Christians was Proverbs 31:10-31, the portrait of the valiant woman. It could be allegorized as a portrait of the church maintaining pure doctrine, but it could be read more literally as a virtuous woman.

Various critical theories regarding the Solomonic authorship were proposed. Nicholas of Lyra (1326) interpreted 25:1 as meaning that Hezekiah's men made a second collection of Solomon's unpublished proverbs and added it to those previously made in Solomon's own time. T. Hobbes (1651) sketched a history of the composition of the book in several stages, of which the latest was to be dated in the post-Exilic period or in the reign of Josiah at the earliest (Whybray 1999:321). Nevertheless, on the whole, Proverbs was

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<sup>14</sup> Proverbs 4:23, Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life (NIV).

<sup>15</sup> Proverbs 13:7, One man pretends to be rich, yet has nothing; another pretends to be poor, yet has great wealth (NIV).

widely regarded as a very ancient work and possibly of Solomonic origin until the nineteenth century and gave relatively little attention to Proverbs except finding Christian doctrine in the book.

Since the authorship of Solomon was believed generally, in the pre-modern interpretation, the contradiction that can be found in Proverbs was not a contradiction itself. Various harmonious interpretations were possible, since Proverbs is also a part of the canon of Christianity and Judaism. Both the proverbial wisdom and the religious wisdom were accepted as the intention of the author of Solomon. The concept of wisdom was divine order for the life of a Christian and divine mystery that God revealed as Woman Wisdom. Yet the interpretation of accepting both voices in one text or an author was challenged by the modern interpretation of the later period.

### **2.2.2 Modern Interpretation of Proverbs**

By the end of the nineteenth century most scholars had abandoned the Solomonic origin of the book of Proverbs and attributed different parts to different periods. Vatke (1835) advocated a fifth century BCE date, on the grounds that the ethical and moral spirit of the book was incompatible with an earlier date. Most scholars believed that Proverbs 10:1-22:16 were for the most part older and Proverbs 1-9 were later. Furthermore, they assumed that even in Proverbs 10:1- 22:13 much addition and correction was done at a later period than the date of the original one.

Eichhorn (1783) employed stylistic criteria to assign the various sections of the book to different pre-Exilic periods (Whybray 1999:321). He also put forward a theory of the

development of the proverb from its origins as domestic regulations laid down by heads of families, to its formation into collections of pious admonitions for general use. Bertheau (1883) listed three reasons for rejecting a pre-Exilic date. Firstly, there was no reference to Proverbs in the prophetic books. Secondly, Proverbs implies that Yahwism has triumphed over paganism in Israel. Lastly, Proverbs appears to be similar to Sirach. When Toy (1899) wrote for the *International Critical Commentary*, the consensus was that the present book of Proverbs is a post-Exilic production (Garrette 2008:572).

Examining individual proverbs, scholars wondered whether they saw evidence for the historical development of the formal proverbs. Eissfeldt (1913) argued that in many cases the sage took an original one-line folk saying and added to it a second line in antithetical or synonymous parallelism. But Gemser (1960) pointed out that the demotic wisdom literature, appearing as the latest of the Egyptian wisdom texts, uses one-line sentences with no parallelism. The view of Eissfeldt has been refuted, and few scholars think that a history of the development of the bicolon can be traced.

The question of whether the date of the entire book of Proverbs was substantially pre-Exilic or post-Exilic has continued, even though different authorship of the book is accepted. The discovery of texts from Egypt and Mesopotamia that were remarkably similar both in form and theme provided the great antiquity of the biblical Proverbs. In 1888 E A Wallis Budge brought from Egypt the papyrus, known as *The Instruction of Amenemope*, and in 1923 published it in English and in 1924 in German (Kassis 1999:1). The striking similarities between *Amenemope* and Proverbs 22:17-24:22 ushered in a new era in the study of the book of Proverbs. The Egyptian instructions were textbooks

composed for use in schools connected with the royal court to educate young men of the upper class destined for high civil service. With the references to kings and the didactic tone, it was suggested that the origins of Proverbs should be looked for in similar circles in pre-Exilic Israel (Lange 2005:1367).

### **2.2.3 Post-WWII Interpretation of Proverbs**

After the Second World War the scholars continued the discussion of the historical development of the book. Some scholars (Snell 1993) have regarded Proverbs 25-29 as the oldest part, calling the Solomonic origin of the book into question. The reference in the heading to the men of Hezekiah was often regarded as authentic. Proverbs 10:1-22:16 closely followed this early material. The presumed Israelite adoption of Proverbs 22:17-24:34 was usually regarded as having occurred at about the same time as the earliest parts of Proverbs were written. In a later period Proverbs 1-9 and the earlier units were compiled to form a book. Yet others (Waltke 2005) still held that Proverbs 10-22 could be a work of the Solomonic period, even though the Solomonic authorship of the entire book of Proverbs was denied.

Along with the discussion regarding the date and the author of Proverbs, the scholars sought for the *Sitz im Leben* of Proverbs, debating whether the origin of Proverbs is derived primarily from Israelite folk sayings or from formal schools. On the one hand, scholars argued that wisdom was a native development from family and tribal teachings. Many scholars, following Eissfeldt, argued that the shorter sayings of Proverbs 10-29 are similar to folk proverbs occurring in every culture. Gerstenberger (1965) argued for the existence of folk wisdom behind biblical wisdom. Westermann (1995) and Golka

(1993) compared Proverbs with African Proverbs. However, on the other hand, there was the view that Proverbs primarily represented an institutional endeavor, created by formal schools that were related to the court or the temple. Von Rad (1972) and Hermisson (1965) argued that Israelite Wisdom Literature was primarily a work of formal schools that began in the united monarchy, encountered and studied as the older international wisdom.

Based on the idea of the historical development of Proverbs, several concepts of wisdom were suggested: family wisdom, or folk proverbs, court wisdom, theological wisdom such as the fear of the Lord and personification of wisdom. The theological wisdom has been interpreted as the reinterpretation of old wisdom such as family or court wisdom in a later period (McKane 1970). In the study of Proverbs, scholars focused on the element of human search for order, attributing the theological wisdom to later addition. In the oldest part of Proverbs 10-29, the scholars found that wisdom or order in the world was searched for by human observation and experience. That was an inherent order: righteous conduct reaps its own reward, while the wicked and foolish will perish miserably (Whybray 1999:323).

Along with this opinion, other opinions were suggested. Even in the earliest part of Proverbs, theological wisdom such as the fear of the Lord could coexist with the search for order (Von Rad 1972, Murphy 1998:xxv, and Brueggemann 2002:176). Proverbs recognised the ambiguities and mysteries in human affairs. Order in world and life could be discerned adequately in the ancient religious contexts. However, it was also recognised that there were contingencies in life that were not under human control or

that could not be anticipated. There were mysteries regarding both the reality experienced and the world. Various attempts to solve the contradiction of the concept of wisdom have been done. Thus the survey of Proverbs leads to the study of the relationship of coexistence between order and mystery in Wisdom Literature.

## **2.3 The Book of Job<sup>16</sup>**

### **2.3.1 Pre-Modern Interpretation of Job**

From the early Christian community up to the present, the book of Job has attracted the attention of various readers and scholars. The oldest surviving interpretation of the book of Job is probably the *Testament of Job* that comes from Alexandria in the first century BCE (Crenshaw 1992b:866). Even though it differs considerably from the biblical story, it might have affected the interpretation of the book of Job, presenting the patient Job as the main character of the book. Origen (c 185-254), who was the greatest early theologian of Alexandria, is characterised by an allegorical interpretation. He explained the mystery of evil in terms of the initial fall of pre-existent souls. According to him, Job was a just man who feared God before the law was given to Moses. He portrayed the suffering of the righteous as a divine gift meant to heal and strengthen the sufferer.

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<sup>16</sup> The date of Job is generally attributed to the Exilic or the post-Exilic period (6-5<sup>th</sup> century BCE), even though the oral tradition probably precedes the pre-Monarchic period. The book of Job is composed of Prologue (Job 1-2), dialogue (3-27), Wisdom poem (28), Job's monologue (29-31), Elihu's speech (Job 32-37), Yahweh's speeches (38-41), and Epilogue (Job 42). In the Prologue (chapters 1-2), Job was the righteous person and the one who feared God and shunned evil (Job 1:1). Despite desperate disaster, he still praised God and continued to fear God. Soon Job began to lament (Job 3) and the dialogue between Job and his three friends started. The dialogue contains three rounds of speeches in Job 4-14, 15-21, and 22-27. After three cycles of dialogue (Job 3-27), Job 28 exhibited a beautiful poem in Job 28. Job's closing lament started (Job 29-31) and Elihu spoke in Job 32-38. At last God appeared and said to Job (Job 38-41). Job was vindicated by God before his restoration in the Epilogue.



Chrysostom (c 347-407), who was born in Syrian Antioch, interpreted the book of Job as typological (Newsom & Schreiner 1999:587). Job was the model of philosophy, the sage who was glorious in adversity because he had always been detached in prosperity. In the whirlwind speech Job discovered true wisdom, namely his own human weakness and the fear of God. Ambrose also equated the wisdom of suffering with detachment. The adversaries of Job and David enabled them to transcend the waves or sea of this temporal, ever fluctuating world. Suffering freed the sufferer from earthly entanglements.

However, Augustine's interpretation (c 354-430) was somewhat different from Chrysostom's and Ambrose's regarding the view on suffering (Crenshaw 1992b:866). Whereas Chrysostom considered suffering as a divine gift, since suffering is necessary for detachment, Augustine regarded Job's suffering as evils that all the elect have to endure.<sup>17</sup> For Augustine the story of Job portrayed suffering as a test of the just person. Job knew the universality of sin and recognised that the righteous person could expect no reward for right conduct. Job realised that disorder in this world was possible and the disorder could belong to the sphere of divine mystery.

The characteristics of medieval interpretation were the allegorical tradition established by Gregory the Great (c 540-604) and the literal tradition formulated by Thomas Aquinas (c 1225-57). Thomas Aquinas expounded the text according to the literal sense (Simon 1990:355). Job's complaints were an honest and experimental observation of

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<sup>17</sup> Augustine debated with Pelagius regarding Job's sin. For Pelagius, Job was righteous without divine grace. Human nature was basically good because it was created by a good God. Yet, for Augustine, Job calls himself a sinner and is clearly aware of his sin, which he humbly confesses (Allen 2008:368).

human events. For him, when providence is restricted to history, disorder was the true character of that providential rule. This problem of God's injustice disappears if there is an afterlife where God remedies historical injustices. Job did not ascend through suffering and affliction. It was Job's faith in immortality that allowed him a deeper perception of reality. Thomas Aquinas's literal interpretation had an effect on reformalists' literary interpretation.

Luther who did not write a complete commentary on Job reflects his understanding of Job as a paradigm for spiritual and psychic tension (Allen 2008:370). Job was a pious saint, but at the same time he was a sinner and a doubter. Job played an important role as a perfect representative of the paradox that exists between piety and guilt. Unlike Luther, Calvin (1554) wrote 159 sermons on Job, mostly polemical defense of providence (Schreiner 1994:5). Calvin portrayed Job as the lone defender of immortality against his friends. As in the case of Thomas, Calvin used the doctrine of immortality to set up the same perceptual opposition between Job and his friends. Unlike Job's friends, Job knew that history often seemed confused. Providence was not always discernible, and sometimes God hides while the wicked prospers. Job's suffering drove him toward a deeper awareness of the darker side of God and confronted him with two aspects of divine hiddenness: the inscrutability of God's justice and the incomprehensibility of divine providence.

### **2.3.2 Modern Interpretation of Job**

Before the modern period, the interpretation of Job was that Job was the righteous person who recognised both the order and mystey of the Providence of God. Since

historical criticism was introduced in the book of Job, previous interpretations were challenged. The question of the historicity of the story of Job became a topic of contention in the eighteenth century (Newsom & Schreiner 1999:592). Lowth (1753) began to analyse the element of Hebrew poems in Job. Lowth praised Job for the poet's descriptive power in expressing character and manners, sentiments and descriptions of natural phenomena. Lowth's lectures on Hebrew poetry represented an important state in literary analysis and appreciation of Job, which would provide a basis for literary analyses of following scholars.

Blake understood Job in his initial state as fundamentally failing to comprehend the nature of God, the world, and human existence (Simon 1990:356). His outward piety was merely life according to the letter rather than the spirit, represented in the first engraving by Job's holding the book of the Law on his lap. Thus, for Blake, Job was not perfect and upright, as is the biblical Job, but was rather misguided and a sinner. His suffering served to give him gradual awareness of his pride and his misperception of reality. God's appearance to Job in the whirlwind served as the critical moment of recognition for Job, who now sees the true God.

The stylistic and theological incongruity between the prose narrative and poetic dialogue has led scholars to suggest separate compositions. For earlier critics (W De Wette 1807; K. Kautzsch 1900), the dialogue was the oldest part of the book and the prose frame was a later addition. More commonly, the prose tale was assumed to be an old written or oral tale that was taken over by the author of the dialogue as a narrative setting (Wellhausen 1871; Duhm 1897). Some scholars (Driver 1913) insisted that the

Elihu speeches constituted a later addition to the book by another author. In addition, the enthusiasm for recovering the book's compositional history has led scholars into increasingly subtle arguments for considering the wisdom poem in chapter 28 as secondary (Fohrer 1968, Pope 1965).

In the nineteenth to mid twentieth century, the historical critical approach still dominated the study of the book of Job, generally focusing on innocent suffering as the central theme of Job (Crenshaw 1992b:866). The rebellion of Job and the universal human condition was dealt with. The attack on the doctrine of retribution became a task of scholars. The modern interpretation contended not only with the book's meaning, but also increasingly with the investigation of the textual, historical, and comparative issues that became the hallmark of scientific biblical criticism at this time.

### **2.3.3 Post-WWII Interpretation of Job**

In the mid twentieth century a new literary approach in the study of the book of Job emerged partly arising from dissatisfaction with the tendencies of traditional historical criticism. The literary and theological interpretations of the book of Job have formed the main stream of the current scholarly discourse. Yet historical critical interpretation that began in the modern period is still practised up to the present. Most scholars considered the date of the book as the post-Exilic period (Westermann 1995, Blenkinsopp 1995, Murphy 1996, Clements 1998), while some scholars insisted that the book of Job was written in the pre-Exilic period (Kaufmann 1972, Pope 1965, Crenshaw 1998). For Blenkinsopp (1995), the role of Satan reminds of the Persian periods. For Westermann (1995:107), the speeches of Job's friends are indicative of a post-Exilic period. The later

wisdom which manifests itself in Proverbs 1-9 is reflected in the speeches of Job's companions and in the Elihu speeches.

The focus of the scholars shifted to the dialogue and its discussion of the doctrine of retribution much more than before. The dialogue in the book of Job often seemed to be in tension with the Prologue and Epilogue. This also raised the issue of theodicy, or justifying God's moral governance of the universe. Furthermore, the book of Job was read as protesting and unorthodox, calling into question such notions as the doctrine of retribution or the traditional understanding of God. Generally the search for order as the obtainment of wisdom was denied and the element of divine mystery was dealt with.

For many scholars (Loader 1979:122, Westermann 1995:110), both the book of Job and the book of Ecclesiastes have been considered as Wisdom Crisis in Wisdom Tradition. The people in the post-Exilic period presented themselves as just people, rewarded for their righteousness (Zerapa 1978:184). The author reacted and attacked their haughtiness, attacking Job as well as his friends. Throughout the whole dialogue section a juxtaposition of doctrine and lament was suggested (Westermann 1995:110). The book of Job was a dramatised lament where Job protested and his friends argued. The doctrine that emanates directly from tradition but is now rigidified is in contrast to the burning lament, which arises from an existential anguish.

In contrast to this trend, some scholars (Murphy 1996:34) argued that the book of Job does not completely deny the ancient Israelite wisdom, even though it rejects the rigid dogmatised system of traditional wisdom. The book of Job is not considered as an

attack on the traditional ideas of divine justice and retribution, which are so firmly upheld in the book of Proverbs. The book's most positive teaching is that the application to Job of the traditional theory of divine retribution is not relevant. The fact that Job is restored in the end bears witness to the author's belief in the traditional goodness and justice of the Lord. The fact that wisdom is identified with the fear of the Lord in Job 28 suggests the possibility of coexistence of transcendent wisdom and traditional wisdom in Proverbs.

## **2.4 The Book of Ecclesiastes<sup>18</sup>**

### **2.4.1 Pre-Modern Interpretation of Qoheleth**

Until the modern period all commentators ascribed the book of Ecclesiastes to Solomon. The book contained sermons by Solomon. Solomon preached them in his wanderings. The early Christian interpreters emphasised on the devaluation of the earthly life and its pleasures and believed that salvation through Christ is Qoheleth's implied solution to the failure of temporal values (Fox 1999b:350). Various attempts to explain the contradiction that was found in the book was made. The contradiction on Qoheleth gave rise to theories that added additional voices besides Qoheleth's in the book. Jerome saw the book as a dialogue between Qoheleth and one or more people of lesser wisdom, such as a pupil or a fool. The unorthodox opinions were considered as statements of

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<sup>18</sup> Ecclesiastes is the Greco-Latin form of the Hebrew Qoheleth. The date of Ecclesiastes is attributed to the Persian or the Hellenistic period (5-4<sup>th</sup> century BCE). There has been little unanimity among scholars concerning the structure of the book. But there is a general recognition of a Prologue (1:1-11) and an Epilogue (12:9-14) by another editor, but the main body has been fragmented into several sayings or unified by broad conceptual headings. Chapters 1:12-6:9 falls into eight sections, each section ending with vanity of vanities and a chasing after wind. In chapters 6:10-12:14 Qoheleth gives some conclusions from his investigations.

erroneous ideas that Qoheleth quotes in order to refute them.

However, A Ibn Ezra (12<sup>th</sup> century) expressed an opinion that the author was an assembly of Solomon's disciples who include their own, often contradictory opinions (Fox 1999b:346). A Ibn Ezra said that 9:4b and 9:10<sup>19</sup> are claims of others that Qoheleth rejects (Fox 1999b:347). On the other hand, it was asserted that this book ought to be obliterated, because it asserts that all the creatures of God are vain, and regard the whole as nothing, and prefer eating and drinking and transient pleasures before all things.

Maimonides (Middle 12<sup>th</sup> century) ascribed the Epilogue to those who edited the book of Ecclesiastes, indicating that he considered Qoheleth to be a later collection of Solomon's teachings. Luther judged the book to be non-Solomonic on the grounds of literary unevenness. H Grotius (1644) determined that Qoheleth is not Solomonic, but rather a post-Exilic collection of various opinions, on the basis of the book's haphazard composition and late language.

Before the modern period, the Solomonic authorship was maintained with some exception. The problem of contradiction was explained in different ways. In fact there was no contradiction in the book of Ecclesiastes. Somomon and the book remained in the sphere of traditional religion, since the fear of the Lord and the authodoxy were a real voice of Solomon, while other voices were the voices of examples or the later

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<sup>19</sup> Ecclesiastes 9:10, Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might, for in the grave, where you are going, there is neither working nor planning nor knowledge nor wisdom.

additions. These interpretations were challenged in the modern period.

### **2.4.2 Modern Interpretation of Qoheleth**

Since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century most scholars denied the authorship of Solomon and placed Qoheleth in the Hellenistic period. The evidence of the argument was a linguistic one. The book showed late usages and numerous Aramaisms and conceptual usages because of the development of wisdom thought. Some scholars based this dating on presumed Greek influence in language and thought as well as on various putative historical references. Whitley (1979:122-46) placed Qoheleth after Ben Sira in the middle of the second century. Nevertheless, the discovery of the texts in the Ancient Near East provided the possibility that the date of the book was earlier than expected.

In a modern discussion of the book the problem of contradiction was a main issue. It was assumed that a large part of the book consists of later additions made by a number of different persons. Siegfried (1898) attributed more than half the book to a series of no less than nine different hands, each having a distinct theological viewpoint. Podechard (1912) somewhat more modestly attributed large parts to two or more additional contributors. It was believed that what appeared to be contradictions of thought or viewpoint in a given piece of literature clearly proved that two or more different authors must have been at work in its production.

Modern interpreters regarded Qoheleth as representing a general crisis in the wisdom school and in Judaism as a whole. Qoheleth was pessimistic and sceptical. He affirmed the futility of human labour, the triviality of wealth, the transience of human life, and



the impossibility of true wisdom. It meant that Qoheleth attacked the doctrine of retribution as traditional wisdom. All this constituted a polemic against the wisdom school, which had become over-confident, rigid, and dogmatic. Qoheleth rather urged the fear of God and moderate enjoyment of life's pleasures. It implied that the book of Ecclesiastes denied the search for order and conveyed the voice of the mystery of reality.

### **2.4.3 Post-WWII Interpretation of Qoheleth**

Current scholars such as Blenkinsopp (1995:61) and Kaiser (1998:84) acknowledged Greek-Hellenistic writing and thought in the book of Ecclesiastes, and attributed the date to the middle of the third century BCE. The rise of the specific genre of autobiography was associated with the breakup of the traditional community. Yet Seow (1997) and Brown (2000) proposed a specific time frame during the early fourth or late fifth century based on the use of the verbal root in the fifth century Aramaic economic documents. Persian loan words, Aramaisms, and late developments in Hebrew form and syntax all indicated a fifth or fourth century BCE dating of the book. Based on the presumed date of the book, the social and cultural context of the book was discussed.

The problem of contradiction that was already suggested in the modern period has continued until now. Various attempts have been made to account for these seemingly contradictory statements (Whybray 1989:76). It has been supposed that the orthodox statements have been added by a later editor, or that they are expressions of traditional views quoted by Qoheleth himself. According to this assumption, they were not contradictory at all. Most recent commentators (Crenshaw 1998) hypothesise that Qoheleth directs a radical negative attack on the traditional beliefs of the sages. He

refutes wisdom's claim to secure one's existence and denies that there is any moral order. Chance determines everything, including the time of death. Divine justice is not in evidence. Not only is the doctrine of retribution refuted in the sphere of the righteous sufferer, but also all human endeavours at success annihilated (Loader 1979:122).

However, other views about the contradictions arose on the current scholarship. Some possibilities were suggested that the contradictions are due to the dialectical character of Qoheleth's thought (Whybray 1989:26). For Qoheleth, reality was complex, and it was impossible to do justice to it either by emphasising only one side of it, or by choosing a middle way between the extremes. After wrestling with contradictions, Qoheleth found it impossible to reconcile his own observations of life with the traditional belief that God who rules men's lives is righteous, and that he made no attempt to reconcile the two but placed them side by side. He can hardly have been expected to solve the problem intellectually. When man's inability to discern God's purposes is recognised, a deeper sense of joy in God's presence makes pain, suffering and injustice irrelevant.

Furthermore, it was suggested that Qoheleth rejected the idea that the book forsakes the wisdom tradition per se (Murphy 1996:55). Even though he changed the concept of traditional wisdom, he never recommended folly. Folly was dangerous and could spoil wisdom (7:5-7; 9:18-15). The ancient Israelite was not as shocked as modern readers who consider Qoheleth to be in revolt against everything in the tradition. Qoheleth did not witness the breakdown of consequent view of retribution. He was not interested in the breakdown of a mechanical order that guarantees life's security. His question is with the God he knows, who has disappeared into mystery (Murphy 1996:57). This idea can

share the various global perspectives of Ecclesiastes. In an Asian (Song 1999:92) and a Latin American perspective (Tamez 1999:77), Ecclesiastes 3 was regarded as the time for hope. When the limits of the human condition are recognised, then hope can be recognised. The debate about traditional wisdom in Qoheleth is still going on, implying the coexistence of order and mystery.

## **2.5 The Book of Sirach<sup>20</sup>**

### **2.5.1 Pre-Modern Interpretation of Sirach**

The history of interpretation of Sirach began with the translation of the grandson into Greek. The grandson mentioned that Sirach wrote his teaching so that those who love learning should make even greater progress in living according to the law. The book was quoted in the Didache (c. 130-160). Moreover, it was quoted as Scripture by Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and Cyprian. Sirach was highly regarded in the early church. Nevertheless, Jerome denied the status of canonical Scripture by designating it as one of the ecclesiastical books which were called deuterocanonical in a later period (Di Lella 1992:934).<sup>21</sup> The problem whether the book can be located in the sphere of the canon of Judaism and Christianity became a big issue in the history of interpretation

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<sup>20</sup> The date of Sirach is attributed to the Hellenistic period (3-2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE). The structure of Sirach consists of three well-integrated parts: Chapters 1-24, 25-43, and 44-51. Each part concludes with a poem: chapter 24 (a hymn of wisdom's self praise), 42:15-43:33 (a hymn on creation), and 51:13-30 (a poem about Sirach's search for wisdom). It contains proverbial wisdom, but usually with an accompanying interpretation in the manner of the author of Ecclesiastes. Sirach uses a style of exhortation that resembles prophecy and emphasises refrains. He also uses poetry, hymn forms and prayers. In the Hellenistic world the increase in literary activity and the influence of Greek led to the substantial growth in scribal ranks (Perdue 2007:233). Some scribes became important officials while others were teachers. Sirach was likely a teacher in a school related to the temple and carried out his activity as a scribe under the supervision of the Zadokite hierarchy.

<sup>21</sup> The Alexandrian (or Septuagint) canon included all the deuterocanonical books as canon. However, Palestinian (or Hebrew) canon excluded them.

on Sirach.

In the 4<sup>th</sup> century, disagreeing with Jerome's distinction, Augustine accepted Sirach as a canonical Scripture. The determination of the Christian Old Testament canon took place in the West at the Councils of Hippo (393) and Carthage (397 and 418), where Sirach and the other deuterocanonical books were included in the canon of the church. Yet Luther revived Jerome's opinion that it did not have an inspired canonical status. Thus Luther removed Sirach in the Hebrew Scripture and placed it in a distinct section between the Old Testament and New Testament (1534). He gave the label "Apocrypha" to Sirach as well as the Wisdom of Solomon. Consequently, in contrast with Roman Catholicism and the Eastern Orthodox Church, Protestantism has either followed the practice of placing it in a separate section or excluding it altogether.

Judaism also revealed a degree of ambivalence toward Sirach (Shaw 1999:314). It is doubtful whether normative Judaism considered Sirach to be a part of its canon. Although highly respected, the book was not considered to be inspired. Numerous quotations in rabbinic literature and the Talmud demonstrated a high regard for its teachings. Additionally, the manuscripts found at Qumran and Masada indicated that certain Jewish groups had given a special status to the book. Surprisingly, however, Rabbi Akiba (d. 135 CE) banned its reading and declared that those who read such outside books would have no share in the world to come. Attempts to reconcile Akiba's ban of Sirach with the high respect for the book within Judaism were made within the Talmud. Leiman (1976) has argued that the ban on Sirach was a measure directed against sects within Judaism that had granted its virtual canonical status.

## 2.5.2 Modern Interpretation of Sirach

The ban on reading Sirach, the fixing of the canon, and the emergence of the Talmud all contributed to the loss of the Hebrew text of the book, although it survived in both Greek and Syriac translations. The textual situation changed between 1896 and 1900. In 1896 Schechter identified the Hebrew text of Sirach 39:15b- 40:8 on a sheet of ancient paper that had been recovered from the Genizah of the Qaraite Synagogues in Cairo. After that, the discovery of Hebrew texts continued (Gilbert 2008:1). Also this authenticity was challenged by some scholars (Margoliouth 1899), by arguing that the Geniza fragments were translations from the Greek or Syriac. However, the decisive defence of their essential authenticity came only with additional manuscript discoveries (Shaw 1999:315).<sup>22</sup>

Much scholarly work on the book in the past century can be viewed as an attempt to understand the person and perspective of Sirach within his historical context (Shaw 1999:315). A number of earlier scholars located the book within the party of the Sadducees because of the author's praise of the priesthood and the conspicuous lack of references to Ezra (Moulton 1896; Oesterley 1912). Later investigations showed that it was historically impossible for Sirach to have been a Sadducee (Hengel 1974). Furthermore, Sirach's attitude toward Hellenism was dealt with. In 1906, Smend characterised the book as a declaration of war against Hellenism, and a number of subsequent studies found that anti-Hellenistic trends pervade the writings of Sirach.

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<sup>22</sup> In 1956 two short fragments of a Hebrew manuscript of Sirach dating to the early first century BCE were found at Qumran (2Q 18). This discovery played a crucial role in establishing the authenticity.

### **2.5.3 Post-WWII Interpretation of Sirach**

Since World War II, Sirach's place within the wisdom tradition of Israel has been an important subject of study (Kieweler 1992). His equation of wisdom and the Torah has been considered as a significant development within the wisdom tradition in Judaism. Some scholars asserted that in Sirach the Torah has replaced the old wisdom in which norms of conduct were to be derived from observation and experience (Hengel 1974). Haspecker (1967:85) argued that the fear of the Lord is the total theme. However, Von Rad (1972) argued that a careful examination of the relevant texts shows that Sirach sought to legitimate and interpret Torah from the wisdom tradition. Wisdom became the fundamental theme (Von Rad 1972:242).

Responding to these opinions, Di Lella (1992:940) contended that Sirach's primary theme is wisdom as the fear of the Lord. Wisdom is identified with the Law. It can be acquired only by one who fears God and keeps the commandments. The scholars noticed a spirit of integration in Sirach (Perdue 2007:264). Sirach constructs a synthesis that unites creation and redemption into a compelling theological vision. He returns to the formulations of the traditional sages and biblical texts to shape his own imaginative rendering of God, the cosmos, humanity, and wisdom. And for the first time among the wisdom teachers Israel's election and 'salvation' history was acknowledged. God permeates the order of creation making possible the providential continuation of the world, and enables sapiential instruction and priestly Torah to direct the behaviour of the faithful.

While the modern interpretation of Sirach characterised the book as an anti-Hellenistic

trend, recent investigations have discerned a more complex and ambivalent attitude toward Hellenism. Not only does he reveal a cautious attitude toward Hellenism, but he also borrows ideas and quotations from Greek literature and thought (Middendorp 1973). In any case, a number of studies have shown that many of Sirach's concerns are a response to Hellenism in general and to Stoic and Epicurean philosophers. The investigation of Sirach's relationship to the wisdom tradition and to Hellenism will continue to be fertile ground for research in years to come.

## **2.6 Conclusion of Survey**

Through the survey of Wisdom Literature, one can discern several trends in its history of interpretation. Pre-modern interpretation focused on the parts where Wisdom Literature could contribute to the Christian doctrine. Generally the Solomonic authorship of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes was accepted. The problem of contradiction in Wisdom Literature was solved in various ways. In the voice of an original author, the readers in the pre-modern period could search for the hidden order in the providence of God and recognised the voice of divine mystery.

Yet the modern interpretation challenged the interpretation of the pre-modern readers. Solomonic authorship was not accepted. Modern scholars attributed the date of Wisdom Literature to the post-Exilic period. The contradiction in Wisdom Literature was focused on. In order to solve the problem of contradiction, the historical development of the concept of wisdom was investigated in Proverbs. The problem of contradictions such as the pitious Job and rebellious Job was suggested. The theme of innocent suffering was focused on as the central theme of Job (Crenshaw1992a:866). The contradiction on

Qohelet gave rise to theories that assume additional voices besides Qohelet's in the book since the pre-modern period. A large part of the book consisted of later additions made by a number of different hands on account of the contradictions of thought. After removing the controversial additions, they (Crenshaw 1998) regarded Qohelet as representing a general crisis in the wisdom school and in Judaism as a whole.

Since World War II, Sirach and Wisdom of Solomon's place within the wisdom tradition of Israel has been an important subject of study (Kieweler 1992). The tension or the contradiction between Wisdom and the Torah has been discussed. Some scholars (Hengel 1974) asserted that in Sirach the Torah has replaced the old wisdom. Other scholars argued that Sirach sought to legitimate and interpret Torah from the wisdom tradition. Wisdom became the fundamental theme (Von Rad 1972:242). However, for some scholars (Perdue 2007), Sirach constructs a synthesis that unites creation and redemption into a compelling theological vision. The explicit equation of wisdom and the Torah has been considered as a significant development within the wisdom tradition in Judaism.

The history of interpretation has shown diverse interpretations of the contradiction regarding the concept of wisdom. It was suggested that contradiction was due to different hands. The relationship between proverbial wisdom and theological wisdom was caused by the development of the concept of wisdom through the history. In the current trend, Proverbs as a whole in the earliest stage showed the search for order as traditional wisdom in human society and the universe. In the later stage the books of Job and Ecclesiastes were read as protesting and unorthodox, calling into question the



traditional wisdom. Only the voice of mystery is heard, denying the voice of the search for order. Sirach again protested the voices of Job and Ecclesiastes, returning to the Jewish wisdom, with the prevailing voice of the mystery of God.

Against this linear development, some scholars such as Von Rad (1972), Murphy (1996), and Perdue (2007) have shown the possibility that in Wisdom Literature both the search for order and mystery coexist. Murphy (1996:34) denied that Qoheleth and Job are seen as an attack on the traditional ideas of divine justice and retribution, which are so firmly upheld in the book of Proverbs. It was suggested that even in Qoheleth and Job the search for order as wisdom was maintained. Sirach could voice the coexistence of the search for order and the maintenance of mystery in a later period. Nevertheless, the investigation of the relationship between order and mystery in each Wisdom Literature book has not been discussed in the scholarship. The social and cultural context in the discussion was not considered. Thus the researcher has chosen four chapters (Proverbs 16, Job 28, Ecclesiastes 3, and Sirach 24) which belong to different periods for the investigation.

## **CHAPTER 3 PROVERBS 16**

### **3.1 Introduction**

Proverbs 16 was chosen as the first chapter for the investigation, since Proverbs 16 belongs to a category of short sayings (10-22:16; 25-29) of the book of Proverbs and the date is attributed to the Monarchic period. In the category of short sayings, Proverbs 10:1-22:16 was titled 'the Proverbs of Solomon' and has been considered as the oldest section of the book which wisdom tradition takes as its role model, while Proverbs 25-29 was compiled by the men of Hezekiah. (Dell 2002:107). Proverbs 10:1-22:16 can be divided into two parts: 10-15 and 16-22, since there is a formal distinction between Proverbs 10-15 consisting mainly of antithetical proverbs and Proverbs 16:1-22:16 consisting primarily of synonymous and synthetic sayings (Plöger 1984:118). Interestingly, Proverbs 16 is the beginning of the second subsection (16-22:16) and occupies the central position in Proverbs 10:1-22:16 and in the entire book of Proverbs.

In particular the themes of Yahweh and the King have been focused on in Proverbs 16. The two topics of Yahweh and the King are topics that not only occur frequently in Proverbs, but are also of central importance in the Old Testament. On account of these, Whybray (1994a:87) considers Proverbs 16 as the centre to 10:1-22:16 both literally and theologically, with Proverbs 15. Thus the careful reading of Proverbs 16 from multiple perspectives will enable the reader to come closer to the world of ancient Israel. First of all, the inner texture that is seen from the literary and rhetorical perspectives will be explored in Proverbs 16 as a basis for further discussion. Proverbs 16 contains the repetitive, progressive, openings-middle-closing and sensory-aesthetic texture.

## 3.2 Inner Texture<sup>23</sup> of Proverbs 16

### 3.2.1 Repetitive Texture

Repetitive texture in Proverbs 16 focuses on the occurrence of words and phrases more than once in a unit (Robbins 1996:8). Repetitive pattern exhibits major characters and major topics in Table 1. This table shows eleven references to ‘Yahweh (יהוה).’ The reference to Yahweh is repeated in all verses except verse 8 in the first section (verse 1-9) and continues in verse 11, 20 and in the last verse 33. Nine references to ‘man (אדם and איש)’ occur with five additional references to the King (מלך). The reference to the human body occurs twenty times: lip (6 times שפת), heart (5 times לב), eye (twice עין), mouth (twice פה), soul (twice נפש), spirit (twice רוה), and hand (once יד). Finally the reference to human activity and the characteristics of human activities occurs thirty two times: way (7 times דרך), good (6 times טוב), wisdom (4 times חכמה), justice (3 times משפט), righteousness (4 times צדק), pride (4 times גאון), and evil (4 times רע).

This repetitive pattern in Proverbs 16 exhibits three characters that refer to Yahweh, the King and human beings. Yahweh dominates the first part of the chapter (verses 1-9), and the King appears in the middle section (verses 10-15) and human beings occur throughout the chapter (verses 1-33). While the reference to Yahweh serves as the basic

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<sup>23</sup> According to Robbins (1996:7), inner texture of a text deals with the language of the text itself, like repetition of words and use of dialogue between two people to communicate the information. It is a stage of analysis prior to analysis of “meanings”, that is, prior to “real interpretation” of the texts. Even though it is impossible for the interpreter to remove all meanings from the words, this analysis functions as looking at and listening to the words themselves as literally as possible. This analysis works only with a basic sense of words. The purpose of this analysis is to gain an intimate knowledge of words, word patterns, voices, structures, and devices and modes in the text, which are the context for meanings that an interpreter analyses with the other readings of the text. Robbins (1996:7) identifies and enacts six things of inner texture in a text: repetitive; progressive; narrational; openings-middle-closing; argumentative; and sensory-aesthetic texture.

foundation and frame, human beings including the King can serve as major targets of Proverbs 16. Furthermore the text shows that central topics are concerned with the human body and its activities. The activity takes place as the function of the human body parts such as lips, eyes, heart, soul and spirit. Human activity and behaviour can be good, righteous, and wise, or evil. Thus the relationship of human beings with other objects can play a crucial role in the interpretation of Proverbs 16, which will be discussed in the next textures.

**Table 1 Repetitive Texture of Proverbs 16**

Verse	God/king	Man	Human body	Human activity*
1	Yahweh (יהוה)	Man (אדם)*	Heart (לב)	
2	Yahweh (יהוה)	Man (איש)	Eye (עין)	Way (דרך)
3	Yahweh (יהוה)			
4	Yahweh (יהוה)			
5	Yahweh (יהוה)		Heart (לב) hand (יד)	Pride (גבה)
6	Yahweh (יהוה)			Evil (רע)
7	Yahweh (יהוה)	Man (איש)		Way (דרך)
8				Good (טוב) righteousness (צדק) Justice (משפט)
9	Yahweh (יהוה)	Man (אדם)	Heart (לב)	Way (דרך)
10	King (מלך)		Lip (שפת) mouth (פי)	Justice (משפט)
11	Yahweh (יהוה)			Justice (משפט)
12	Kings (מלכים)			Righteousness (צדק)
13	Kings (מלכים)		Lip (שפת)	Righteousness (צדק)

14	King (מלך)	Man (איש)		Wise (חכם)
15	King (מלך)			
16				Good (טוב) wisdom (חכמה)
17			Soul (נפש)	Way (דרך) evil (רע)
18			Spirit (רוח)	Pride (גאון)
19			Spirit (רוח)	Good (טוב) prides (גאים)
20	Yahweh (יהוה)			Good (טוב)
21			Lips (שפתים) heart (לב)	The wise (לחכם)
23			Heart (לב) lips (שפתי) Mouth (פי)	Wise (חכם)
24			Soul (נפש)	
25		Man (איש)		Way (דרך)
27		Man (איש)	Lips (שפתי)	Evil (רע)
28		Man (איש)		
29		Man (איש)		Way (דרך) good (טוב)
30			Lips (שפתי) eyes (עיני)	Evil (רע)
31				yaW (דרך) righteousness (צדק)
32				Good (טוב)
33	Yahweh (יהוה)			

\* As the name of God Yahweh (יהוה) is used, while the term of human beings is man (איש). With the mention of king (מלך), the term of the names reflects the Monarchic period.

\* The fact that human body and human activity are repeated indicates that Proverbs 16 is much interested in the potential and the limitations of human beings.

### 3.2.2 Progressive Texture

Progressive texture deals with progressions of words and phrases throughout the unit (Robbins 1996:9). The repetitive pattern shown above leads readers to the progression of the repetition that will be shown in Table 2. The references to Yahweh (verses 1-4) produce the progression of words or phrases as ‘*detesting* (תועבת) Yahweh’ (verse 5), ‘*the fear* (ירא) of Yahweh’ (verse 6), and ‘*pleasing* (רצות) Yahweh’ (verse 7). ‘Detesting Yahweh’ (verse 5) and ‘pleasing Yahweh’ (verse 7) these words or phrases also lead to comparison with ‘*detesting* (תועבת) king’ (verse 12) and ‘*pleasing* (רצון) king’ (verse 13). The reference to ‘man (איש)’ progresses to ‘*the wise man* (איש חכם)’ in verse 14, 21, and 23). The reference to ‘heart’ (לב) or ‘spirit’ (רוח) also progresses to ‘*the proud* (גבה) or *wise* (להכם) of heart (לב) or spirit (רוח)’ (verse 18).

This progressive pattern is concerned with the relationship of human beings with other beings. The first relationship is between human beings and Yahweh: How to please Yahweh and how to avoid what Yahweh detests. This progression of Yahweh can imply that the central theme of Proverbs 16 lies in the human activity in relation to Yahweh. That can be the fear of Yahweh. The relationship of human beings with Yahweh goes beyond religious activities. Human beings should not only fear Yahweh, but should also search for morality and wisdom. The fear of Yahweh (verse 6) was mentioned in the last verse of previous Proverbs 15 and in Proverbs 1.

In the progressive texture of Proverbs 16, one can find a particular form or role of human beings. That is the topic of the King (verse 10-15) that is located between the topic of Yahweh (1-9) and the wise man (16-25), dealing with the King as an ideal

figure (Murphy 1998:121). This texture shows the relationship between human beings and the King. Human beings should please the King (verse 13). 'Righteous lips are the delight of kings (verse 13).' The King is seen as the object that human beings should please, even though one cannot recognise the King's special relationship with Yahweh at this stage. Nevertheless, one can think that the position of the King is higher than all other things. Yet the topic of the King is changed into the topic of human wisdom in verses 16-33. Since the King is also a human being, the King can play a linking role between Yahweh and human beings.

The progression of 'man' into 'wise man' shows that the theme of Proverbs 16 is related to the relationship of human beings to the world. The status of the human heart in the world can be a main theme of Proverbs 16. Particularly one can notice that the repetitive term as 'heart' or 'spirit' progresses to the term of 'the proud heart' or 'wise heart.' It can be either wise or proud. Proud heart is contrasted with wise heart. What is the wise or proud heart? What does it mean? If human beings can be wise or proud, can one say that Proverbs 16 shows the possibility that human beings can search for 'meaning' or 'order' in the world? At this stage it seems that human beings can try to possess wise hearts, rejecting the proud heart.

So what relationship is there between the search for wisdom and the fear of the Lord? In this texture, one cannot elaborate on the relationship, which will be dealt with in the study of the following textures. Nevertheless, one can say that the progressive texture of Proverbs 16 shows both elements of human potential and its limitation of human activities, since while human beings possess the capacity to search for wisdom, human

beings should fear Yahweh, please him and avoid what Yahweh hates.

**Table 2 Progressive Texture of Proverbs 16**

Verse	Yahweh/king	Man	Wisdom
1	Yahweh		
2	Yahweh	Man (איש)	
5	<i>Detesting</i> (תועבת) Yahweh		<i>The proud</i> (גבה) of heart (לב)
6	<i>Fear of</i> (איר) Yahweh		
7	<i>Pleasing</i> (רצות) Yahweh	Man (איש)	
10	King		
12	<i>Detesting</i> (תועבת) King		
13	<i>Pleasing of</i> (רצון) Kings		
14		Man (איש) <i>of wise</i> (חכם)	
18			<i>Pride</i> (גבה) of spirit (רוח)
21			<i>The wise</i> (להחכם) of heart
23		Heart <i>of the wise</i> (לב חכם)	

\* The italic expressions reveal the progressive texture: Yahweh- *fear of* Yahweh, king- *pleasing* kings, man- man *of the wise*, *the proud* of heart- *pride* of spirit.

### 3.2.3 Opening-Middle-Closing Texture

The topics of repetitive pattern and progressive pattern provide the foundation for opening-middle-closing texture. This shows the voices according to three steps of texture (opening, middle, and closing). Opening texture is composed of verses 1-9.

What is interesting in this opening texture is that Yahweh appears 8 times. Nevertheless,



human activity and its consequence are still focused on. This opening texture contains another sub-opening-middle-closing texture. Verse 1 serves as a sub-opening texture, and verses 2-8 are sub-middle texture and verse 9 serves as sub-closing texture. Both Proverbs 16: 1 and 16:9 declare a main message of the opening texture as the limitation of human activities, while verses 2-8 show several examples of the theme.

Opening texture (Proverbs 16: 1-9) starts by declaring that ‘the plans of the mind belong to man, but the answer of the tongue is from Yahweh (Proverbs 16:1).’ This verse declares that human activity contains a kind of limitation that human beings cannot control (Clifford 1999:157). The same theme is repeated in the last verse of the opening. ‘A man’s heart plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps (Proverbs 16:9).’ In the framework of opening texture (Proverbs 16:1-9), one can discern the examples of limitation of human activities, while acknowledging human potential. Human beings can expect the consequences of human activities, on the condition that human beings should obey Yahweh.

The voice of human limitation is challenged by the voices of the King and wise men in the middle texture. The middle texture of Proverbs 16 is composed of royal proverbs (Proverbs 10-15) and wisdom proverbs (Proverbs 16-25). Most of the royal proverbs emphasise the King’s power or his wisdom, as verse 10 shows. ‘The lips of a king speak as an oracle and his mouth should not betray justice (verse 10).’ This text reveals that the King is the representative of God, realising justice in his kingdom. To obey the King

is to follow divine order that human beings should search for (Clifford 1999:158).<sup>24</sup> However, other texts describe that the King should also do his duty as a king. The King's throne remains secure only in so far as it is based on righteousness (verse 12). It is the King's duty to promote and favor those who speak the truth (verse 13). It implies that he is also a human being, not God. The message that even the King should stand on righteousness shows that human beings should search for righteousness or goodness in the everyday life. The possibility that human beings can search for order is suggested in this texture.

The royal proverb is connected with every day life of individual wisdom (Proverbs 16-33). In this texture, one can hear a clear voice about human potential in the world. Human beings can find and acquire wisdom, if they try to. Proverbs 16:16 recommends the acquisition of wisdom, extolling its value in the same terms as are found in some of the instructions in chapters 1-9 (Whybray 1994:108). One who acquired the wisdom can be called 'the wise at heart,' or 'the heart of the wise.' 'The wise at heart will be called prudence and sweetness of the lips increases learning (Proverbs 16:21).' 'The heart of the wise teaches his mouth and adds learning to his lips (Proverbs 16:23).' In this texture wisdom is not separated from religious and moral activities. Verse 17 is a general recommendation to avoid evil. Both verses 18 and 19 advocate humility, since pride leads to destruction.

Despite a strong voice of human potential, one can still find the voice of human

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<sup>24</sup> According to Clifford (1999:158), in Ancient Near Eastern thought the King was the representative of the gods. Thus it is not surprising that this section on the King follows immediately that on Yahweh.

limitation in the middle texture. Human beings should pay attention to the Word and trust in the Lord. 'He who heeds the word wisely will be good, and whoever trusts in the Lord, happy is he (Proverbs 16:20).' Humility is a quality needful to those who decide to submit to Yahweh. Human beings can not see the final destination. 'There is a way that seems right to man, but its end is the way of death (Proverbs 16:25). Thus humility is a very important entity for human lives. Despite the existence of the voice of human limitation, the voice of human potential prevails in the middle texture.

Closing texture (Proverbs 16:27-33) concludes, repeating the voice of human limitation of opening texture (Proverbs 16:1-9) and the voice of human potential of middle texture (Proverbs 16:10-26). The first section of the closing texture focuses on the life of the community, suggesting human potential (Proverbs 16: 27-32). Different types of evil that disrupt community life are dealt with. A perverse man sows strife and a whisperer separates friends (16:28). A violent man entices his neighbour and leads him in a way that is not good (16:29). The consequences of searching for wisdom or righteous life presented in Proverbs 16: 31 and 32 is a long life crowned at the end with honor and self-control. Nevertheless, the recognition of human limitation is very crucial. Finally, Proverbs 16:33 reminds the reader that the whole of the human life is in the hands of Yahweh. This final Yahweh proverb marks a return to the theme of human limitation in opening texture.

Proverbs 16 begins and ends with the framework of limitation of human understanding, and mentioning the subordination to Yahweh. Within the framework, it proceeds with the themes of the fear of the Lord and the role of the King, the search for wisdom and

instruction. It continues with a list of dangers and evil encountered on the way, and concludes with a picture of the person who has resisted all temptations and emerged into honoured old age. He can be slow to anger and rule his spirit, since he has obtained wisdom. While the voice of the recognition of human limitation is still important, human potential is emphasised.

### **3.2.4 Sensory-Aesthetic Texture**

Sensory-aesthetic texture provides a particular tone or colour to previous repetitive, progressive, or opening-middle-closing textures (Robbins 1996:30). A human being is endowed with a heart for thinking, along with eyes that fill the heart with data; a mouth for speaking, along with ears that collect the speech of others; and hands and feet for acting. Thus human beings consist of three mutual interpenetrating yet distinguishable zones of thought, speech and action. Proverbs 16 reveals the zone of thought, using the term of heart; the zone of speech such as tongue and lips; the zone of action. Nine references to heart, six references to lips and ways, and two references to mouth reflect the importance of sensory-aesthetic texture of Proverbs 16.

Opening texture (verse 1-9) starts with using the zone of thought and speech: the comparison of 'the plan of heart' with 'reply of tongue.' The range of thought as heart belongs to the sphere of human beings. However, the reply of speech as tongue comes from Yahweh (verse 1). It does not imply that the range of speech is more important than the range of thought. The antithesis expresses the totality of human activity (Clifford 1999:157). Rather it conveys that there is an element of inscrutability that human thought or any speech cannot control in life. Verse 9 also concludes that in his

heart a man plans his course, but Yahweh determines his steps.

The zone of action appears in verse 2-8 within the frame of the zone of thought and speech. Though an action of a man is considered as innocent, there can be something that only Yahweh can find. 'All a man's ways seem innocent to him, but Yahweh weighs his motive (verse 2).' The acknowledgement of limitation of human activities leads a man to commitment to Yahweh in verse 3. The commitment to Yahweh will have a consequence of success. 'Our deeds should be committed to Yahweh, and we will succeed (verse 3).' If the human ways please Yahweh, Yahweh makes even his enemies live at peace with him (verse 7). Even though human beings experience that kind of inscrutability, human activity for better life should be an essential part of human life. Human beings should avoid a proud heart and keep a humble heart, since Yahweh hates all kinds of pride of heart (verse 5). Thus sensory-aesthetic texture of opening texture clarifies the voice of recognition of human limitation, with the positive voice of human potential.

In middle texture, the first part (verses 10-15) deals with the topics of the King, reintroducing the range of speech. As the reply of tongue comes from Yahweh (verse 1), the lip of king can function as oracle and his mouth will declare justice (verse 10), since the King can be representative of Yahweh. From the lip of the king, one can recognise the justice or order that human beings can depend on. That is the voice of human potential. Thus the lips of the righteous are that with which the King is pleased (verse 13). The zone of action enforces the voice of human potential. The statement that 'honest weights and scales are the Lord's (verse 11)' can apply to the King and human

beings. The King should be based on righteousness and justice, since the King is a man as well.

In the second part of middle texture (verses 16-25) the zone of action prevails. The texture asks a man to obtain wisdom, which is compared with gold and silver (verse 16). To obtain wisdom needs strong activity. The activity is to avoid the evil. The highway of the upright avoids evil, and he who guards his way guards his soul (verse 17). The zone of action is accompanied by the zone of thought and speech. Pride precedes destruction and a haughty spirit precedes a fall (verse 18). Better to be a humble spirit with the lowly (verse 19). The term of heart as the zone of thought is propounded as the wise of heart or heart of the wise man in verses 21 and 23. The wise of heart is called discerning (verse 21). The heart of the wise man is again related to mouth as the zone of speech, since the heart guides the mouth (verse 23). Pleasant lips promote instruction. Thus, all the zones enforce the voice of human potential.

In closing texture (verse 26-33) the zone of speech reappears. The wrong use of lips and action should be avoided. The lips can be like scorching fire (verse 27). A whisperer separates friends (verse 28). He who pursues his lips is bent on evil (verse 30). This zone of speech conveys the voice of human potential. The zone of action is followed, enforcing human potential. A violent man leads his neighbours down a path that is not good (verse 29). The wise man who overcomes temptation will get a crown of splendour. Gray hair is a crown of splendour, and it is attained by a righteous way (verse 32). However, there is human limitation that no one should forget (verse 33). Thus the inner texture of Proverbs 16 shows the coexistence of human potential and human limitation.

Nevertheless, the voice of human potential prevails, and maintains the voice of the limitation of human activities.

### **3.2.5 Preliminary Conclusion**

Proverbs 16 contains inner texture, as every literary text does. Seen from a literary and rhetorical perspective, Proverbs 16 can play a role as a center of literary structure in Proverbs 10:1- 22:16 which is considered as the oldest section in the book of Proverbs. As the basic level for the search for 'meaning' in Proverbs 16, the inner texture that was introduced by Robbins was explored.

The analysis of the repetitive texture as a starting point for the next textures reveals that Proverbs 16 has several repeated words or topics. They are the eleven references to Yahweh, five to the King, and nine to man. As the reference to the human body, six references to lips, five to hearts, and two to eyes, mouth, and soul occur. Seven references to ways, six to 'good,' and four to wisdom, justice, and righteousness are compared with four references to 'proud' and 'evil.' This pattern exhibits that Yahweh, the King, and human beings are main characters and human activity as wisdom can be main topics. While the reference to Yahweh serves as the foundation and frame, human beings as the King and a wise man can serve as major targets of Proverbs 16. Furthermore, the King can play a middle role between God and human beings, both reflecting a model of God and a real human being.

The progressive texture in Proverbs 16 can be found in the range of Yahweh, the King and human beings. The reference to Yahweh is promoted to the references of 'detesting

of Yahweh (verse 5), 'the fear of Yahweh (verse 6),' and 'pleasing of Yahweh (verse 7).' How to please Yahweh and how to avoid what Yahweh detests seem related to the fear of Yahweh. Reference to kings (verse 10-15) is promoted to 'the detesting of kings' and 'the pleasing of kings.' Another progressive pattern can be found in the progression of 'man' into 'wise man.' These progressive patterns focus on the relationship between Yahweh, the King and human beings, and the relationship between human beings and the world such as wisdom, righteousness, and piety. It implies that how to fear the Lord and how to acquire wisdom are found simultaneously in this texture.

Based on the repetitive and progressive patterns, the structure of Proverbs 16 is composed of an opening-middle-closing texture. Opening texture is composed of verses 1- 9. In this part, a main topic is the relationship between Yahweh and human beings. A main theme in this part is that there are inscrutabilities that human beings cannot expect (verse 1 and 9). Several examples are suggested in the opening texture. Human beings can expect the consequences of human activities, on the condition that human beings should obey Yahweh. Human plans will be successful only if they are committed to him (verse 3). Yet this voice of human limitation is challenged by the voices of the King and wise men in middle texture.

The middle texture of Proverbs 16 is composed of royal proverbs (Proverbs 16:10-15) and wisdom proverbs (Proverbs 16:16-25). This texture reveals that the King is the representative of God, realising justice in his kingdom. To obey the King is to follow divine order that human beings should search for. However, the message that even the King should take a stand on righteousness shows that human beings including kings



should search for righteousness or goodness in the everyday life. Thus the possibility that human beings can search for order is suggested in this texture. The royal proverb is connected to the every day life of individual wisdom (Proverbs 16-33). In this texture, one can hear a clear voice about human potential in the world. Human beings can find and acquire wisdom, if they try to. Closing texture (Proverbs 16:27-33) concludes, repeating the voice of human limitation of opening texture (Proverbs 16:1-9) and of the voice of human potential of middle texture (Proverbs 16:10-26).

The sensory-aesthetic texture in Proverbs 16 reveals three zones of human beings: the zone of thought, using the term of heart, the zone of speech such as tongue and lips, and the zone of action. Opening texture (verse 1-9) starts with using the zone of thought and speech: the comparison of 'the plan of heart' with 'reply of tongue,' enforces the voice of human limitation. The zone of action appears in verse 2-8 within the framework of the zone of thought and speech. The acknowledgement of limitation of human activities leads a man to commitment to Yahweh in verse 3. The voice of human limitation becomes enforced, with the use of three zones of human beings.

In middle texture, three zones of human beings enforce the voice of human potential. The lip of the King as a zone of speech can function as an oracle and his mouth will declare justice (verse 10). The zone of action enforces the voice of human potential. The King should be based on righteousness and justice. The strong voice of action conveys the potential of human activities. In the second part of middle texture (verses 16-25) the texture asks a man to get wisdom, comparing wisdom with gold and silver (verse 16). The zone of action is accompanied by the zone of thought and speech. Thus, all the

zones enforce the voice of human potential. In closing texture the zones of speech and action combine both voices. While the voice of human limitation is still important, human potential is emphasised.

### **3.3 Intertexture<sup>25</sup> of Proverbs 16**

#### **3.3.1 Introduction**

The investigation of the inner texture of Proverbs 16 has shown the characters and the topics of Proverbs 16. The topics of Yahweh, the King and wise men have been dealt with. Human beings should please and fear Yahweh, recognising the limitations of human activity. At the same time human beings have the potential to search for wisdom and righteousness in the world. There is a possibility that human activities could expect some consequences. The position and role of the King is located between Yahweh and human beings. While the King can be the representative of Yahweh, the King should be based on righteousness, since the King is a human being.

In order to elaborate on the topics such as the limitation of human activities and the

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<sup>25</sup> Intertexture deals with the way in which the material outside the text is interpreted. It implies that the intertexture of a text is in dialogue with the text, with outside material and physical objects such as oral-scribal texts, customs, institutions and historical events. According to Robbins (1996:40), "the text configures phenomena outside the text in a particular language environment. Sometimes the text imitates another texture but places different people in it. Sometimes it restructures a well-known tradition so that it ends differently or has very different implications for belief and action." One of the ways a text configures is to use language from other texts. Oral-scribal intertexture involves a text's use of any other text outside of itself. For Robbins (1996:40), "there are five basic ways in which language in a text uses language that exists in another text: recitation, recontextualization, reconfiguration, narrative amplification, and thematic elaboration." The researcher will include repetition in this oral-scribal intertexture, since repetition in Proverbs is the dominant and significant phenomenon. Snell (1993) examined the repetition of Proverbs, believing that repeated verses hold the only key for understanding the history of composition. This oral-scribal intertexture will be utilised for the intertextual study of Proverbs 16, but cultural and social intertexture can be included in social and cultural texture.

potential to search for wisdom and righteousness, the intertexture of Proverbs 16 requires to be investigated. Intertexture will be studied first in the repetition in the book of Proverbs, especially Proverbs 10-22 to which Proverbs 16 belongs. In Proverbs 16 one can find some repetition of Proverbs 10-22. The repetition can reflect the editorial activity, and it can also be recitation from oral or literary tradition. Furthermore one will focus on the recontextualization or reconfiguration of the wisdom texts in Ancient Near Eastern Nations. This study of intertexture will elaborate the theme of Proverbs 16.

### 3.3.2 Repetition and Recitation

#### 3.2.2.1 Limitation of Human beings

The repetition of words or topics is found in the proverbs which deal with the limitation of human activity. Both Proverbs 16:1 and 9 show similar patterns of the structure and content in Proverbs 19:21. The first part of Proverbs 16:1 mentions that the plans of the heart belong to human beings. However, the reply of the tongue comes from the Lord (16:1b). What one actually says can differ from what one intended to say, since the Lord directs the words. This expression can be found in 16:9 and 19:21.

16:1 To man belong **the plans** of **the heart** (לאדם מערכי לב), but **from the Lord comes** the reply of the tongue (ומיהוה מענה לשון).

16:9 In **his heart** a man **plans** his way (לב אדם יחשב דרכו), but **the Lord determines** his steps (ויהוה יכין צעדו).

19:21 Many are **the plans** in a man's **heart** (רבות מחשבות בלב איש), but it is **the Lord's purpose** that prevails (ועצת יהוה היא תקום).

The human heart in this texture is an organ with which human beings plan. However hard human beings may try, they will face some limitation, since they do not know the consequences. Yet it does not mean that human beings need not make plans for the future. Rather the text says that there is a mysterious sphere that belongs only to God. It is not a mystery itself, but the mystery of Yahweh that human limitation is recognised. 'It is not my purpose, but the Lord's purpose that prevails (19:21).' The limitation of human beings is concerned with the inscrutability of Yahweh. Thus the limitation of human beings is the same as the recognition of the mystery of Yahweh (Von Rad 1972:100).

Human beings do not weigh the motives of the heart. Only God can weigh the motives or the heart. This is also the sphere of the divine mystery. Thus a way that seems right to man is not always right in the eye of Yahweh. It can be that way of death (16:26) Proverbs 16:25 and 14:12 belongs to the whole verses repeated with spelling variations. Since one cannot find any difference in both verses, it is difficult to consider the reason why they are repeated. Nevertheless, the fact that they are repeated provides the importance of maintaining the voice of mystery.

16:2 **All a man's ways** seem innocent to him (כל־דרכי־איש זך בעיניו), but motives are **weighed by the Lord** (ותכן רוחות יהוה).

21:2 **All a man's ways** seem right to him (כל־דרך־איש ישר בעיניו), but **the Lord weighs** the heart (ותכן לבות יהוה).

16:25: There is **a way** that seems right to **man** (שי דרך רשי ינפל שיא), but its end is **the way of death** (ואחריה דרכי־מות).

14:12: There is **a way** that seems right to a **man** (יש דרך ישר לפני איש), but its end is **the way of death** (ואחריתה דרכי מות).

Proverbs 21:30-31 shows the voice of the mystery of God, even though it does not deny the voice of the search for order such as wisdom, righteousness, and justice (Murphy 1998:xxv). It does not mean that the horse does not need to be prepared for the day of battle, since deliverance is of the Lord (21:31). It is important that the horse is prepared for the day of battle. Yet that preparation as human endeavor is not the only reason for the victory of the battle. There is some help from God that human beings cannot control. Thus there is no wisdom or understanding or counsel in conflict with the Lord.

21:30 There is **no wisdom** or understanding or counsel **against the Lord**

(אין חכמה ואין תבונה ואין עצה לנגד יהוה).

21:31 The horse is prepared for the day of **battle** (סוס מוכן ליום מלחמה). But deliverance is **of the Lord**

(וליהוה התשועה).

Thus Proverbs 16 conveys the voice of mystery shared by the book of Proverbs. There is some mystery that belongs to God and does not belong to human beings. This voice of mystery is not a later addition to Proverbs and belongs to the earliest part of this book. The topic of human limitation is connected to the following theme: the fear of the Lord.

### 3.2.2.2 The Fear of the Lord

As human activities have their limitations and there is the mystery of God that human beings cannot control, human beings should depend on the Lord. The fear of the Lord is

an expression of the recognition of human limitations in the world. In the book of Proverbs one can meet many repetitions of the fear of the Lord (Van Leeuwen 2005:639).<sup>26</sup> In Proverbs 10-22 the fear of the Lord has mysterious consequences. That is the success of life, departing from evil, possessing a long life. If human beings fear the Lord, they can depart from evil. The fear of the Lord has a blessing in the family life. Children have a place of refuge in the fear of the Lord, since the fear of the Lord is a foundation of life. This is the voice of mystery that human beings cannot understand in the everyday life. This mysterious concept of the fear of the Lord becomes a condition for blessing.

16:6b By **the fear of the Lord** (וביראת יהוה) one departs from evil (סור מרע).

14:26 In **the fear of the Lord** (ביראת יהוה) there is strong confidence (מבטח עז), and his children will have a place of refuge (ולבניו יהיה מחסה).

14:27a **The fear of the Lord** (יראת יהוה) is a foundation of life (מקור חיים).

15:33 **The fear of the Lord** (יראת יהוה) is the instruction of **wisdom** (מוסר חכמה) and before honour is humility (ולפני כבוד ענוה).

In Proverbs 1-9 the fear of the Lord becomes the beginning of wisdom. The proper wisdom begins with the fear of the Lord (Proverbs 1:7; 2:1-6; 9:10; 15:33). This fear is no emotion, nor is it simply reverential awe, but a deep seated humility grounded in an awareness of one's absolute dependence for existence on the undeserved mercy of Yahweh. Only through such humility and dependence is the human heart prepared to

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<sup>26</sup> Van Leeuwen (2005:639) indicates that Proverbs 1:7 and 9:10 (the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge/wisdom.) form the thematic inclusion of chapters 1-9 and the motto for the entire book.

perceive and receive the wisdom that God provides (Wilson 1997:1283).

1:7a **The fear of the Lord** (יראת יהוה) is the beginning of **knowledge** (ראשית דעת).

9:10 **The fear of the Lord** (יראת יהוה) is the beginning of **wisdom** (תחלת חכמה), and the knowledge of the holy one is understanding (ודעת קדשים בינה).

Yet the fear of the Lord goes beyond the sphere of mystery that belongs to God. The fear of the Lord becomes a foundation of the search for wisdom, the beginning of wisdom, since the consequence of the fear of the Lord results in a blessing. A kind of order that will be discussed in the following section can be found. Thus the fear of the Lord connects the limitation of human activities with the search for wisdom.

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### 3.2.2.3 The Search for Wisdom

Even though Proverbs 16 maintains the voice of human limitation and the fear of the Lord, the voice of the search for wisdom can be found in Proverbs 16. In Proverbs 16 the wise man can appease the angry king (16:14). To obtain wisdom is much better than to obtain gold (16:16). The wise man promotes instruction (16:21, 23). Then what can the concept of wisdom be in Proverbs 10-22 and the entire book of Proverbs? The concept of wisdom can be interpreted in the context of the book of Proverbs.

16:14 A king's wrath is a messenger of death (חמת מלך מלאכי מות), but **a wise man** will appease

(ואיש חכם יכפרגה).

16:16 how much better to get **wisdom** than gold (קנה חכמה מה טוב מחרוץ), to **understanding** rather than

silver (וקנות בינה נבחר מכסף)

16:21 **The wise in heart** are called discerning (להכחם לב יקרא נבון), and pleasant words promote **instruction** (ומתקן שפתים יסוף לקח).

16:23 **A wise man's heart** guides his mouth (להכחם ישכיל פיהו) and his lips promotes **instruction** (ועל שפתיו יסוף לקח).

The topic of wisdom is repeated in the entire book of Proverbs. In Proverbs 10-22 and 25-29 a background of a family is given. A father commands a son to be wise. A wise son brings joy to his father, while a foolish son gives grief to his mother (10:1). The wise at heart accept commands. Seen from this context, the concept of wisdom is related to obtain the acceptance of some kind of social 'order.' The wise man has some skill of steering life (Clifford 2009a:657). Wisdom is the foundation of life, turning a man from the snares of death (13:14). Thus the concept of wisdom is order that human beings can possess.

10:1 **A wise son** brings joy to his father (בן חכם ישמח אב) but a foolish son grief to his mother (ובן כסיל תוגת אמו).

10:8 **The wise in heart** accept commands (הכחם לב יקח מצות), but a chattering fool comes to ruin (ואויל שפתים ילבט).

13:14 **The teaching of the wise** is a **foundation of life** (תורת חכם מקור חיים), turning a man from the snares of death (לסור ממקשי מות).

Any one who acquired this order can enjoy economic wealth. Since a wise man has knowledge of steering life and order, he can store wealth. (21:20). It also includes military power. A wise man attacks the city of the mighty and pulls down the stronghold



in which they trust (21:22). Since wisdom is the skill useful in every aspect of life, wisdom is order that everyone should search for. In case of trying to obtain wisdom, the rebuke of the wise man is like an earring of gold (25:12). In this context, the father of a household urges his son to be wise. The fact that a son is wise can give a father reason to answer anyone who treats him with contempt (27:11).

21:20 In the house of **the wise** are stores of choice food and oil (אוצר נחמד ושמן בונה חכם), but a foolish man devours all he has (וכסיל אדם יבלענו).

21:22 **A wise man** attacks the city of the mighty (עיר גברים עלה חכם) and pulls down the stronghold in which they trust (וירד עז מבטחה).

25:12 Like an earring of gold or an ornament of fine gold (נזם זהב וחלי כתם) is **a wise man's** rebuke to a listening ear (מוכיח חכם על אזן שמעת).

27:11 **Be wise**, my son, and bring joy to **my heart** (חכם בני ושמה לבי): then I can answer anyone who treats me with contempt (ואשיבה הרפי דבר).

The topic of wisdom is enlarged in Proverbs 1-9 and is attributed to a later period than Proverbs 10-22 and 25-29. The voice that human beings should try to access and possess wisdom is clear. Blessed is the man who finds wisdom (3:13). Wisdom is more precious than anything (3:14-15). Wisdom is a tree of life to those who embrace her. Thus wisdom is order that human beings embrace and hold. If human beings try to find the order, they can find and possess it, since human beings have the potential to find the order in the world. The order gives the searcher a tree of life.

3:13 Blessed is the man who **finds wisdom** (אשרי אדם מצא חכמה), the man who **gains understanding**

(ואדם יפיק תבונה).

3:14 For **she (wisdom)** is more profitable than silver (כי טוב סחרה מסחר כסף) and yields better returns than gold (ומחרוץ תבואתה).

3::15 **She (wisdom)** is more precious than rubies (ויקרה היא מפניים); nothing you desire can compare with her (וכל חפציד לא ישוו בה).

3:18 **She (wisdom)** is a tree of life to those who embrace her (עץ חיים היא למחזיקים בה); those who lay hold of her will be blessed (ותמכיה מאשר).

In Proverbs 10-22 and 25-29 one can find the traits of order that the wise searched for (Wilson 1997:1278). People who pursue wisdom are described as diligent (Proverbs 10:4; 13:4; 21:5). The wise speaks with the quality of speech that is important, rather than quantity of words (10:19). The wise are acutely aware of the power of words for good or hurt (11:12, 13; 14:3; 17:19, 20; 18:6, 7, 21) and counsel silence and restraint as the prudent path of wisdom (11:12; 21:23). The wise are self-controlled (15:32; 16:32; 29:11) and patient (14:29; 19:11). Humility (11:2; 22:4), generosity (19:17; 22:9), and caution (12:18, 23, 26; 15:28) characterize the wise, while fools act rashly (12:23) and with pride (13:10; 18:12; 22:3). The truly wise are honest (12:19, 22), avoiding crooked business practices (11:1, 16, 18).

The search for order by the wise extends to the heavens, the physical world, the world of the animals, human relationships and behaviour. There are many observations of animal behaviour in Proverbs: birds (Proverbs 1:17; 26:2); ants (6:6); oxen and deer (7:22-23); pig (11:22), bear (17:12); lion (19:12; 20:2; 22:13). By their humorous comparisons and contrasts, the wise are able to illuminate human behaviour,

encouraging right action and discouraging their followers from destructive paths. Storms (10:25), rain (16:15), flowing fountains (16:22), and dew (19:12) provide ample material for the reflection of the wise, as does the painful obstruction by thorns (15:19). Wise people gaze at the world of human behaviour and relationships. The home (15:17, 20; 17:6; 21:9), the workplace (10:5, 26; 11:1 12:11, 27; 16:11, 20, 26), the market (20:14, 23), the law court (17:26; 18:17; 19:5), and government administration (16:12-15) all serve as fruitful examples for the scrutiny of the wise.

Behind this observation and experience, there is a way of looking at life and the world. The basic assumption is that there is a hidden order that only the wise can discern in life. There are two ways to travel in life (Brueggemann 2002:175). Seen from the context of Proverbs 10-22 and the book of Proverbs, the concept of wisdom in Proverbs 16 can be the human attempt to search for order in the world. Yet the search for order coexists with recognising the voice of human limitation on account of the mystery of God. The fear of the Lord should be the foundation of the search for order.

### **3.3.3 Recontextualization and Reconfiguration<sup>27</sup>**

#### **3.3.3.1 Limitation of Human Beings**

The topic of human limitation, the fear of the Lord, and the search for wisdom in Proverbs 16 can be investigated in the context of Wisdom Literature in the Ancient Near East. In this study of intertexture, one will utilise the terms of recontextualization or

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<sup>27</sup> Unlike repetition and recitation, recontextualization refers to the practice of the placement of narratives, speeches in new contexts without announcing the fact. Recontextualization presents “wording from previous texts without explicit statement or implication that the words existed anywhere else” (Robbins 1996:48). Reconfiguration is recounting a situation in a manner that makes the later text new in relation to a previous text. Authors or editors reconfigure not only texts, but also well-known traditions.

reconfiguration, since there is common agreement that Egyptian and Babylonian Wisdom texts are much older than those of Israel (Perdue 2007:43). Proverbs 16 has a reconfiguration from Egyptian texts, or Babylonian texts. The Israelites held Egyptian wisdom in high regard (1 Kings 5:10) and noticed their traditions, in particular those of the schools in the court and temples. Proverbs contains three collections that have the appearance of royal sages issuing wisdom about kingship (16:1-22:16; 25:2-27; and 31:1-9). The collections in 16:1-22:16 contain a brief section that developed in the royal court or in a school that had in view the court and kingship (16:1-15).

The allegations that there are inscrutabilities of Yahweh that the human heart cannot understand have parallels also in Egyptian texts. Proverbs 16:1 and 16:9 are comparable to these Ancient Near Eastern texts. In *Amenemopet* xiv:16 and xx:5 what human beings say is different from what god does. They mean that ‘man proposes, but God disposes.’ The Babylonian instruction can also be considered as comparison with Israelite wisdom. In *Ahikar* gods will let him speak something good, if he were beloved of the gods. Even though Proverbs 16:1 and 9 are not copied or recited from these texts, it is possible that Proverbs 16:1 and 16:9 reconfigured the idea of the foreign texts.

16:1 To man belong the plans of **the heart** (לאדם מערכי לב), but from the Lord comes the reply of the tongue (ומיהוה מענה לשון).

16:9 In **his heart** a man plans his way (לב אדם יחשב דרכו), but the Lord determines his steps (ויהוה יכין צעדו).

*Amenemopet* xix:16 One thing are **the words** which **men say**, another is that which **the god does** (ANET:423).

*Amenemopet* xx:5 If **the tongue of man** (be) the rudder of a boat, **the All-Lord is** its pilot (ANET:424).

*Ahikar* viii:111-125 If he were beloved of **the gods**, they would put something good in his palate **to speak**  
(ANET:429).

In the Ancient Near East the recognition of human limitation is related to the mysterious inscrutability of deities. Thus one can say that people in the Ancient Near East could maintain the mystery in the world on account of the inscrutability of deities. The mystery of deities provides people the motive to fear the deities. The idea that human beings should fear God is a common factor in the religious world of the Ancient Near East. The idea of the fear of the deity is found many times in Babylonian Wisdom Literature (*Ludlul bel nemeqi* ii:18, 25, 32; Babylonian Theodicy line 22; *Shamash* hymn, line 165, and Proverbs ii:11-14; Counsels of Wisdom lines 143-7). It is impossible to decide which country was the first to fear god. One can say the fear of the Lord in Proverbs shares the religion of the Babylonian Wisdom.

Proverbs 16:6b By **the fear of the Lord** (וביראת יהוה) one departs from evil (סור מרע).

Counsels of Wisdom lines 143-7 He who **fears the gods** is not slighted by...

He who **fears the Anunnaki** extends his days.

The fear of the Lord does not remain a voice of recognition of divine mystery. To fear the Lord is to follow a social order, since God is the Creator and deserves to be worshipped. Anyone who fears God enjoys the consequences of his choice. Like the fear of the deity in Ancient Near East, the fear of the Lord in Proverbs 16 is not only recognising the human limitation, but also searching for order. As the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, the fear of the Lord lets human beings avoid evil (Proverbs

16:6).

### 3.3.3.2 Order of God

As the voices of human limitation and the fear of the Lord had a common basis in the Ancient Near East, the search for order was also prevalent in the Ancient Near East. The concept of order in the Ancient Near East was related to the characteristics of God. God is the one who keeps order, since God has balance. Since the notion that balance belongs to God in Proverbs 16 can be found in Egyptian *Amenemopet*, it is possible that Proverbs 16:11-12 also reconfigured Egyptian mythology. How the sages of Israel became familiar with Egyptian schools is not known, but the Egyptian influence on Israelite wisdom is clear in regard to *Amenemopet* (Perdue 2007:43). Human heart, thought, and activity will have an appropriate consequence, since God rules with balance.

16:11 **A just balance** and scales belong to the Lord (פֶּלֶס וּמֵאָזְנֵי מִשְׁפָּט לַיהוָה). And **all the weights** in the bag are his work (וְהַשְׁעָמ לֹכ יִגְבֵּא סִיכ).

*Amenemopet* xvi:15 Do not falsify **the balances** nor diminish the measures and **weights**, for *Thoth* is the guardian of **the balances** (ANET:423).

Since the characteristics of God have the justice or order, human beings should search for this order, which will please God. The first object of the search for order was the King in the Ancient Near East. The justice or order of God was applied to the King. Since the King was the representative of God, the throne should be found on righteousness (16:12). The righteousness can be compared with *Maat* of Egyptian

mythology.

16:12. It is an abomination for kings to commit wickedness (תועבת מלכים עשות רשע), for a throne is established by **righteousness** (יכ הקדצב נוכי אסכ).

According to Brunner (1958:426), in the Egyptian mythology the pedestal was a representation of the primeval hill on which the Creator stood when he brought reality into existence and established *Maat* as the order of creation. Brunner also identified the hieroglyph for the royal pedestal with that for *Maat*. This mythological place was realised in every Egyptian temple. Every royal throne rested on it, for the King in discharging his office fulfils and preserves the work of creation. In this respect it indicates that the King's throne was founded on justice. It rests on the basis of a divinely established order and exists within its framework. Brunner supposes that the Israelite gave up the idea of the primeval hill because it was foreign to their cast of thought, but they clung to the thought that the throne is founded on righteousness (הקדצ) which here represents an attempt to render the Egyptian *Maat*.

This expression that righteousness is the foundation of a throne might be commonplace and it might occur to anyone at any time. Nevertheless, the researcher agrees that there is some possibility that Brunner's explanation should be adopted (McKane 1970:492). The description of Solomon's throne in 1 Kings 10:18-20 showed that the throne of Solomon rested on a pedestal like that of the Pharaoh, both lions and steps being features of Egyptian design. As this throne was physically reproduced in Israel, it is possible that Israel in Proverbs 16 may have reconfigured the Egyptian mythology. If

the King's rule is an aspect of the divine order, it is endangered wherever men breach that order.

Seen from this study of intertexture, the search for wisdom in Proverbs 16 as well as in the book of Proverbs can be interpreted as the search for the order of God. The search for order is a kind of religious activity and should include the fear of God and the maintenance of human limitation for the place of God. In this context of the Ancient Near East, Proverbs 16 shows a particular voice of Israel in the search for wisdom and the fear of Yahweh as in Israel. This is the voice of reconfiguration in the search for order and the maintenance of mystery.

### **3.3.3.3 Biblical Intertexture**

While Proverbs 16 has a reconfiguration from the Ancient Near East, Proverbs 16 functions as the model for other biblical texts written in later periods. The topics of human limitation and the fear of the Lord in Proverbs 16 are related to the topic of a proud heart in the Bible. If someone recognises their limitations and fear the Lord, he can be called a man of humble heart. Otherwise, he will be considered as a man of proud heart. The topic of proud or humble heart often occurs in the Old Testament.<sup>28</sup> Since the book of Chronicles was written much later than Proverbs 16, it is possible that the topic of pride in Chronicles recontextualized the topic of Proverbs 16. In Proverbs 16:5 the Lord detests every proud heart that does not recognise human limitations and does not fear God. Therefore, the Lord will punish them. In 2 Chronicles 26:16 the pride

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<sup>28</sup> The topic of 'heart' is the most important anthropological term in the Old Testament. It occurs 46 times in Proverbs and 858 times in the Old Testament (Waltke 2004:50).



of Uzziah led to his downfall.

16:5. The Lord detests every **arrogant heart** (תועבת יהוה כל גבה לב). Be sure of this: They will not go unpunished (יד ליד לא ינקה).

2 Chronicles 26:16 But after Uzziah became powerful, **his pride** (הבג ובל) led to his downfall (עד להשחית).

He was unfaithful to the Lord his God (וימעל ביהוה אלהיו), and entered the temple of the Lord to burn incense on the altar of incense.

It is possible that 2 Chronicles 26:16 has recontextualized the topic of proud heart in Proverbs 16. Pride was a cardinal sin in Chronicles (Dillard 1987:210). An example of his proud heart is shown. After Uzziah became powerful, he developed a proud heart. The result led to his downfall. He was unfaithful to the Lord and entered the temple of the Lord to burn incense on the altar. He did not believe in the limitations of human beings. In this case, the meaning of a proud heart can be his unfaithfulness to the Lord.

In 1 Samuel 2:3 the role of heart is more significant than any other organ. Human beings should not talk with a proud heart (1 Samuel 2:3). Only God sees and knows the heart, while human beings only see appearances (1 Samuel 16:7b). 'Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart (האדם יראה לעינים ויהוה יראה ללבב) (כי).' Similarly, in Psalm 131:1 a poet exclaims, 'My heart is not proud (לא גבה לבי) Oh Lord. My eyes are not haughty (ולא רמו עיני). I do not concern myself with great matters, or things too wonderful for me.'

This topic of proud heart is related to the topic of Yahweh such as commitment to

Yahweh and the fear of Yahweh. Proverbs 16:3 mentions that human beings should commit (לג) their deeds to the Lord. However, Proverbs 3:5-6 shows that human beings should trust (בטח) in the Lord with all their heart (בכל לבך). It is generally acknowledged that Proverbs 1-9 is later than Proverbs 10-22, even though Proverbs 1-9 is not attributed to the post-Exilic period (Perdue 2007:47).

16:3 **Commit to the Lord** whatever you do (גל אל יהוה מעשיך), and your plans will succeed

(ויכנו מחשבתיך).

3:5-6 **Trust in the Lord** with all your heart (בטח אל יהוה בכל לבך) and lean not on your own understanding. In all your days acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.

2 Chronicles 20:20 Early in the morning, they left for the desert of Tekoa. As they set out, Jehoshaphat stood and said, "Listen to me, Judah and people of Jerusalem! **Have faith in the Lord your God** (נימאה היהיב מכהלא) and you will be upheld (והאמנו). Have faith in his prophets and you will be successful.

The sentence that 'Roll<sup>29</sup> your actions towards Yahweh' can be used as the meaning 'Commit your actions to Yahweh (RSV).' Human beings should roll their deeds to the Lord. It means commitment to the Lord. However in 3:5, trust the Lord with heart (בטח אל יהוה בכל לבך) is used. Human beings should trust the Lord in all human activities. The role of the Lord is emphasised still more. While in Proverbs 16:3 your plans will succeed, in Proverbs 3:6 the Lord will make your paths straight. The role of the Lord is emphasised. In 2 Chronicles 20:20 Jehoshaphat exhorted the Israelite to 'have faith (האמינו)' in the Lord (Thompson 1994:294).

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<sup>29</sup> לג (commit) of 16:3 is Qal imperative masculine singular verb of ללג (roll).

In comparison with Proverbs 16 the topics of proud heart and the fear of Yahweh are strengthened in the later texts. Although these topics in Proverbs 16 are not the same as the later texts, Proverbs 16 still expresses the opinion that Yahweh detests the proud heart and humbleness is an essential part of religious and social life. The consequences will be punishment (verse 5). The commitment to Yahweh is essential for our success. It seems that later texts have a tendency to emphasise the voice of the maintenance of mystery such as trusting Yahweh and having faith in Yahweh wholeheartedly. The fact that they maintained the sphere of mystery in the universe reveals humbleness and greatness of understanding reality. Yet in comparison with later biblical texts, it seems that Proverbs 16 contains the strong voice of the search for order, even though the maintenance of mystery is still important.

### **3.3.4 Thematic Elaboration<sup>30</sup>**

The study of the intertexture of Proverbs 16 elaborates a particular theme. The particular theme is that human beings should search for order, maintaining the mystery and fearing the Lord. In a word, the concept of wisdom as the search for order should be based on the fear of the Lord. It explains the relationship between human beings and God and the world. As 1:7 introduces the idea that the fear of Yahweh is the beginning of wisdom, Proverbs 16 elaborates the theme. The rationale for the theme is that there are the order and the mystery of God in the world (verse 1, 9, and 33).

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<sup>30</sup> According to Robbins (1996:52), “a theme emerges in the form of a thesis near the beginning of a unit, and the meanings of this theme unfold through argumentation as the unit progresses.” The major topics for elaborating the theme are rationale, argument from the opposite, analogy, example, and authoritative testimony. The elaboration shows that a complete argument contains a rationale that supports the presupposition. Then it contains argumentation that confirms the rationale. After the confirmation of the rationale, embellishment follows.

The confirmation of the rationale is revealed through the entire book of Proverbs as well as Ancient Near East Literature. Proverbs 16 shows many examples of order as well as the limitations of human beings. Opening texture shows the examples of the maintenance of mystery, while middle texture focuses on the examples of the search for order. The fear of Yahweh does not only provide the voice of the search for order, but also the voice of the maintenance of mystery. Human beings cannot know the result of the human plan of heart. 'In his heart a man plans his course, but Yahweh determines his steps (16:9).' If someone does not recognise the limitations of human heart, he will have a proud heart.

As embellishment human heart is recommended to be a wise heart. The heart that fears the Lord can be called 'the wise heart', not 'proud heart.' The wise of heart is called discerning (16:21). The heart of the wise man guides his mouth (16: 23). The fear of Yahweh introduces wisdom to the human heart. Thus the concept of wisdom cannot be separated from the fear of Yahweh and his righteousness.

### **3.3.5 Preliminary Conclusion**

Based on the inner texture of Proverbs 16 the topics such as the limitation of human activities and the potential to search for wisdom and righteousness were investigated in the study of intertexture. The concept of the limitation of human beings and wisdom was discussed in the context of Proverbs 10-22 and the book of Proverbs. After that, the topics were compared with Wisdom Literature in Ancient Near East and Israel. The study of intertexture has elaborated the theme of Proverbs 16 as the coexistence of the search for order and the maintenance of mystery.

The limitation of human activity and the fear of the Lord, and the search for order are repeated in the book of Proverbs. As the voice of the limitation of human activity, both Proverbs 16:1 and 9 show similar patterns of the structure and content as in Proverbs 19:21. The texts say that there is a mysterious sphere that belongs to God alone. It is not a mystery itself, but it is in the mystery of Yahweh that human limitations are recognised. Even though human beings do not weigh their motives or their heart, only God can do (Proverbs 16:2 and 21:2). Thus human beings should depend on the Lord. The fear of the Lord is the recognition of the mystery of God in the world. Yet the fear of the Lord becomes a condition for blessing. Thus the fear of the Lord connects the maintenance of mystery to the search for order.

Together with the voice of the maintenance of mystery, the voice of the search for wisdom can be found in Proverbs 16. In Proverbs 10-22 and 25-29 the concept of wisdom is related to the search for order. Since a wise man has knowledge of steering life, he can store wealth. (21:20). A wise man attacks the city of the mighty and pulls down the stronghold in which they trust (21:22). The topic of wisdom is enlarged in Proverbs 1-9. The message that human beings should try to access and possess wisdom is clear. Blessed is the man who finds wisdom (3:13). Wisdom is more precious than any other valuable object (3:15). Wisdom is a tree of life to those who embrace her.

The topics of human limitation, the fear of the Lord, and the search for order in Proverbs 16 were investigated in the context of Wisdom Literature in the Ancient Near East. The expressions that there are inscrutabilities of God that the human heart cannot understand have parallels in Egyptian texts, too. Proverbs 16:1 and 16:9 are comparable

to these Ancient Near Eastern texts. In *Amenemopet* xiv:16 and xx:5 what human beings say is different from what god does. The Babylonian instruction can also be considered as comparison with Israelite wisdom. The idea of the fear of the deity is often found in Babylonian Wisdom Literature. The fear of the Lord in Proverbs 16 is not only a recognition of the human limitations, but also a search for order.

As the voices of human limitation and the fear of the Lord have common ground in the Ancient Near East, the search for order is also prevalent in the Ancient Near East. God is the one who keeps order, since God possesses balance. In Egyptian *Amenemope*, since the characteristic of God has justice or order, human beings should search for the order, which will please God. The justice or order of God was applied to the King. Since the King was the representative of God, the throne is found on righteousness (16:12). The righteousness can be compared with *Maat* of Egyptian mythology.

The topics of human limitation and the fear of the Lord are related to the topic of a proud heart. The topic of proud or humble hearts often occurs in the Old Testament. In comparison with Proverbs 16 the topics of a proud heart and the fear of Yahweh are strengthened in the later texts of the Old Testament. Although these topics in Proverbs 16 are not the same as in later texts, Proverbs 16 still holds the opinion that Yahweh detests the proud heart and that humbleness is an essential part of religious and social life. It seems that later texts have a tendency to emphasise trusting Yahweh and having faith in Yahweh with all one's heart. Yet in comparison with later biblical texts, Proverbs 16 contains the strong voice of the search for order, even though the maintenance of mystery is still important.

The study of the intertexture of Proverbs 16 elaborated some particular themes. A particular theme was that human beings should search for order, maintaining mystery and fearing the Lord. In a word, the search for order as the concept of wisdom should be based on the fear of the Lord. The rationale for the theme is that there are order and mystery of God in the world. The confirmation of the rationale is the intertexture of Proverbs 16. The book of Proverbs and Wisdom Literature in the Ancient Near East show many examples of both the search for order and the maintenance of mystery.

### **3.4 Social and Cultural Texture<sup>31</sup>**

#### **3.4.1 Introduction**

The study of intertexture of Proverbs 16 elaborated the theme of Proverbs 16 as the coexistence of the search for order and the maintenance of the mystery, since there were order and mystery of God in the book of Proverbs and in the context Ancient Near East. This theme can reflect society and culture where Proverbs 16 was written. The search for wisdom and the maintenance of the mystery is a product of the Monarchic period. For understanding the social and cultural texture of Proverbs 16, the researcher will deal with the discussion of scholarship regarding the social and cultural setting of Proverbs 16. Proverbs 16 will reflect a social and cultural voice of the sage or the scribe in the Monarchic period.

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<sup>31</sup> Investigation of the social and cultural texture of a text means that the social scientific approach is utilised in the studies of the Old Testament. Especially sociology and cultural anthropology have provided substantial contributions to the study of society and culture of ancient Israel and of the background of the Old Testament. Instead of concentrating predominantly on national events, leading individual, and social scholars dealt with broader and more basic issues such as social organization, and conditions in cities and villages (Blenkinsopp 1995:vii). Analysis and interpretation of the social and cultural location of the text and the social and cultural world that the text reflects can reveal a fuller understanding of various topics of the book of Proverbs.

After the discussion of the social setting of Proverbs 16, one will deal with the social topics and cultural category of Proverbs 16. According to Robbins (1996:72) the social and cultural texture of a text can be exhibited by “specific social topics and cultural categories” and they can reveal the potential of the text to encourage its readers to adopt certain social and cultural locations and orientations rather than others. Wilson (1973:18) and Robbins (1996:72) classified seven types of specific social topics, based on a cross-cultural spectrum of religious groups. They are conversionist, revolutionist, introversionist, manipulationist, thaumaturgical, reformist, and utopian responses.

Robbins (1996:86) also introduced cultural categories of rhetoric as final topics described by Aristotle. Those topics identify one’s cultural location. These topics separate people in terms of dominant culture, subculture, counterculture, contraculture, and liminal culture, even though there is overlapping between them.<sup>32</sup> Considered as a specific social type Proverbs 16 can show a manipulationist type, even though it still contains the element of a thaumaturgical type. Proverbs 16 can also reflect the dominant or subcultural perspectives, at the same time maintaining other voices of remaining cultures.

### **3.4.2 Social Setting of Proverbs 16**

Before investigating the social and cultural texture of Proverbs 16, one should deal with the discussion of scholarship concerning the social setting of the book of Proverbs. The authorship and the social context of Proverbs have been much debated. Hermisson

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<sup>32</sup> Since cultures are not closed, there is a necessary tension between the dominant culture and countercultures or subcultures (Bühl 1997:748).



(1968) proposed that Wisdom Literature such as Proverbs was composed for use in Israelite schools connected to the royal court. However, Westermann (1995) and Golka (1993) proposed that the middle section of Proverbs (chapters 10-29) contained mostly oral sayings originating from the daily life of ordinary people such as farmers and labourers. In terms of style it has been argued that the artistic sayings are the product of highly skilled writers, and thus would not have originated among ordinary people (Murphy 1998:xxi). There is no perfect solution. Rather both the family and court school such as the activity of Hezekiah's men (Proverbs 25:1), should be recognised in the history of the development of Proverbs.

The collections in Proverbs with some exceptions may have originated during the Monarchic period.<sup>33</sup> Frydrych (2002:213) looks for the origins of the proverbial outlook in the pre-Monarchic and the early Monarchic periods. Family based, rather than nation based identity and socio economic independence of small family units fit the proverbial profile best. In such a setting the wicked would indeed more often than not suffer and the righteous prosper, simply due to the economic forces at work in such a small and independent community. Perdue (2007:38) also acknowledges that Israel's wisdom tradition originated in the Monarchic period, as early as the time of the Davidic-Solomonic empire.

It is obvious that the most of Proverbs 10-22 was based on family solidarity and the clan households largely related by blood and marriage. This social principle originated during the pre-Monarchic period and continued to function in a later period. As the title

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<sup>33</sup>The Sayings of Agur (chapter 30) and the Words of Lemuel (chapter 31) are attributed to a later period.

of collections attributes Proverbs 10-22 and 25-29 to Solomon, there was writing or correction in the early Monarchic period. Furthermore, there is a possibility that some part of Proverbs 10-22 was edited in the later period, when the scribes of Hezekiah collected Proverbs 25-29. For Perdue (2007:38),<sup>34</sup> a full-scale administration largely made up of offices and scribes located throughout the kingdom of Judah did not appear until the reign of Hezekiah. However, the researcher agrees with the scholars (Boström 1990:16, Frydrych 2002:213, Clifford 2009a:657), that the most part of Proverbs 10-22 and 25-29 can be attributed to the early Monarchic period.

Proverbs 16 is a literary product rather than a mere recording of an earlier oral tradition. The wisdom tradition and ideals originating from the pre-Monarchic era continued to be cultivated and adhered to even when the Monarchy came into place. Scribes under the direction of a royal court and priestly hierarchy would have been involved in the administration of these increasingly important and related institutions. The elegance of the language strongly supports the view that highly educated and skilled scribes or sages produced this book. From observation of the world, the scribes developed sayings that were designed to shape social and behavioural existence and to shape the righteous order of the social group and the community in which they functioned.

A social group in the Monarchy would have been formed in a school-like tradition (Perdue 2007:46). The direct evidence for the existence of schools in ancient Israel during the First temple is sparse. Yet there were some brief indications of royal schools

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<sup>34</sup> Perdue (2007) insists that most of Proverbs originated in the period of the Late Israelite/Judahite monarchy, while post-Exilic scribes were responsible for editing the book of Proverbs as a compendium of sapiential teachings, forms, literary features and religious teaching during the Persian period.

in Kings 12:8 and 10:2; Kings 10:1, 5-6; 2 Chronicle 17:7-9. There were temple schools in Isa 28:7-13 and 2 Chronicles 22:11, wisdom schools (Proverbs 5:13; 17:16), and prophetic schools in 2 Kings 6:1-2; Isa 8:16; 28:9; 50:4-9. The existence of scribal schools in Egypt and Mesopotamia and the similarities in language, thought, activity, and formal instruction enables the reader to assume that the first educational institutions in Israel were inspired by Egyptian schools and that some part of Proverbs, including Proverbs 16 served as learning material in these institutions.

The cultural traditions were available to Israelite and Jewish scribes who comprised the court officials, teachers in the royal school, composers of narratives and literature and archivists of a variety of documents. Israel's scribes were part of the scribal groups in the cultural regions of the Eastern Mediterranean world and were well acquainted with the literatures of the Fertile Crescent. The scribes of Israel and early Judaism acknowledged that they were part of an international group of intellectuals whose wisdom was accessible to the wise of the various cultures (1 Kings 5:9-14). Thus it would be unwise to ignore cultural engagement and appropriations (Perdue 2007:13).

### **3.4.3 Specific Social Topics**

Texts with a substantive religious texture can contain specific ways of talking about the world. According to Robbins (1996:72), there are seven types of specific social topics. They are conversionist, revolutionist, introversionist, manipulationist, thaumaturgical, reformist, and utopian responses. According to Wilson (1973:53) the majority of religious responses arising in less developed societies, manifest thaumaturgical and revolutionist responses, even though some of them continue over long periods of time.

The thaumaturgical response is the belief in supernatural communications and manifestations of power. It focuses on the individual's concern for relief from present and specific ills by special dispensation (Robbins 1996:73). "The request for supernatural help is personal and local, and its operation is magical. Salvation takes the form of healing, restoration after loss, reassurance, the foresight and avoidance of calamity and the guarantee of eternal life after death." Thaumaturgy is the primal element of primitive religion. The working of miracle is found very widely in almost all preliterate societies. The exorcism of ghosts and the miraculous healing continues as evidence of persisting thaumaturgical demand.

A revolutionist response is also a common type in less developed societies and especially in non literate cultures (Wilson 1973:61). It is to declare that only the destruction of the world will suffice to save men. This process of destruction must be supernaturally wrought, for men lack the power. Believers may themselves feel called upon to participate in the process of overturning the world. For Wilson (1973:502), human beings' dream of supernatural or revolutionist solutions for personal and social problems does not entirely disappear even in advanced societies in which social relationships are predominantly organised according to empirical and rational principles, but both thaumaturgical and revolutionist become marginal and attenuated.

Proverbs 16 is no exception to this phenomenon, since Proverbs 16 is a product of ancient Israelite society. One can recognise the supernatural element of thaumaturgical response, even though manipulationist response prevails much more than thaumaturgical response. In Proverbs 16 one can find some elements of thaumaturgical

response. In 16:1 and 9 the expression that the answer of the tongue comes from the Lord and the Lord directs his steps belongs to supernatural mystery (Murphy 1996:12). It evokes a desire to become the pious who fear the Lord. By the fear of the Lord one departs from evil. Proverbs 16:10-15 contains some thaumaturgical responses. Divination is on the lips of the kings. Their mouths must not transgress in judgment (16:10).<sup>35</sup>

Despite certain aspects of thaumaturgical response, Proverbs 16 mainly reflects the manipulationist response. Whereas revolutionists seek a transformed world, the manipulationist response is to seek only a transformed set of relationships and a transformed method of coping with evil (Wilson 1973:24). According to manipulationists, salvation is possible in the world and evil might be overcome if human beings learn the right means and improved techniques, to deal with their problems. This orientation concerns the provision of timeless happiness for human beings. Salvation is a present, immediate, and permanent possibility. This response is related to everyday wellbeing, and this wellbeing may be obtained by learning universal principles concerning human beings and a world.

Proverbs 16 reveals a manipulationist response to the world. In 16:7, if one pleases Yahweh, social relationships will be restored, since the fear of Yahweh can amend social structure. The man whose conduct earns Yahweh's pleasing (תוצרב הוהי) is at the same time one who radiates social reconciliation (Proverbs 16:7). His righteousness enables

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<sup>35</sup> Here divination can be a metaphor for special insight given to the king for the proper performance of his duties (Clifford 1999:159).

him to incorporate his enemies in the wholeness of his own life (Murphy 1998:121). The righteous or good or the upright man has a therapeutic power to mend broken relationships and to repair evidences of alienation and divisiveness in the society.

According to Wilson (1973:42) a manipulationist movement can develop only when metaphysical thinking has been developed within the religio-philosophical traditions of the society. They appear to arise in achievement oriented societies, where physical, economic and social wellbeing are open to at least some measures of competitive action. Therefore Proverbs 16 reflects the status of developed court scribes for the kingship. Social reconciliation was essential to the maintenance of kingship. It is an abomination to kings when someone else commits evil (16:12).

#### **3.4.4 Cultural Categories**

As Aristotle described such topics, Robbins (1996:86) introduced cultural categories of rhetoric. Those topics identify one's cultural location. They separate people in terms of dominant culture, subculture, counterculture, contraculture, and liminal culture. As mentioned before, dominant culture rhetoric is supported by social structures, and subculture rhetoric imitates the dominant culture, and it claims to enact them better than members of a dominant status. Counterculture rhetoric evokes the creation of a better society, but not by violent opposition to the dominant culture (Robbins 1996:87), while contraculture rhetoric is a reaction formation response to some form of dominant culture, subculture, or counterculture rhetoric. Liminal culture is at the outer edge of identity. Seen from these cultural categories, Proverbs 16 exhibits either dominant culture or subcultural rhetoric. Proverbs 16 exhibits the power of the King and temple (McKane

1970:488). In Proverbs 16:1-25:27, the King is mentioned twenty four times. The word of God supports the kingship. Divination is on the lips of the King (16:10). The King detests committing wickedness, and loves him who speaks what is right. Therefore, the texture of Proverbs 16 demands that one should obey God and the King and keep the law. It is significant for subjects to obey God and the King for stability of kingdom. When the King smiles on an official, it is life for him (verse 16:5), and when he frowns, it is death (McKane 1970:488). Commit your works to the Lord, and your thoughts will be established (16:3).

It is undesirable to protest Yahweh and kings. Any criticism of the institution of the monarchy or any indication of misrule is rare. The gracious words are essential for them, since the gracious words are a honeycomb (Proverbs 16:24). It is sweet to the palate and a tonic for the body. Honey is pleasant to the taste and had medicinal value, and so it is also with gracious words, which are palatable to those to whom they are addressed.

The sages valued wealth for its many benefits and regarded it as a divine gift for following the discipline of the wisdom tradition (Proverbs 10:2, 15; 13:8; 14:20; 18:16, 23; 19:4). In addition, diligence and hard work were believed to result in riches (10:4-5). As a result the sages tended to deprecate poverty, which brought with it many limitations and dreadful consequences (14:20; 18:23; 22:7). Poverty was a wretched state to be avoided if possible (10:15). Wealth was considered as a reward for orderly and moral existence (Perdue 2007:61). Consequently, one can say that the main cultural category of Proverbs 16 reflects the dominant or subdominant aristocratic elite with power, position, and wealth.

Even though Israel's sages exhibit their dominant or subdominant position, they were sometimes critical of the powerful and rich whose behaviour led to their harsh treatment of the indigent (14:41). They might reflect counterculture or alternative culture rhetoric. They expected those who were God fearing wise men and women to treat the poor with justice and to sustain them in their degrading destitution. Wealth and poverty were viewed as part of the order of society. The sages expected the righteous to care for those who lived in the midst of scarcity and need.

Contraculture or liminal culture rhetoric can be found in Proverbs 16. The recognition that there is limitation in human activity can serve as contracultural rhetoric in the prevailing confidence in retribution. It explains that poverty is not always bad. Righteousness can stay with poverty. 'Better a little with righteousness than much gain with injustice (16:8).' In Proverbs 16 one can also find the suffering state of the laborers. Since they should labour in even harder circumstances, hunger forces them to work (Clifford 1999:161). Without that labour, they will be hungry. 'The person who labors labors for himself, for his hungry mouth drives him (Proverbs 16:26).'

The fact that Proverbs 16 reveals dominant or subdominant culture positions mainly shows that the texts were written or edited for social security or order by those in dominant positions. For the purpose of kingdom security, court scribes required an explanation for disorder or chaos of the society. They suggested that even though there are inscrutabilities they do not understand, kingship should be established safely, since it is the order that God provided. Nevertheless, they did not deny other minor voices such as contraculture responses and liminal culture. Thus the dominant voice with minor



contraculture in Proverbs 16 contributed to the strong voice of the search for order, maintaining the mystery.

### **3.4.5 Preliminary Conclusion**

The social and cultural texture of Proverbs 16 exhibited the social and cultural location of Proverbs 16. The social setting of Proverbs 10-22 was based on family and clan solidity in the early Monarchic period representing Solomon, even though there is a possibility that some part of Proverbs 10-22, including Proverbs 16 was edited in the later period, when the scribes of Hezekiah collected Proverbs 25-29. Proverbs 16 as a present literary text reflects the spirits of temple and kingdom in the Monarchic period. Scribes or the sages under the direction of a royal court and priestly hierarchy would have been involved in the administration of these institutions.

A social group in the Monarchy would have been formed in a school-like tradition. The educational institutions in Israel could be inspired by an Egyptian school and some part of Proverbs, including Proverbs 16 served as learning material in these institutions. The social status of scribes reflects that of the aristocratic elite with power, position, and wealth. That is the reason why any criticism of the institution of the monarchy is rare. In Proverbs 16 the King is mentioned five times. Israel's sages were part of the scribal groups in the cultural regions of the Eastern Mediterranean world. Wisdom was accessible to the wise of the various cultures. As specific social topics, Proverbs 16 contains manipulationist and thaumaturgical discourse. In 16:1 and 9 one can find some element of thaumaturgical response. They belong to supernatural mystery. The topics make human beings fear the Lord. By the fear of the Lord one departs from evil (16:6).

The lips of the King resemble the Lord. Divination is on the lips of the kings, so his mouth must not transgress in judgment (16:10). Despite some aspect of thaumaturgical response, Proverbs 16 reveals a manipulationist response which can be found in much developed societies. The fear of Yahweh can amend social structure (16:7). His righteousness enables him to incorporate his enemies in the wholeness of his own life. The righteous or good or the upright man has a therapeutic power to mend broken relationships.

As cultural categories, Proverbs 16 reflects either a dominant culture or a subcultural voice. Like Mesopotamia and Egypt, the Monarchy of Israel might have experienced an economy centralized in temple. The King and priests held authority. Proverbs 16 exhibits such power of the King and temple. Subjects should obey God and the King for stability of kingdom. The throne has stability only where there is a broad base of social justice that is not undermined by the wrongdoing of any subjects. The texture of Proverbs 16 demands that one should obey God and the King and keep the law for social order. It is undesirable to protest Yahweh and the King.

Despite the dominant voice of Proverbs 16, it can also reflect counterculture or alternative culture rhetoric, since they expected those who were God fearing wise men and women to treat the poor with justice. In contrast to the ruling elite, there is the voice of peasant or labourer who should labour in spite of a little revenue. Without that labour, they will be hungry (Proverbs 16:26).<sup>7</sup> To be satisfied with a little is to be humble, but to keep and divide the spoil is to be proud (Proverbs 16:13).<sup>7</sup> The recognition of limitations in human activity can serve as contracultural or liminal rhetoric in the strict society of

retribution, showing the voice of the maintenance of mystery.

The texture of Proverbs 16 reflects several voices, even though a voice of king or a group of elite scribes predominates. This phenomenon explains the coexistence of various voices in a text. Nevertheless, Proverbs 16 appears to emphasise the importance of social order as the social cultural demand, while maintaining the voice of mystery. Those topics will be more fully dealt with in the next chapter, which will be ideological and theological texture.

## **3.5 Ideological and Theological Texture<sup>36</sup>**

### **3.5.1 Introduction**

The theme of the coexistence of the search for wisdom and the limitation of human beings was suggested by the study of the inner texture of Proverbs 16. The study of intertexture of Proverbs 16 explains the theme as the coexistence of the search for order and the maintenance of mystery in the Ancient Near East. The theme was the product of the social and cultural background of the Monarchic period. All these textures of Proverbs 16 provide the foundation of the ideological and theological texture of Proverbs 16. Ideological and theological texture shows the ideology and the theology of

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<sup>36</sup> The interest in ideological texture is the social, cultural and individual location and perspective of writers and readers. This means that the analysis of the ideological texture exists at the opposite end of the spectrum from analysis of the inner texture of a text. According to Robbins (1996:95), while inner texture concerns the text itself, ideological texture concerns the biases, opinions, preferences, and stereotypes of a particular writer and a particular reader. This thesis will focus on the individual location and perspective of royal kings and scribes who were referred to by the writer or editor of Proverbs 16. A special characteristic of ideological analysis is its focus on the relation of individual people to groups. Rather than one person's particular way of thinking, a person's ideology concerns his or her conscious or unconscious enactment of presuppositions, dispositions and values held in common with other people (Robbins 1996:95). Thus a definition of ideology is "an integrated system of beliefs, assumptions and values that reflects the needs and interests of a group or class at a particular time in history."

Proverbs 16.

While Proverbs 16 reflects the royal ideology of the Israelite kingdom, it also shows the creation theology of ancient Israel. Both the ideology and the theology explain the relationship between Yahweh and the King, Yahweh and people, and people and the world. Royal ideology focuses on the status of the King and the stability of the kingship. Facing this ideology, the sage as the author of Proverbs 16 suggests the creation theology, which conveys the coexistence of the search for order and the maintenance of mystery. Both royal ideology and creation theology are found in the relationship between Yahweh and the King, Yahweh and human beings, and human beings and the world.

### **3.5.2 Yahweh and King**

Based on the previous various textures of Proverbs 16, the ideology and theology in the relationship between Yahweh and the King will be investigated. On the one hand, Proverbs 16 demands that one should obey both God and the King for the stability of the kingdom. The King is identified with God. On the other hand, the King should be righteous, fearing Yahweh. The relationship between two characters is a central topic of Proverbs 16 as well as the Old Testament. This relationship reflects royal ideology of the Ancient Near Eastern Nation,<sup>37</sup> where deities and kingship played central roles in

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<sup>37</sup> In *Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament* (2006), Walton examined the continuity and discontinuity between Old Testament and Ancient Near East. It is acceptable that one can find both continuity and discontinuity in between the Old Testament and the Ancient Near East. Some aspects of Yahweh may remain in continuity with the rest of the ancient world. The gods in the Ancient Near East experienced the whole range of human emotions such as joy, sorrow, and anger. They are familiar with Yahweh in the Bible. However, as discontinuity, Yahweh does not show shame and fear unlike other gods in the Ancient Near East (Walton 2007:104). God of Israel, however, is one and has no origin.

society and civilization.

In the Ancient world the King stood between the divine and human realism mediating the power of the deity (Clifford 1999:158). The King communed with the gods. He was responsible for maintaining justice and for the performance of the cult. The King in Egypt was, on the whole, divinized to a higher degree than kings in the other cultures. An Egyptian hymn to *Re* provides the origin of kingship and the role of the King (Walton 2006:279). *Re* has placed the King in the land of the living forever and ever, judging humankind and satisfying the gods, realizing *Maat* and destroying *Izfet*. The King gives offerings to the gods and mortuary offerings to the deceased. In Egypt the acts of Pharaoh were the acts of deity.<sup>38</sup>

On the Mesopotamian side, the King was elected by the gods and adopted as the sons of gods (Walton 2006:279). The kingship was governed by an agreement that existed between the King and the gods. If kings lost touch with deity, divine patronage could be forfeit and divine authority withdrawn. Kings had to make efforts to learn the will of gods. Even though they are not portrayed as gods, they are sometimes treated as gods.

The ideology in Proverbs 16 had the common element with royal ideology of the rest of the Ancient Near East, although with discontinuity. The King shared the divine nature

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<sup>38</sup> The position and the role of kings, however, have a tendency to change throughout the history, as Ray (1998:21) in *Wisdom in Ancient Israel* shows the examples. In *the Instruction for Merikare*, one can find unprecedented things in Egyptian literature because of the degree of selfcriticism which the king reveals and the stress he lays upon divine judgment for misdeeds, even those done by Pharaohs. Neferkare and the General Sisene mention that the previous system collapsed because of moral depravity. In Papyrus Westcar, the Pharaoh Cheops is shown as arbitrary and overbearing features which are in conflict with the idea of *Maat*.

and played the role as of the representative of Yahweh. The King stood between the divine and human realms mediating the power of Yahweh. The King enjoyed Yahweh's favour and protection. Since the early Monarchic period the need to legitimize the new political power might force the addition of major features borrowed from other nations. The court ideologists of David and Solomon used Egyptian and Mesopotamian precedents to develop a new ideology of kingship (Scott 1965:XXX; Boström 1990:20; Clifford 1999:3). Williams R J (1981) advocated the Egyptian influence upon Israel and pointed to a number of factors that indicate that this was the case especially in Solomon's and Hezekiah's days. According to the ideology, the King was commissioned by him to bring the whole world to bow down to him as the incarnate son of Yahweh.

The middle texture of Proverbs 16, Proverbs 16:10-15 emphasises a special relationship between Yahweh and the King. In an article, *Die Struktur von Proverbia 16:1-15*, Pola (1995:43) considered Proverbs 16:1-15 as *rhetorische Duplik* which reflects royal ideology. Pola (1995:63) explains that while Proverbs 16:1-9 shows the contrast of human beings with Yahweh, Proverbs 16:10-15 exhibits the *Einklang* between Yahweh and the King. The topic of Yahweh (16:1-9) and kings (16:10-15) is the intention of an editor for identifying Yahweh with the King. With Yahweh's greatness in Proverbs 16:1-9, the greatness of the King prevails in Proverbs 16:10-15.

Even though the royal ideology in Proverbs 16 can be heard, the ideology is not all. The royal ideology is challenged by the theology found in Proverbs 16. One of the main

theologies of Israel is creation theology which means Yahweh is a real king,<sup>39</sup> since Yahweh is the creator of the universe and of human beings. Even though the earthly King can exist in a court, there is only one sovereign King who is Yahweh. Whybray (1994a:88-89) insists that “joining of the topics of Yahweh and the King together serves a double purpose. On the one hand, it teaches that kings rule by divine permission and are Yahweh’s representatives on earth, but, on the other, that as human beings kings have this authority only if they acknowledge their subordinate status and rule righteously.” That is the creation theology on which the sage as the author or editor of Proverbs 16 depended.

After encountering the royal ideology of the king and priests, the theology of the sage or the scribe played a critical role regarding the ruling class. For the sage, Yahweh was the King. The sage urged human beings including the earthly king to fear Yahweh and to maintain the mystery of Yahweh, since Yahweh’s role as a sovereign King involves his mystery. Yahweh has the freedom to enact his will. Yahweh rules even chance, as symbolized by his rule over the casting of dice (16:33). Nevertheless, the creation theology of Yahweh as a King caused earthly kings to keep a social order and obey the law of Yahweh. As a sovereign king in heaven, Yahweh made the scales that the earthly King uses to administer fair weight and measures (16:11). Thus this coexistence of order and mystery is explained in the relationship between Yahweh and the King.

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<sup>39</sup> The theology that Yahweh is a real king of the universe can be found in different biblical contexts or different periods. Even the book of Proverbs, including Proverbs 16 shows some element of Yahweh as a universal king.

### 3.5.3 Yahweh and Human Beings.

As both royal ideology and creation theology was shown in the relationship between Yahweh and the King, they can also be found in the relationship between God and human beings. In the Monarchic period, the creation theology in Proverbs 16 challenged the royal ideology, contributing to the status of human beings. Israel had a different understanding of the status of human beings<sup>40</sup> in the context of the Ancient Near Eastern Nations.

In the creation theology of Israel, Yahweh created all in the world including kings. The relationship between Yahweh and human beings is like the relationship between parents and children. While Yahweh takes care of human beings, human beings should obey Yahweh. In a word, the relationship can be explained as the fear of the Lord. The fear of the Lord is the key to Proverbs (Waltke 2002:100; Murphy 1998:5), since Proverbs is based on the fear of the Lord (1:7). This fear of Yahweh (16: 6) was mentioned in the last verse of the previous chapter 15. The creation theology that human beings including the King should fear Yahweh can challenge the royal ideology, since Yahweh is the only God that human beings should serve and fear.

Instead of guaranteeing the security of the king and the kingdom, creation theology allows human beings to search for order, maintaining mystery. What is life searching for

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<sup>40</sup> All across the ancient world there was interest in exploring the divine component of human beings and the ontological relationship between human beings and gods (Walton 2007:215). Human beings derived from a divine action and their dignity was the product of a relationship with deity. One aspect of this can be seen on an Akkadian word play that connects the term for man (*awilu*) with the term for god (*ilu*). Sumerian and Akkadian sources portray people as having been created to do the work of the gods and the work that they were tired of doing for themselves. In Mesopotamia the cosmos functions for the gods and in relation to them. People are an afterthought, seen as just another part of the cosmos that helps the gods function. Egyptian sources offer no explanation for the creation of human beings.



order and maintaining mystery? The fear of Yahweh is a religious activity searching for order and maintaining mystery. If only human beings fear Yahweh, they will be successful in every sphere of life. For the security of the King and kingdom, human beings should fear the Lord. Human plans will be successful only if they are committed to him (verse 3). The possession of the favour of Yahweh will bring security from the hostile intentions of enemies (verse 7). For the fear of Yahweh, human beings should be moral and righteous. Proverbs 16:17 commands human beings to avoid evil. Anyone who departs from evil will preserve his soul. Obedience to his moral demands is the only guarantee of safety, and can cancel out previous sin (16:6). Thus the fear of Yahweh has a good consequence, since it is the order of Yahweh.

For the fear of Yahweh, it is necessary that human beings should remain humble, and not proud. The topic of humble or proud heart was a central topic of inner texture and intertexture of Proverbs 16. Yahweh detests everyone with a proud heart (16:5a). The humble person who fears Yahweh can recognise the human limitation and the mystery of God. The acknowledgement of the limitation of human ways leads human beings to commitment to Yahweh (16:3). Thus Proverbs 16 shows the relationship between Yahweh and human beings as the fear of Yahweh. This relationship explains the creation theology as coexistence of order and mystery, challenging the royal ideology for the security of kingdom.

### **3.5.4 Human Beings and the World**

Like the relationship between Yahweh and human beings, creation theology is found in the relationship between human beings and the world. Royal ideology of the kingdom

demanded that human beings should follow the order of the kingdom. That is the obedience of human beings to the King and social class.<sup>41</sup> In Proverbs 16 one can find a voice of that kind of ideology. Human beings should please the King. The favour of the King is life. In the order of the kingdom the King is like God. Human beings could not avoid the order of the kingdom and it was impossible to listen to other voices such as the voice of the limitation of the King.

In facing the royal ideology, the sage of Proverbs 16 suggested creation theology as both the search for order and the maintenance of mystery. In the context that social order is needed, the sage exhibits the search for divine order, rather than the order of the kingdom. According to the creation theology, human beings including the king should search for the order that Yahweh has ordained. That is not only the fear of Yahweh, but also the search for order. The search for order appeared in the search for wisdom.

When the world was created by God, God's divine wisdom was active in the creative process and continued to influence the progress of worldly affairs. As wisdom can be found in the structures and relationships of the world, so it continues to shape and order human life. Yahweh's order applies to human life and society. "The predictability of this

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<sup>41</sup> In the cosmology of the ancient world, creation takes place by giving things order, function, and purpose, which is synonymous with giving them existence. Egyptians conceived of the precreation state as opposite to the created state. For them, creation is the process through which the One became the Many. In Mesopotamia, the status of precreation is personified in the conflict myths that recount jeopardy to the created order. The threatening creatures must be overthrown and order reestablished (Walton 2007:185). Once established, the order that exists in the cosmos is constantly threatened. The gods are responsible for reestablishing order day by day. Compared with surrounding nations, the creation of the universe in Israel shared some common elements in the Ancient Near East, particularly in the concept of order and chaos. Yahweh also established order from chaos through the process of creation. However, for Israel, the creation of the universe and the provision of the order for the universe were done by the activity of Yahweh (Frydrych 2002:107). It was unnecessary to divide a god or interject a god. Yahweh only commanded the waters to be divided.

order, albeit subject to exception, is due to its fixed nature, but due to the implied stability of Yahweh's character" (Frydrych 2002:107). Thus human beings and the world are connected to each other in the order of Yahweh. Human beings including the king should 'search for' the order. Even though searching for the order is not easy, human beings have the potential to acquire the order, only if they try to. The result of the search for order can be the life of righteousness and wisdom.

Despite the optimism regarding the search for order, the creation theology of Proverbs 16 maintained the voice of mystery. Especially the relationship between human beings and the world explains the mysterious inscrutabilities that human beings should encounter in life (Proverbs 16:1, 9, 33). A divine sphere is acknowledged which human beings cannot control. Proverbs 10-22 exhibits evidence of an ongoing tension between the mysterious sphere of life (Brueggemann 2002:176), acknowledging that the definitive claims and assumptions of wisdom concerning order are not adequate. They admit that even the wise must face the storms of life (Proverbs 10:25).

### **3.5.5 Conclusion**

Based on the various preceding textures of Proverbs 16, both ideological and theological perspectives were discussed in an integrated way. The relationships between Yahweh and the King, Yahweh and human beings, and human beings and the world were discussed. In every relationship, one can find both royal ideology and creation theology. While the royal ideology of the King and the priests focused on the security of the kingdom, creation theology suggested both the search for order and the maintenance of mystery.

The relationship between Yahweh and the King can be explained as an Israelite theology as well as a royal ideology of the Ancient Near East. Ideologically, for the stability of the King and kingdom, the support of Yahweh was essential. The King was the representative of Yahweh and his subjects should obey the King, which contributed to social order and security. Facing this ideology, the particular theology of Israel made even the King seek for the order of Yahweh, since Yahweh is a real King. The theology of Yahweh as the King caused all human beings including earthly kings to keep divine order and obey the law of Yahweh. The existence of Yahweh as a real King explains the coexistence of order and mystery in Proverbs 16. As the intertexture and social and cultural texture of Proverbs 16 show it, the role of Yahweh seems more emphasized, while the position and role of the King becomes weaker, in contrast with the Ancient Near East.

In the relationship between Yahweh and human beings creation theology allows human beings to search for order, maintaining mystery. The fear of Yahweh is religious activity searching for order and maintaining mystery. If only human beings fear Yahweh, they will be successful in every sphere of life. Yahweh provides the human beings who fear Yahweh with what is indispensable to life. The theology that there is an order of Yahweh in the world and that Yahweh controls everything with justice leads human beings to fear Yahweh. At the same time the acknowledgement of limitations of human ways leads human beings to commitment to Yahweh (16:3). Thus this relationship as fear of Yahweh explains the coexistence of order and mystery. In the context of the Ancient Near East, the position and role of human beings are emphasised.

Creation theology is found in the relationship between human beings and the world. Royal ideology of the kingdom demanded that human beings should follow the order of the kingdom. That is the obedience of human beings to the King and priests. In facing the royal ideology, the sages of Proverbs 16 described creation theology as the search for divine order, rather than the order of the kingdom. According to the creation theology, human beings including the King should search for the order that Yahweh has ordained. That is not only the fear of Yahweh, but also the search for order. This appears in the form of the search for wisdom.

Despite the prevailing voice of the search for order in Proverbs 16, the creation theology of Proverbs 16 maintained the voice of mystery. Human beings should encounter the mysterious inscrutabilities in life (Proverbs 16:1, 9, 33). It is acknowledged that human beings cannot control the divine sphere. Proverbs 10-22 exhibits evidence of an ongoing tension between the mysterious sphere of life (Brueggemann 2002:176), acknowledging that the definitive claims and assumptions of wisdom concerning order are not adequate. They admit that even the wise must face the storms of life (Proverbs 10:25). Yet in the creation theology Proverbs 16 emphasises the search for order, maintaining mystery, reflecting the context of the monarchic period.

## CHAPTER 4 JOB 28

### 4.1 Introduction

The previous study of Proverbs 16 significantly indicated the relationship between order and mystery. The voice of order prevailed, accompanied by the marginalized voice of mystery. In this chapter, it is also significant to investigate the book of Job, focusing on Job 28, since the date of Job 28 as well as the book of Job was attributed to the post-Exilic period,<sup>42</sup> which is much later than that of Proverbs 16. The book of Job reflects the social cultural context of the period. For many scholars (Loader 1979:122, Westermann 1995:110), both the book of Job and the book of Ecclesiastes have been considered as Wisdom Crisis in Wisdom Tradition.

Though Job 28 itself has been regarded as a brilliant poem in the biblical literature, the position or function of Job 28 in the book of Job has been debated. Many scholars (Pope 1965:xxvii, Rowley 1970:234, Perdue 1991:84, Clines 2006:926) have attributed Job 28 to a later editor, since Job 28 does not have a connection with its context and is not part of the argument.<sup>43</sup> Yet some recent scholars (Murphy 1996:41, Strauss 2000:157, Newsom 2003a:170) show that Job 28 can reflect the intention of the author of the book with the speech of God (Job 38-41), since the themes such as transcendent wisdom and

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<sup>42</sup> When the date of the book is mentioned, it means the date when the entire book was written. Oral tradition about Job or some written fragments of the book might have early antecedents which no one can date. Although some scholars (Pope 1965:xxxvii, Kaufmann 1972:338) attribute the date of Job to the pre-Exilic period, most scholars (Blenkinsopp 1995:28, Clements 1998:152) consider it as post-Exilic period (BCE 6-5th century).

<sup>43</sup> One can argue that Job 28 does not represent the book of Job, because it is considered to be a later addition. Yet Job 28 can be written by the author of the dialogue and show the intention of the author. This Wisdom Poem criticizes the limitations of Wisdom Dialogue by strategically refraining the concrete conflicts of the dialogue, anticipating the speeches of Yahweh (Newsom 2003:26).

the fear of the Lord provide a crucial key to the understanding of the book of Job.

In the Prologue (chapters 1-2), Job was the righteous person and the one who feared God and shunned evil (Job 1:1). Despite desperate disaster, he still praised God and continued to fear God. Yet after Job's friends came to Job, the dialogue between Job and his three friends had changed into argument or debate. While Job's friends regarded Job or his children as the cause of the disaster on the basis of the doctrine of retribution, Job contended that he was righteous and God's justice or the doctrine of retribution was problematic.

After three cycles of dialogue (Job 3-27), Job 28 exhibits a beautiful poem or song in Job 28 (Van Wolde 1997:88), bridging the previous chapters (chapters 3-27) with the following chapters (chapters 29-37), as well as anticipating the speech of God (chapters 38-41). The topics of wisdom and the fear of the Lord occur in Job 28. As Proverbs 16 showed the relationship between order and mystery, Job 28 can still reflect a unique voice regarding the relationship. Through this study of Job 28, one can compare the relationship of order and mystery in Job 28 with that in Proverbs 16.

## **4.2 Inner Texture of Job 28**

### **4.2.1 Repetitive Texture**

As the starting point of the study of Job 28, one should investigate repetitive texture, since it can show the basic interest of the text or the author. As repetitive pattern one may note that the reference to 'not (אֵל)' occurs nine times. The reference to 'place

(מקום)' is used five times. Thus the text of Job 28 might say something related to some place, but one does not know what relationship there is between 'not' and 'place' at this stage. The fact that the reference to 'wisdom (חכמה),' 'all (כל),' and 'where (אי)' occurs four times each can make the reader think that the place is related to the wisdom.

It is interesting that some significant verbs such as 'know (ידע)', 'see (ראתה)', and 'say (אמר)' are repeated three times each, while the verb 'compare (גרד)' is repeated twice. It is also interesting that the reference to 'God (אלהים)' and 'human beings (אנוש)' occurs twice. While 'gold (זהב)', 'stones (אבן)', 'earth (ארץ)' occur three times, silver (כסף), dust (עפר), and lapis (ספיר) are repeated twice each. The reference to 'eye (עין)' occurs three times, while the reference to 'understanding (בינה)' is repeated twice.

**Table 3 Repetitive Texture in Job 28**

Verse	God/people	No place	Wisdom Where	All/valuables
1		Place (מקום)		Gold (זהב) silver (כסף)
2				Stone (אבן) dust (עפר)
3				All (כל) stone (אבן)
4	Man (אנוש)			
5				Earth (ארץ)
6		Place (מקום)		Stones (אבניה) dust (עפרת) gold (זהב) lapis (ספיר)
7		No (לא)		Know (ידע) eye (עין)
8		No (לא)		
10				All (כל) see (ראתה) eye (עיני)



12		Place (מקום)	Wisdom (חכמה) where (אי) where (מאין)	Understanding (בינה)
13	Man (אנוש)	No (לא)		Know (ידע) earth (ארץ)
14		No (לא)		Say (אמר)
15		No (לא)		Silver (כסף)
16		No (לא)		Lapis (ספיר)
17		No (לא)		Compare (גרד) gold (זהב)
18		No (לא)	Wisdom (חכמה)	
19		No (לא)		Compare (גרד)
20		Place (מקום)	Wisdom (חכמה) where (אי) where (מאין)	Understanding (בינה)
21				All (כל) eyes (מעיני)
22				Say (אמר)
23	God (אלהים)	Place (מקום)		
24				All (כל) see (יראה) earth (ארץ)
27				See (ראה)
28	God (אדני)		Wisdom (חכמה)	Understanding (בינה) say (אמר)

In this repetitive pattern, one can guess that both God and human beings want to know, see and speak about the place of wisdom or the place of some valuables such as gold, silver and sapphire. The object includes the earth and dust. What is obvious at this stage is that the search for something such as wisdom or valuables has a negative image on account of the usage of nine times 'not'. However, the fact that all verbs are not negative tells the reader that the affirmative of verbs is mentioned. The relationship between the negative and affirmative can be a significant key to read the text of Job 28

(Van Wolde 2003:30). At this stage one does not know which of God or human beings know or do not know the place of wisdom and the valuables.

#### 4.2.2 Progressive and Narrational Texture

In progressive texture, one can notice several progressive patterns of repetitions. A reference of 'man (מֵאָנוּשׁ)' in verse 4 has a progressive pattern as '*man does not know* (לֹא יָדַע אָנוּשׁ)' in verse 13. In order to understand a progressive pattern one can regard a hidden subject as man. The hidden subject of 'man' starts in verse 3, and continues up to verse 13, with some exceptions such as verse 7 and 8. Before arriving at verse 13, all verbs are affirmative. The affirmative becomes negative in verse 13. Thus the progressive pattern of 'man (מֵאָנוּשׁ)' enforces the negative of human efforts. No matter how much human beings make every effort to achieve something, its result turns out to be a failure (Hofmann 1996:288). Human beings know nothing.

It is interesting to compare the animals with human beings in verse 14. Bird does not know and falcon does not see in verse 7. Sons of pride and of lion do not trod in verse 8. While the subject of animals is accompanied by the negative verbs, the subject of human beings has affirmative verbs. Yet in verse 13 human beings also follow the way of animals, using the negative verbs. After verse 13, the negative verbs continue until verse 19, using the 'not (לֹא)' eight times. Yet from verse 20 to the last verse the negative verbs are absent. The pattern progresses as '*God understands and knows* (הִבִּין יָדַע אֱלֹהִים)' in verse 23. Even though human beings and animals do not know and understand anything, God knows and understands it (Wharton 2000:116). The progressive pattern emphasises the knowledge of God.

As subject has a progressive pattern, object also has a progressive pattern. The repetition of 'place (מקום)' began as the place of valuables such as gold (verse 1), silver (verse 1), and lapis (verse 6). This repetitive pattern progresses to 'the place of wisdom and understanding (verses 12, 20, and 23).' 'Where is Wisdom (מאין החכמה)? Where is the place of understanding?' The repetition of verse 12 may imply the increase of the meaning. In verse 23 the place of wisdom is repeated once again. Only God knows 'the place of wisdom (מקומה)' (verse 23). The question about the place of wisdom can be related to the final conclusion (Alden 1993:41). *The fear of God is wisdom (היא חכמה)* (יראת אדני), and the shunning of evil is understanding (verse 28).

**Table 4 Progressive Texture of Job 28**

Verse	Activities	Place of valuables/wisdom
1		<i>Place for gold (לזהב מקום)</i>
3	He (הוא, Man) search	
4	<i>From human beings (מאנוש) dangle</i>	
6		<i>Place of lapis (מקור ספיר)</i>
7	Bird no knowing, falcons no seeing	
8	Proud beast no trodding, lion no passing	
9	(Man) assault, lay bare	
10	(Man) dig, see	
11	(Man) search, bring	
12		<i>Where is wisdom?(מאין החכמה)?</i> <i>Place of understanding?( בינה מקום זה אי )</i>

13	<i>Man not know</i> (לא ידע אנוש)	
14	Deep, nowhere in me, with me	
15	No buying, no weighing gold, silver	
16	No buying ophir, onix, lapis	
17	No comparing gold, crystal	
18	No remembering	<i>Price of wisdom</i> (משך חכמה)
19	No comparing topaz, pure gold	
20		<i>Where can wisdom be found?</i> (והחכמה מאין?) <i>Place of understanding?</i> (ואי זה מקום בינה)
21	Hidden, concealed	
22	Abaddon, Death say, heard	
23	<i>God understand, knows</i> (ידע, הבין אלהים)	<i>Place of her</i> (מקומה)
24	View, see	
25	Establish, measure	
26	Make	
27	See, appraise, confirm	
28	<i>(God) Said</i> (ויאמר)	<i>The fear of Lord is wisdom</i> (יראת אדני היא חכמה) <i>To shun evil is understanding</i> (וסור מרע בינה)

\* The term of man progresses to the sentence that man does not know, while the term of God progresses to the sentence that God knows it.

\* The term of place for valuables progresses to the place of wisdom, arriving at the final place as the fear of the Lord in verse 28.

In the progressive pattern one can recognise that even though human beings search for

valuables under the ground, they do not know where wisdom is. Only God knows the place of wisdom. Narrational texture is found in Job 28. The focus on the narrational texture will clarify the message of the text (Clines 2006:915). After some narration, the reader or listener can read or listen to the first question of the narrator (verse 12). “But where can wisdom be found? Where does understanding dwell?” In reply to this question, the depth says in verse 14, “it is not in me.” The sea says, “it is not with me.” The answer of the depth and the sea stresses the difficulty of finding wisdom.

In such difficulty, the narrator asks the same question once again in verse 20. “But where can wisdom be found? Where does understanding dwell?” But to this question, the answer differs from the former. There is a possibility to find it, even though it is difficult to do so. Destruction and death say in verse 22, “Only a rumour of it has reached our ears.” Yet finally the reader and the audience can read and listen to the voice of God. God has unveiled that which otherwise would remain ‘hidden from the eyes of all living’ (Zuck 1992:302). ‘He said to man, the fear of the Lord- that is wisdom, and to shun evil is understanding (verse 28).’

Both progressive texture and narrational texture show that while human beings cannot find the place of wisdom, God knows and sees it. It implies that wisdom is something that exists somewhere. Then what should human beings do to find this wisdom? The answer is to fear the Lord. Then what do both wisdom and the fear of the Lord mean? The question will be investigated in the following textures. Before that, one will look at the structure of Job 28 with the help of repetitive, progressive and narrational textures.

### **4.2.3 Opening-Middle-Closing Texture**

With the repetitive, progressive and narrational textures, opening-middle-closing texture exhibits the voice of the inner texture of Job 28. Job 28 is composed of opening texture (Job 28:1-22), middle texture (Job 28:12-22), and closing texture (Job 28:23-28). Opening texture (verse 1-11) is a unit such as a poem. Middle texture is composed of the first question (verse 12) and its provisional answer (verses 13-19) and of the second question (verse 20) and its provisional answer (verse 21-22). Closing texture delivers a final answer to the question (verses 23-28).

In opening texture (verse 1-11), a poet or a narrator begins by declaring a narration: “there is a mine for silver and a place where gold is refined (verse 1).” It implies that human beings know the whereabouts of valuables such as silver and gold (Hartley 1985:384). This declaration is accompanied by human activities in search of valuables (verse 2-6, 9-11), since human beings know the locality of valuables. Even though the reference to ‘man’ is seen once in verse 4, the subject of most narrations in verses 2-6 and 9-11 implies human beings. The fact that there are places for valuables in verses 1-11 provides human beings with the reason why they are searching for the valuables. There is human potential to access the valuables.

The declaration in verse 1 continues in verse 2. Through the experience and observation human beings know that ‘iron is taken from the earth and copper is smelted from ore (verse 2).’ The knowledge provides the motives to procure the valuables. In order to acquire them, they go to extreme darkness (verse 3). This heroic activity of mining seems appropriate to divine activity (Clines 2006:911). They go far from where people

dwell and go to the places forgotten by the foot of man (verse 4). These efforts are desperate. They dangle and sway. These expressions show a negative sentiment rather than the praise of human achievement. Nevertheless, the text does not say that human efforts for valuables are completely in the wrong. According to Wharton (2000:113), ‘the poet stands quite frankly in awe before the human capacity to achieve such remarkable results.’

Human potential is contrasted with that of animals. ‘No bird of prey knows the hidden path, and no falcon’s eye has seen it (verse 8).’ ‘Proud beasts do not get foot on it, and no lion prowls there (verse 9).’ Even though animals do not know, do not see, and do not tread, human beings do it. Human beings overcome all obstacles such as rocks and mountains (verse 9), and rivers (verse 11). Finally they come to see the valuables (verse 10) and bring the hidden valuables to light (verse 11). Thus opening texture exhibits the potential of human beings, even though the text does neither think of human activities as affirmative nor as negative.

Middle texture challenges the potential of human beings in opening texture, asking a question regarding the place of wisdom. In opening texture, there was no reference to wisdom. It was a poem about mining activities. Human beings could find valuables underground. Yet middle texture changes the topic from searching for valuables to the place of wisdom (Clark 1982:402). ‘But where can wisdom be found? Where does understanding dwell (verse 12)?’ A narrator answers the question provisionally, by saying that human beings do not know the price of wisdom and ‘it cannot be found in the land of the living’ (verse 13). An answer of the deep and the sea shows an example

of a testimony that wisdom cannot be found in the world. The deep says, 'it is not with me.' The sea says 'it is not with me' (verse 14).

Middle texture continues with the repetition of the previous question in verse 20. Where is wisdom? To this question, verse 21 explains why no living thing can find wisdom. 'It is hidden from the eyes of every living thing, concealed even from the birds of the air (verse 21).' Another testimony follows in verse 22. Destruction and death say that 'only a rumour of it has reached our ears.' Middle texture does not say that there is no wisdom in the world. Rather it says that it is impossible to find and see it, since it has been hidden and concealed from the eye of all living things (Zuck 1992:302). Human limitation is declared.

Closing texture concludes, exhibiting both the limitation and the potential of human beings. It starts with the declaration that only God understands the way of wisdom and knows the place of wisdom (verse 23). The following verses (verses 24-27) exhibit the reason why God knows the place of wisdom (Habel 2003:290). The reason is that only God can 'view the ends of the earth and see everything under the heavens' (verse 24). 'When he made a decree for the rain and a path for the thunderstorm (verse 26), he looked at wisdom and appraised it (verse 27).' After the voice of human limitation, the final verse (verse 28) functions as a practical conclusion of Job 28. Since it is impossible for human beings to know the place of wisdom, the only thing that they can do is to fear the Lord and practise morality. Thus the fear of the Lord is not only recognition of human limitation, but also recognition of human potential. The fear of the Lord appeared in chapter 1 and will appear again in the final chapter 42.



#### **4.2.4 Sensory-Aesthetic Texture**

Sensory-aesthetic texture provides a particular tone or colour of the voice of any text, dealing with three zones of human beings: Action, thought, and speech. Opening texture in Job 28 includes the zone of action. The verbs such as take, smelt (verse 2), put, search (verse 3), cut, dangle, sway (verse 4) exhibit powerful human activities (Van Wolde 2003:20). This zone of action provides a particular tone for opening texture. On account of this human action, the earth from which food comes is transformed like fire (verse 5). The zone of action is followed by the zone of heart in verse 7.

While human beings perform some activities, the bird of prey does not know the path and the falcon's eye has not seen it. Animals do not even know and see the way of human activities. After that, the zone of animal action is followed. Any giant animal such as proud beasts and lions will not tread or prowl (verse 8). The mixture of the action and the heart of animals enforces the zone of human action, showing human potential. After the zone of animals, the zone of human action is continued. Human beings assault, and tunnel the rock (verse 9). Before arriving at final action such as searching and bringing hidden things into light (verse 10), human beings turn to the zone of heart. Human eyes see all its treasures. Thus sensory-aesthetic texture in opening texture enforces the voice of human potential.

In contrast with opening texture, middle texture owns many zones of speech, enforcing the voice of the limitation of human beings. Beginning a question about the place of wisdom in verse 12, the deep and the sea say that wisdom is not with them in verse 14. After this zone of speech, the zone of action is followed. The price of wisdom is

compared to the price of valuables. The price of wisdom is beyond any other valuables. In the same repeated question in verse 20, the zone of heart and the zone of speech are utilised. Since wisdom is hidden from the eyes of all their lives, they do not know the place of wisdom. The limitation of human beings is found. The zone of heart enforces the inaccessibility of wisdom. After that the zone of speech is followed. Destruction and Death say that only rumour of it has reached their ears. Their knowledge is limited to the zone of speech. For knowledge, the zone of seeing and heart is required.

In closing texture, one can find three zones of sensory-aesthetic texture, which enforces the voice of both the limitation and the potential of human beings. The first part of the closing texture uses the zone of heart, enforcing the limitation of human beings. God understands the way to wisdom and he alone knows where wisdom is, since he views the ends of the earth and sees everything under the heavens (Habel 2003:290). The zone of action is followed. God established the force of wind and measured out waters (verse 25). Finally the zone of speech is also included, showing the voice of human potential. God said to human beings. The fear of the Lord- that is wisdom and to shun evil is understanding (verse 28).

Sensory-aesthetic texture reveals the strong desire to search for valuables. That shows human potential. Even though they can get valuables, they do not know where wisdom is, since the place of wisdom is hidden from the eyes of all living things. This is the recognition of human limitation. Yet it does not mean that the search for wisdom is priceless at all. Since God knows the place of wisdom, the revelation of God enables human beings to know where wisdom is. That is the place of the fear of the Lord. Thus

in the voice of the fear of the Lord, one can listen to both voices of human potential and human limitation.

#### **4.2.5 Preliminary Conclusion**

As a starting point for the study of the relationship between order and mystery in Job 28, the inner texture of Job 28 such as repetitive, progressive, narrative, opening-middle-closing, sensory-aesthetic textures was investigated. As repetitive pattern 'not' occurs nine times and 'place' five times. Job 28 might say something related to some place, and the relationship between 'not' and 'place' might be focused on. 'Wisdom', 'all', and 'where' appear four times each and enable the reader to think that the place is related to wisdom. Yet the search for something such as wisdom or valuables has a negative connotation on account of the usage of nine times 'not'.

In the progressive texture, a reference to 'man' in verse 4 has a progressive pattern as 'man does not know' in verse 13. The progressive pattern indicates the negative of human efforts. The pattern progresses to 'God understands and knows' in verse 23. The repetition of place also has a progressive pattern. 'The places' of valuables such as gold (verse 1), silver, and lapis (verse 6) progress to 'the place of wisdom and understanding' (verses 12, 20, and 23). 'Wisdom where and place of understanding where?' in verse 12 is repeated in verse 20 and verse 23. The place of wisdom is related to the final conclusion. The fear of God is wisdom, and the shunning of evil is understanding (verse 28).

Job 28 contains narrational textures. "But where can wisdom be found? Where does

understanding dwell?" In reply to this question, the deep says in verse 14, "it is not in me." The sea says, "it is not with me." Destruction and death say in verse 22, "Only a rumour of it has reached our ears." Yet finally the reader or the audience can read or listen to the voice of God. 'He said to man, the fear of the Lord- that is wisdom, and to shun evil is understanding (verse 28).' Both progressive texture and narrational texture show that while human beings cannot find the place of wisdom, God knows and sees it.

Job 28 contains opening- middle-closing texture. In opening texture (verse 1-11), a poet or a narrator begins by declaring a narration: "there is a mine for silver and a place where gold is refined (verse 1)." This declaration is accompanied by human activities to search for valuables (verse 2-6, 9-11), since human beings know the way to the place for valuables. Thus the voice of opening texture is the potential of human beings. Yet middle texture (verses 12-22) challenges the voice of human potential, exhibiting the voice of human limitation. Middle texture starts with a question regarding the place of wisdom. Human beings do not know the place of wisdom as well as the price of wisdom. Job 28:21 adds a reason why all living things cannot find wisdom. It is because the eyes of all living things are hidden. 'It is hidden from the eyes of every living thing, concealed even from the birds of the air (verse 21).'

Closing texture (verses 23-28) shows both voices of the limitation and the potential of human beings. It starts with the declaration that only God understands the way of wisdom and knows the place of wisdom (verse 23). Only God can 'view the ends of the earth and see everything under the heavens' (verse 24). 'When he made a decree for the rain and a path for the thunderstorm (verse 26), he looked at wisdom and appraised it

(verse 27).’ After the voice of human limitation, the final verse (verse 28) functions as a practical conclusion of Job 28. Since it is impossible for human beings to know the place of wisdom, the only thing that they can do is to fear the Lord and practise morality. Thus the fear of the Lord is not only a voice of recognition of human limitation, but also a voice of human potential.

Sensory-aesthetic texture enforces the voice of the limitation and the potential of human beings. The sensory-aesthetic texture in the opening texture enforces the voice of human potential, utilising the zone of action. The mixture of action and the heart of animals enforces the zone of human action, showing human potential. After the zone of animals, the zone of human action is continued. In contrast with opening texture, middle texture owns many zones of speech, enforcing the voice of the limitation of human beings. After this zone of speech, the zone of action follows. The zone of heart and the zone of speech are utilised. The zone of heart enforces the inaccessibility of wisdom. After that the zone of speech follows.

In closing texture, one can find three zones of sensory-aesthetic texture, which enforce the voice of both the limitation and the potential of human beings. The first part of the closing texture uses the zone of heart, enforcing the limitation of human beings beginning at the zone of heart. The zone of action follows. God established the force of wind and measured out waters (verse 25). Finally the zone of speech is also included, showing the voice of human potential. God said to the human beings: The fear of the Lord- that is wisdom and to shun evil is understanding (verse 28). Thus the closing texture in Job 28 shows both the voices of the limitation and potential of human beings

ambivalently, and sensory-aesthetic texture in ending texture enforces the ambivalent voice.

## **4.3 Intertexture of Job 28**

### **4.3.1 Introduction**

The inner texture of Job 28 has shown that Job 28 deals with the place of wisdom, comparing the valuables such as silver and gold. The problem whether human beings can know, see, and find the place of wisdom was discussed. Even though human beings cannot find the place of wisdom, it does not imply that the searching for wisdom is completely useless. God knows the place of wisdom and human beings can obtain the wisdom through the fear of the Lord. This poem of Job 28 can be interpreted variously, unless it is located in the book of Job (Anderson 1976:224). Yet since Job 28 is located in the book of Job, Job 28 should be dealt with in the context of the book of Job as well as the wisdom tradition of the Ancient Near East.

Both searching for wisdom and fear of the Lord are repeated in the entire book of Job. The definition of wisdom was a crucial key to understand Job 28 as well as the book of Job. Job and his friends might have different ideas about wisdom, even though they refer to the same word (Wolfers 1995:492). Furthermore the fear of the Lord is repeated especially in the Prologue and Epilogue. Both Job and his friends argued in the dialogue, using the repetition of wisdom. Finally God responded to Job and his friends, mentioning wisdom. The search for wisdom and the fear of the Lord have been recontextualized and reconfigured from Israelite Wisdom Literature and that of the Ancient Near East. This study of intertexture helps to elaborate the theme of Job 28 as

the coexistence of order and mystery.

## 4.3.2 Repetition and Recitation

### 4.3.2.1 Place of Wisdom

The term 'wisdom' is used four times in Job 28. The price of wisdom is beyond all the valuables such as gold, silver, onyx, lapis, coral and jasper (28:17-18). Yet human beings cannot see and find out the wisdom (28:12 and 20). Only God saw and searched it out (28:27). Then what is the concept of wisdom in the context of the book of Job? In the dialogue Job and his friends use the concept of wisdom. This term of wisdom can be interpreted in the context of dialogue between Job and his friends.

28:18 Coral and jasper are not worthy of mention (ראמות וגביש לא יזכר); **the price of wisdom** is beyond rubies (ומשך חכמה מפנינים)

28:27 Then he looked at **wisdom** (חכמה) and appraised, confirmed and searched it out (אז ראה ויספרה הכינה וגם חקרה).

4:21 Are not the cords of their tent pulled up, so that they die without **wisdom** (חכמה)?

4:7 Consider now: **Who, being innocent, has ever perished?** Where were the upright ever destroyed?

Regarding the cause of Job's disaster, Job and his friends have argued each other, saying that all of them obtained wisdom. A friend of Job, Eliphaz began to mention 'wisdom.' According to Eliphaz, those who dwell in the house of clay, whose foundation is in the dust (4:19-20), die without wisdom (4:21). It meant that Job was dying without wisdom. When Eliphaz saw Job's disaster, he explained the reason of the disaster, introducing the doctrine of retribution (Clines 1989:x1). According to the doctrine of retribution, the

innocent cannot perish (4:7). The fact that Job suffers shows that Job committed sin. Thus he should repent and seek God. This behaviour according to the doctrine of retribution is Eliphaz's wisdom.

Zophar also mentions wisdom. Zophar says that God possesses the secrets of wisdom. God's wisdom is not different from human wisdom (Clines 1989:xli). Where there is suffering, God's wisdom holds the reason. According to the wisdom of God, God punishes the sinner. Prosperity of the wicked is temporary. God will judge the wicked (20:5). Thus the catastrophe of Job has been caused by Job's sin. Furthermore, God has forgotten some of Job's sins (11:6). Like Eliphaz's case, Zophar refers to wisdom as the doctrine of retribution. Whoever knows the doctrine of retribution will be the one who has wisdom.

11:6 And disclose to you the secrets of **wisdom** (חכמה)... Know this: God has even forgotten some of your sin.

20:5 But the mirth of **the wicked** (רשעים) is **brief** (מקרוב), the joy of the godless lasts but a moment.

Job's friends refer to the concept of wisdom as the doctrine of retribution. The doctrine of retribution is related to the search for order. Yet the doctrine of retribution is different from the search for order, in the sense that the doctrine does not allow the space for the limitation of human beings. According to the wisdom as the doctrine of retribution, there was a clear reason why Job was suffering. In this context, Job 28 refers to the wisdom of God. God looked at and searched for the wisdom. The fact that God searched for wisdom conveys that there is divine order in the world which human beings could



search for. Thus the concept of wisdom in Job 28 is the search for order rather than the doctrine of retribution. Wisdom is more valuable than any other thing to search for.

#### 4.3.2.2 Limitation of Wisdom

Even though Job acknowledges that there is divine order in the world, Job often understands the wisdom of God differently from his friends. Job's understanding of the wisdom of God is that human beings cannot know the sovereignty of God. In reply to the argument of his friends, Job responded, agreeing that the wisdom of God is profound (9:4). Yet the sovereignty of God cannot be limited to the doctrine of retribution, since God destroys both the blameless and the wicked (9:22). Job resists the simple understanding of his friends of the cause of his disaster (Wolfers 1995:492). Thus Job does not admit that his friends are wise. Wisdom will die with them (12:2) and they will no longer be wise men (17:10).

28:12a But where can **wisdom** be found (והחכמה מאין תמצא)?

28:20a Where does **wisdom** come (והחכמה מאין תבוא)?

9:4 His **wisdom** (חכם) is profound, his power is vast.

9:22 He destroys both the blameless and the wickedness.

12:2 Doubtless you are the people, and **wisdom** (חכמה) will die with you.

17:10 But come on, all of you, try again! I will not find a **wise man** (חכם) among you.

Even though Job often disagrees with his friends on the doctrine of retribution, this is not all. Depending on the doctrine of retribution, Job keeps asking God to do justice (10:2-6). Furthermore, Job sometimes attacks his friends with the doctrine of retribution

(27:13-23). Job's ambivalence regarding the doctrine of retribution becomes a crucial key to the understanding of the book of Job as well as Job 28. According to Birch (1999:393), Job does not reject the system of retribution. 'Job and his friends have laid out the issues, but are incapable of adjudicating the issues between orthodoxy and the truth Job knows.'

The argument about wisdom continues in the speech of Elihu (chapters 32-37) and the speech of Yahweh (chapters 38-42). While Elihu repeats the opinion of Job's friends, God seems to agree with Job that God's sovereignty is not limited by the doctrine of retribution, even though God also rebukes Job's wisdom. Rather God is the one who endows the heart with wisdom. The search for order in the world was allowed. Even though human beings possess a little wisdom that God provided, they do not have the wisdom to count the clouds. They can only recognise and maintain mystery, so that they may not say that they possess wisdom.

34:34 Men of understanding declare, **wise men** (חכמ) who hear me say to me, Job speaks without knowledge, his words lack insight.

38:36 Who endowed the heart with **wisdom** (חכמה) or gave understanding to the mind?

38:37 Who has the **wisdom** (חכמה) to count the clouds? Who can tip over the water jars of the heavens?

Considering the context of dialogue among Job, his friends and God, the repetition of wisdom in Job 28 reflects the voice of God regarding wisdom, rather than a voice of

Elihu (contra Clines 2006:908).<sup>44</sup> Job's friends consider themselves as wise men, since they know and believe the doctrine of retribution. According to their wisdom, Job is not wise, since Job does not accept the doctrine of retribution and says that God destroys both the righteous and the wicked. On the contrary, Job 28 resists the doctrine of retribution of his innocence and suggests divine order that human beings cannot recognise easily. Job 28 declares that wisdom cannot be found by human beings and only God knows the way to wisdom. Wisdom in Job 28 is the mystery of God as transcendent wisdom that belongs to God. Human beings should acknowledge the fact that they do not know the wisdom, even though they could search for the order.

#### 4.3.2.3 The Fear of the Lord

If human beings cannot find the place of wisdom, what is the only way to obtain the wisdom? The last verse of Job 28 says that the fear of wisdom is wisdom (28:28). The meaning of the fear of the Lord needs to be investigated in the context of the book of Job, since it is often repeated in the entire book of Job. The book of Job (1:1) starts by saying that Job feared God and shunned evil. Even God boasted to Satan that Job feared God and shunned evil (18). In reply to the word of God, Satan challenges God: Does Job fear God for nothing?

28:28 **The fear of the Lord**, that is **wisdom** (יראת אדני היא חכמה) and to shun evil is understanding

(וסור מרע בינה).

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<sup>44</sup> In WBC, a recent published commentary, Clines (2006) argued that Job 28 belonged to Elihu's speeches. Elihu's four speeches would have concluded with Job 28, and that would have been followed by Job's final speech in Job 29-31. Rather Job 28 anticipates the speeches of Yahweh and reflects the intention of the author, even though Job 28 is spoken by the mouth of an inspired Job.

1:1 In the land of Uz there lived a man whose name was Job. This man was blameless and upright

(וירא אלהים וסר מרע), he **feared God** and shunned evil (והיה האיש ההוא תם וישר).

1:8 Then the Lord said to Satan, Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him,

he is blameless and upright (כי אין כמהו בארץ איש תם וישר), a man who **fears God** shuns evil

(ירא אלהים וסר מרע).

1:9 Does Job **fear God** for nothing? Satan replied (ויען השטן את יהוה ויאמר החנם ירא איוב אלהים).

In the Prologue, the fear of the Lord was a central theme (Childs 1979:54). Despite Satan's several attacks on Job, Job continued to fear the Lord. He lost all his property and children. He became seriously ill. Nevertheless, Job did not curse God but rather praised God.

At this, Job got up and tore his robe and shaved his head. Then he fell to the ground in worship and said. Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; may the name of the Lord be praised. In all this, Job did not sin by charging God with wrongdoing (Job 1:20-22)

This theme of the fear of the Lord continues in the dialogue. Yet in the dialogue that situation has apparently changed. Job begins to lament and ask questions why he should experience such a disaster. Job doubts if there is justice of God. After seeing Job and his lamentation, Job's friends mention a theme of fear of the Lord. They argued that Job deserted the fear of the Lord and should return to it (4:6). In the past Job might have feared God. Yet now, where is the fear of the Lord? The reason why God rebukes Job and brings charges against him is not caused by the fear of the Lord. The fact that he is

now suffering shows that he did not fear the Lord. Before the speech of Yahweh, Elihu finishes his speech by telling Job that human beings should fear the Lord.

4:6 Should not **your piety** (יראתך) be your confidence? And your blameless ways your hope?

22:4 Is it for **your piety** (יראתך) that he rebukes you and brings charges against you?

37:22 Out of the north he comes in golden splendour, God comes in **awesome** (נורא) majesty.

37:24 Therefore, men **fear him** (יראוהו), for does he not have regard for all the wise in heart?

For Job's friends, the fear of the Lord was following traditional religion (Dillard 1994:204). Whoever fears the Lord will believe that God controls the world with justice. Anyone who has such a belief and fears the Lord will obtain rewards such as wealth, health and honour (Proverbs 19:23; 22:4). For them, Job was the one who does not fear the Lord, on account of the fact that he complains about the justice of God and he has been deprived of everything. Job could have deserted the fear of the Lord, since he experienced that the fear of the Lord could not provide a successful life. He also suffered due to his friends' advice.

In this argument Job 28 says that wisdom is the fear of the Lord. The fear of the Lord is the only thing that human beings should practice amidst even disaster. It implies that the fear of the Lord without any reward is possible. Thus Job 28 is on Job's side concerning the fear of the Lord (Birch 1999:401). Even though Job did not mention the fear of the Lord again, Job continued to fear the Lord regardless of his rewards. Job did not leave God but still loved God. He longed to see God after his physical death. Nevertheless, the fear of the Lord has not been complete before meeting God. After the speeches of

Yahweh in the storm, he experiences another level of fear of the Lord. In dust and ashes he denies himself and repents: the fear of the Lord.

19:26 And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh **I will see God**

(ואחר עורי נקפו זאת ומבשרי אחזה אלוה).

19:27 **I myself will see him** with my own eyes- I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me

(אשר אני אחזה לי ועיני ראו ולא זר כלו כליתי בחקי)!

42:5-6 My ears had heard of you but now **my eyes have seen you** (לשמע און שמעתיד ועתה עיני ראתך)

Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes (על כן אמאס ונחמתי על עפר ואפר).

In the context of the book of Job the fear of the Lord in Job 28:28 refers to both the maintenance of the mystery of God and the search for the order of God. The fear of the Lord in Job 28 complements the fear of the Lord in chapter 1 and lets the reader anticipate the conclusion of the book. In the confrontation with God, Job repents sincerely and fears the Lord completely. Therefore, the fear of the Lord plays a role as a bridge between the fear of the Lord in the Prologue and that of the speeches of Yahweh.

### **4.3.3 Recontextualization and Reconfiguration**

#### **4.3.3.1 Order of God**

As the study of Proverbs 16 has shown, it is possible that the concept of wisdom as the search for order and maintenance of order has been reconfigured from the Ancient Near East. The concept of wisdom as the doctrine of retribution was the common element in the Ancient Near East. In Egyptian wisdom, *the Wisdom of Amenemope*, one notices the doctrine of retribution in the sphere of human society. Silence of human beings is the

activity that human beings search for as the order of gods. The silent man discerns divine purpose and accommodates himself to it (Ray 1998:24). In such a way he avoids pitfalls in this life and is found pleasing to the gods. The other aggressive man is in conflict not only with external conditions, but also with himself.

*Amenemope* vi 7-12 The truly silent, who keeps apart

Is like a tree grown in a meadow

It is green, it doubles its yield,

It stands in front of its lord.

**Its fruit is sweet, its shade delights,**

And it reaches its ends in the garden (ANET: 422).

The consequence of the activity i.e. silence can bring success. Seen from the point of view of *the Wisdom of Amenemope*, Job cannot be wise. Job's friends might share the idea of the doctrine of retribution of the Ancient Near East. Religions and righteous activities were also rewarded (Lambert 1998:31). Yet when performances of religious duties and activities of righteousness went unrewarded, or worse, results in personal disaster, questions about the generally assumed cosmic order were raised and attempts were made to answer them.

In Babylonian Wisdom Literature, *Ludlul bel nemeqi* begins and ends with praise of Marduk. The long poetic monologue describes how a once prosperous public figure lost his post, wealth, family, friends and health, for no reason that he could fathom, and

he was given back by Marduk what he had lost. Marduk is blamed for the unexplained disasters. The opening hymn consists of couplets with the same theme: severity, then goodness. This theme provides the framework of the whole text. A successful man experiences a disaster. He first succumbs to Marduk, but regains all he lost thanks to Marduk's goodness.<sup>45</sup>

*Ludlul bel nemeqi* I 5-8 Whose fury surrounds him like the blast of a tornado,

Yet whose breeze is as pleasant as a morning zephyr,

**His anger is irresistible**, and his rage a hurricane,

But **his heart is merciful**, his mind forgiving.

Like *Ludlul bel nemeqi*, the *Babylonian Theodicy* deals with a dialogue between a just sufferer and an orthodox friend. At the beginning, the sufferer declares both his righteousness and his suffering, while his friend endlessly repeats that piety pays. After a vigorous argument, his friend is forced to retreat somewhat from his previous dogma that piety pays, and he now admits that the pious may not be well off, but at least they never go hungry, and that the personal god can quickly make up what the pious have lost over a period (235-42). The sufferer appears to accept this idea. In *Theodicy* the doctrine of retribution is correct finally.

*Theodicy* lines 65-66 Do you wish to go the way these have gone?

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<sup>45</sup> In Babylonian Wisdom Literature, three major works are mentioned for the study of intertexture. They are 'I will praise the Lord of wisdom (*Ludlul bel nemeqi*),' the *Theodicy*, and the *Dialogue of Pessimism*. Among them, the first and the second conclude that the doctrine of retribution is right.



Rather seek the lasting **reward** of (your) god! (BWL 75)

Seen from the context of the Ancient Near East, the argument of Job and his friends reflects the religious cultural background of the Ancient Near East. Even though one cannot say that the doctrine of retribution was borrowed from the Ancient Near East, the reconfiguration is possible. While Job's friends stick to the traditional wisdom of the Ancient Near East, the author of Job 28 conveys an alternative voice i.e. the search for order, maintaining mystery, rather than the doctrine of retribution.

#### **4.3.3.2 Limitation of Wisdom**

As discussed in the study of the intertexture of Proverbs 16, the limitation of human beings to grasp the mind of the gods was a theme with deep roots in Mesopotamian wisdom (Newsom 2003:174). The topic of the limitation of human beings was reconfigured from the topic of the mystery of the deities. In *Ludlul bel nemeqi* a pious man was struck down by disease. He was mocked by his friends as a wrongdoer, and his family has become hostile to him. He is troubled by his human inability to understand the gods (Clines 1989:lx).

*Ludlul bel nemeqi*: What seems good to one, may be evil to **a god**.

Where has mankind learned **the way of a god**? (BWL 41)

In the Babylonian Theodicy one encounters a different voice about the theodicy. The friend tries to explain the reason why the rich and powerful grind down the poor. Human beings have a perverse streak, since the gods created them this way. The gods

implanted a criminal bent in the human race at the time of creation. Yet the Hebrew theology could not accept that kind of idea, since human beings and the world was created 'very good' in Genesis 1 (Lambert 1998:35). Yet Sumero Babylonian polytheism saw the world as it existed, with deities assigned to every aspect of the universe. One rather can say that Hebrew theology shared a voice of the mystery of God in the context of the Ancient Near East.

Like the order and mystery of God, the fear of the Lord has precedents in Ancient Wisdom Literature (Murphy 1996:16). Although the idea of the fear of the deity is common in ancient Egypt, it is not found in Egyptian Wisdom Literature until the late composition, Ankhsheshonqy. Yet the idea of the fear of the deity is often found in Babylonian Wisdom Literature: *Ludlul bel nemeqi* ii:18, 25, 32; Babylonian Theodicy line 22; Shamash hymn, line 165, and Proverbs ii:11-14; Counsels of Wisdom lines 143-7.

Counsels of Wisdom lines 143-7: Revelence begets favour,

Sacrifice prolongs life.

And prayer atones for guilt.

He who fears the gods is not slighted by...

He **who fears the Anunnaki** extends his days (BWL 107).

Ankhsheshonqy xiv:10: Make burnt offering and libation before the god

Let **the fear of him** be great in your heart.

It therefore appears that the fear of the Lord in Job 28 was reconfigured from the fear of

the deity in the Ancient Near East, along with the recontextualization from Jewish Wisdom Literature. Job's friends approached Job with this traditional meaning of the fear of the Lord. The fact that there was no reward in life meant that there was no fear of the Lord. Against his friends, Job 28 showed another dimension of the fear of the Lord, which can be a particular voice of Jewish wisdom. Since one does not know what God does, the only thing that human beings should do is to fear the Lord. That is the voice of maintaining the mystery of God, while searching for divine order at the same time.

Considering these intertextures, the concept of wisdom in Job 28 has reconfigured the concept of wisdom from the Ancient Near East, as other Wisdom Literatures such as the book of Proverbs did. In the context of the doctrine of retribution, Job 28 showed both the search for order and the maintenance of mystery, which can be a particular voice of Jewish theology that can be dealt with in the following study of ideological and theological textures in Job 28.

#### **4.3.3.3 Biblical Intertexture**

As one finds reconfiguration in Job 28 from the Ancient Near East, one can see the recontextualization in Job 28 from Israelite Wisdom Literature. It is possible that the concept of wisdom and the fear of the Lord have been borrowed from the earlier Jewish wisdom texts such as the book of Proverbs. The statement that the price of wisdom is much better than that of everything else occurs often in the book of Proverbs. As dealt with in the study of Proverbs 16, the oldest part of Proverbs (Proverbs 10-22) contains many statements that to obtain wisdom is better than gold and silver (Proverbs 16:16). The profit of wisdom is much better than that of gold (Proverbs 3:14). Thus the man

who finds wisdom will be blessed (Proverbs 3:13).

Job 28:17 Neither gold nor crystal can compare with **it (wisdom)**; nor can **it** be had for jewels of gold

(לא יערכנה זהב וזכוכית ותמורתה כלי פז).

Proverbs 16:16 How much better to **get wisdom** than gold, choose understanding rather than silver

(קנה־חכמה מה־טוב מחרוץ וקנות בינה נבחר מכסף)

Proverbs 3:13 Blessed is the man who **finds wisdom** (אשרי אדם מצא חכמה) and the man who gains

understanding (ואדם יפיק תבונה).

The comparison of wisdom with gold implies that there is order or design which human beings can discern in the world. According to the order, the wise who searched for wisdom will be rewarded. The reward of the wise was common in the book of Proverbs. The wise possess stores of food and oil, but the foolish lose all they have (Proverbs 21:20). Thus the concept of wisdom in Job 28 is shared with the search for order in Jewish Wisdom Literature.

Proverbs 21:20 In the house of **the wise** (חכם) are stores of choice food and oil (אוצר נחמד ושמן בנוה חכם),

but **a foolish** man devours all he has (וכסיל אדם יבלענו).

Along with the search for order, Job 28 shares the concept of the maintenance of mystery in the book of Proverbs. As shown in the study of Proverbs 16 (Proverbs 16:9), the book of Proverbs contained a voice of maintenance of mystery. Even the sage of Proverbs recognized the limitations of human wisdom. No wisdom can succeed against the Lord's will (Proverbs 21:30). In Job 28 wisdom is something whose place human

beings cannot know. Nevertheless, only God knows the way to wisdom and knows where it dwells. Thus it is possible that both the rewards and the limitations of wisdom in Proverbs are developed in the argument between Job and his friends.

Job 28:23 **God understands** the way to it (אלהים הבין דרכה) and **he alone knows** where it dwells

(והוא ידע את מקומה).

Proverbs 16:9 In **his heart** a man **plans** his way (בל מדא בשחי וכרד), but **the Lord determines** his steps

(הוהיו יכיר ודעצ).

Proverbs 21:30 There is **no wisdom** (חכמה), no insight, no plan that can succeed **against the Lord**

(אין חכמה ואין תבונה ואין עצה לנגד יהוה).

The concept of the fear of the Lord in Job 28 is connected to the concept of the fear of the Lord in Proverbs. In Job 28:28, the fear of the Lord becomes wisdom (Balentine 2009:328).<sup>46</sup> It has a similar expression in Proverbs 1:7. 'The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge.' When the book of Proverbs refers to the fear of the Lord, it includes both the search for order and its limitations. The rewards of the fear of the Lord are length of life (Proverbs 10:27), protection from trouble (Proverbs 19:23), wealth, honour, and life (Proverbs 22:4). As mentioned in the study of Proverbs 16, the fear of the Lord makes human beings avoid evil, which results in respectable morality and religion.

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<sup>46</sup> According to Balentine (2009:328), the reference to the fear of the Lord in Job 28:28 and 1:1 can be seen as a literary frame for the first half of the book, thus a strategic return to the Prologue's emphasis on the virtues of heroic piety in the face of adversity. Job 28 may serve as a bridge, not only back to the Prologue, but also forward to the divine speeches in Job 38-41.

Proverbs 10:27 **The fear of the Lord** adds length to life (יראת יהוה תוסיף ימים ושנות), but the years of the wicked are cut (רשעים תקצרנה).

Proverbs 19: 23 **The fear of the Lord** leads to life (יראת יהוה לחיים), then one rests content, untouched by....

Proverbs 22:4 Humility and **the fear of the Lord** bring wealth and honor and life

(עקב ענוה יראת יהוה עשר וכבוד וחיים).

Proverbs 16:6 Through love and faithfulness sin is atoned for (בחסד ואמת יכפר עון); through **the fear of the Lord** (וביראת יהוה) one departs from evil (סור מרע).

Thus the theme of the search for order and the fear of the Lord have been recontextualized from Wisdom Literature in Israel, especially from the book of Proverbs, as they have been reconfigured from Wisdom Literature of the Ancient Near East. The theme of human search for wisdom and the limitations of wisdom have been interpreted in the theme of the search for order and the maintenance of mystery of Wisdom Literature in Israel and the Ancient Near East.

#### **4.3.4 Thematic Elaboration**

Intertexture of Job 28 elaborates a particular theme as the search for wisdom, limitations of human beings and the fear of the Lord. The study of inner texture showed both the search for wisdom and a practical conclusion to the fear of the Lord. The elaborated theme in the study of intertexture was that human beings should search for order, maintaining the mystery of God. In a word, that is the fear of the Lord. Human beings can access wisdom by recognizing the limitations of human beings and the fear of God. Without any reward or any result human beings can fear God and trust in God.

The rationale of the theme is limitation of human understanding of the sovereignty of God. Even though human ability can find out the place of valuables such as gold and silver, human beings cannot see everything as God does it. However hard they may try to find out the place of wisdom, it is impossible to know the secret of wisdom. That belongs to the sphere of God. Yet it does not mean that human beings should not search for order and fear the Lord. The search for order is still maintained. In the mystery without any reward, human beings can search for order such as wisdom and the fear of the Lord.

The confirmation of the rationale is the comparison of repetition between Job 28 and Wisdom Literature. When one compares Job 28 with the entire book of Job, wisdom and the fear of the Lord respond to the traditional meaning of wisdom and the fear of the Lord that Job's friends stuck to. While Job 28 criticizes some element of traditional wisdom, Job 28 still maintains the efficiency of traditional wisdom to search for order. The fear of the Lord is upgraded regardless of its reward. In Wisdom Literature in Israel and the Ancient Near East, both traditional wisdom and its challenge can be found.

Mining activities in Job 28:1-10 provide an example of confirmation. On the whole negative images are found in human activities for obtaining valuables, since human beings cannot find the place of wisdom (Van Wolde 2003:33). Nevertheless, Job 28 does not say that human beings should stop searching for valuables such as gold and silver. It also applies to the search for wisdom. Even though the place of wisdom belongs to God, one can search for the place of wisdom and the fear of the Lord. When Death and Abaddon state that they have heard a report of it (28:22), 'the imaginative language of

the poem appears to be taking on closer to this place of wisdom' (Newsom 2003:180). In contrast with human ability, God can see and find the place of wisdom. Since God does what human beings cannot do, through the fear of the Lord human beings can obtain wisdom. These examples of human activities (Job 28:1-10) and God's activity (Job 28:20-28), show that human beings can both search for order and maintain mystery.

The theme that human beings can search for order, while recognizing the limitations of human beings and fearing God continues throughout the book of Job, while life is filled with mystery that human beings cannot understand. While Job's friends stuck to a simple aspect of the doctrine of retribution, Job's search for wisdom was different. God's wisdom should not be limited to a system such as the doctrine of retribution. God's order was different from human beings' order. Thus human beings should recognise their limitations regarding wisdom and understanding. In the context Job 28 provided a central message from the book of Job and anticipated the speeches of Yahweh. After the meeting with Yahweh, Job came to know a much deeper meaning of wisdom and the fear of the Lord.

#### **4.3.5 Preliminary Conclusion**

In order to clarify the themes or topics in Job 28, the intertexture of Job 28 was discussed. The concept of wisdom in Job 28 was understood in the context of dialogue between Job and his friends. When Job's friends saw the disaster of Job, they explained the reason of the disaster, depending on the doctrine of retribution. For them, to know the doctrine of retribution is to know wisdom. Yet Job understands the wisdom of God differently from his friends, even though he agrees that the wisdom of God is profound



(9:4). God can destroy both the righteous and the evil at the same time. In this argument, Job 28 says that human beings do not know the place of wisdom. It implies that human beings should search for order, maintaining the mystery of God.

The concept of the fear of the Lord was also investigated in the context of the book of Job. The book of Job (1:1) started by saying that Job feared God and shunned evil. Despite Satan's attacks on Job, Job continued to fear the Lord. Job did not curse God but rather praised God. In the dialogue, one could meet the theme of the fear of the Lord. For Job's friends, the fear of the Lord belonged to traditional religion. They argued that Job had deserted the fear of the Lord and Job should return to the fear of the Lord (4:6). In this context, Job 28 says that wisdom is the fear of the Lord. It implies that human beings could fear the Lord regardless of his rewards. Thus the concept of the fear of the Lord in Job 28 voices the maintaining of the mystery of God, at the same time searching for the order of God. Finally in the speeches of Yahweh, Job fully experiences the order and mystery of God

The concepts of wisdom and the fear of the Lord were discussed in the context of wisdom tradition in Israel as well as the Ancient Near East. In the wisdom tradition of the Ancient Near East, the concept of wisdom and the fear of deity were connected with the doctrine of retribution. Yet Job 28 has reconfigured the doctrine of retribution as the search for order and the maintenance of the mystery of God. At the same time the concept of wisdom and the fear of the Lord have been recontextualized from Jewish wisdom literature. Both the search for order and the maintenance of mystery was common in the book of Proverbs. The theme of the search for order and the

maintenance of mystery in Proverbs has been developed in the argument between Job and his friends.

Intertexture of Job 28 elaborated a particular theme that human beings should search for order, maintaining the mystery of God. In a word, it is the fear of the Lord as the concept of wisdom. Even though there is no reward or any result, human beings should fear God and should trust in the providence of God. The rationale of the theme is limitation of human understanding of the sovereignty of God. While human ability can trace the place of valuables such as gold and silver, human beings cannot see everything as God does. That belongs to the sphere of God. Nevertheless, human beings should not stop searching for order and the fear of the Lord. The search for order is still focused. In the mystery without any reward, human beings can search for order such as wisdom and the fear of the Lord. Wisdom represents both the search for order and the maintenance of mystery.

The theme that human beings should have access to wisdom by recognising the limitations of human beings and the fear of God started in the Prologue. Even when Job experienced suffering and loss which corresponds to the foolish and the evil, Job continued to fear the Lord and praised Him. Job's search for wisdom continued in the dialogue. In the context Job 28 revealed a central message of the book of Job and anticipated the speeches of Yahweh. After the meeting with Yahweh, Job realized a much deeper meaning of wisdom and the fear of the Lord. That is the meaning of order and mystery in the universe which God controls. The ambivalent voice of order and mystery is heard in the book of Job, especially in Job 28.

## **4.4 Social and Cultural Texture**

### **4.4.1 Introduction**

The intertexture of Job 28 showed that a main theme of Job 28 was both the search for order and the maintenance of mystery. The ambivalent coexistence of order and mystery was placed in Job 28. The particular voice of Job 28 reflects the society and culture on which Job 28 is based, since no texture can be separated from the social and cultural texture. The concepts such as the search for order or the doctrine of retribution and the fear of the Lord can voice a particular period in a particular society, even though the themes or the topics of Job 28 can be common elements regardless of the period and the place.

It is very difficult to determine the date of both Job 28 and the book of Job. Despite different opinions, Job 28 as well as the book of Job can be attributed to the post-Exilic period (BCE 6-5 centuries). Yet it does not mean that the tradition of Job was created on the date when the book was written (Murphy 1996:35). The tradition of Job's tale was quite old. It could be earlier than the Monarchy, since Job's tale reflects the period of patriarchy. For this reason, some scholars (Perdue 1991:75) insist that the frame of the book of Job (chapters 1-2, and 41) might have existed before the poet of dialogue composed the entire book of Job. Nevertheless, the record of the book of Job including Job 28 can reflect the society and culture of the post-Exilic period, which will be dealt with in the social and cultural setting of Job 28.

Based on a social and cultural setting, Job 28 contains specific social topics and cultural categories which Wilson and Robbins introduced. As in Proverbs 16, Job 28 contains

specific social topics such as thaumaturgical response and manipulationist response and cultural categories such as dominant culture, contraculture and liminal culture. These studies will contribute to the explanation of the origin and function of Job 28 as social and cultural texture, which will provide a background for the following ideological and theological textures.

#### **4.4.2 Social Setting of Job 28**

It is generally accepted that the tale of Job had a long tradition before it was written. Whether Job was a real man or literary character was discussed by scholars. No agreement has been reached. Yet there is no reason to argue that Job's tale was just fiction. In Ezekiel 14 Job with Noah and Daniel was cited as examples of holy men. He can be a historical individual whose reputation regarding the fear of the Lord was handed down for generations (Murphy 1996:35). Even though one believes the historical existence of Job, one cannot know when he lived. He might have lived in the pre-Monarchic period. Yet the social and cultural setting of the book of Job differs from the placing of the tale of Job, since the book was written in a much later period.

Most scholars attribute the date of the book to the Persian period. Blenkinsopp (1995:28) argues for the date of the Persian period. "Satan in the Prologue is reminiscent of the Persian official, known as the king's eye or the king's ear, whose task was to tour the provinces, checking local officials." Yet there is still a possibility that Job 28 as well as the book of Job was written in the Exilic or the post-Exilic period (BCE 6-5 centuries). The social and economical condition fits that period. Economic conditions were bad. The wealthy upper class showed no concern for the poor, and their lack of concern led

to social unrest and occasional violence, which in turn made them question traditional religious ideas. Thus the contrast of wealth and poverty, power and powerless is experienced by both sides in the debate, also fitting that period.

It is possible that the social crisis of the post-Exilic period caused the upper class to split into two groups (Albertz 2002b:114). One group was those members who were intent on winning economic advantage regardless of the religious obligation to help one another. Their opponents called them sinners and godless. The other group was the members of the upper class who were willing to embrace the social obligations of the Torah and to alleviate the distress of the bankrupt by making donations from their own wealth. They referred to themselves as the pious and the righteous.

The party that advocated mutual help carried a heated theological debate with their opponents. The members were warned that they should put their trust in God and not in wealth (Psalms 62:9, 11). Even in the party of the pious and righteous, there was a possibility that more powerful classes such as the priests stuck to the doctrine of retribution for social security. At the same time some members of the upper class developed a comprehensive system of pastoral care within their own group (Job 4:3-5). They had to contend with the tempting economic success enjoyed by the sinners (Psalms 73:2). Furthermore, “they had to deal with the more worrying problem that members of their own group could themselves fall from grace, however pious and tireless in helping the poor (Albertz 2002b:114).” This social crisis in the post-Exilic period initiated the question of theodicy of Job 28 in Israel’s religion.

### **4.4.3 Specific Social Topics**

Job 28 shows both manipulationist and thaumaturgical responses. The statement that human beings can search for valuables belongs to manipulationist response. Since human beings know the place of valuables in the earth, they have the capacity to find out valuables. As human beings discovered the valuables, Job and his friends tried to discover wisdom. While Job doubted its efficiency, his friends comprehended wisdom as the doctrine of retribution. In this context Job 28 exhibited a particular voicing of the search for order, maintaining mystery. This understanding of wisdom as the search for order or the doctrine of retribution can be a manipulationist response.

In the latter part of Job 28 God knows the place of wisdom. It implies that the place of wisdom is available if God reveals it. Thus the relationship between God and human beings is much more important than any other. The relationship refers to the fear of the Lord. Job 28 says that the fear of the Lord is the only way that human beings can obtain wisdom. In fact, the fear of the Lord in Job 28:28 corresponds to a thaumaturgical response. Nevertheless, the fear of the Lord has been related to the doctrine of retribution, as the friends of Job have shown. Newsom (2003:181) insists that the fear of the Lord in Job 28 agrees with the fear of the Lord in the Prologue and allegorizes it. Thus the statement that human beings can obtain wisdom through the fear of the Lord shows an ambivalence of the manipulationist and thaumaturgical responses. Furthermore, it can also contain an element of a conversionist response, since it demands a return to religious activity.

Against the doctrine of retribution as the concept of wisdom, Job 28 says that human

beings cannot find wisdom, for only God knows the place of wisdom. This statement refers to a thaumaturgical response. There is something that human beings can not solve, but something that only God can do. Thus human beings should depend on God's intervention. This religious response can occur regardless of the time and space. Thus Job 28 contains both manipulationist and thaumaturgical responses, as Proverbs 16 did, which implies that Wisdom Literature in the Old Testament shares both responses with different societies.

#### **4.4.4 Cultural Categories**

Regarding the cultural categories, one can say that Job 28 shows both of dominant culture and contraculture. The idea that human beings can find out the place of wisdom as well as valuables, can belong to a dominant culture. Dominant classes in the post-Exilic period believed that they could find out the position of wisdom. For them, the concept of wisdom refers to the doctrine of retribution. The priest who was in charge of Judah in the post-Exilic period stuck to a kind of social order that was the doctrine of retribution (Albertz 2002b:111). According to the doctrine, the dominant class such as the priests could maintain a social order.

Job and his friends belonged to a dominant or subdominant class, even though they were not a class of priests. They were respectable leaders in society. Job and his friends shared the idea of the priests, such as the doctrine of retribution. Even though Job often denied the doctrine of retribution, he sometimes did not deny the efficiency of the doctrine of retribution. The fact that Job 28 was located in the dialogue between Job and his friends shows that Job 28 still exhibits a voice of a dominant culture or subdominant

culture.

However, as Job's catastrophe has shown, Job remains beyond dominant or subdominant culture. Job experienced losing everything except his life. He lost his honour and got shame. As the case of Job, the poet of Job 28 might have experienced something similar. The poet of Job 28 delivers a contra or liminal voice. The fear of the Lord can function as a voice of contraculture or liminal culture. Especially in Job 28 there is nothing that human beings can do in terms of the search for wisdom. The only thing that human beings can do is perform religious activity: the fear of the Lord, which will be a voice of contra or liminal nature. Nevertheless, since the fear of the Lord belonged to the sphere of traditional wisdom, one can say that the fear of the Lord in Job 28 can still show a dominant or subdominant culture.

The statement that human beings do not know the place of wisdom reflects the contraculture or liminal culture. Only God knows everything. That is the sphere of divine mystery (Murphy 1996:135). The fact that there is no sphere for human beings lets the reader hear a voice of contraculture or liminal culture. This confession is similar to the one contained in Proverbs 16. In Proverbs 16, human beings sometimes do not know the inscrutability of God. Like this, human beings in Job 28 do not know the place of wisdom. Thus Job 28 as a text responding to post-Exilic society and culture contains both the dominant and contracultures. The fact that different voices coexist ambivalently shows the social and cultural background of the ambivalent coexistence of order and mystery, which will be focused on in the following study as ideological and theological textures.



#### **4.4.5 Preliminary Conclusion**

The social and cultural texture was investigated in Job 28. As social and cultural background, the date of Job 28 was attributed to the post-Exilic period, even though the tradition of Job's tale was much earlier. The social condition and the prevalence of the doctrine of retribution say that Job 28 and the book of Job were probably written in the post-Exilic period by an elite group such as scribes.

Regarding specific social topics, Job 28 contains both the manipulationist and thaumaturgical response, as Proverbs 26 did. The statement that human beings can discover valuables indicates the manipulationist response. Since human beings know the place of valuables in the earth, they have the capacity to detect valuables. This activity is compared to Job and his friends' finding wisdom. For Job's friends wisdom is considered as the doctrine of retribution, which can be a manipulationist response. In contrast with human beings, God knows the place of wisdom. It implies that wisdom is available if God reveals something. Wisdom becomes the fear of the Lord. Thus the fear of the Lord can be a manipulationist response as well as thaumaturgical culture, as in the case of Proverbs 16.

The statement that human beings cannot find wisdom refers to thaumaturgical response. There is something that human beings cannot solve, something that only God can. Thus human beings should depend on God's intervention. Like Proverbs 16, the fear of the Lord in Job 28:28 can correspond to a thaumaturgical response. Thus one can say that the fear of the Lord exhibits both thaumaturgical and manipulationist responses. Furthermore, it can also contain an element of a conversionist response.

Just as the cultural categories, Job 28 shows the combination of dominant culture and contraculture. The statement that human beings can detect the place of wisdom as well as the valuables can belong to a dominant culture. Job and his friends belonged to dominant or subdominant classes. They were respectable leaders in society. Job and his friends discussed the theme of wisdom in relation to the cause of the disaster or suffering of Job, depending on the doctrine of retribution. Even though Job often denied the doctrine of retribution, he also at times did not deny the efficiency of the doctrine of retribution. Job 28 can still exhibit a voice of dominant or subdominant class.

However, as Job's catastrophe has shown it, Job cannot remain only as dominant or subdominant culture. Job experienced losing everything except his life. He lost his honour and got shame. Such an experience enabled the author of Job 28 to deliver a contra or liminal voice. This states that human beings do not know the place of wisdom. Only God knows everything. A voice of the fear of the Lord can also function as the contra and liminal as well as the dominant response.

Thaumaturgical response as a specific social topic and contra liminal culture as cultural categories in Job 28 explain the maintenance of mystery. Human beings in Job 28 do not know the place of wisdom. At the same time, the manipulationist response and dominant or subdominant culture in Job 28 shows that the search for order is still significant and undeniable. The fear of the Lord in Job 28 indicates both voices simultaneously. The relationship between them is ambivalent, and this will provide the basis for the following discussion of ideological and theological texture in Job 28.

## **4.5 Ideological and Theological Texture**

### **4.5.1 Introduction**

Inner texture of Job 28 indicated both the limitations and potential of human beings. While human beings know the places of valuables such as silver and gold, they do not know the place of wisdom as well as the price of wisdom. Intertexture showed that both the limitation and potential of human beings are related to understanding wisdom and the fear of the Lord in the Wisdom Literature. While Job's friends considered the doctrine of retribution as the concept of wisdom, Job 28 could not limit the sovereignty of God to the doctrine of retribution. The search for order was suggested, and this maintains the voice of mystery. Social and cultural texture revealed that the themes of wisdom and the fear of the Lord reflect a society and culture of the post-Exilic period, suggesting the social and cultural background of the search for order and maintenance of mystery.

Based on previous textures, ideological and theological texture is concerned with an ideology or a theology that Job 28 is based on. The search for order and the maintenance of mystery in Job 28 can be a result of a conflict of ideologies. Ideology of friends was found in the dialogue. In the dialogue or conflict there was no solution. This conflict can reflect political conflict between the dominating class and non dominating class in the post-Exilic period. The ideology of the dominating class such as priests and landowners stuck to the doctrine of retribution for maintaining social order (Albertz 2002b:111). Yet Job 28 with the speech of Yahweh suggests a kind of solution to the conflict, which will be a different theology. In the context of the conflict between Job and his friends, the theology of Job 28 will be investigated in this chapter, focusing on

continuity and discontinuity of the wisdom tradition.

#### **4.5.2 God and Wisdom**

Job 28 deals with the relationship between God and wisdom. This relationship is based on an ideology or a theology. In the context of dialogue, Job and his friends believed that wisdom belongs to God. But Job's friends thought that they know the place of wisdom. For them, wisdom was an ideology i.e. the doctrine of retribution. As shown in the study of intertexture, the doctrine of retribution as the concept of wisdom had occurred throughout the history of the wisdom tradition in Israel as well as the Ancient Near East (Clines 1989:xxxix). Yet in a specific period, especially in the post-Exilic period, the doctrine of retribution became a central issue of life that the class of priests dealt with (Perdue 1991:247). Job's friends reflect the ideology of the dominating class. For them, wisdom is not the one which God owns, but the one that human beings can discover and control.

Against this ideology, Job resisted the doctrine of retribution, which can be an anti-ideology. According to Job, he sometimes feels that there is no justice in God's providence. Human beings can not find wisdom. In the context of the conflict, Job 28 reveals an alternative theology. That is creation theology of which only God knows the place of wisdom. This voice can criticise both Job and his friends. By saying that human beings cannot know the place of wisdom, Job 28 criticises Job's friends, since the wisdom of God cannot be limited to the doctrine of retribution. But by saying that God knows the place of wisdom, Job 28 criticises Job, since wisdom exists in the world.

A creation theology of Job 28 suggests an alternative answer to the debate between Job and his friends. The sages such as the author of the book of Job suggested the sovereignty of God in creation theology, like the author of the book of Proverbs 16. As human beings cannot understand the sovereignty of God, human beings cannot know the wisdom of God. Human beings must not dogmatise the concept of wisdom like the doctrine of retribution (Wilcox 1989:182). Nevertheless, as there is a divine design in the sovereignty of God, there is a divine order in the world. Therefore, Job 28 still refers to the search for order with the maintenance of mystery.

In the theological understanding of the relationship between God and wisdom, the fact that human beings do not know the place of wisdom indicates the sphere of mystery that does not belong to human beings. Nevertheless, the fact that God knows the place of wisdom and searches for it shows that Job 28 also does not deny the search for order. It is a creation theology that the sage described in the post-Exilic period. It was a criticism of the dominating class such as priests.

### **4.5.3 God and Human Beings**

As Job 28 showed the relationship between God and wisdom, Job 28 reveals the relationship between God and human beings. The relationship is expressed as a phrase: the fear of the Lord. Since human beings do not know the place of wisdom and only God knows it, what should human beings do? Is there any way to obtain the wisdom? Surely there is. It is the fear of the Lord. God said to human beings that the fear of the Lord is wisdom (28:28). So what does the fear of the Lord in Job 28 mean?

As dealt with in the study of intertexture, the fear of the Lord was a main theme in the book of Job. As a traditional meaning, the fear of the Lord belongs to traditional wisdom to which human beings should have access. In traditional wisdom, the fear of the Lord had its consequences such as success and length of life, and honour (Proverbs 22:4). Since these were rewarded, the fear of the Lord was wisdom. It was a part of the doctrine of retribution. In this sense, Job feared the Lord throughout his life (Job 1-2). Yet the traditional wisdom also recognised the limitation of human understanding of the sovereignty of God (Murphy 1996:12). Job has also experienced suffering and disaster. As a response, Job accepted his disaster as a providence of God (Job 2).

Religion as the fear of the Lord, however, turned into a religious ideology like 'prosperity theology' in the post-Exilic period. In the interpretation of Job's suffering Job's friends insisted that Job did not fear the Lord and should fear the Lord by repenting and accepting his suffering. It was an ideology of priests in the post-Exilic period. Against this ideology, Job insisted that his religion as the fear of the Lord could be maintained without rewards. Like the relationship between God and wisdom, the understanding of the fear of the Lord brought the clash of two entities.

In this clash, the theology of Job 28 sides somewhat with Job. Creation theology of the sage could approach Job's case with an open mind. Human beings should continue to fear the Lord, since they cannot understand the sovereignty of God. Yet even though the recognition of human limitations maintained in the wisdom tradition, this voice was a new voice. The sage in the post-Exilic period developed the element of mystery within wisdom tradition. Yet by mentioning the fear of the Lord of traditional wisdom, Job 28

did not deny the efficiency of the search for order. The coexistence of mystery and order was shown in the fear of the Lord as a relationship between God and human beings.

#### **4.5.4 Human Beings and the World**

In the relationship between God and wisdom, and God and human beings, both the search for order and the maintenance of mystery were found in the relationship between human beings and the world. In the relationship two opinions can be found. One is that human beings should stop seeking the location of wisdom. The reason is that only God knows this and human beings do not. This is the voice of maintaining mystery. Another voice is that despite the maintenance of mystery human beings should keep searching for order. Human beings have the capacity to find the place of valuables. In opening texture, human activity for mining was wonderful. Even though the activities have a negative meaning, it is certain that human beings had such a capacity.

What brought about this contradiction? The fact that human beings can find the place of wisdom without the limitations is of the ideology of dogmatized traditional wisdom. According to the tradition of wisdom, wisdom was something human beings should search for. Even though human beings could find the place of wisdom, they still maintained the limitation of human understanding. However, in the post-Exilic period, the emphasis on the search for order was developed as an ideology that human beings could find the place of wisdom. In this context, a sage of Job 28 recognised the importance of both the potential, and limitations of human activities in the world, depending on creation theology. Facing the tendency of rigidity of the wisdom tradition, the sage of Job 28 as well as the speeches of Yahweh (chapters 38-41) emphasised the

balance of the search for order and the maintenance of mystery.

Thus a theology of Job 28 in the relationship between human beings and the world show a dialectical relationship between the search for order and the ending of the search for order. When it says that human beings cannot find the place of wisdom, it does not mean that to search for wisdom is wrong, but it means that human beings should recognise their limitations and maintain mystery in the sphere of God. Therefore, while maintaining mystery or limitation of human activities, human beings should hold on to the wisdom tradition. While Proverbs 16 emphasises the search for order, and the maintaining of mystery, Job 28 focuses on a dialectical relationship between order and mystery, which refers to this ambivalent coexistence.

#### **4.5.5 Conclusion**

Based on previous textures on Job 28, the ideology or theology of Job 28 was investigated. Ideological and theological texture in Job 28 clarified the ideology and the theology in the relationship between God and wisdom, God and human beings, and human beings and the world. In this texture one could elaborate the relationship between the search for order and the maintenance of wisdom in Job 28 in a specific way different from previous wisdom literature. A central message of Job 28 indicates a creation theology of which God knows, while human beings do not. This theology criticises both Job and his friends' ideologies.

By saying that human beings cannot know the place of wisdom, Job 28 criticises Job's friends' ideology, since the wisdom of God cannot be limited to the doctrine of



retribution. As human beings cannot understand the sovereignty of God, human beings cannot know the wisdom of God. The theology that human beings do not know the place of wisdom shows the sphere of mystery that does not belong to human beings. Yet one cannot deny that there is divine order in the world. The fact that God knows the place of wisdom and searches for it shows that Job 28 also does not deny searching for a kind of order or design.

The relationship between God and human beings is expressed as a phrase describing the fear of the Lord. Since human beings do not know the place of wisdom and only God knows it, fearing the Lord is the only thing human beings can do. Traditionally, the fear of the Lord belongs to traditional wisdom. Religion as the fear of the Lord, however, became a religious ideology in the post-Exilic period. In contrast with this ideology, Job insisted that his religion as the fear of the Lord could be maintained without its rewards. Yet by mentioning the fear of the Lord itself, Job 28 did not deny the efficiency of traditional wisdom. Thus the coexistence of mystery and order was shown in the fear of the Lord as a relationship between God and human beings.

In this relationship between human beings and the world two ideologies were found. An ideology is that human beings can search for wisdom, as human beings have the capacity to find valuables. The emphasis on the search for order has changed traditional wisdom into dogmatized ideology. Yet, the sage in Job 28 recognized the importance of both the potential and limitations of human activities in the world, depending on creation theology. Facing the tendency of rigidity of the wisdom tradition, the sage in Job 28 emphasized the ambivalent nature of both order and mystery.

## CHAPTER 5 ECCLESIASTES 3

### 5.1 Introduction

While Proverbs 16 and Job 28 reflect the concepts of order and mystery as both ideology and theology in the Judean kingdom and the post-Exilic period, Ecclesiastes 3 shows a different perspective on the concepts of order and mystery, since it was written in a later period than both texts.<sup>47</sup> Ecclesiastes 3 is a crucial text for the understanding of Israelite Wisdom Literature as well as the entire book of Ecclesiastes, since it dealt with the themes such as proper times of human activities, their limitations, and divine determinism (Rudman 2002:82). Ecclesiastes 3 shows how the ancient sages both appropriated the traditions of the past and challenged them (Brown 2000:13).

In previous chapters (Ecclesiastes 1 and 2), the book began with the author reporting on the quest to discover what life is all about. He has tried to find life's meaning in his work, either in learning, or in pleasure. But none of these efforts is ultimately satisfying. Death will put an end to every aspiration after which one has striven. The author declares that everything is “vanity (הבל)”, with the fivefold repetition. Even though Qoheleth has a very specific meaning on ‘vanity (הבל)’, it can be related to the enigmatic dimension of human experience in the sense that life is not fully comprehensible (Seow 1997:59).

In Ecclesiastes 3 the author focuses on some of life's problems. He begins to talk about

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<sup>47</sup> There are various opinions about the date of the book. While some scholars (Odgen 1987:15, Murphy 1992:xIv, Blenkinsopp 1995:58) attribute it to the Hellenistic period (3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE), others (Seow 1997:21, Brown 2000:7) consider it as belonging to the post-Exilic or Persian period.

God, to talk theology (Limburg 2006:15). There are times for all things in life, and God has set these times (3:1-8). Nevertheless, he feels that human beings cannot know the times. Furthermore, the world is full of wickedness and injustice (3:16; 4:1-3). Like all creatures, we eventually die, and we do not know what death means for any of us (3:18-21). Thus human beings are advised to accept God's gifts of friendship (3:12-13), and joy in work (3:13, 22). This theme is expressed several times in the following chapters (11:1-6). An editor's epilogue offers a glance at the teacher's workshop and provides a brief summary of the fear of God (12:9-13).

The relationship between the limitations and the potential of human activities has been considered as a main theme in Ecclesiastes 3. Some scholars such as Murphy (1992a:39), Fox (1998:29), and Brown (2000:43) insisted that Qoheleth is exhibiting a kind of 'soft determinism'. Whether one agrees with the term or not, the soft determinism of Ecclesiastes might have a connection with the maintenance of mystery in Proverbs 16 and Job 28 which was dealt with in the previous chapter. It implies that the relationship can provide the possibility of the search for order as human activity in the context of the prevailing voice of divine mystery. These possibilities will be discussed in this chapter by means of the socio-rhetorical criticism.

## **5.2 Inner Texture of Ecclesiastes 3**

### **5.2.1 Repetitive Texture**

Before looking at Ecclesiastes 3 from several different perspectives, the first attempt is inner texture, as the study of Proverbs 16 and Job 28 indicates. First of all, repetitive texture will be dealt with in Ecclesiastes 3. The occurrence of words and phrases more

than once in a unit will be focused on (Robbins 1996:8). The investigation of a repetitive pattern will provide the basic starting point in which the author is much more interested.

As shown in table 5, the repetition of some words can be found in Ecclesiastes 3. The reference to 'time (עת)' is repeated thirty-one times, while the reference to 'all (כל)' is repeated twelve times. This repetition leads us to inquire 'time' for or against 'all'. This can be related to both God and human beings, since the reference to both 'God (אלהים)' and 'human beings (אדם)' occurs seven times each. Both God and human beings may be seen as performing activities, as five times 'see (ראה)' and 'do (עשה)' and twice 'gave (נתן)' indicate.

In this discussion, animals are included, since the reference to 'animals (בהמה)' occurs four times. The activity of human beings and animals may take place in the heart and spirit, since 'heart (לב)' occurs three times and 'spirit (רוח)' twice. While all activities may be good, happy, and righteous, they can also be harsh and wicked. Here again repetition is found. Four times of 'good (טוב)' and twice of 'toil (עמל)', 'happy (שמוח)', 'justice (צדק)', and 'wickedness (רשע)' are also repeated in Ecclesiastes 3. One cannot know who or what is good or wicked in this repetitive texture.

Like some words, some phrases or sentences display a repetitive pattern. 'Under the sun (תחת השמים)' in verse 1 is repeated in verse 16. 'Time for all activity' in verse 1 is repeated in verse 17. 'What God did or does (האלהים עשה)' is repeated in verses 11 and 14. It may imply that there are times for all activities under the sun, since God did or

does all things. The reference to the first person pronoun occurs. Three times of 'I saw (ראיתי)', and twice of 'I know (ידעתי)' and 'I (אני) said (אמרתי)' can be found. 'I (אני) said (אמרתי) in my heart (בלבי)' occurs in both verse 17 and 18, which may indicate an internal dialogue or struggle (Longman 1998:128).

**Table 5 Repetitive Texture of Ecclesiastes 3**

Verse	God	Time	People/all/toil	The World
1		Time (עת)	All activity (את לכל הפיץ)	Under the sun (תחת השמים)
2		Time (עת)		
3		Time (עת)		
4		Time (עת)		
5		Time (עת)		
6		Time (עת)		
7		Time (עת)		
8		Time (עת)		
9			Toil (עמל)	
10	God(אלהים)		People (אדם)	Gave (נתן) I saw (ראיתי)
11	God(אלהים)	Time (עת)	People (אדם) All (כל)	Gave (נתן) heart (לב)
12				Good (טוב) happy (שמחה) I know (ידעתי)
13	God(אלהים)		People (אדם) All toil (עמל)	Good (טוב) all saw (ראה)
14	God(אלהים)		All (כל)	I know (ידעתי)
15	God(אלהים)			

16				Justice (צדק) wickedness (רשע) I saw (ראיתי) under the sun (תחת השמים)
17	God(אלהים)	Time (עת)	All activity (את לכל חפץ)	I (אני) said (אמרתי) in my heart (בלבי) Justice (צדק) wickedness (רשע)
18	God(אלהים)		People (אדם)	Animal (בהמה) I (אני) said (אמרתי) in my heart (בלבי)
19			People (אדם) All (כל) Vanity (הבל)	Animal (בהמה) all (כל) spirit (רוח)
20			All (כל) all (כל) all (כל)	
21			People (אדם)	Animal(בהמה) know(יודע) spirit (רוח)
22			People (אדם)	See (ראה) happy (ישמח) good (טוב) saw (ראיתי)

This repetitive pattern above shows that verses 1- 9 function as a poem different from the following verses 10-22. As this poem is acknowledged as one of the most beautiful parts of the Old Testament, its beauty lies in the symmetry of the entire poem (Seow 1997:169). In each line in verses 2-8, the term of ‘time’ appears four times. Thus the repetition of ‘time’ in all verses in verse 1-9 occurs twenty nine times. This particular repetition of ‘time’ exhibits that a main topic of verse 1-9 is related to a certain time. That the reference of ‘all (כל)’ occurs twelve times in Ecclesiastes 3 makes the reader focus on the relationship between all activities and their time.

The relationship between verses 1-9 and the following parts was dealt with by many scholars. Blenkinsopp (1995:60) suggests that 3:9-15 is intended to refute the thesis of 3:2-8 that everything has its appropriate time in accordance with which human beings can act. Lohfink (1980:10) also argues that Qoheleth makes use of the Stoic diatribe. However, some scholars such as Murphy (1992a:31) and Rudman (2001:94) insist that

3:1-15 can be read as a unity, with a linking theme between the two subsections 3:1-8 and 3:9-15. The fact that the phrase of ‘Time for all activity (את לכל הפע)’ in verse 1 is repeated in verse 17 shows that Ecclesiastes 3 deals with a common theme and verse 1-9 as a poem can function as an introduction or opening section.

The fact that both God and human beings occur seven times simultaneously in verses 10-22 shows that time for all activities is related to both God and human beings. It is God who does (עשה), or gives something regarding all activities at all times, but at this stage it is not certain whether human beings can know the proper time for all activities (Longman 1998a:125, Brown 2000:13). Can there be any room for the search for meaning as a human activity in the book of Ecclesiastes, especially in Ecclesiastes 3? This relationship will be dealt with in the following textures. What one can apparently notice is that human beings including Qoheleth himself have a capacity to see, think and know something. Human beings can see toil or wickedness in all things, as well as something good and happy.

### **5.2.2 Progressive Texture**

When one proceeds toward the progressive pattern of Ecclesiastes 3, one notices the development of the repetitive pattern. The statement that ‘there is time for every activity’ in verse 1 has examples of twenty eight activities from verse 2 to verse 8 (Weeks 2007:424). After that statement, one can find the term ‘toil (עמל)’ (verse 9) and the ‘burden (הענין)’ (verse 10) in a negative sense. The negative sense is enforced when some examples are demonstrated in the latter part. ‘Unjustness (הרשע)’ and ‘wickedness (הרשע)’ can be seen in human life (verses 16 and 17). The fate of human beings and that

of animals are the same (verses 18 and 19). Thus in verse 19 all is declared as ‘vanity (הבל) which is a main theme in the book of Ecclesiastes.

**Table 6 Progressive Pattern of Ecclesiastes 3**

Verse	God-Do	All-toil-burden	Human beings-Do/Do not
1		Time (עת) for all activity.....	
2		Time (עת) to be born.....	
3		Time (עת) to kill, .....	
4		Time (עת) to weep,.....	
5		Time (עת) to scatter,.....	
6		Time (עת) to search,.....	
7		Time (עת) to tear,.....	
8		Time (עת) to love, .....	
9		Toil (עמל)	
10	God (אלהים) gave (נתן)	The burden (הענין)	Human beings (אדם) I saw (ראיתי)
11	God (אלהים) did (עשה)	All (הכל) beautiful (יפה)	Human beings cannot find out it. (לא ימצא האדם את המעשה)
12		Good (טוב) be happy (לשמחה)	Do good (טוב) I know (ידעתי)
13	The gift of God (אלהים)	Toil (עמל)	All eat, drink, see good (טוב)
14	God (אלהים) do (עשה)	All (כל)	
15	God (אלהים) seeks	One being past (נרדף)	Revere (שיראו) him. I know (ידעתי)
16		Justice (צדק) wickedness (רשע)	I saw (ראיתי)
17	God (אלהים) judges	Justice (צדק) wickedness (רשע) For all activity (את לכל חפץ)	I said (אמרתי) in heart
18	God (אלהים) tests them	Human beings are like animals.	I said (אמרתי) in heart



19		All (כל) vanity (הבל)	
21		Spirit of animals and people	Who know (יודע)?
22			Enjoy (ישמח) I saw (ראיתי) good (טוב)

What relationship is there between all activities and God? The progressive pattern relates to all activities of God. God made all beautiful (יפה) in his time and gave eternity in their heart (verse 11). As Fox (1999b:209) insisted it, ‘beautiful (יפה)’ refers to visible beauty, and it is possible that Qoheleth uses this term as a synonym for ‘good (טוב)’. God acted from the beginning to the end (verse 12). Everything God does endures forever; nothing can be added to it and nothing taken from it (verse 14). God seeks one being past (verse 15). Finally God will judge the wicked and the righteous (verses 16 and 17) and will test human beings (verse 18). Even some human activities such as eating, drinking and finding goodness become the gift of God (verse 13).

If God does everything to the world and human beings, what can be the place and the role of human beings? On the whole, human beings can be the passive receivers who should respond to what God gave (Seow 1997:173). Even though they try to find out what God did, they cannot (3:11). Though there is a time for all activities, human beings cannot know the time. Furthermore, the fate of human beings does not differ from that of animals. Considering this status of human beings, there is nothing human beings can do except receiving what God does. Thus everything is vanity (3:19).

In spite of this negative statement, the text contains a different voice that human beings can do something and utilise their ‘free will’ (Ceresko 1999:93). Qoheleth affirms the

goodness of creation. It is good to enjoy life and to do goodness (verse 12). It is the gift of God that human beings eat, drink and seek goodness (verse 13). The final verse repeats the enjoyment that human beings should gain from their works (verse 22). Qoheleth, at least seven times, exhorts his readers to accept and rejoice in that goodness, which will be dealt with in the study of intertexture in Ecclesiastes 3. Thus the positive is juxtaposed with the negative. How to solve this contradiction still remains a problem, which will be dealt with in the following textures.

### **5.2.3 Opening-Middle-Closing Texture**

Repetitive texture and progressive texture in Ecclesiastes 3 contributes to the recognition of the structure or form of this text (Ceresko 1999:96). Since the distinction between verse 1-9 and verse 10-22 is evident in these textures, it is reasonable to attribute verse 1-9 to the opening texture of the whole chapter. In this opening texture, one can find the sub-opening, middle, and closing sections. Verse 1 is the opening heading that gives a summary of the theme of the poem: Every event or activity has its time or season (Weeks 2007:424). Verse 9 functions as the closing conclusion, while verses 2-8 play a role as the middle section. In the middle section in verses 2-8, each of these lines consists of two halves, the one half stating the opposite of the other. Each statement concerns a positive or negative thing. These pairs of opposites convey a sense of the totality of human endeavor in all its manifold forms (Brown 2000:41).

The lines of verse 2 begin with two positive statements (to be born and to plant) and end with two negative ones (to die and to uproot). But in verse 3 the order is reversed: two negative's (to kill and to break down) are followed respectively by a positive one (to

heal and to build). In verse 4 the order is the same as in verse 3. However, in verses 5 and 6 the order is again reversed. The positive pronouncement again comes first and the negative second. In verse 7 the negative one comes first. Finally Qoheleth arranges verse 8 in the form of chiasm. In the first line the positive one starts first, while in the second line the negative one starts first. The parallelism between the two lines of a verse is maintained throughout the poem. This positive negative pairing implies totality which happens in the human world. This poem describes all activities and emotions as parts of the full spectrum of human experience (Longman 1998a:118)

**Table 7 Positive and Negative in Ecclesiastes 3:2-8**

Verse	Positive (+)	Negative (-)
2	To be born (ללדת) +	- to die (למות)
	To plant (לטעת) +	- to uproot (לעקור)
3	To kill (להרוג) -	+ to heal (לרפוא)
	To tear down (לפרוץ) -	+ to build (לבנות)
4	To weep (לבכות) -	+ to laugh (לשחוק)
	To mourn (ספוד) -	+ to dance (רקוד)
5	To scatter stones (להשכיך) +	- to gather stones (כנוס)
	To embrace (לחבוק) +	- to refrain (לרחק)
6	To search (לבקש) +	- to give up (לאבד)
	To keep (לשמור) +	- to throw away (להשליך)
7	To tear (לקרוע) -	+ to mend (לתפור)
	To be silent (להשות) -	+ to speak (לדבר)

8	To love (לאהב)	+	-	to hate (לשנא)
	War (מלחמה)	-	+	peace (שלום)

As an opening Texture, 3:1-9 starts by stating that ‘there is a right time for everything.’ This poem develops the statement by fourteen balancing pairs. The message is that there is an appropriate time for each of the activities listed in verses 2-8. At a certain moment life begins; and when a person’s time has come, death takes over. A person cannot choose the time for birth or death. This idea is similar to that of verse 2. The activity of planting and uprooting refers to agriculture. Planting may be a metaphor for coming to life and uprooting may be a metaphor for death, even though the literal meaning is adequate (Seow 1997:168).

Similarly, there is a time when people kill each other and another time when they heal the sick (verse 3). Again a parallelism follows to say that a time comes when people tear down and a time when they build. This may refer to the demolition of houses and their construction. In its content it may also be considered as warfare. An attacking army may tear down buildings, but after the war, they are rebuilt (Longman 1998a:115). In that case the first line in verse 3 is expanded by the second. Verse 4 states that there are occasions that elicit crying and mourning. Positively laughter and dancing follow. There is a time for weeping and there is time to laugh. At the time of death people mourn on account of sorrow. When people are happy, they can dance for joy.

What is the meaning of casting stones and gathering stones in verse 5? It was thought that the reference was to pebbles used by merchants for adding up accounts, or the

accumulation or removal of stones on fields. But there is another interpretation that might do justice to the entire context. According to *Midrash Rababah*, quoted by Gordis (1978:230), casting away stones refers to sexual intercourse. There is a time for making love and a time for not making love. The next line of the embrace can be used as a euphemism for the same thing. Still the acts of casting and gathering stones may have various purposes and ‘embrace’ can just as well include all types of friendly embrace (Fox 1999:206)

In verse 6, there is a time to look for something and a time to give up. In verse 7 there is a time to tear and a time to sew. There is a time for silence and a time for speech. In verse 8 there is a time to love and a time to hate, while there is a time for war and a time for peace. Verse 8 starts by saying that there is a time to love, and ends by saying that there is a time for peace. This opening texture says that everything in life has its right time, even if they are unfortunate and destructive events. Even though the meaning of ‘time’<sup>48</sup> for everything is not evident, one can say that the poem shows the potential of human beings. Human beings can discern that there is a time for everything and expect hope for the future.

In middle-closing texture (verse 10 to verse 22) the theme of opening texture is challenged (Murphy 1992:34). Even though there is time for everything, there is

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<sup>48</sup> Following J Pederson (1926), Boman (1960:139) insisted that the Semitic concept of time is coincident with that of its content without which time would be quite impossible. It implies that every harvest time is the “same” time and every war time is the same time. However, Fox asserted that the Israelites were quite aware that there were different years and wars. Nevertheless, Fox acknowledged that Pederson and Boman’s viewpoint has value, since ‘time’ in Hebrew is sometimes defined by its content. With some exception, ancient Israel’s concept of time is the same as ours.

nothing that human beings can do. God is the principal 'actor or doer'. The root 'עשה' to do, work, make, act is used repeatedly as a progressive pattern of God. God has established a time for everything and then has put eternity (עלם)<sup>49</sup> in human beings' hearts. Yet human beings cannot know the divine time. Human beings cannot change what God has done (14-15). Furthermore the time is the burden for human beings (Longman 1998:118). Qoheleth say, "I have seen the burden (ענין) God has set on men (3:10)." Already in 1:13 Qoheleth has spoken of the harsh burden (ענין) with which God has afflicted human beings. These expressions show the voice of the limitations of human beings.

The introduction of verse 16 suggests a connection with the preceding unit of thought. Qoheleth had considered the absolute sovereignty of God in the determination of time. Now Qoheleth turns to the specific problem of injustice. The problem is that wickedness prevails where justice is expected. Qoheleth witnessed the injustices of his day and wondered why divine judgment was delayed. Yet God will judge when history runs its course. Furthermore God is judging now (verse 18). The message of the imperfect verb 'will judge' is probably the same as the imperfect verb 'will seek' in verse 15. God will take care of all. Nevertheless, since it is impossible for human beings to know the time, human beings feel vanity, showing human limitation.

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<sup>49</sup> Since eternity is a divine attribute, one would think that Qoheleth was pleased by this truth. But Longman (1998:119) insisted that the context makes it clear that Qoheleth was not happy as a result of these observations. The verse is yet another cry of frustration on Qoheleth's part. Human beings long to know the eternity of everything. Yet try as human beings will, they cannot see it. The statement that 'all is vanity' contributes to the beginning of the closing texture in this chapter, representing the voice of the limitations of human beings.

The prevailing voice of human limitation is accompanied by the voice of human potential in middle texture. Verses 12 and 13 introduce a conclusion, which flows from the previous verses. Once the search for ultimate time in life is thwarted, the best course is to seek the little pleasures of life. Qoheleth knows that there is nothing better for human beings than to rejoice and to get food so long as they live. The enjoyment of life is an important theme in Ecclesiastes and is mentioned in four sections in chapters 3-10. Thus human beings should enjoy God's gifts as the fruit of one's labour, no matter how difficult life may be, rather than complaining about what lacks. In verse 14 Qoheleth reaches another conclusion based on his observation. Qoheleth asserts that the proper attitude is the fear of the Lord, presenting the voice of human potential.

In the closing texture (verses 19-22), one can hear both voices of the limitation and the potential of human beings. As the voice of human limitation, Qoheleth concluded that there is no difference between human beings and animals, in the sense that they both die and their bodies return to dust. Murphy (1992a:37) held that verse 20, 'All are from the dust and all return to dust' reflects Genesis 3:19 as background. Nobody knows what the future holds. Nevertheless, knowing that God is in sovereign control of life, human beings can be at peace. Again Qoheleth closes this section by reminding the reader to enjoy life while he can. God and his providence provide human beings with the motive to live. There is the potential of human beings, even though it is marginalised, on account of the prevailing voice of the limitation of human beings

#### **5.2.4 Sensory-Aesthetic Texture**

As the study of Proverbs 16 and Job 28 has shown, Ecclesiastes 3 can be looked at from

the perspective of a sensory-aesthetic texture, since sensory-aesthetic texture provides a particular tone or colour to previous textures (Robbins 1996:30). A human being is endowed with a heart for thinking, along with eyes that fill the heart with the data; a mouth for speaking, along with ears that collect the speech of others; and hands and feet for action. Human beings consist of three mutual interpenetrating yet distinguishable zones of thought, speech and action. Ecclesiastes 3 shows the interaction of three zones to the reader, enforcing the voice of the potential and limitations of human beings.

In the opening poem, all activities are related to these three zones. The poem begins with the zone of action. Most verses deal with the zone of action in this poem. Human activity includes birth, death, planting, uprooting (verse 2), and killing, healing, tearing down and building (verse 3). Weeping, laughing, mourning, dancing (verse 4) and scattering, gathering, embracing, and refraining (verse 5) follow. Yet in verse 7 the zone of speech occurs: speaking or to being silent. In verse 8, the zone of action as love and hatred does not exclude the zone of the heart. All activities including speech and thought have their times. The emphasis on the zone of action in opening texture makes it clear that life is composed of many different actions. These actions are sometimes mixed with the zone of speech and thought. Human beings can play a positive role in terms of 'human will', since human beings can enjoy the divine design in the world (Odgen 1987:56). Thus sensory-aesthetic texture in opening texture enforces the human potential to search for order (Brisson 2001:293, Song 1999:92).

Middle section starts with the zone of thought, challenging the voice of human potential, which implies that the following verses can be the commentary on the previous section.



Qoheleth saw the burden that God has laid on human beings. It implies that the start of the zone of thought reveals the negative aspect of reality. It was not happiness, but a burden that God placed upon human beings. The zone of thought continues in verse 16, and the first person singular perfect form of 'I saw' is used. In this verse, Qoheleth reports that he saw injustice in the place where most people expect justice. Qoheleth supports his thesis that the present world is vanity. In verses 17 and 18 the zone of thought is mixed with the zone of speech. Qoheleth ponders this observation from his heart. Qoheleth begins to discuss the similarity between human beings and animals. Both animals and human beings die without exception. Through seeing and thinking, Qoheleth declares that everything is ambiguous and absurd. Sensory-aesthetic texture in middle texture enforces the voice of human limitations.

Sensory-aesthetic texture in closing texture (19-22) concludes by repeating the limitations and potential of human beings. The zone of action enforces the voice of human limitations. The death of animals and the death of human beings are the same (verse 19). All go to the same place; all come from dust and all return to dust. The zone of thought is followed. Who knows if the spirit of man rises upward and if the spirit of the animal goes down into the earth (verse 21)? Human beings do not know the meaning of death and the world beyond the world. With this voice of human limitation, the voice of human potential is repeated. Verse 22 concludes with the zone of thought, using 'thus I saw'. Verse 22 with its 'there is nothing better than to enjoy his work' is parallel to 2:24 and 3:12. It is a positive perception of life which Qoheleth expresses. Thus the study of sensory-aesthetic texture shows that Qoheleth has two opposing ideas, even though the ambiguous and mysterious aspect of reality dominates.

### 5.2.5 Preliminary Conclusion

As a first attempt to interpret Ecclesiastes 3, inner texture was discussed, focusing on repetitive, progressive, opening-middle-closing, and sensory-aesthetic texture. Repetitive texture shows the importance of 'time' which occurs in each of verses 1-9, twenty nine times in all. The reference to 'all (כל)' occurs twelve times in Ecclesiastes 3. It implies that Ecclesiastes 3 deals with the relationship between all activities and their time. As both God and human beings occur seven times simultaneously in verses 10-22, time for all activities applies to both God and human beings. While God does (עשה), or gives something regarding all activities and time, human beings may observe or experience all happenings under the sun.

The progressive pattern of God relates all activities to God. God made all things beautiful in his time and gave eternity in their hearts (verse 11). God acted from the beginning to the end (verse 12). Nevertheless, human beings cannot know the time. What God gave human beings was the burden (verse 10). Everything is vanity. The fate of human beings does not differ from that of animals. Thus it is good for human beings to enjoy life and to do goodness (verse 12). It is the gift of God that human beings eat, drink and seek goodness (verse 13 and 22). That 'I saw', 'I know' and 'I said in heart' implies that Qoheleth can still search for wisdom and goodness in life.

Opening-middle-closing texture explains the message of Ecclesiastes 3 in detail. As opening texture of Ecclesiastes 3, verses 1-9 shows that the parallelism between the two lines of a verse is maintained throughout the poem. This positive negative pairing implies totality which takes place in the human world. The poem continually moves

from one extreme to the other. Although this poem can be interpreted as representing various voices, it includes the voice of human potential. Since there is divine time in all, human beings can expect their time and try to understand the meaning of time. Yet this opening texture ends with the question: What does the worker gain from his toil (3:9)?

In middle texture, Qoheleth challenges the voice of human potential in opening texture, explaining why his toil is fruitless. God has established a time for everything and then has put eternity in human beings' heart. Yet human beings cannot change what God has done (14-15). Even though human beings long for the knowledge of the eternity of everything, human beings cannot see it. No one can discover what God is doing. In closing texture the voices of human limitation and potential are repeated. Human limitation is repeated, concluding that there is no difference between human beings and animals, in the sense that they both die and their bodies return to dust. Nevertheless, human beings should enjoy God's gifts as the fruit of their labour, no matter how difficult it is for life to show human potential. Thus in closing texture Qoheleth closes this section by reminding the reader to enjoy life while he can.

The study of sensory-aesthetic texture adds a special interpretation of the text of Ecclesiastes 3. As human beings consist of three zones i.e. thought, speech and action, Ecclesiastes 3 shows the interaction of three three zones. The emphasis on the zone of action in opening texture enforces the voice of human potential. Yet middle and closing texture starts with the zone of thought, challenging the voice of opening texture. Sensory-aesthetic texture in middle texture strengthens the voice of human limitation, which implies that the following verses can be a commentary on the previous section. In

verses 17 and 18 the zone of thought is mixed with the zone of speech. An internal dialogue or struggle between two opposing ideas can be found within the mind of Qoheleth.

Sensory-aesthetic texture in the closing texture (19-22) concludes by repeating the limitations and potential of human beings. The zone of action enforces the voice of human limitations. All go to the same place; all come from dust and to dust all return. The zone of thought is followed. Human beings do not know the meaning of death and the world beyond the world. With this voice of human limitation, the voice of human potential is repeated. It is a positive perception of life that Qoheleth expresses. Despite a desperate declaration of 'vanity', Qoheleth can still be in the search of some meaning. Thus inner texture of Ecclesiastes 3 provides the basic foundation of further discussion of coexistence of order and mystery which is a main topic of this dissertation.

## **5.3 Intertexture of Ecclesiastes 3**

### **5.3.1 Introduction**

The relationship between the limitations and the potential of human activities has been discussed in the study of inner Texture of Ecclesiastes 3. It appears that human beings cannot know nor search for divine time, since what God has done cannot be added and subtracted. The inability might lead Qoheleth to declare the vanity of life, as many scholars (Kaiser 1998:85, Longman 1998a:38, Fox 1999:48) agree. There are, nevertheless, a few things that human beings can still do, as seen in the study of inner texture. Both the fear of the Lord and the pursuit of enjoyment can play a crucial role in

human activities.

Some themes such as vanity, the fear of the Lord, and the enjoyment of life will be discussed in the intertexture in order to clarify the message of Ecclesiastes 3. Since they are repeated in the entire book of Ecclesiastes, one can assume that a part of Ecclesiastes 3 may have been quoted or recited from oral or written traditions of Israel (Whybray 1994b:186). By focusing on the repetitions of the book, one can approach some particularly important messages such as the relationship between the limitations and the potential of human activities. Both the mystery of life and the search for meaning or order can coexist, despite the prevailing aspect of mystery.

Since these themes had similar patterns in the Ancient Near East, especially the Gilgamesh Epic, the study of recontextualization or reconfiguration needs to be considered (Brown 2000:7). At the same time, other themes such as 'time for all' and 'good creation of God' will be compared with quotes from other Wisdom books, especially in Proverbs 10-29. The comparisons enable the reader to believe that Ecclesiastes 3 has recontextualization and reconfiguration from both the Ancient Near East and Israelite Wisdom Literature, including Proverbs 16 which was discussed in the previous chapter.

The fact that Ecclesiastes 3 is still located in wisdom tradition and contains some contradictory voices enables the reader to consider Ecclesiastes 3 as not denying the search for order, while maintaining the prevailing of mystery. Based on various elements of the intertexture, thematic elaboration will be suggested for the clarification

of themes in Ecclesiastes 3.

## 5.3.2 Repetition and Recitation

### 5.3.2.1 Vanity of All

In the study of Wisdom Literature, the focus on the repetition is crucial, since repetition is common in Wisdom Literature. Some words and phrases such as ‘vanity for all’, and ‘enjoyment of life’ in Ecclesiastes 3 are repeated in the book of Ecclesiastes. These patterns are related to the theme of the entire book. Vanity (הבל) occurs 38 times in the book of Ecclesiastes, and it is employed as a key term in concluding statements which climax many smaller sections. Since the literal meaning of vanity as vapor has a multipurpose metaphor, its meaning must be derived from the context (Fox 1999:30). Then it will be crucial to define the meaning of vanity in the context of Ecclesiastes 3: 16-19 as well as in the book of Ecclesiastes.

3:19 Man’s fate is like that of the animals; the same fate awaits them both: As one dies, so dies the other.

All have the same breath; man has no advantage over the animal. **Everything is vanity** (כי הכל הבל).

4:7 Again I saw **vanity** under the sun (ושבתי אני ואראה הבל תחת השמש).

In Ecclesiastes 3: 16-18 Qoheleth observes a human situation. Corruption and evil are found in places where one would expect to find justice and righteousness. Qoheleth’s response is two-fold (Ceresko 1999:94). On the one hand, Qoheleth affirms that God will at some point bring justice in verse 17. On the other hand, Qoheleth represents other responses to the corruption and evil in verse 18. Qoheleth suggests that the pervasiveness of evil works as a form of testing, the purpose of which is to realize that

human beings are like animals. In this observation, Qoheleth declares that ‘everything is vanity.’ Thus the term of vanity can imply the state of inscrutability or absurdity, in the sense that human beings cannot discern justice and righteousness in the world.

In order to compare this statement with the repeated passage in the book of Ecclesiastes, the contexts of passages in 4:7-8 need to be investigated. In 4:7-8, one can find the lonely workaholic who wants to increase his property. There is no end to all his labours, nor is his eye satisfied with riches. Though the workaholic gains a great deal materially from his endeavours, he does not ask whom he toils for. He can only spend some portion of his riches. In a biblical tradition, material benefits are seen as tokens of divine blessing. Yet there is an anomalous situation brought about by the inability to enjoy what one has. Qoheleth observe the peculiar situation depicted by the term vanity. It can be not only futile but also absurd to Qoheleth (Fox 1999:37).

These examples can also be found in 6:2 and 8:14. These are also similar to those in passages 3:16-18 and 4:7-8. Good things happen to bad people. Bad things befall the good. Though there are different voices, this problem is sufficiently common to raise a serious theological question. Why does a just God allow this kind of thing to occur? There is no answer. Yet life does not cease to have meaning, and become vanity. It is a problem of theodicy.

6:2 God gives a man wealth, possessions and honour, so that he lacks nothing his heart desires, but God does not enable him to enjoy them, and a stranger enjoys them instead (לאכל ממנו כי איש נכרי יאכלנו) (זה הבל וחלי רע הוא). This is **vanity**, a grievous evil (ולא ישליטנו האלהים)

8:14 There is something else **vanity** that occurs on earth (יש הבל אשר נעשה על הארץ). Righteous men who get what the wicked deserve, and the wicked men who get what the righteous deserve.

Through this comparison of repetitions, the meaning of 'vanity' in Ecclesiastes 3 can be different from literal 'vanity' or 'meaninglessness' (Seow 1997:59). Rather the fact that there are no ready made answers to the problem of 3:16 leads to the conclusion that there is an enigma or mystery in life. If God's justice were to intervene, as 3:17 one might expect, then clearly the problem mentioned in verse 16 would be resolved. Even if one were to die before actually seeing divine justice work itself out, it would not strip life of its meaning. Thus the term 'vanity' in the book of Ecclesiastes can be a vehicle expressing an enigmatic situation (Odgen 1987).

### 5.3.2.2 The Fear of God

This enigmatic situation can lead to a religious activity. A religious devotion as human behaviour is the fear of the Lord in Ecclesiastes 3:14. This phrase concerning the fear of the Lord is repeated many times throughout the book. Since a full understanding of the universe is beyond human understanding, a practical conclusion is a religious piety. This attitude has already started in the study of Proverbs 16 and Job 28, and will continue in the further research on Sirach 24.

3:14 I know that everything God does will endure forever (ידעתי כי כל אשר יעשה האלהים הוא יהיה לעולם);  
nothing can be added to it and nothing taken from it, so men will **fear him** (שיראו מלפניו)

5:7 Much dreaming and many words are meaningless (כי ברב חלמות והבלים ודברים הרבה).

Therefore stand in **fear of God** (כי את האלהים ירא)



12:13 Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter. **Fear God and keep his commandments**, for this is the whole duty of man (את האלהים ירא ואת מצותיו שמור כי זה כל האדם).

In 3:14 Qoheleth explains why human beings should fear the Lord. For Seow (2000:468), God in Ecclesiastes 3:14 is wholly transcendent. The fundamental dissimilitude between God and human beings is stressed. Qoheleth observes that whatever God does, endures, and no one can change God's plan. This is what Qoheleth means by the fear of God in 3:14. Yet Murphy (1992a:ixv) comments that it is the mystery of divine activity. No matter how enigmatic God's world, human beings should live and fear God on account of the mystery of divine providence. Thus the fear of God functions as a practical conclusion in the enigmatic world.

Ecclesiastes 12:13 confirms that the fear of the Lord is a practical conclusion in a traditional sense (Longman 1998a:39). The Epilogist or an editor concludes, saying 'fear God and keep his commandments.' Furthermore he adds the reason for the fear of the Lord. 'It is the duty of human beings.' To fear the Lord is not only keeping the commandment, but also living according to the order God has provided. It is useless to ask why human beings should do such a thing. Thus the fear of the Lord can function as a way of searching for order as well as an expression of the mystery of God, as shown in the previous study of Proverbs 16 and Job 28

The fear of the Lord as the search for order occurs 8:12-13. Even though the wicked commit many crimes and live a long life, people fearing the Lord will be much better. The fear of the Lord can provide many useful things to the people who fear the Lord

(8:12). In other ways, the wicked that do not fear the Lord will have their days which will not lengthen like a shadow (8:13). In both cases, the fear of the Lord can function as traditional wisdom, in which it is possible to discern and search for the wisdom. Thus one can say that Qoheleth still believed the fear of the Lord i.e. the search of his faith and divine order in a world in which human wisdom is limited.

8:12 Although a wicked man commits a hundred crimes and still lives a long time, I know that it will go better with **God fearing** men (כִּי גַם יוֹדַע אֲנִי אֲשֶׁר יִהְיֶה טוֹב לִירְאֵי הָאֱלֹהִים), who are **reverent before God** (אֲשֶׁר יִירָאוּ מִלִּפְנֵי).

8:13 yet because the wicked do not **fear God** (אֲשֶׁר אֵינָנו יִרָא מִלִּפְנֵי אֱלֹהִים), it will not go well with them, and their days will not lengthen like a shadow (וְטוֹב לֹא יִהְיֶה לְרַשָּׁע וְלֹא יֵאָרֶיךָ יָמִים כְּצֶל).

### 5.3.2.3 Enjoyment of Life

The fear of the Lord as the acceptance of traditional wisdom can be accompanied by a positive view of life which can also be seen in the old wisdom tradition. These passages such as 3:12, 3:22, and 2:24 show that Qoheleth recommends the devoted pursuit of enjoyment, though Qoheleth maintains a very pessimistic view of life (Whybray 1994:203). The passage in 3:12 has 3:22 as the repetition in Ecclesiastes 3 as well as the entire book of Ecclesiastes: 2:24; 5:17; 8:15; 9:7-9; 11:7-12.

3:12 I know that there is no better thing for them to do than to **be happy and enjoy** themselves as long as they live (יָדַעְתִּי כִּי אֵין טוֹב בָּם כִּי אִם לְשִׂמּוּחַ וּלְעִשׂוֹת טוֹב בְּחַיָּו).

3:22a I understand that there is no better thing than that a man should **be happy** in his work (וְרָאִיתִי כִּי אֵין טוֹב מֵאֲשֶׁר יִשְׂמַח הָאָדָם בְּמַעֲשָׁיו).

2:24a There is no better thing for man to do than to eat and drink and **find enjoyment** in his toil

(אין טוב באדם שיאכל ושתה והראה את נפשו טוב בעמלו).

Ecclesiastes 3:12 shows how human beings should behave in the light of their ignorance of the future. Though the things which happen to human beings and the opportunities which are given to them occur at the time which God has determined, human beings can try to fit into the divine time. Though human beings cannot know and alter the divine time (3:11), human beings should accept and find happiness in what God provides. Thus there are some things that human beings can do. It implies that human beings can still search for the meaning of life or the order of life (Odgen 1987:63).

Ecclesiastes 3:22 can also be explained in the context of 3:16-22. The problem of injustice in the world is dealt with. In addressing this problem, Qoheleth reaffirms the traditional belief that God will judge the righteous and the wicked (Fox 1999:26). But the difficulty is that human beings do not know when this will happen. But out of this depressing state of affairs Qoheleth once again draws a positive conclusion. It is the enjoyment of life. Qoheleth adds that it is his lot and no one can let him know what will happen to him in the future.

In 2:22-23, Qoheleth also arrives at a similar conclusion. Though Qoheleth sought satisfaction in life by the acquisition first of pleasure and then of wisdom, he expresses his disillusionment. He comes to hate life and his fruitless toil. Even the immense efforts which he made to enjoy himself have given him no lasting satisfaction. It is precisely because he tried so hard and relied on his own efforts that in the end all he has

achieved is worry and strain. Qoheleth's answer to this problem is verse 24. Human beings should eat and drink and find enjoyment as a gift or heritage of God. Thus the search for enjoyment can be a reevaluation of traditional wisdom, still maintaining its efficiency (Ceresko 1999:14).

The use of many repetitions such as vanity, the fear of the Lord and enjoyment of life can reflect the period when the book was written and read for the first time. As suggested in the previous study in Proverbs 16 and Job 28, these repetitions can result from recitations from the contemporary oral tradition and written literature in a particular period. The Persian period when the book was written could repeat or recite the traditional wisdom.

### **5.3.3 Recontextualization and Reconfiguration**

#### **5.3.3.1 Vanity of vanities**

The themes such as vanity, the fear of the Lord, and enjoyment of life are found in the Ancient Near East Literatures as well as in traditional wisdom of Israel. The vanity of life is the theme of a collection of literary sections in cuneiform. In Sumerian, the Ugarit and Emar copies, each section begins with the same three lines (Lambert 1998:38).

Rules were formulated by Enki,

Regulations were laid at the command of the gods,

From days of old there has been **vanity** (literally 'wind').

This reflects the Sumero-Babylonian idea that every aspect of human life was laid down

by the gods when they civilised the human race in early times, but Qoheleth did not accept that idea. Nevertheless this idea would have given the motive of reconfiguration to the heart of Qoheleth. The futility of all human endeavor occurred in the mouth of Gilgamesh in the Old Babylonian edition (c. 1700 BCE). Unlike the Sumerian version of the story, the Babylonian version offers the brief generalization (Lambert 1995:37). Another similar statement occurs in a wisdom text known from a single Late Assyrian copy.

As for mankind, their days are numbered,

Whatever they do is **wind** (ANET 79:7-8).

Mankind and their achievements alike come to an end (BWL 108:10).

Vanity of vanities was a wisdom theme in Mesopotamian wisdom texts before 1600 BCE. The theme seems to refer to the idea that human achievements are forgotten and in vain. A solution to this dilemma is offered at the end. Happiness is what is worthwhile. One day of life is of greater worth than 36,000 years in the grave. In this sense the vanity of vanities in Ecclesiastes 3 is shared with that of the Ancient Near East. The Ugaritic tablet 164 ends with this.

Ugaritic tablet 164: When the gods created mankind

They assigned death to man,

But life they kept in their own hands.

Seen from the context of the Ancient Near East, the meaning of vanity is related to the

inscrutabilities of the deities. Yet the sage in Israelite has reconfigured it as the voice of the mystery of God. Thus the voice of the maintenance of mystery was emphasised in Ecclesiastes, accompanied by the voice of the search for order.

### 5.3.3.2 Enjoyment of life

When it comes to foreign Semitic influence on Qoheleth, there is no doubt that the most striking parallels are in the Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic (Day 1998:59). A remarkable parallel can be found between Qoheleth's advices about enjoying life in Ecclesiastes 9:7-9 and the goddess Siduri's version of the Gilgamesh (X iii 6-14). In Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic, Gilgamesh meets the goddess of wisdom, *Siduri* during his travels on his quest for eternal life (Lambert 1998:31). *Siduri* discourages Gilgamesh from such futile ambition and offers him instead the enjoyment of life.

Gilgamesh Epic (X iii 6-14): As for you, Gilgamesh, let your belly **be full**,

Day and night ever **rejoice**,

Every day **have pleasure**.

.....

Let your spouse have **constant pleasure** in your bosom

Seen from the comparison with Gilgamesh Epic, Ecclesiastes was presenting an old theme in an Israelite way (Brown 2000:7). How the author drew on the ancient near eastern tradition is the big question. It is possible that the Mesopotamian texts were translated, whether orally or literally, into a West Semitic language. The verbal similarity of the passage in the Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic to Ecclesiastes 9:7-9 is well

known. In the hands of an Israelite sage, such themes are reinterpreted for a new age. Thus the enjoyment of life in Ecclesiastes 3 may be interpreted as a theme of traditional wisdom, as the search for order in the prevailing voice of mystery in life such as the vanity of vanities.

### 5.3.3.3 Biblical Intertexture

Even though Qoheleth was reconfigured from the Ancient Near East, Qoheleth still has been recontextualized from earlier Israelite literature (Whybray 1994b:186). They could be composed in traditional fashion by Qoheleth himself. In his book *Koheleth-The Man and His world: A Study of Ecclesiastes*, Gordis (1978:100) wrote: “whether Qoheleth is quoting proverbs already extant, or composing them himself is difficult to determine.” The sayings might be recontextualization from some earlier written or oral collection from an earlier age, with the sayings in Proverbs 10-22 which was dated in the period of the Monarchy.

Whybray (1994:187) attempted to identify quotations from earlier Wisdom Literature. According to Whybray, there are at least forty sayings which are self contained, and whose forms are paralleled in Proverbs. One of them is that there is an appropriate time for speech. As one sees the statement that there is a time to be silent and a time to speak in Ecclesiastes 3, one can see similar expressions in Proverbs 15:21 and 23.

Ecclesiastes 3:7b (there is) **a time to be silent** and **a time to speak** (עת לחשות ועת לדבר)

Proverbs 15:23 To make **an apt answer** is a joy to anyone (שמחה לאיש במענה פיו) and **a word in season**

how good it is (ודבר בעתו מה טוב).

Proverbs 25:11 **a word fitly spoken** is like apples of gold in a setting of silver

(תפוחי זהב במשכיות כסף דבר דבר על אפניו).

When Qoheleth provides the statement that everything has its time or season, it is possible that Qoheleth quoted the earlier wisdom (Odgen 1987:51). Yet the quotation is a recontextualization of the earlier proverbs. It implies that the statement that there is a time to be silent and a time to speak is not new in the wisdom history. In the book of Proverbs there are similar expressions. Proverbs 25:11 and 23 showed the importance of making an apt answer, doing a word in season.

In traditional wisdom, the ancient Israelite believed that they could find some order in human life by the observation and experience, since God created the world. One of the sage's missions was to discern the right of speech (Murphy 1992:34). Giving an answer before hearing is tantamount to folly (Proverbs 18:13). To master life is in part to determine when to embrace and when to refrain. Ecclesiastes 3:11 also has similar expression in Proverbs 16:4, which was previously discussed. The reason why everything has its time or season is that God has made everything suitable for its time (Ecclesiastes 3:11). Thus it is possible that Ecclesiastes 3:11 is a recontextualization of Proverbs 16:4.

Ecclesiastes 3:11a God has made **everything suitable for its time** (את הכל עשה יפה בעתו).

Proverbs 16:4a The Lord has made **everything for its purpose** (כל פעל יהוה למענהו).

It seems that both statements are fully compatible in meaning (Brown 2000:43). Both



statements claim God's unsurpassable sovereignty in creation. Qoheleth also accepts the traditional proverbial wisdom which affirms that God has a discernible purpose for everything created (Proverbs 16:4). Yet there can be significant differences between Qoheleth's presentation of the times and the insights of traditional wisdom. This is the emphasis of human limitation recognised in traditional wisdom. Even though humanity is the subject of the various infinitives (people plant and pluck up, mourn and dance), the human subject is by no means the determiner of such events. Qoheleth makes it clear that God alone is the one who determines (Seow 2000:469). From Qoheleth's perspective, God's determinations are immutably sufficient.

The nature of God's determination from Qoheleth's perspective can be compared with traditional wisdom. As seen in the study of Proverbs 16 and Job 28, the traditional wisdom also recognised the limitations of human understanding. In Proverbs 16:1, 'the plans of the heart belong to man, but from the Lord comes the reply of the tongue.' 'Man does not comprehend its worth; it cannot be found in the land of the living' (Job 28:13). Qoheleth's vision of time does not stray far from the tenets of traditional wisdom, recontextualized or reconfigured from the old wisdom. Thus it is possible that the themes such as 'vanity for all,' 'the fear of God,' and 'enjoyment of life' have been reconfigured from recognition of both limitations and the potential of human understanding in the old wisdom tradition of Israel as well as the Ancient Near East.

#### **5.3.4 Thematic Elaboration**

The study of inner texture such as repetitive pattern, progressive pattern, and opening-middle and ending texture enabled the reader to notice that a particular theme was

introduced in opening section of Ecclesiastes 3. The particular theme was dealt with in detail in middle section (verses 10-19). Some examples for the argument were included. Finally, in closing section the argument appeared again and closed it.

The particular theme which intertexture of Ecclesiastes 3 elaborates is the theme that human beings can maintain the mystery of God such as the vanity of vanities, while searching for order such as the enjoyment of life (Ceresko 1999:94). The rationale of the theme is the sovereignty of God (Brown 2000:15). It implies that all action and time belong to God. On the one hand, it is natural that the recognition of the sovereignty can lead to a feeling of 'vanity' and the fear of God, since there are nothing human beings can add. On the other hand, the recognition leads to the enjoyment of the gift of God and a positive attitude to life.

The confirmation of the rationale is the repetition patterns in the entire book of Ecclesiastes. The book of Ecclesiastes shows a recontextualization or reconfiguration of Israelite wisdom tradition as well as the Ancient Near East. The vanity of vanities and maintenance of the enjoyment of life were a common theme in the Ancient Near East. It is possible that the book of Ecclesiastes reconfigured the theme as the vanity of vanities and the enjoyment of life in Israelite way. Furthermore the search for order and the maintenance of mystery was a theme of the book of Proverbs, including Proverbs 16. In comparison with Proverbs 16, the aspect of mystery is emphasised much more in the book of Ecclesiastes.

For examples, an introductory poem conveyed a message that all human activities have

their time. However, Qoheleth does not know the time, even though he knows that God will judge it in the future. Qoheleth saw or experienced wickedness instead of justice and iniquity instead of righteousness. The comparison of the death of human beings and that of animals also confirms the theme. There is no difference in death in the sense that their bodies return to dust. It leads Qoheleth to feel the mystery of life. Nevertheless, the order of God is not denied, since God has created the world. 'Time for all' in Ecclesiastes 3 includes an allusion that there is a divine plan to search for (Odgen 1987:51). The allusion provides human beings the motive to live with and to search for the meaning of life.

As embellishment, Qoheleth adds that all come from the dust and all return to dust. It also alludes to the state of human beings in Genesis 2:7 (Murphy 1992a:37). Even though human beings return to dust, since they come from dust, it does not mean that life is completely in the darkness. The presence of God and his providence provides human beings with the motive to live and to search for meaning. This theme of Ecclesiastes 3 appeared throughout the entire book of Ecclesiastes. In the Prologue (Ecclesiastes 1:1-11), one can find Qoheleth's basic judgment about life. Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher; Vanity of vanities, all is vanity (Ecclesiastes 1:2). This Prologue reflects the cosmology of a wise king who is dismayed at the inefficacy of his grand accomplishments (Brown 2000:15), starting with a theme of vanity of all.

By the time one reaches the book's conclusion, one can notice a significant change from first person to second person discourse. Furthermore, one can find a greater concentration of proverbial sayings in the latter half of the book (Ecclesiastes 7-12).

Such an observation suggests some measure of pedagogical movement. Qoheleth's instructions and sayings are cast in a more positive light in the latter part of the book. It seems that even though the book starts with certain negative perspectives on life, the book gradually gives way to more positive instruction.

### **5.3.5 Preliminary Conclusion**

In order to clarify the meaning of Ecclesiastes 3, intertexture of Ecclesiastes 3 has been discussed. The statement such as vanity of all, the fear of the Lord, and the enjoyment of life has repetitions in the book of Ecclesiastes. The repetition patterns in Ecclesiastes 3 were related to the theme of the entire book. The study of recontextualization or reconfiguration in Ecclesiastes 3 has made it possible to look at Ecclesiastes from the perspective of the traditional wisdom of Israel as well as the Ancient Near East.

Vanity of all in Ecclesiastes 3 has a repetition or a recitation in the book of Ecclesiastes, including Ecclesiastes 4:7-8, 6:2 and 8:14. By means of the comparison of the repetition, the term of vanity in Ecclesiastes 3 can mean ambiguity or absurdity, being part of the divine character. The phrase of the fear of the Lord is often repeated. In 3:14 Qoheleth explains why human beings should fear the Lord. Qoheleth realises that human beings should fear the Lord, since no one can change God's plan. As a form of the search for order, these passages such as 3:12, 3:22, and 2:24 show that Qoheleth recommends the pursuit of enjoyment. Since human beings cannot know and alter the divine time (3:11), Qoheleth concludes that human beings should accept and find happiness in what God provides, even in the enigmatic situation.

The themes such as vanity, the fear of the Lord, and enjoyment of life can be found in wisdom tradition of the Ancient Near East Literatures as well as Israelite. The vanity of vanities was a wisdom theme in Mesopotamian wisdom texts. Human achievements are forgotten and in vain. As a solution to this dilemma, enjoyment has been suggested. Furthermore, Qoheleth has recontextualised the earlier proverbial wisdom. Proverbs 15:21 and 23 showed the importance of making an apt answer, doing a word in season. In Ecclesiastes 3:11 and Proverbs 16:4, Qoheleth accepts the traditional proverbial wisdom which affirms that God has a discernible purpose for everything created. The traditional wisdom enabled human beings to search for order and maintain mystery, as seen in the study of Proverbs 16 and Job 28.

The particular theme which the intertexture of Ecclesiastes 3 elaborates is that human beings should maintain the mystery of God such as vanity of vanities and the search for order such as the enjoyment of life. The rationale of the theme is the sovereignty of God. Recognition of the sovereignty leads to a feeling of 'vanity' and the fear of God. The recognition also leads to the enjoyment of the gift of God and to demonstrate a positive attitude to life. The confirmation of the rationale is the repetition patterns in the book of Ecclesiastes and the Ancient Near East Wisdom. As embellishment, Qoheleth adds that all are from dust and all return to dust. Even though human beings return to dust, it does not mean that life is completely meaningless. The presence of God and his providence provides human beings with the motive to live.

Despite the coexistence of the search for order and the maintenance of mystery, the voice of maintenance of mystery was emphasised and prevailing in the enigmatic

situation. This theme of Ecclesiastes 3 appeared throughout the entire book of Ecclesiastes. The Prologue (Ecclesiastes 1:1-11) shows a particular message about the ‘vanity of vanities’ which reflects a theme of Ecclesiastes 3. In the latter part of the book (Ecclesiastes 7-12), Qoheleth’s messages show the positive perspectives on life.

## **5.4 Social and Cultural Texture**

### **5.4.1 Introduction**

Through the study of intertexture of Ecclesiastes 3 a particular theme was elaborated. While the sovereignty of God was emphasised, Qoheleth could feel the inscrutability of life under the sun. Such recognition did not let him stay away from God, but let him fear God and accept the happiness of ordinary life. Even though Qoheleth’s approach was not new in the history of Israelite Wisdom, Ecclesiastes 3 shows a particular voice in the wisdom tradition, which reflects the social and cultural context in which the book was written and read. A pessimistic view of life like ‘vanity for all’ might be a product of a particular period as a response to the Israelite wisdom tradition.

Current scholars have not reached an agreement on the date of the book of Ecclesiastes 3. While many scholars (Odgen 1987:15, Murphy 1992a:xlvi, Blenkinsopp 1995:58) attribute the date of the book of Ecclesiastes to the Hellenistic period (BCE 3<sup>rd</sup> century), some recent scholars (Seow 1997:21, Brown 2000:7) insisted on the possibility that it could have been written in the Persian period (BCE 539-337). Vanity which was discussed in intertexture can be explained in terms of the economy in the Persian period. It may point to the total lack of profit or uncertainty of profit. Qoheleth might express

the anxiety and hopes in an emerging economy.

Social and cultural texture of Ecclesiastes 3 will start with a social background of Ecclesiastes 3 and will discuss the social and cultural topics, using the categories of Robbins and Wilson. As done in the study of Proverbs 16 and Job 28, thaumaturgical and manipulationist response will be investigated as specific social categories in Ecclesiastes 3. Cultural categories such as dominant culture, contraculture, and liminal culture will be dealt with in Ecclesiastes 3. Such a social and cultural background of Ecclesiastes 3 will provide a basis for further ideological and theological reading.

#### **5.4.2 Social Setting of Ecclesiastes 3**

Blenkinsopp (1995:61) and Kaiser (1998:84) acknowledged Greek-Hellenistic writing and thought in the book of Ecclesiastes, and attributed the date to middle of the third century BCE. The rise of the specific genre of autobiography has been associated with the breakup of the traditional community. According to Kaiser (1998:84), the prominence which Qoheleth gives to the personal account form, and the emphasis which he places on the individual path to knowledge, corresponds to his break with the ideas which were presupposed in wisdom tradition of his people. He lived at a time when old beliefs were being questioned, and when the individual no longer able to depend on them was forced to find his own way.

According to Blenkinsopp (1995:61), since we are almost completely in the dark with regard to Jewish intellectual life in the third century BCE, “we can only speculate that the erosion of confidence in traditional dogma and practices was fairly widespread in

the social class to which Qoheleth belonged.” Qoheleth is addressing a radical critique to the tradition of the sages from inside. Yet Seow (1997) and Brown (2000) proposed a specific time frame during the early fourth or late fifth century based on the use of the verbal root in the fifth century Aramaic economic documents. Persian loan words, Aramaisms, and late developments in Hebrew form and syntax all indicate a fourth or third century BCE dating of the book.

It is likely that the book of Ecclesiastes was produced during the Persian period. The linguistic evidence<sup>50</sup> indicates a date in the Persian period (Seow 1997:21). This period has been considered a dark age in the history of Israel on account of the paucity of information on it. Within the socio-historical context, Judah had suffered the ravages of defeat and exile by the Babylonians (BCE 597-538). With the fall of the Babylonian empire under the Persian king Cyrus II in 539, Judah came under Persian hegemony, marked by the release of the Exiles by royal edict in 538. Although Judah enjoyed a measure of autonomy, it still had to contend with survival under foreign control.

Beginning in the Persian period, certain dramatic socioeconomic developments occurred changing the social landscape of Palestine (Brown 2000:8). In contrast to the largely subsistence agrarian economy of pre-Exilic Judah, the economy became increasingly commercialised from the fifth century onward. A standardised monetary currency was introduced for the first time in order to facilitate commerce between Egypt and Persia. In addition, an efficient and aggressive system of taxation was implemented under

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50 According to Seow (1997:12-20), there are widely recognised Persian loanwords in Ecclesiastes: parks (פרדסים) (2:5) and sentence (פתגם) (8:11). The usage of the root authority (שלט) in Ecclesiastes 2:19, 5:18 is typical for the fifth and fourth centuries BCE.



Persian hegemony. Consequently, a new market driven economy of global proportions emerged, complete with many entrepreneurial opportunities.

The development of the monetary economy may provide a socioeconomic context within which to interpret many sayings in Ecclesiastes (Seow 1997:22). ‘One who loves silver will not be satisfied with silver, nor whoever loves abundance with yield (Ecclesiastes 5:10).’ ‘The sleep of a labouring man is sweet, whether he eats little or much; But the abundance of the rich will not permit him to sleep (Ecclesiastes 5:12).’ ‘Wisdom is a defense as money is a defense, but the excellence of knowledge is that wisdom gives life to those who have it (Ecclesiastes 7:12).’ While Qoheleth clearly draws on timeless wisdom teachings, he also addresses people facing a new world of money and finance. The people whom Qoheleth addressed were preoccupied with the acquisition of money.

The rapid growth of a monetary economy did not benefit all people equally (Brown 2000:9). “Those who already had extensive capital outlays possessed unprecedented opportunity for cultivating greater assets. Those of lesser means, however, were at a distinct disadvantage. As a result, a shrinking middle class felt overwhelmed with the plethora of economic opportunities and risks. A person could reap profit one day and find himself in the dumps the next day, so volatile was this economy. Thus it was a time of turbulent socioeconomic change that prompted many to question the wisdom of the past.”

Since authors in antiquity reflect a category or class to which they belong, the author of

Qoheleth can mention the voice of a particular sage or a scribe class. In a recent book, *Scribal Culture and the making of the Hebrew Bible* (2007:80), Van der Toorn identifies the sages with the temple scribes.<sup>51</sup> The scribes who copied, edited and wrote the books were professional elite affiliated to the temple of Jerusalem, since the majority of the population was not literate, in the period when the Old Testament was written.

Nevertheless, Qoheleth can reflect a voice of the general populace of Judah with the anxiety and hopes in such an emerging economy. In the second temple hierarchy, the priests played a significant role in controlling the life of Judah. The scribes were subordinate to the priests, even though there was the rivalry between the priests and scribes. The sage or the scribe shared a common question with ordinary people in the Persian period. In his opening reflections about the human condition, Qoheleth asks the question of economic gain in 1:3. “What do people gain from all the toil at which they toil under the sun (3:9; 5:16)?” Qoheleth’s discourse reflects the lack of security and wellbeing felt among ordinary citizens. The problem and the response to the question dominate the rest of the book.

### **5.4.3 Specific Social Topics**

Ecclesiastes 3 which is a product of the Persian period can share specific social topics. According to Robbins (1996:72), there are seven types of specific social topics: ‘conversionist, revolutionist, introversionist, manipulationist, thaumaturgical, reformist, and utopian response.’ Like Proverbs 16 and Job 28, Ecclesiastes 3 shows both

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<sup>51</sup> According to Van der Toorn (2007:80), since wisdom presupposes high literacy, and literacy is to be acquired by a scribal training, the sages and the scribes are occasionally used as synonyms.

thaumaturgical and manipulationist responses. The thaumaturgical response is the belief in supernatural communications and manifestations of power. Supernatural solution maintains even in the advanced societies. Divine determination can belong to this category. The social and cultural context of the Persian period made the writer of Ecclesiastes adopt a thaumaturgical response.

Qoheleth experiences that there is nothing human beings can do in terms of financial problems. Qoheleth describes “both tangible and intangible outcomes in the language of finance and commerce more often than in the parlance of agriculture or the royal court” (Mills 2003:14). Ecclesiastes 3 asks a question, hinging on a commercial idiom, that of profit and loss. Of what advantage is it for a human being to live? The answer is that there is no clear profit to be made. The use of the term ‘vanity’ may point at the total lack of profit or it may indicate that the nature of any possible profit is ambiguous or uncertain.

The question and answer found at the start of Ecclesiastes 1 is repeated across the rest of the text and covers a range of varying events of life (Seow 1997:48). No advantage is gained despite all the activities. It is not profitable to make money and collect wealth. And it is not profitable to have a family and many sons. Furthermore it is not profitable to be educated and to have wisdom. Human beings are caught in such a situation where they are not in control; only God is in charge. In Ecclesiastes 4:8 the writer observes those who have no one to share wealth with, in terms of family members, but who ceaselessly toil to gain more possessions without asking what the point of the struggle is. In Ecclesiastes 6 Qoheleth speaks of a man with hundred sons and a long life. But this

man does not have the means to enjoy the years and his sons do not bother to provide him with a decent burial. Yet the profit of family and age is negated by lack of benefit attached to these social goods. Thus the writer of Ecclesiastes employs “cultural images drawn from life experience in the broadest sense to map existing social value systems” (Mills 2003:15).

Thus the writer of the book experiences disappointment at the society. The disappointment made Qoheleth state ‘vanity of all.’ In the situation of vanity, the statement that everything has a time, but human beings cannot know divine time can play a role as a salvation from the society. Qoheleth believes that nothing can be added to what God has done. Seeing Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 from a Latin American perspective, Tamez (1999:77) regards Qoheleth’s affirmation of time as a utopian phrase that orders real life in the midst of slavish toil. Faith in the hope for the future helps one to resist with dignity the present time of death and weeping, leading to salvation. Thus the prevailing voice of Ecclesiastes 3 can belong to a thaumaturgical response. According to the thaumaturgical response by Robbins (1996:73), ‘salvation takes the form of healing, restoration after loss, avoidance of calamity, and the guarantee of eternal life.’

Despite thaumaturgical response, a manipulationist response can also be found. A manipulationist response is ‘to seek a transformed set of relationships or transformed methods of coping with evil’ (Robbins 1996:73). Evil might be overcome if a human being learns correct means and improved techniques. This orientation provides timeless happiness for human beings. This response is related to everyday wellbeing, and this wellbeing may be obtained by learning universal principles concerning human beings

and the world. The enjoyment of life as the gift of God can be a manipulationist response. That 'everything has a time' and 'God has created everything according to his time' can also function as a manipulationist response. God's judgment of the righteous and the wicked can show a manipulationist response. Finally God will provide wellbeing for the righteous. 'God will judge the righteous and the wicked, for there is a time for every purpose and for every work (Ecclesiastes 3:17).' The fear of the Lord can also function as both a manipulationist and a thaumaturgical response, in the study of Proverbs 16 and Job 28.

The coexistence of thaumaturgical and manipulationist responses in Ecclesiastes 3 provides a social understanding of a society of the Persian period, while the prevailing voice of a thaumaturgical response reflects the search for salvation from the insecurity and ambiguity. This is the voice of maintenance of mystery. Yet the fact that there is still a manipulationist response in Ecclesiastes 3 shows that the search for order is not completely rejected, which will be dealt with in the ideological and theological texture.

#### **5.4.4 Cultural Categories**

As in the study of Proverbs 16 and Job 28, one will utilise the cultural categories such as dominant culture, subculture, counterculture, contraculture, and liminal culture (Robbins 1996). Ecclesiastes' use of money images can be regarded as a neutral cultural imagery, but, equally, it can be viewed suspiciously as the manner in which one particular group seeks to dominate social consciousness and so uphold power. In Ecclesiastes' case this would be the educated elite, which has access to power and wealth in its community. They are certainly not the peasantry, even though a labourer's

life is idealised in the text (Ecclesiastes 5:12).

According to Van der Toorn (2007:107), in the second temple period, due to the gradual transformation of Judaism into a religion of the Book, the scribes eventually transcended their secondary status in the hierarchy. Furthermore the social crisis of the fifth century BCE caused the upper class to split into two classes (Albertz 2002b:114). One class is the upper class that was intent on winning economic advantage regardless of the religious obligation to help one another. The other is the upper class that was willing to embrace the social obligations and to alleviate the distress of the bankrupt by doing the righteous activities.

Reading Ecclesiastes from the perspective of an ideology of power would be to view the writer as spokesperson for dominant class interests in Persian Judaism (Mills 2003:16). In this setting the book would be seen as dealing with the nature of existence, a common debate, but doing so within the cultural interests of the elite governing class. Only someone with surplus wealth would be concerned with the risks of venture capital (Ecclesiastes 5:13). The weary tone of the work would stem from an upper class malaise, a suspicion that the advantage of wealth and status confers no absolute profit in terms of life as a whole.

The traditional wisdom that 'there is time for everything' reflects a voice of dominant culture. In pre-Monarchic and Monarchic periods, proverbial wisdom functioned as maintaining social security and order, as dealt with in the previous study of Proverbs 16 and Job 28. The fear of the Lord and the pursuit of enjoyment could be a voice of

dominant culture since the pre-Exilic period, even though they could share with other cultures. Thus the book of Ecclesiastes reflects an elite social world in antiquity. Qoheleth can be linked with royalty and temple.

However, the dominant security of a royal voice is challenged by the other voice of the autobiographer, that of insecurity, of an ambivalent balance between profit and vanity (Mills 2003:93). 'Vanity for all' can reflect a voice of contraculture or liminal culture. Though they can be a product of a class of dominating elite, their voice shows contra or liminal culture. A contraculture expresses a feeling of resignation, rather than searching for hope and success. They feel that there is nothing that human beings cannot add or subtracts.

Thus Ecclesiastes 3 as well as the book of Ecclesiastes can reflect the combination or mixture of dominating and contra and liminal cultures. Even though the writer of the book belonged to the dominating elite group of the post-Exilic period, he might experience or observe the deep marginalization in the economic sphere. In fact, he can represent both a lower and an elite class. The experience or observation of the contraculture and liminal culture made the writer of the book elaborate his interest in social absurdity and ambiguity by means of the dependence on the Israelite wisdom tradition and the Ancient Near East Wisdom. Thus the status of the author or the editor socially and culturally might make possible the coexistence of mystery and order in Ecclesiastes 3. Yet the coexistence in Ecclesiastes 3 was different from that in Proverbs 16 and Job 28, in the sense that the voice of the maintenance of mystery prevails.

### **5.4.5 Preliminary Conclusion**

Social and cultural texture of Ecclesiastes 3 began with the discussion of the social background of Ecclesiastes 3. It is likely that the book of Ecclesiastes was produced during the Persian period. Persian loan words, Aramaisms, and late developments in Hebrew form and syntax all indicate a fifth or fourth century BCE dating of the book. Beginning in the Persian period, certain socioeconomic developments occurred dramatically changing the social landscape of Palestine. A standardized monetary currency was introduced for the first time in order to facilitate commerce. A new market emerged with many opportunities and risks. In this period, Ecclesiastes 3 voiced a particular sage or scribe class that Qoheleth belonged to.

Ecclesiastes 3 showed thaumaturgical and manipulationist responses to the monetary society. The social and cultural context of the post-Exilic period enabled the writer of the book of Ecclesiastes to depend on a kind of divine determination, which can be a thaumaturgical response. The writer of the book experiences disappointment at the society. Human beings cannot do anything in terms of financial problems. In this situation, divine time can play a role as a salvation of society, reflecting a utopian idea. The hope for divine time helps one to resist the present suffering (Tamez 1999:77). The fear of the Lord can also function as a way of salvation.

Despite prevailing thaumaturgical response, a manipulationist response to the society was found. The enjoyment of life as the gift of God is a manipulationist response. Divine time and the judgment of God over the righteous and the wicked can also belong to a manipulationist response. The fear of the Lord can also function as a



manipulationist and a thaumaturgical response, since the fear of the Lord functions as traditional wisdom. Thus the coexistence of thaumaturgical and manipulationist responses in Ecclesiastes 3 provides a social understanding of a society of the Persian period, while the prevailing voice of a thaumaturgical response reflects the prevailing voice of the maintenance of mystery.

As a cultural category, Ecclesiastes 3 as well as the book of Ecclesiastes reflected dominant class interests in post-Exilic Judaism, as an elite social world in antiquity. The weary tone of the work would stem from an upper class. Qoheleth can be linked to royalty and temple. The traditional wisdom that 'God will judge the righteous and the wicked' reflects the dominant class which occurred in the book of Proverbs. However, the dominant security of a royal voice is challenged by the other voice of insecurity and resistance. Some messages that Qoheleth delivered in Ecclesiastes 3 reflected a contra or liminal voice. The statement that 'everything is vanity' and 'human beings cannot know divine time' could reflect a voice of contraculture or liminal culture.

Ecclesiastes 3 represents the dominant culture of temple scribe classes and leading classes in the second temple period. Yet Qoheleth might experience or observe the situation of failure or disappointment, though he remained part of a dominant class. He might experience the marginalisation in the economic sphere. For that reason he might criticise the culture of other dominating classes such as priests and landowners, giving birth to a particular voice of Ecclesiastes 3 as the prevailing mystery and marginalised search for order, which is the theological theme of this dissertation.

## **5.5 Ideological and Theological Texture**

### **5.5.1 Introduction**

All the textures such as inner texture, inter texture, social and cultural texture provide the background for ideological and theological texture. As inner texture, Ecclesiastes 3 suggested the potential of human activity in the prevailing activity of God. Intertexture clarified a theme as a relationship between mystery and order. The meaning of vanity was considered as inscrutability or mystery of a divine world. Despite an emphasis on mystery, Ecclesiastes 3 shows the continuity of traditional wisdom that was found in Proverbs 16, representing the search for order. The social and cultural texture showed that the material uncertainty contributed to form a social and cultural background to the theme of mystery and order.

Then what is ideological and theological interpretation of the theme of Ecclesiastes 3? Through which ideology and theology, could the writer suggest the coexistence of mystery and order? The ideological analysis is related to the theological analysis. According to Robbins (1996:130), while 'ideological texture concerns the biases, opinions, preferences, and stereotypes of a particular writer and a particular reader,' the theological texture includes aspects concerning 'deity, holy persons, spirit beings, divine history, human redemption, religious community and ethics (Robbins 1996:95).'

Ecclesiastes 3 reflects a social critical theology against the dominating ideology of the ruling class. It refers to a continued creation theology in a later period, reflecting particular emphasis on a particular situation. Brown (2000:15) depicted the theology of Ecclesiastes as a theology from below. The relationship between God and time, God and

human beings, and human beings and the world will be dealt with in ideological and theological textures.

### **5.5.2 God and Time**

In an article: Time in Qoheleth's Catalogue of Times, Fox (1998:25-39) clarified the meaning of time in Ecclesiastes 3. Fox asserted that Israel's concept of time is the same as ours, rejecting the viewpoint of Pedersen (1926) and Boman (1960:139) who held that in the mentality of ancient Israel, time is identical with substance. Nevertheless, Fox values Pedersen and Boman's viewpoint, as long as time in Hebrew is *sometimes* defined by its content.

Based on this idea, Fox (1998:25) argued that the meaning of time in Ecclesiastes 3:1-9 should be defined substantively, rather than temporally. This means that Qoheleth is not a strict determinist, believing that everything has a fixed moment to happen. Seow (1997:174), however, mentioned 'a certain amount of determinism in events.' Ecclesiastes 3 speaks of the right times, the circumstances when something should happen. Human beings should act at the right moment, when something is ready for doing and can be performed most effectively.

As an opening texture, Ecclesiastes 3:1-9 started by stating that there is a right time for everything. It is a relationship between all activities and time. There is an appropriate time for each human activity listed in verses 2-8. Everything in life has its right time, even if it is an unfortunate and destructive event. All the activities, however, are related to God, as seen clearly in middle and closing texture. God made all appropriate in his

time and gave eternity in their heart (verse 11). God performed the activity from the beginning to the end (verse 12). Even human activities such as eating, drinking and finding goodness become the gift of God (verse 13). Thus the relationship between God and all activities is led to the relationship between God and time.

One can ask the reason why the writer of Qoheleth should hold that time for all belongs to God. It is possible that Qoheleth criticised the proud ideology of the dominating class of the Persian period, suggesting the creation theology as the search for order and the maintenance of mystery. Dominating ruling classes such as priests believed that they could control divine time for economical profit. It could be the doctrine of retribution without exception. Against this ideology, the writer of Ecclesiastes 3 declares that time for all belongs to God. Thus the voice of Qoheleth in Ecclesiastes 3 can function as a critical theology of some scribes like the writer of Qoheleth against the dominating priest ideology in the second temple period.

According to the creation theology of Israel, it is undeniable that all activities come from God (Murphy 1992a:49). The sovereignty of God was a major theme. God is a creator of space and time. Thus God is beyond time. Despite a message about the sovereignty of God in the creation theology, many ruling classes in the Persian period believed in timeous human control. By saying that time for all belong to God, Qoheleth attempted to focus on the element of sovereignty of God in the creation theology. Qoheleth emphasised that God was beyond time. It could function as a critical voice against the ideology of the ruling classes, maintaining the mystery of creation theology.

Nevertheless Qoheleth's criticism does not mean that Qoheleth depended on a strict determination or fatalism. Qoheleth relied on the search for order of creation theology. It means that divine time is not completely exclusive to God. According to creation theology, God is not only beyond time, but also within time. While transcendent, God is present within the boundary of time with human beings. God can sometimes reveal his time to his creatures to some degree. Even though human beings cannot control divine time, human beings can adapt themselves to the divine time (Fox 1998:33). The voice of the search for order is suggested. Thus the relationship between God and time is extended as the relationship between God and human beings.

### **5.5.3 God and Human beings**

The relationship between God and time is accompanied by the relationship between God and human beings in Ecclesiastes 3, especially in middle and closing texture (Ecclesiastes 3:10-22). Regarding the relationship between God and human beings, one can hear the voice of the fear of the Lord. God does everything and there is nothing human beings can add. This gives birth to the declaration that everything is vanity (verse 19). In spite of this negative statement, the text contains a difference i.e. Human beings can do something and utilize their 'free will' (Odgen 1987:53). Human beings should fear him (verse 14), 'reverencing the one whose existence transcends the seasons and the days and is co-existential with eternity' (Mills 2003:67).

As in other previous texts, the fear of the Lord in Wisdom Literature comprises both voices which search for order and maintain mystery. Nevertheless, the fear of the Lord in Ecclesiastes 3 prevails regarding the maintenance of mystery. Since there was

nothing that human beings could do except to fear the Lord, the fear of the Lord expresses the maintenance of mystery. A similar voice could be heard in the text of Job 28. Yet while the fear of the Lord in Job 28 was heard as the ambivalent voice between the search for order and the maintenance of mystery, the fear of the Lord in Ecclesiastes 3 shows the prevailing voice of the maintenance of mystery, with the marginalised search for order. Nevertheless, the voice of the search for order is still present.

What caused this phenomenon regarding the relationship between God and human beings? As mentioned in previous relationships, the ruling class such as priests in the Persian period overemphasized the order of the society for controlling this society and the temple. Dominating ruling classes believed that human beings could know the Providence of God in order to increase their wealth by their activities. Creation theology was changed into the ideology of order. In this context, the sage in Ecclesiastes 3 criticises the order ideology of priests, suggesting the return to creation theology, which shows both the search for order and the maintenance of mystery.

Ecclesiastes 3 attempted to keep a balance in the relationship between God's sovereignty and human activities. By emphasising the sovereignty of God, Qoheleth and his contemporary scribes made the other ruling class focus on the limitations of human achievements. Yet it does not mean that human beings should not search for some meaning. By saying that God made everything appropriate, Qoheleth believed that human beings could search for the appropriate time. By saying that human beings should fear God and pursue a simple pleasure of family life, Qoheleth did not deny human potential, as the traditional wisdom did. Nevertheless, the limitation of human

potential should be recognised and emphasised. That is a particular voice of a theologian Qoheleth in the post-Exilic period, especially in the Persian period when the coexistence of both was threatened.

#### **5.5.4 Human beings and the World**

The relationship between God and human beings is continued as the relationship between human beings and the world in Ecclesiastes 3. If one listens to a voice that human beings cannot add to what God has done, human beings should not seek for the order of the world, since it is impossible for human beings to discern the order, or even less there is no order in the world. However, if one listens to another opposing message that the role of human beings is possible, one can search for the order in the world. There is an appropriate order for human beings to discern. The fear of God and the enjoyment of everyday life can be the product searching for the divine order.

Qoheleth faced a problem in the wisdom tradition, since he was rooted in it. According to the wisdom tradition, order could be discerned in the world (Odgen 1987:53). The wisdom tradition, especially Proverbs 10-29 showed that human beings could discern the order and should seek for order. Yet, in the creation theology there was a different voice that human beings could not discern the order on account of the inscrutability of God (Proverbs 16:1, 9). Both order and mystery coexisted. However, the ideology of a contemporary dominating class only stuck to one aspect of wisdom tradition, neglecting other aspects of this tradition. They could strongly hold the doctrine of retribution. In this context it is possible that Qoheleth criticised the retribution ideology of the priests.

According to creation theology, Qoheleth confesses that human beings cannot find the time for searching for order in the world. The ignorance includes the problem of theodicy. Human beings do not know the time when justice will be seen, even though God will judge the righteous and the wicked. Furthermore, in the face of death, all human beings are equal. Even the fate of animals does not differ from that of human beings. This confession can recognise the element of the absurdity of reality. Mentioned above, this confession is not completely new in wisdom tradition.

As seen earlier, the inscrutability of reality was dealt with in the early Israelite wisdom tradition. Nevertheless, there is a difference between Ecclesiastes 3 and Proverbs 16 and Job 28. The difference is the prevailing voice. In the Persian life setting, the observation and experience of reality forced Qoheleth to emphasise the inscrutability of reality. Now it is very difficult for human beings to search for some order in the world. Nevertheless, it does not mean that human search for order is completely meaningless. In other words, one should search for order, maintaining the limitations of human activities. Human beings should search for order such as the fear of the Lord and the enjoyment of life.

### **5.5.5 Conclusion**

The ideological and theological texture of Ecclesiastes 3 has been investigated. The ideological and theological explanation exhibited the relationship between God, human beings, and the world. Ecclesiastes 3:1-9 started by stating that there is a right time for everything, i.e. the relationship between all activities and time. Yet in Ecclesiastes 3:10-22 the relationship is developed between God and time, God and human beings, and human beings and the world.



The relationship between God and time is a declaration that time for all belongs to God. In this declaration Qoheleth criticised the ideology of dominating classes such as priests in the second temple. Priest class believed that they could control divine time for the power and economical profit. Against this trend, the sage of Ecclesiastes 3 declares that time for all belongs to God. Qoheleth attempted to focus on the element of the sovereignty of God in creation theology. Qoheleth emphasised that God was beyond time. Yet God is not only beyond time, but also within time. God is present with human beings within the boundary of time. Even though human beings cannot control divine time, human beings can adapt themselves to the divine time. Thus the relationship between God and time provides the reason for the coexistence of two voices in Ecclesiastes 3, functioning as a critical theology against the dominating ideology of the Persian period.

Regarding the relationship between God and human beings, one can hear the voice of the fear of the Lord. The fear of the Lord in Ecclesiastes 3 prevails regarding the maintenance of mystery. Since there is nothing that human beings could do except to fear the Lord, the fear of the Lord voices the maintenance of mystery. The dominating ruling class believed that human beings could know the Providence of God in order to increase their wealth by their activities. Creation theology was changed into the ideology of order. In this context, the sage in Ecclesiastes 3 criticises 'the order ideology' of the priests, suggesting the return to creation theology, which shows both voices of the search for order and the maintenance of mystery. By saying that human beings should fear God, Qoheleth and his contemporary scribes made the other ruling class focus on the limitations of human achievements. Nevertheless, Qoheleth did not

deny human potential, as the traditional wisdom did. It is a particular voice of a theologian Qoheleth in the Persian period when the coexistence of both was threatened

The relationship between God and human being is continued as the relationship between human beings and the world in Ecclesiastes 3. According to the wisdom tradition, both the search for order and the maintenance of mystery in the world coexisted. However, the ideology of the contemporary dominating class only stuck to one aspect of wisdom tradition, neglecting other aspects. The prevalence of the doctrine of retribution reflected this trend. In this context it is possible that Qoheleth criticised the retribution ideology of priests. Qoheleth confesses that human beings cannot find out the time for searching for order in the world. Human beings do not know the time when justice will be seen, even though God will judge the righteous and the wicked. Yet it does not mean that human search for order is completely meaningless. In other words, one should search for order, maintaining the mystery of God.

## **CHAPTER 6 SIRACH 24**

### **6.1 Introduction**

The theme of order and mystery that began in Proverbs 16 continued in Job 28 and Ecclesiastes 3. Even though one could recognise the coexistence of order and mystery in each chapter, the relationship between order and mystery was different. Proverbs 16 showed the emphasis on order, still maintaining the element of mystery, reflecting a voice of the sages in the Judean kingdom. In a post-Exilic period, Job 28 showed an ambivalent coexistence between order and mystery, while in the Persian period, Ecclesiastes 3 exhibited the emphasis on mystery. These phenomena that were found in Old Testament Wisdom Literature continue in Sirach 24 in the Hellenistic period.

Due to its location in the structure of the book and its contents, Sirach 24 provides the theme and summit of the entire book of Sirach (Marböck 1997:67, Perdue 2007:243). Sirach 24 functions as a new introduction and reminds of the origin of wisdom in God and its relation to creation in Sirach 1:1-10. Sirach 24 could be understood as a first conclusion as an inclusion of 1:1-27: The origin and blessing of the wisdom and the fear of God. The praise of wisdom opens a new part of the book, utilising 1<sup>st</sup> person narration. As the theme of Job 28 is the fear of the Lord as wisdom, Sirach 24 can reflect the theme of Sirach as Wisdom and the fear of the Lord (Di Lella 1997:114).

It seems that Wisdom, the fear of the Lord, and the Torah are interrelated in Sirach 24 (Rogers 1999:131). Wisdom is personified, engaging in a hymn of self praise. This hymn describes the divine origin of Wisdom and the cosmic rule of Wisdom, her

‘covering the earth like a mist’, her taking up residence in Jerusalem, her identification with the temple cult and the Torah. Wisdom is identified with both the transcendent realm of the divine dwelling and the immanent presence of God on earth and particularly among his chosen people. The mystery and order in Sirach 24 can be found in all themes such as God, Wisdom, creation, Torah and human history. The relationship between mystery and order will be investigated in this chapter, as done in the study of Proverbs 16, Job 28, and Ecclesiastes 3.

## **6.2 Inner Texture of Sirach 24**

### **6.2.1 Repetitive Texture**

When one sees repetitive patterns, one can find interesting repetitions. Some of them are the reference to the first person pronoun ‘I’ (ἐγὼ, μου, μοι, μς, μου) and the third person feminine pronoun ‘she’ (αὐτῆς). The reference to the first person pronoun is repeated twenty seven times, while the reference to the third person feminine pronoun occurred six times in the beginning (verse 1-2) and end (verse 28-34) of the poem. Since this poem starts with the sentence that ‘wisdom declares her own praises,’ any reader or listener can recognise a main character in this poem as the Woman Wisdom. She expresses something to the reader, using the first person pronoun. The repetition of the preposition ‘as’ (ὡς) is also interesting, since the preposition ‘as’ occurs twenty one times in Sirach 24. In this repetitive texture, one can guess that Wisdom tries to compare herself with something.

In Sirach 24 one can see the five repetitions of God and God-related words. The term ‘the highest’ (ὕψιστου) is repeated twice (verse 2 and 3). The creator (κτιστής), the Lord

(κυριου), and the God the highest (θεου ὑψίστου) are utilised in verses 8, 12 and 23. When the repetitive pattern of Wisdom and God is considered, the relationship between Woman Wisdom and God may be an important theme in this poem. Thus in the ideological and theological texture the theme of the relationship between Wisdom and God will have to be discussed. One can recognise that God and Wisdom are two characters in Sirach 24.

Another interesting repetition in Sirach 24 is the repetition of ‘inheritance (κληρονομία)’, since it is repeated five times as many as the reference to God related word. The inheritance is accompanied by three times ‘tent (σκηνην)’ and ‘people’ (λαου). They can imply all things (παντων), which is also repeated four times. Besides these, one can see many things referred to twice. For examples, the sphere of all things: earth (γην) and sea (θαλασσης) is referred to twice. Some actions such as boast (καυχησεται) and dwell (κατεσκηνωσα), and raise up (ανυψωθην) are included in the repetitive pattern. Some religious elements such as glory (δοξης) and grace (χαριτυς) and wisdom (σοφια) occur and human body such as mouth (στομα) is repeated.

In this repetitive texture, one can say that God, Woman Wisdom, People and the World are main characters in this poem, though Woman Wisdom seems to be seen as a unique character. The relationship among them can be an important theme. People and the world imply everything. Among them the special terms such as ‘inheritance’ and ‘tent’ and ‘rest’ show that this poem can focus on something special in the creation world. The repetitive verbs such as boast (καυχησεται), dwell (κατασκηνωσον), command (ενετειλατο), and raise up (ανυψωθην) let the reader think who their subjects are.

**Table 8 Repetitive Pattern of Sirach 24**

<b>Verse</b>	<b>God</b>	<b>Wisdom (she, I)</b>	<b>People and World</b>
1		Wisdom (σοφια) she (αυτης)	People (λαου) boast (καυχησεται)
2	Highest (υψιστου)	She (αυτης)	Mouth (στομα) boast (καυχησεται)
3	Highest (υψιστου)	I (εγω)	As (ως) earth (γην) mouth (στοματος)
4		I (εγω, μου)	Dwell (κατεσκηνωσα)
5			Boundless (αβυσσου)
6			All (παση, παντι) people (λαω) earth (γη) sea (θαλασσης)
7			Inheritance (κληρονομα) all (παντων) rest (αναπαυσιν)
8	Creator (κτιστης) Create (κτισας)	I (μοι, μς, μον)	Inheritance (κατακληρονομηθητι) all(απαντων) tent (σκηνην) Rest (κατεπαυσεν) command(ενετειλατο) Dwell (κατασκηνωσον)
9		I (με)	
10			Tent (σκηνη)
11		I (με, μου)	Rest (κατεπαυσεν)
12	TheLord (κυριου)		Inheritance (κληρονομιας) people (λαω)
13			As (ως,ως) raise up (ανυψωθην)
14			As (ως, ως, ως, ως) raise up (ανυψωθην)
15			As (ως, ως, ως ως) tent (σκηνη)
16		I (εγω, μου, μου)	As (ως) glory (δοξης) grace (χαριτες) Branch (κλαδους, κλαδοι, κλαδοι)
17		I (εγω, μου)	As (ως) glory (δοξης) grace(χαριτην)

19		I (με, μου, μου)	
20		I (μου, μου)	Inheritance (κληρονομια)
21		I (με, με)	
22		I (μου, εμοι)	
23	God highest (θεου υψιστου)		Inheritance (κληρονομιαν) all (παντα) command(εντειλατο)
25			As (ως, ως) wisdom (σοφιαν) day (ημεραις)
27			As (ως, ως) day (ημεραις)
28		She (αυτην)	
29		She (αυτης, αυτης)	Sea (θαλασσης) boundless (αβυσσου)
30			As (ως, ως)
31		I (μου, μου, μου, μοι)	
32			As (ως)
33			As (ως)
34		She (αυτην)	All (απασιν)

### 6.2.2 Progressive Texture

Repetitive texture leads to progressive texture. In progressive texture one can find distinguishing progressions of several words. They are the progression of God, Wisdom and People. The term God starts with the reference to ‘the Highest’ (υψιστου, verses 2 and 3). The Highest is changed into ‘the creator’ (κτιστης) in verse 8. God as creator created Wisdom and commanded Wisdom. The term of God is changed into ‘the Lord’ (κυριου) in verse 12 and finally is revealed as ‘God the highest’ (θεου υψιστου) in verse 23. As the name is changed, progressive texture of God focuses on ‘the book of the

covenant of God’, the law that Moses commanded.

Along with the progressive pattern of God, Wisdom that appears in the first verse of this poem occurs throughout the poem. The third person Wisdom (σοφια) is changed into the first person pronoun (εγω) from verse 3 to verse 22. Wisdom seemed to say something about her origin and her activities. She covered the earth (verse 3) and dwelt in the heights (verse 4). Her throne was in a pillar of cloud (verse 4). Then she was commanded by the creator. She spread out her branches and sprouted pleasure. Finally, Wisdom called people to approach her and eat and drink her fruits. Yet people cannot know Wisdom (αυτην) fully.

In ‘people (λαου)’ and ‘the world’ one can find the progressive pattern. The term ‘people’ in verse 2 progresses to ‘all people (παντι λαω)’ and to ‘a glorified people.’(λαω δεδοξασμενω). It seems to imply that the focus is changing from common people and the universal world to a specific people and a specific nation. The ‘people’ is related to the term of ‘inheritance’ (κατακληρονομηθητι). The text asks a question about ‘inheritance’ (whose inheritance?). The answer is exhibited in the progressive texture. It is an inheritance of Israel. The inheritance includes the tent which becomes the holy tent (σκηνη αγια) and the smoke of incense in the tent. It is the inheritance of Jacob’s congregations. Finally the inheritance is revealed as ‘the Law (νομον) of Moses.’

**Table 9 Progressive Texture of Sirach 24**

<b>Verse</b>	<b>God</b>	<b>Wisdom (she, I)</b>	<b>People and World</b>
1		Wisdom (σοφια)	People (λαου)



2	Highest(υψιστου)		
3	Highest(υψιστου)	I came forth from the mouth (εγω απο στοματο) of Most High.	
4		I (εγω) dwelt in the heights. My throne (ο θρονος μου) in a pillar of cloud	
6			In all People (εν παντι λαω)
7			Whose Inheritance (κληρονοματινος)
8	Creator of all (κτιστης απαντιων)	Commanded me (μου), created me (με), my Tent (σκηνην μου)	Inheritance in Israel (εν Ισραηλ κατακληρονομήθητι)
9		Created me (εκτισεν με)	
10			In Holy Tent (εν σκηνη αγια) In Zion (εν Ζιων)
11		In a City beloved as me (με)	In Jerusalem (εν Ιερουσαλημ)
12	Lord's portion (εν μεριδι κυριου)		In a glorified People (εν λαω δεδοξασμενω)
16		I (εγω) spread out branches	
17		I (εγω) sprout pleasure	
19		Approach me (με), desire me (μου), my (μου) fruit	
20		My (μου) memory, my (μου) inheritance	
21		Eat me (με), drink me (με)	
22		Obey me (με), work with me (εμοι)	
23	The book of the covenant of God the Highest (θεου υψιστου).		The law (νομον) that Moses commanded us Inheritance (κληρονομιαν) for Jacob's congregations
28		Not know her (αυτην) completely	

		Not succeeded in fathoming her	
29		Her (αυτης) thought, her counsel	
34		For all those who seek her (αυτην)	

This progressive pattern shows that all characters proceed in one direction, which is the Law of Moses and an inheritance of Israel. Among them, Wisdom seems to play a crucial role to integrate both God and the world and the Law of Israel. Wisdom was created by God and covered the earth and dwelt in the heights. But the commandment of God let her take root in Israel and the Law of Moses. Thus the origin of Wisdom and the process of Wisdom' becoming the Torah represent the sphere that human beings cannot understand. Human limitation is recognised, while the sovereignty of God is revealed.

### 6.2.3 Narrational Texture

In Sirach 24 one can recognise narrational texture. In the first part of the poem (verses 1-2) and the last part of the poem (verses 23-34) one can listen to the voice of the narrator. He introduces Woman Wisdom in verse 1-2 and summarises what Wisdom will say about herself in the following verses. The noticeable thing in this introduction is where and to whom Wisdom speaks. She is now in the midst of her people and in the assembly of the Highest. She addresses her people before God. Wisdom is in the sphere of God whom human beings cannot approach.

After the introduction, Wisdom herself says something in the direct speech in verse 3 to verse 22. She says, "I came forth from the mouth of the Highest and like a mist I covered the earth." By saying that she came from the mouth of God, she relates herself

to God. As the spirit of God covered the earth, she also covered the earth (Sheppard 1980:25). Her narration is continued up to verse 22. During her narration, she asks a direct question. “In whose inheritance should I lodge (24:7)? As the answer to her question, she quotes the word of God, mentioning that the creator of all commanded her: He said, “In Jacob pitch your tent, and In Israel take your inheritance (24:8).” Thus one becomes to listen to God’s narration within Wisdom’s narration.

In Sirach 24:9-22 Wisdom continued to speak about her origin and her activities, especially in the sphere of Israel, showing the sovereignty of God and the role of wisdom. God created Wisdom ages ago (24:9). Before God she ministered in the holy tent. Wisdom was established in Zion (24:10). In the city of Jerusalem God gave her rest (24:11). She took root within a glorified people (24:12). It was her inheritance. She grew up like a cedar in Lebanon and a cypress on Mount Hermon (24:13). She spread out her branches and bore fruit of glory and wealth (24:16-17). Finally Wisdom called people to approach and eat her. “The one who eats of me will hunger for more and the one who drinks of me will thirst for more (24: 21).” She wants people to obey her and work with her (24:22).

In Sirach 24:23-34, the narration of Wisdom is changed into the narration of the narrator of Sirach 24. The poet concludes that this Wisdom is the Law of Moses. “All this is the book of the covenant of God the highest, the law that Moses commanded us, an inheritance for the congregations of Jacob (24:23).” The explanation of Wisdom by the poet continues in the following verses (24-34). Wisdom overflows like the Euphrates, floods like the Nile. Since Wisdom becomes the Torah, now human beings can search

for Wisdom. The voice of the potential of human beings prevails. Nevertheless, the poet recognises the limitations of understanding Wisdom. Any human being could not know Wisdom completely. “The first human being did not know her completely, nor has the last succeeded in fathoming her (24:28).” “For her thoughts are deeper than the sea, her counsel is deeper than the great abyss (24:29).”

The last part of the conclusion (24:30-34) shows the determination of the narrator regarding Wisdom and the recommendation of Wisdom to the reader. This is the voice of the potential of human beings. As Wisdom said, the narrator said “I will water my plants and I will irrigate my flower bed.” The narrator determines that he will instruct, shine and pour out teaching like prophecy and give it as a legacy to all future generations. A final comment is included, asking people to know that he has not toiled for himself alone, but for all those who seek Wisdom.

#### **6.2.4 Opening-Middle-Closing Texture**

Previous textures such as repetitive, progressive and narrative textures contribute to the formation of opening-middle-closing texture. Seen from the perspective of opening-middle-closing texture, Sirach 24 consists of three distinct units (Rogers 1999:197). The first section as opening texture (24:1-22) is a first person speech by personified Wisdom. Opening texture begins with the instruction of Wisdom by the poet and introduces her inheritance to Israel. It focuses on the origin and the role of Wisdom, representing resemblance to the sphere of God.

In opening texture (24:1-22), one can find a sub-opening-middle-ending texture. Sub-

opening texture (24:1-2) introduces Wisdom to the reader. Wisdom declares her own praises in the midst of her people. As sub-middle texture in opening texture (24:3-8), Wisdom begins to explain her own origin. She says that she came forth from the mouth of the highest. Since her birth, Wisdom alone encircled the vault of heaven and walked amongst every people and nation. They are the spheres of Wisdom. After that, the texture proceeds toward a specific people and nation. Even though Wisdom controlled the people and the world, Wisdom wanted something special: the resting place. Then the creator of all commanded her to take inheritance of Israel. Israel becomes a special people and nation within the world, since Wisdom came to Israel.

Sub-closing texture in opening texture (24:9-22) elaborates the meaning of sub-opening texture (24:1-8). The texture focuses more on the special relationship between Wisdom and Israel where Wisdom took root and flourished. Wisdom has grown tall like many trees (24:13-14). Also Wisdom gives forth perfume like the smoke of incense in the Tent (24:15). Wisdom has spread out her branches like glorious and gracious branches. Wisdom sprouted pleasure like a vine and bore fruit of glory and wealth. Finally, Wisdom called people to approach her, desire her, and to eat and drink the fruit of Wisdom. People who obeyed Wisdom would not be ashamed and people who worked with Wisdom will never sin. The consequence will be the fruit of glory and wealth, as Wisdom has acquired them as the result of obeying the commandment of God.

Middle and closing textures (24:23-34) show a conclusion of the poet of Sirach 24 and suggest that human beings should follow the Law of Moses, the commandment of God and the search for Wisdom, recognising the limitations of human understanding. While

opening texture focuses on human limitations, middle and ending textures emphasise human potential to search for wisdom or the Torah. The poet declares that Wisdom which was dealt with previously, is the book of the covenant of God the Highest, the law that Moses commanded us. This is the identification of Wisdom with the Law of Moses. Now the Torah or Wisdom brims and overflows like several rivers such as the Pishon, the Tigris, the Euphrates, the Jordan, the Nile and the Gihon (24:25-27). Yet human beings should recognise that they cannot understand Wisdom completely, since ‘the first human being did not know her completely nor has the last succeeded in fathoming her (24:28).’

An additional determination by the poet follows in the last part of Sirach 24 (24:30-34). As a person, the poet will search for Wisdom and develop her in his life. For the poet, Wisdom is instruction and teaching that he has learned traditionally. He will make the instruction shine forth like the dawn, and he will pour out the teaching like prophecy. It will be a legacy to all future generations. The final purpose of the poet is not only for himself, but also for all those who seek Wisdom. Thus inner texture of Sirach 24 shows that Wisdom is not only something that human beings should search for, but also something that human beings should recognise and maintain, as in previous Wisdom texts such as Proverbs 16, Job 28 and Ecclesiastes 3.

### **6.2.5 Sensory-Aesthetic Texture**

Sensory-aesthetic texture enforces the relationship between the potential and the limitations of human behaviour as the search for order. Sensory-aesthetic texture provides a particular tone or colour to previous textures (Robbins 1996:30). It looks at

the text from the perspective of human behaviour such as thinking, speaking, and acting. A human being is endowed with a heart for thinking, along with eyes that fill the heart with data, a mouth for speaking, along with ears that collect the speech of others, and hands and feet for action. Human beings consist of three mutual interpenetrating zones of thought, speech and action. Thus the study of sensory-aesthetic texture will enforce the sphere of human potential and the limitations in any text.

Opening texture (24:1-22) begins and ends with a speech zone. In sub-opening texture (24:1-2), Wisdom opens her mouth and declares her worth in the assembly of the Highest. In sub-middle texture (24:3-8), the speech zone is followed by the action zone. Wisdom came forth from the mouth of the Highest. Wisdom's activities were similar to those of God. Wisdom covered the earth and dwelt in the heights. She alone encircles the vault of heaven and she walked in the depth of the abyss. In the waves of the sea and in every land and in every people and nation she ruled. Finally she sought a resting place, as God rested after finishing creation.

After this zone of activity, the speech zone is resumed in 24:8. Wisdom listened to the voice of God which commanded her to pitch her tent in Israel. In sub-closing texture in opening texture (24:9-22) speech, thought, and action are mixed. By saying that God created Her, God's activity or creation is revealed. Furthermore God gave Wisdom rest. Wisdom also began to perform activities. She ministered before God. She was established in Zion. Wisdom grew tall. Wisdom performed activities such as spreading out the branches and bearing fruit. Finally Wisdom requested strong action of the reader. They are 'approach me', 'desire me', 'eat me', 'drink me', 'obey me' and 'work with

me.'

In order to elaborate the activities of Wisdom, many instruments of sight were utilised. The mentioning of the holy tent, Zion and Jerusalem reminded the reader to think of their symbols. They formed the traditions of Israel. A cedar on Lebanon, a cypress on Mount Hermon, a palm tree in Engeddi, the rose bushes of Jericho belonged to Israel and contained kinds of allusions for Israel. Especially the smoke of incense in the Tent yielded the thought zone, reminding the reader of the tradition of Exodus (Sheppard 1980:29). These demands for activities were addressed by the speech zone. This combination of all zones enforced people to see the greatness of Wisdom and thought of the relationship between Wisdom and the traditions of Israel, showing the sphere of the limitations of human beings and the sovereignty of God.

However, in middle-closing texture (24:23-34), the voice of human potential challenged the voice of human limitations of opening texture, utilising the zone of speech again. The narrator is not Wisdom, but the author of the poem. The narrator concluded, by saying that 'All this is the book of the covenant of God the Highest, the law that Moses commanded us.' Commandment is a kind of speech zone demanding strong activity. Human beings should keep the Torah in order to acquire Wisdom. Human potential for Wisdom is suggested, maintaining the voice of limitation. The speech and activity zone in the closing texture shows the strong will to search for Wisdom. I said, 'I will water my plants and I will irrigate my flower bed.' This combination of three zones in the final texture exhibits that Sirach 24 is asking the reader to focus on searching for Wisdom which is the Law of Moses, reflecting the voice of human limitation in opening and



middle textures. Thus inner texture of Sirach 24 shows that a kind of human search for order and the limitation of human beings coexist in Sirach 24.

### **6.2.6 Preliminary Conclusion**

Inner texture of Sirach 24 was discussed as the basic foundation of the following textures. In repetitive texture, one could find the first person pronoun occurring twenty seven times and the third person feminine pronoun occurring six times, indicating Wisdom. There are five repetitions of God related words and inheritance, four of 'all', and three of tent and people, and two reference to the earth and the sea. This repetitive texture shows that God, Wisdom, people, and the creation of the World can be main characters or topics in this poem.

In progressive texture, the Highest (verses 2 and 3) is changed into the creator in verse 8, the Lord in verse 12, and finally God the Highest in verse 23. As the name of God was being changed, progressive texture focused on the book of the covenant of God, the law that Moses has commanded. Along with the progression of God, people in verse 2 progressed to all people and to a glorified people. The term inheritance became inheritance in Israel. The tent progressed to the holy tent and the smoke of incense in the tent. These progressive patterns showed that some specific terms such as God, Wisdom, people, inheritance, and tent proceeded in one direction, which is the Law of Moses and the inheritance of Israel. Among them, Wisdom seemed to play a crucial role for all other characters.

In narrational texture, one can listen to the voice of the narrator. In the first part of the

poem (verses 1-2), a narrator introduced Woman Wisdom in verse 1-2 and summarised what Wisdom would say about herself in the following verses. In the midst of her people and in the assembly of the highest, she would address her people before God. Wisdom asked a direct question. “In whose inheritance should I lodge? As the answer to her question, she quoted the word of God, mentioning that the creator of all commanded her: He said, “In Jacob pitch your tent, and In Israel take your inheritance.” In the narration, the narrator concluded that this Wisdom is the Law of Moses. The explanation of Wisdom by the poet continues in verses 23-34. The narrator recognised the limitations of understanding Wisdom. The last part of the conclusion shows the determination of the narrator regarding Wisdom and the recommendation of Wisdom to people.

As opening-middle-closing texture, opening texture (24:1-22) consists of three parts. In sub-opening texture (24:1-2) Wisdom declares her own praises in the midst of her people. In sub-middle texture (24:3-8), She mentions that she came forth from the mouth of the highest. Yet Wisdom wanted something special as her resting place. Then the creator of all commanded her to take her inheritance in Israel. In sub-closing texture (24:9-22) Wisdom took root in a glorified people. It was Israel as Wisdom’s inheritor. In opening texture the origin and the role of Wisdom and the process of identification of Wisdom with the Torah are related to the sphere of sovereignty of God which human beings cannot approach. In middle and closing texture (24:23-34), the poet declared that Wisdom which was dealt with previously, is the book of the covenant of God the Highest, the law that Moses commanded us. As an addition the narrator was determined to search for Wisdom and develop her in his life.

Sensory-aesthetic texture enforces the voice of the potential and limitation of human beings. Opening texture (24:1-22) begins and ends with the speech zone. In sub-middle texture (24:3-8), the speech zone is followed by an action zone. After this zone of activity, the speech zone resumes. In sub-closing texture the three zones of thought, speech and activities are mixed. In order to elaborate the activities of Wisdom, many instruments of sight are utilised. These three zones in opening texture enforce the voice of the sphere of God that human beings can not understand. In contrast with opening texture, three zones in middle and ending texture (24:23-33) challenge the voice of human limitation, suggesting the search for wisdom or the Torah.

The narrator concludes, by saying that Wisdom is the Torah and the commandment. Commandment is a kind of speech zone demanding strong activity. This sensory-aesthetic texture illustrates that Sirach 24 is asking the reader to focus on the search for Wisdom, maintaining the limitations, as other Wisdom textures have shown this coexistence. Thus the study of inner texture will provide a basic foundation for the discussion of the following textures for the study of the search for order and the maintenance of mystery.

## **6.3 Intertexture of Sirach 24**

### **6.3.1 Introduction**

Inner texture of Sirach 24 suggested several themes such as the origin of Wisdom, the Torah of God, and the search for wisdom. Wisdom came forth from the mouth of God and ruled the universe like God. Yet Wisdom is also a part of the creation of God.

Wisdom sought the resting place in the world. God commanded Wisdom to settle in Israel. According to the commandment of God, Wisdom took root in Israel and grew tall, and became Torah, the commandment of God. Wisdom became identified with Torah, connected with the fear of the Lord. How can this narrative be explained in the context of Sirach and in Wisdom literature?

First of all, the topics such as the origin of Wisdom, the keeping of the Torah, and the search for wisdom will be discussed. In each topic the search for order and the maintenance of mystery will be found. In the study of the origin of Wisdom and the process of Wisdom becoming the Torah, one can find that the theme is related to the maintenance of the mystery of Wisdom Literature. The keeping of the Torah and the search for wisdom can be interpreted as the search for order. These topics will be investigated not only in the book of Sirach, but also in the Wisdom Literature in Israel and the Ancient Near East. The recontextualization and reconfiguration of the topics will lead to the discussion of the common element in Wisdom Literature and development in Wisdom tradition. The consideration of this intertexture of Sirach 24 will help the reader to amplify or clarify the narrative or the theme of Sirach 24.

## **6.3.2 Repetition and Recitation**

### **6.3.2.1 Origin of Wisdom**

As inner texture of Sirach 24 has shown, a main character of Sirach 24 is Woman Wisdom. Sirach 24 is a poem about this Woman Wisdom. The two opening verses introduce Wisdom before her own words commence in verse 3. Woman Wisdom proceeds to speak of her divine origin, her heavenly abode, and her wanderings through

the cosmos (verses 3-7). The origin of Wisdom and her role in the creation of the world forms an important theme in Sirach 24. The origin of Wisdom in Sirach 24 is a repetition or citation of Sirach 1, as in many aspects Sirach 24 is similar to Sirach 1 (Coggins 1998:76). While Sirach 24 mentions that Wisdom came forth from the mouth of the Highest, Sirach 1:1 says that all wisdom is from the Lord. The statement that Wisdom came forth from God is accompanied by the statement that Wisdom was created by God (Sirach 24:8). In Sirach 24:9 God created Wisdom from the beginning, while in Sirach 1:4 Wisdom was created before all else.

24:3a **I** (ἐγὼ) came forth **from the mouth of the Highest** (ἀπὸ στόματος ὑψίστου).

1:1 **All wisdom is from the Lord** (πασα σοφια παρα κυριου) and is with him for eternity.

24:9 **Before eternity** (προ του αιωνος), from the beginning he created **me** (με).

1:4 **Before all else** (προτερα παντων) **wisdom** (σοφια) was created and thoughtful intelligence **from eternity** (ἐξ αιωνος).

When one compares the origin of Wisdom in both chapters, Sirach 24 might be a repetition or recitation of Sirach 1. By repetition or recitation, Sirach 24 conveys the special origin of Wisdom. Even though Wisdom was created by God, Wisdom is different from other things in the World. She was created before eternity or before all else. In origin, Wisdom is incomprehensible and unreachable (Beentjes 2008:142). The mystery of Wisdom is also found in the description of Wisdom's activity as well as the origin of Wisdom. Wisdom encircled alone and walked in the depth of the abyss in Sirach 24:5. This expression is also repeated in Sirach 1:3.

24:5 **The vault of heaven** (γυρον ουρανος) I encircled alone and in **the depth of the abyss** (βαθει αβυσσων) I walked

1:3 **The height of heaven** (υψος ουρανου) and the breadth of the earth and **the depth of the abyss** (αβυσσων) who can trace out?

After the statement about the origin of Wisdom (Sirach 1:1), Ben Sira asks a question who can number the creation world (1:2-3). This is the rhetorical question about the incomprehensible mystery of God's creation. It implies that human beings can not approach the secrets of the creation completely. The answer is given in the statement in verse 8. Only one is truly wise- the Lord, who is "wise" sitting on the divine throne. Wisdom is fully accessible to God alone. Thus Sirach 24 reminds the reader of Sirach 1:3. Wisdom can walk and encircle as God does.

Both Sirach 1:1-10 and Sirach 24 deal with the origin and activity of Wisdom. In both chapters Wisdom is a mysterious being. Wisdom is associated with God, since Wisdom was created before eternity and she alone can encircle alone the earth like God. Wisdom has priority over all creation. The question: 'the height of heaven and the breadth of the earth and the depth of the abyss who can trace out? (1:3)' can be answered in Sirach 24:5, 'The vault of heaven I encircled alone the vault of Heaven and in the depth of the abyss I walked.' Wisdom could do what human beings could not do, and which only God could do.

Nevertheless, Wisdom is not God and Wisdom must listen to the commandments of God, since she is also a part of creation. The further expression that Wisdom was poured

on all works of God conveys the potential of human beings. ‘The Lord, he created her and saw and numbered her and poured her upon all his works.’ Finally when one hears the invitation of Wisdom to approach her, eat and drink the fruit of Wisdom, one can recognise that Wisdom is an object to search for. Nevertheless, the origin and activity of Wisdom begins with the mystery of Wisdom like the mystery of God and creation.

### **6.3.2.2 Keeping of the Torah (νομος)**

The mystery of Wisdom in Sirach 24 is developed in the relationship between Wisdom and other entities such as keeping the Torah and the fear of the Lord. In Sirach 24 Wisdom who formed the mysterious being became the Torah of Moses. God commanded Wisdom to pitch her tent in Israel. According to the commandment of God, Wisdom took root in Israel and has grown tall and flourished. Finally 24:23 declared that all this was the Torah of Moses. This identification of Wisdom with the Torah became a central theme in Sirach 24 as well as the entire book of Sirach. The mention of the Torah and commandments can be found in the book of Sirach. The identification of Wisdom with the Torah in Sirach 24 can reflect repetition or recitation of a written text or oral Wisdom tradition.

24:23 All this is the book of **the covenant** (διαθηκησ) of God the highest, **the law** (νομον) that Moses commanded us, an inheritance for the congregations of Jacob.

1:26 If you desire **wisdom** (σοφιαν), keep **the commandments** (διατηρησον) and the Lord will convey her to you

6:37 Attend to **the fear of the Highest and his commandments**, meditate continuously then he will instruct your heart and he will give you the wisdom you desire.

19:20 The whole of **wisdom** is **fear of the Lord**; complete wisdom is the fulfillment of the Law

In Sirach 1:26, people who desire Wisdom should keep the commandment. In Sirach 6:37, if someone fears the Highest and meditates his commandment continuously, God will give him the wisdom he desires. In these texts, the Torah was indispensable in order to possess wisdom. Studying the Law and commandments is the means to acquire wisdom, since in obedience to the Law one places oneself in a position to receive the gift of Wisdom from God. Furthermore, one can notice that the fear of the Lord and the Torah are used in a similar meaning simultaneously in 6:37 and 19:20.<sup>52</sup> Thus the relationship between wisdom and the Torah is enforced by the mention of the fear of the Lord (Rogers 1999:120).

As seen in Proverbs 16, Job 28 and Ecclesiastes 3, the fear of the Lord conveys both the search for order and the maintenance of mystery. Like them, the keeping of the Torah in Sirach 24 shows both voices. The process of Wisdom becoming the Torah in Sirach 24 represents the voice of mystery in Wisdom Literature. Yet the fact that human beings should search for the Torah and Wisdom implies the search for order. Without both the fear of the Lord and the keeping of Torah, none can obtain wisdom. The person who spurns the fear of the Lord cannot be wise.

Sirach 1:11ff deals with the intimate relationship between Wisdom and the fear of the Lord. The beginning and the root of Wisdom is to fear the Lord and her branches are the

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<sup>52</sup> The fear of the Lord is closely bound up with keeping the commandments (2:16, 23:27, 32:14-16). The fear of the Lord is not separable from the Torah, since the fear of the Lord is practiced by keeping the Torah.



length of days. Wisdom and instruction are the fear of the Lord, as seen in Job 28:28. For the grandchild, Ben Sira had devoted himself to the tradition of the Law, the Prophets, and the other books of the ancestors. Ben Sira wrote Sirach in order that people who love learning might progress in living according to the Torah.

1:14 The beginning of **wisdom** (ἀρχὴ σοφίας) is to **fear the Lord** (φοβεισθαι τον κυριον).

1:20 The root of **wisdom** (ρίζα σοφίας) is to **fear the Lord** (φοβεισθαι τον κυριον) and her branches are length of days.

1:27 For **wisdom** (σοφια) and **instruction** (παιδεια) are **the fear of the Lord** (φοβος κυριου).

Sirach Prologue 14: My grandfather Jesus, who had devoted himself especially to the reading of the Law (νομος) and the Prophets and the other books of our ancestors, and had acquired considerable proficiency in them, was himself also led to write something pertaining to **instruction and wisdom**, so that by becoming familiar also with his book those who love learning might make even greater progress in living according to the Law

In the eyes of the grandchild and the translator the Torah played an outstanding role (Reiterer 2008:210). Obviously the grandchild wanted to offer an introduction to the book of his grandfather. On the one hand, the Torah can be the first written part of the revelation. On the other hand it can be the general term regarding the revealed will of God. Considering the Torah, commandments, and the fear of the Lord in the context of Sirach, the Torah and commandment in Sirach 24 may become a means to obtain ‘practical wisdom’, implying the search for order and maintenance of mystery.

### 6.3.2.3 The Search for Wisdom

As Wisdom, the Torah and the fear of the Lord are often repeated in the entire book of Sirach, so is the topic of creation. The theme of creation takes up ample space in Sirach (16:26-30, 17:1-13, 39:12-35, 42:15-43:33). God as creator and the power of God are lauded. The sphere of creation of God includes everything: human beings, animals, and inanimate things. Sirach 24 mentions that God created all. God who created all also created Wisdom. This repetition can also be found in Sirach 1:1-10. When God created Wisdom, God saw and counted her and poured her upon all his works.

24:8 The creator of all commanded **me** (μοι), the one who **created me** (κτισας με).....

1:9 The Lord, he **created her** (αυτην) and saw and numbered **her** (αυτην) and poured **her** (αυτην) upon  
all his works

In Sirach 1:9, the Lord is said to have created Wisdom, seen and numbered her and poured Wisdom out upon all his works. When God is said to number wisdom, it implies that he has an intimate knowledge and complete understanding of her. Von Rad (1972:288) interprets it as the description of a real cosmological process- the bestowal of something special on creation. Yet God can pour out wisdom upon all his works by creating them in a manner which reflects his own wisdom, so that there is a rational purpose manifest in the cosmos (Rogers1994:80).

Since God poured out Wisdom in the created world, human beings can search for and acquire this Wisdom. Sirach 24 says that Wisdom calls the reader to approach her and eat and drink her. These expressions have similarities in 6:27 and 51:26. Human beings

should seek and find her. Furthermore when they grasp her, they should not let her go (6:27). The result of searching for Wisdom is an appropriate response from Wisdom. Wisdom draws near to those who seek her and the one who searches for Wisdom finds her (52:26). Thus Wisdom becomes the order of creation that human beings should search for. Since order has been revealed in the creation, human beings can search for order in the cosmos (Reiterer 2008:211).

24:19 Approach **me** (με), you desire **me** (μου) and from my fruits take your fill.

24:21 The one who eats of **me** (με), ill hunger for more

and the one who drinks of **me** (με) will thirst for more.

6:27 Search out and seek, look for and find and when you grasp her, do not let **her** (αὐτήν) go.

51: 26b She draws near to those who seek her

And the one who gives his life, finds **her** (αὐτήν).

In Sirach 16:24-23, God assigns every natural element of creation to its place and enables each of his works to accomplish its particular task or function forever (26-28). According to Perdue (2007:238), “this continuous regularity and order in the operations of the heavens and the earth is achieved because the works of creation are obedient to the divine imperative. All things are created to exist in harmony and are obedient to the divine will in following what God had determined for them to be and to do. Obedience to God’s commandments, whether by the elements of creation or by human creature, leads to harmony, order, and well-being.”

The creation of God includes the mystery as well as the order of the cosmos. Sirach 24

starts by mentioning the mystery of Wisdom. The origin of Wisdom and the rule of the cosmos by Wisdom belong to the mystery. The mystery can be found in the confession of Ben Sira (24:28-29). None could know Wisdom completely, including the first human being and the last. In Sirach 1:1-10 the mystery of creation and Wisdom is focused on. Verses 2-3 underline the mysteries of the cosmos. Human beings cannot fathom the intricacies of the created realm. Furthermore, since Wisdom was created before all things and has been in existence from eternity, none can understand her subtleties. Only one is wise- the Lord.

24: 28 The first human being did not know **her** (αὐτήν) completely, nor has the last succeeded in fathoming **her** (αὐτήν).

24: 29 For deeper than the sea are **her** (αὐτήν) thoughts and **her** (αὐτήν) counsel than the great abyss.

1:2 The sand of the seas and the drops of rain and the days of eternity who can number?

1:6 The root of **wisdom** (ῥίζα σοφίας), to whom has it been revealed?

And her subtleties, who knows?

In speaking of repentance and the mercy of God (17:25-32), God's mercy is given to human beings, for they are only dust and ashes. The inherent limitations of human existence are recognised by a merciful God who is sure to forgive those who repent and turn to him. Sirach 18:1-14 also speaks of God's wondrous deeds, mighty power, and unlimited mercy that transcend all human descriptions and understanding. The insignificance of humanity is expressed by the question: "What is a human being, and of what worth is he?" In view of the greatness of God and the insignificance of humanity, even human good and evil are worth little consideration. This contrast between the

sovereignty and greatness of God and the insignificance of human beings is the poem's basis for the mercy of Yahweh (Sirach 17:11-14).

In this sense, when one reads Sirach 24, one can notice that it is full of both the search for order and the maintenance of mystery in the creation. All characters in Sirach 24 such as God, Wisdom, and the creation of the world had had both hidden and visible aspects. Whoever wants to live according to the will of God has to keep universal order and maintain mystery, which are not only meant for Israel (Reiterer 2008:214).

### **6.3.3 Recontextualization and Reconfiguration**

#### **6.3.3.1 Biblical Intertexture**

The themes of Sirach 24 need to be looked at in the context of Wisdom Literature in Israel and the Ancient Near East. Peters (1913:xxxix) denoted the large literary frame of Sirach in line with the book of Proverbs. The first significant aspect is a general resemblance in the opening poems in two books. While Proverbs begins with a six line introduction (Proverbs 1:1-6), Sirach opens with an eight line preamble (Sirach 1:1-10). The statement of Proverbs 1:7: "The fear of Yahweh is the beginning of knowledge" is recontextualized into the sentence of Sirach 1:14: "The beginning of wisdom is the fear of the Lord."

Like an opening poem, Sirach 24 has many similarities to Proverbs 8 (Corley 2008:23). Woman Wisdom's first person speech in Sirach 24:3-22 about her origin and activity is reminiscent of her first person speech in Proverbs 8:4-36. The reference of 'I (ἐγώ)' is similar to the use of 'I (אני)' in Proverbs 8:12, 17. Wisdom's presence at the origin of

creation in Sirach 24:3-6 is mentioned in Proverbs 8:22-31. Yahweh created Wisdom ‘at the beginning of his way’ in Proverbs 8:22. Similarly God created Wisdom ‘before eternity, from the beginning’ in Sirach 24. In Proverbs 8:27, when Yahweh established the heavens Wisdom was there, and in the depth of the abyss Wisdom walked.

Sirach 24:9: Before eternity, from the beginning he created **me** (προ του αιωνος απο αρχης εκτισεν με).

Proverbs 8:22: Yahweh created **me** at the beginning of his way (יהוה קנני ראשית דרכו קדם מפעליו מאז).

Sirach 24:5: The vault of heaven I circled above, and in the depth of the abysses **I** walked (γυρον ουρανος εκυκλωσα και εν βαθει αβυσσων περιπατησα).

Proverbs 8:27: When he established the heavens **I** was there, when he marked a circle on the surface of the abyss (בהכינו שמים שם אני בחוקו חוג על פני תהום).

The origin of Wisdom and the activity of Wisdom in Sirach 24 are similar to those in Proverbs. As in Sirach 24, the mystery of God, Wisdom, and creation is found in the book of Proverbs. Furthermore the search for order prevailed in the book of Proverbs. As those working with me will not miss the mark (Sirach 24:22), one who misses me injures himself (Proverbs 8:36). Seen from this comparison, it seems that Sirach 24 has recontextualized the wisdom of Proverbs in a new context of the Hellenistic period, showing the coexistence of the search for order and the maintenance of mystery.

Sirach 24:22: Those working with **me** will not miss the mark (οι εργαζόμενοι εν εμοι ουχ άμαρτήσουσι).

Proverbs 8:36a: One who misses **me** injures himself (וחטאי חמס נפשו),

all who hate me love death (כל משנאי אהבו מות).

Sirach also exhibits several structural resemblances to the book of Job, especially Job 28. As it was discussed earlier, Job 28 was a sapiential poem that equates wisdom with the fear of the Lord in Job 28:28. However, Sirach 24 is a poem that identifies wisdom with the Law of Moses. The book of Job may have had some influence on the general structure of Ben Sira's work (Corley 2008:25). Both books open with two chapters about a God-fearing person who has to face trials. While Job (1:1) depicts the hero as fearing God, Sirach (1:11-30) offers a discourse on the fear of the Lord. Yahweh's speeches in Job 38-41 correspond with divine glory in creation in Sirach 42:15-43:26. Job's humble admission of his lack of understanding of God's wonders in Job 42:2-6 is similar to the confession of the limitations of human powers in the face of the Lord's wonders in Sirach 43:33. Thus Sirach 24 has been recontextualized from Jewish Wisdom Literature, showing the coexistence of the search for order and the maintenance of mystery.

### **6.3.3.2 Hellenistic and ANE Intertexture**

Along with the recontextualization from Jewish Wisdom Literature, it is possible that Sirach 24 was a reconfiguration from the Ancient Near East Literature, as from Israelite Wisdom Literature. The Palestine of Ben Sira's day was not isolated. Trade with the Aegean had brought Greek influence to Phoenicia and the Palestinian coast as far back as the second millennium. There is evidence of Greek mercenaries and merchants in Palestine from the seventh century BCE and Greek coins from after the sixth century BCE (Hengel 1974:32). Hengel suggested that all Judaism from about the middle of the third century BCE must be regarded Hellenistic Judaism in the strict sense. While there is general agreement that Ben Sira is conservative, scholars differ in their assessment of

his reaction to Hellenism.<sup>53</sup> In spite of different opinions, most scholars acknowledge that there are at least some traces of Hellenism.

In the interpretation of Sirach 24:3-7, Conzelmann (1971:230) compares Sirach 24 with Isis imagery. In connection with Wisdom's celestial journey he cites Plutarch (IS.Osir 372-373) as to where the primal god as pure Being abides. While Isis is Movement, Wisdom walks the circuit of the cosmos. Isis Wisdom creates the world and consequently rules it. Even though Sirach 24 is not borrowed directly from Isis, this reflects a common phenomenon in the Ancient Near East. Furthermore, the possibility of Ben Sira's reconfiguration of certain ideas from the Ancient Near East could not be ruled out

Sanders (1983) also showed Sirach's relation to the Ancient Near East Literature. He finds various allusions, indicating that Sirach knew Greek Literature. Sirach depends on wisdom from Egypt, especially Papyrus Insinger. He may be influenced by Homer, Pindar, and especially Theognis and the Isis aretalogy. The intensive discussion about Sirach's contact with non-Biblical Literature has been emphasised with regard to Sirach 24 (Reiterer 1997:41). Nevertheless, Ben Sira was an Israelite under Hellenistic influence marked by international contacts. Ben Sira was confident enough within his Jewish faith to make use of Hellenistic authors or insights where he felt that they were consonant with Jewish belief.

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<sup>53</sup> Smend (1906:xxiv) and Tcherikover (1959:144) regarded Ben Sira as vehemently anti-Hellenistic. Sanders (1983:60) argues that there is no polemic against Hellenism apart from 30:18f and 3:21-25.



### **6.3.4 Thematic Elaboration**

The investigation of the intertexture of Sirach 24 provides the reader with thematic elaboration. The theme that Sirach 24 suggests is that human beings should search for order and maintain mystery and order in the world. The rationale for the theme is the origin of Wisdom and the Torah or commandments of God. On the one hand, Wisdom is the mysterious being which human beings could not understand completely. Wisdom came forth from the mouth of God and covered the earth like mist, encircled alone the vault of heaven, walked in the depth of the abyss. Thus human beings should maintain the mystery of God. On the other hand, Wisdom became the Torah that human beings should learn and keep. Wisdom should be sought for. It implies that human beings should search for order in the world.

The confirmation of the rationale of the theme is the comparison of Sirach 24 with other Wisdom Literatures in Israel and the Ancient Near East. The topic of the origin of Wisdom is interpreted as the maintenance of mystery, while the search for wisdom is interpreted as the search for order in the context of Sirach. The keeping of the Torah functions in both ways. In the comparison of Sirach 24 with Wisdom Literature such as Proverbs, Job shows that Sirach 24 was recontextualized and reconfigured from Wisdom Literature in Israel and the Ancient Near East, confirming the theme of the search for order and the maintenance of mystery. The theme of Sirach 24 was common in Wisdom Literature in the Ancient Near East.

The examples of the confirmation of the theme are seen in Wisdom's narrative in Sirach 24:1-22 and the narrative of Ben Sira in 24:23-30. Wisdom explains her origin and her

activities in the world and her becoming the Torah. She sought a resting place in the world. God commanded her to pitch her tent in Israel. According to the commandment of God, she took root in Israel and flourished. Finally Wisdom calls the reader to approach her and eat and drink her fruits. Ben Sira explains that this is the Torah and the commandment. Ben Sira especially mentions the limitation of human beings in understanding Wisdom. Ben Sira's autobiographical expression in Sirach 24:30-34 functions as an embellishment of the theme. Ben Sira sought for Wisdom in his life and he poured out his teaching to all future generation.

The theme of the search for order and the maintenance of mystery in God, Wisdom, and the World occurs throughout the book of Sirach. The beginning of the book (Sirach 1:1-10) starts the description of the mystery of God and the creation. Sirach 1: 2-3 shows the mysteries of the cosmos. Since Wisdom was created before all things and has been in existence from eternity, none can understand her subtleties. Only one is wise- the Lord. Yet in the following part (Sirach 1:11-30), Ben Sira provides a central biblical theme: the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom (Proverbs 1:7, 9:10, Psalms 11:10). Wisdom, the fear of the Lord and keeping the commandments are indissolubly linked (Di Lella 1997:122). Here Wisdom becomes practical wisdom enabling one to live correctly, representing the search for order.

### **6.3.5 Preliminary Conclusion**

The themes that inner texture of Sirach 24 revealed were discussed by means of intertexture of Sirach 24. The origin of Wisdom, the keeping of the Torah, and the search for Wisdom was discussed in the context of the book of Sirach. These terms or

the themes are repeated in the whole book of Sirach. The recontextualization and reconfiguration of the theme were discussed in the Wisdom Literature in Israel as well as the Ancient Near East. The consideration of this intertexture clarified the theme of Sirach 24

The origin of Wisdom and her activities in the creation world are repeated in the book of Sirach, especially Sirach 1:1-10. In both chapters Wisdom is a mysterious being. Wisdom is associated with God, since Wisdom was created before eternity and She alone can encircle the earth like God. Wisdom has her priority over all creation. Nevertheless, Wisdom is not God and Wisdom must listen to the commandment of God, since she is also a part of creation. Wisdom was poured on all works of God. Yet the origin and activity of Wisdom begins with the mystery of Wisdom like the mystery of God and creation.

The mystery of Wisdom in Sirach 24 is developed in the relationship between Wisdom and the keeping of the Torah and the fear of the Lord. In Sirach 24 Wisdom who formed the mysterious being like God became the Torah of Moses. Along with the voice of mystery, the keeping of the Torah and the fear of the Lord functions as a voice of the search for order. In Sirach 1:26 and 6:37, the Torah is indispensable to the possession of Wisdom. Studying the Torah and commandments is the means to acquire wisdom, since in obedience to the Torah one places oneself in a position to receive the gift of wisdom from God. Thus the Torah and commandments in Sirach 24 can become a means to obtain 'practical wisdom'.

The search for wisdom in the world is also repeated throughout the book. In Sirach 1:1-10, when God created the universe, God poured out wisdom upon all his works by creating them in a manner which reflects his own wisdom. It implies that there is rational order manifest in the cosmos. The creation of God includes the mystery as well as the order of the cosmos. Sirach 24 starts by mentioning the mystery of Wisdom. The mystery can be found in the confession of Ben Sira (24:28-29). All characters in Sirach 24 such as God, Wisdom, and the creation of the world had both hidden and visible aspects. Whoever wants to live according to the will of God should follow universal order and maintain mystery, which are not only meant for Israel.

The themes of Sirach were dealt with in the context of Wisdom Literature in Israel and the Ancient Near East. Sirach 24 has many similarities with Proverbs 8. The origin of Wisdom in Sirach 24:3-6 is similar to that in Proverbs 8:22-31. The mystery of God, Wisdom, and the creation of the world is found in the book of Proverbs. Furthermore the search for Wisdom prevails in Proverbs. Job 28 equates wisdom with the fear of the Lord in Job 28:28. Sirach also has recontextualization and reconfiguration from the Ancient Near East Literature, as from Israelite Wisdom Literature Sirach depends on wisdom from Egypt.

The investigation of the Intertexture of Sirach 24 provided the reader with thematic elaboration. The theme that Sirach 24 suggests is that human beings should search for order, maintaining mystery in the world. The rationale for the theme is the origin of Wisdom and the Torah or commandment of God. The confirmation of the rationale of the theme is the comparison of Sirach 24 with other Wisdom Literatures in Israel and

the Ancient Near East. The theme that there are both mystery and order to search for in God, Wisdom, and the World occurs throughout the book of Sirach.

## **6.4 Social and Cultural Texture**

### **6.4.1 Introduction**

The study of intertexture of Sirach 24 elaborated the theme that the study of inner texture has suggested. Inner texture had shown main themes such as Wisdom, the Torah, people and creation world. Intertexture of Sirach 24 suggested that there are both mystery that human beings cannot understand as well as order to search for in God, Wisdom, and the Creation world. That is the keeping of the Torah and the search for wisdom. Then what is the social and cultural background regarding Sirach 24? The fact that Wisdom and the Torah become integrated can reflect the society and culture in which Sirach was written.

Most scholars agree that Sirach was written at the beginning of the second century BCE by a Jewish scribe, Ben Sira. The time corresponds to the Hellenistic period. In this Hellenistic period, Ben Sira belonged to the Jewish upper elite class as a professional scribe, living in Jerusalem (38:34-39:11). Yet Ben Sira also could not avoid Hellenistic influence like most people in that period. The relationship between Judaism and Hellenism in Sirach 24 will be an important topic in this chapter.

Social and cultural texture of Sirach 24 will begin with the social and cultural setting and proceed toward the social and cultural topics, utilising the categories of Robbins and Wilson. As in the study of Proverbs 16, Ecclesiastes 3, and Job 28, the

thaumaturgical and manipulationist responses will be discussed as specific social categories in Sirach 24. Cultural categories such as dominant culture, contraculture, and liminal culture will be dealt with. Such a social and cultural study will provide a foundation for further ideological and theological reading.

#### **6.4.2 Social Setting of Sirach 24**

The name of the author is mentioned in the book, differently from most Wisdom Literature: Jesus son of Eleazar and grandson of Sira (Prologue 3, Sirach 50:27). In short he is called Ben Sira. Ben Sira wrote the book between 200 and 175 BCE before the Maccabean crisis under Antiochus IV. A Prologue refers to the date of his grandson's arrival in Egypt<sup>54</sup> for the Greek translation of Sirach. Furthermore, Ben Sira praises a high priest named Simeon, son of Jochanian. From 219 to 196, Simeon II was a high priest in Jerusalem, which accords well with the information provided by Ben Sira's grandson (Perdue 2007:235).

The time when Sirach was written corresponds to the Hellenistic period. The empire of Alexander the Great had broken up into several Hellenistic kingdoms. Palestine was a field of contention between the Ptolemaic kingdom based on Egypt and the Seleucid kingdom of Syria. Palestine was incorporated under the control of Ptolemy Lagi I in 301 BCE. The Seleucid kings regained control of the region, by Antiochus III in 198 BCE. Ben Sira lived most of his days under Ptolemaic rule, with the change to Seleucid rule

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<sup>54</sup> The grandson arrived in Egypt in the thirty eighth year of the reign of Euergetes. That epithet was applied to only two Lagid rulers, Ptolemy III Euergetes I (246-221 BCE) and Ptolemy VII Physkon Euergetes II (170-164, 145-117 BCE). Only the latter king held office long enough to meet the translator's thirty eight years (Crenshaw 1997:610).

taking place in the latter part of his life. Both the Ptolemaic and Seleucid kingdoms were strongly Hellenistic.

Neither the Ptolemaeans nor the Seleucids brought Judaea much change in politics and religion in comparison with the Persian period. Politically, Judaea upheld its partly autonomous self rule, although it was exercised by the high priest. Prior to Aniochus IV Epiphanes (175-164 BCE), the early Seleucid kings allowed local priesthoods to be hereditary and practised a policy of noninterference. A high degree of status accompanied the office of the high priest, who also enjoyed power and wealth. The priests and the temple were allowed to receive the temple tax from the Jews in Judah and in the Diaspora (Perdue 2007:227). In Ben Sira's time Jerusalem experienced a period of relative calm. Nevertheless, the Hellenistic period was a time of change and uncertainty with traditional beliefs and values being challenged by the dominant Hellenistic culture.

Ben Sira saw himself as a scribe as well as a wisdom teacher, and his book as a source of wisdom (Sirach 38:24; 50:24). He also considered himself a latecomer in the long sapiential tradition (Sirach 33:16-18). From his youth, Ben Sira had been a pious and devoted student of the Law and of the traditions of Israel, and he became a professional scribe, a vocation that he extols in 38:34- 39:11. On the basis of these, some scholars contended that Sirach or Ben Sira showed anti-Hellenistic trends (Smend 1906:xxiv; Tcherikover 1959:144).

On the other hand, recent investigations have discerned a more complex and ambivalent

attitude toward Hellenism. Hellenism infiltrated the political, religious, economical and social aspects of the Ancient Near East. At the beginning of the third century BCE when the Diaspora Jews returned, an intellectual milieu began to flourish. Sirach is one book that shows direct Greek influence (Sanders 27-59). The relationship between Judaism and Hellenism in Sirach is 'a complex and multifaceted one' (Pua 2008:721). Even though Ben Sira belonged to conservative traditional Jewish scribes, he could not help being affected by Hellenism. Ben Sira traveled widely (34:11). In this milieu, Ben Sira attempted to create a Jewish Wisdom theology that would satisfy even the demands of high Hellenistic philosophy (Albertz 2002b: 122).

### **6.4.3 Specific Social Topics**

Sirach 24 which is a product of the Hellenistic period exhibits specific social topics. According to Robbins (1996), there are seven types of specific social topics: The conversionist, revolutionist, introversionist, manipulationist, thaumaturgical, reformist, and utopian response. Like other Wisdom texts, Sirach 24 shows both thaumaturgical and manipulationist responses. The thaumaturgical response is the belief in supernatural communications and manifestations of power. In the context of Hellenism, Ben Sira can experience such a thaumaturgical response to the society.

The declaration that Wisdom opens her mouth in the assembly of the Highest belongs to the thaumaturgical response. The thaumaturgical response is continued through the autographical narrative of Wisdom herself in Sirach 24:3-22. Wisdom is the mysterious being with specific origin and her activities in creating the world. Wisdom conveys supernatural communications and the manifestations of power to the reader.



Furthermore, God commands Wisdom to pitch her tent in Israel and Wisdom obeys the commandment of God. All these processes of Wisdom becoming the Torah reflect a thaumaturgical response among specific social topics. The writer of Sirach seems to experience a huge stream of Hellenism. In the face of Hellenism, Ben Sira describes traditional wisdom and diverse traditions, themselves depending on supernatural Wisdom. The fact that a thaumaturgical response is strong in Sirach 24 shows that the writer is not always comfortable with the context.

Both the thaumaturgical and the manipulationist response are strong. A manipulationist response is to seek a transformed set of relationship or transformed method of coping with evil. Evil might be overcome if human beings learn the right means and improved techniques. This orientation provides timeless happiness for human beings. This response is related to everyday wellbeing and this wellbeing may be obtained by learning universal principles concerning human beings and the world. The statements that Wisdom took root in Israel and grew tall can be not only thaumaturgical, but also manipulationist. The process of Wisdom becoming the Torah is a thaumaturgical response, since it is the supernatural process. Nevertheless, a transformed relationship between Wisdom and the Torah is sought, since in Sirach 24 Wisdom is identified with the Torah.

The calling of Wisdom also belongs to both the thaumaturgical and manipulationist responses. The fact that Wisdom calls people to approach her belongs to the thaumaturgical response. However, if someone approaches her, he will take her fruits. The one who obeys Wisdom will not be ashamed and the ones who work with her will

never sin. These explanations will be manipulationist responses. Ben Sira finally shows a manipulationist response by saying that his rivulet became a river, and his river became a sea. The consequence of seeking for Wisdom will be wonderful. This integration of thaumaturgical and manipulationist responses reflects the social and cultural background of Sirach 24. In the face of Hellenism, Ben Sirah attempts to integrate the mystery of thaumaturgical response with traditions of Israel such as the Torah and the fear of the Lord.

#### **6.4.4 Cultural Categories**

According to Robbins (1996), there are five cultural categories such as dominant culture, subculture, counterculture, contraculture, and liminal culture. In the period when Sirach was written, Hellenism might have challenged Jerusalem. Hellenism is frequently used in the sense of cultural phenomena. It is possible that there were several responses to Hellenism of Jews living in Ptolemaic and Seleucid Palestine. One could embrace the Graeco Macedonian lifestyle and worldview, seeking advancement by identifying as much as possible with the ruling class. This would inevitably cause some conflict with traditional interpretations of the Jewish law and tradition. Russell (1986:8) identifies the wealthier sections of the Jewish community, including the priestly aristocracy as the circles most open to Hellenism.

These upper classes had the greatest opportunities for contacts with foreigners and the greatest motivation to pursue these contacts, since Hellenism carried with it social and economic as well as cultural and religious implications. It was also possible to react violently against Hellenism. Between these extremes, many Jews were able to borrow

from Hellenistic culture where they did not need to compromise their Jewish belief. In the light of the Hellenistic challenge, Sirach reflects a voice between these extremes, which provides the social and cultural background of the coexistence of the search for order and the maintenance of mystery.

The groups more open to foreign influence sought ways to lessen the divide between Jew and Gentile through rationalistic interpretation of the Jewish Torah. They wanted to express the essential truth of Judaism in a universalistic way (Hengel 1974:147).<sup>55</sup> These rationalistic interpretations of the Torah provoked conservative elements to an even firmer insistence on the entire corpus of laws. Judging from the outbreak of a life and death struggle between the reform party and the conservatives after Ben Sira's time, one can assume that the conflict of interpretations had been going on for some time prior to the uprising.

Seen from this context, Sirach 24 shows two conflicting cultural categories simultaneously. The emphasis on the Torah and religious traditions of Israel reflect the dominant or subdominant culture such as priests and the ruling class in Jerusalem. The smoke of incense in the Tent reminds the reader of priests. Many references to Zion, Jerusalem, a glorified people, and inheritance reflect the culture of the ruling classes in the Jewish community. The learning and the keeping of the Torah bring a wonderful consequence such as glory and wealth.

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<sup>55</sup> Hengel (1974:147) sees traces of the Hellenistic spirit in the great confidence that Ben Sira places in the possibility of a rational understanding of the world. The purpose of the world created by God is to be demonstrated by means of rational argument.

Nevertheless, the emphasis on the supernatural element of Wisdom and the rational process from Wisdom to Torah provides another voice against the ruling dominant or subdominant culture in the Jewish community. Even though Hellenism was prevalent in Jerusalem, the voice of appropriating Hellenism in Jerusalem would be contra or liminal culture. Which culture is more dominant is not clear. However, it is certain that there is conflict between Judaism and Hellenism in the Jewish community in the Hellenistic period. Sirach 24 attempts to integrate both in a specific way, still remaining as a conservative scholar. Ben Sira actually shows a positive attitude to Hellenistic culture. Surrounded by the Greek influence he sought to show pious Jews how to live positively with Greek culture, not rejecting it altogether.

#### **6.4.5 Preliminary Conclusion**

The theme that Wisdom and the Torah became integrated reflects the society and culture in which Sirach was written. The time corresponds to the Hellenistic period, when Ben Sira belonged to the Jewish upper elite class as professional sage or scribe, living in Jerusalem (38:34-39:11). As specific social topics, Sirach 24 reflects both thaumaturgical and manipulationist responses. The declaration that Wisdom opens her mouth in the assembly of the Highest belongs to the thaumaturgical response. Wisdom is the mysterious being with specific origin and her activities in creation world. Wisdom conveys the supernatural communications and the manifestations of power to the reader. All this process of Wisdom becoming the Torah reflects a thaumaturgical response among specific social topics.

While the thaumaturgical response is strong, the manipulationist response is also strong.

The statements that Wisdom took root in Israel and grew tall may be a manipulationist response. The process of Wisdom becoming the Torah seeks a transformed relationship between Wisdom and the Torah, since in Sirach 24 Wisdom is identified with the Torah. The calling of Wisdom can be a manipulationist response. If someone approaches her, he will take her fruits. The one who obeys Wisdom will not be ashamed and the ones who work with her will never sin, which will be a manipulationist response. Ben Sira finally shows a manipulationist response by saying that his rivulet became a river, and his river became a sea. The consequence of seeking for Wisdom will be wonderful.

Sirach 24 shows two conflicting cultural categories between Judaism and Hellenism. The emphasis on the Torah and religious traditions of Israel reflects the dominant or subdominant culture such as the Priest and the ruling classes in Jerusalem. The smoke of incense in the Tent reminds the reader of the Priest. Many references to entities such as Zion, Jerusalem, a glorified people, and inheritance reflect the culture of the ruling classes. The learning and keeping the Torah bring a wonderful consequence such as glory and wealth. At the same time, the emphasis on the supernatural element of Wisdom and the rational process from Wisdom to the Torah shows another attitude against the ruling dominant or subdominant culture. In the conflict between Judaism and Hellenism, Sirach 24 attempts to integrate both in a specific way.

The spirit of integration in Sirach 24 reflects the social and cultural background of Sirach 24. In the face of Hellenism, Ben Sirah attempts to integrate the maintenance of mystery and the search for order as traditions of Israel such as the Torah and the fear of the Lord. The writer of Sirach seems to experience a huge stream of Hellenism. Ben

Sira seems to describe that traditional wisdom and diverse traditions themselves can be explained by supernatural Wisdom which is influenced by Hellenism.

## **6.5 Ideological and Theological Texture**

### **6.5.1 Introduction**

All the textures such as inner texture, intertexture, social and cultural texture provides the background for ideological and theological texture. Inner texture suggested the topic or theme of Sirach 24 such as the origin of Wisdom, the keeping of the Torah, and the search for order. The study of intertexture elaborated the theme as the search for order and the maintenance of mystery. Social and cultural texture showed that the theme of Sirach 24 reflects the society and culture in the Hellenistic period. Sirach 24 showed a kind of integration spirit in the time of conflict.

Along with all these textures, Sirach 24 also contains ideological and theological texture. On which ideology and theology could the writer of Sirach 24 suggest the integration of Wisdom and the Torah? As mentioned before, ideological analysis is related to the theological analysis. While ideological texture concerns “the biases, opinions, preferences, and stereotypes” of a particular writer and a particular reader, theological texture includes aspects concerning “deity, holy persons, spirit beings, divine history, human redemptions, religious community and ethics” (Robbins 1996:95).

While Ecclesiastes 3 and Job 28 reflect a social critical theology against the dominating ideology of the ruling class, Sirach 24 conveys a reformulated creation theology in a somewhat Hellenistic way, maintaining the core of Judaism. This theology can produce

an integrated coexistence of order and mystery which is a way of coexistence compared with other Wisdom texts. This coexistence in Sirach 24 yields a theological relationship between God and Wisdom, God and human beings, and human beings and the world.

### **6.5.2 God and Wisdom**

What then is the relationship between God and Wisdom in Sirach 24? Is Wisdom an attribute of God or a mediatrix? Sirach 24:1-2 places Wisdom in the divine assembly of the Most High and indicates that she opens her mouth to praise herself and her virtues. Among them is Wisdom, created by God. In Sirach 24:3-7 Wisdom describes her origins by the mouth of the Most High and her wandering through the cosmos. In Sirach 24:8-12 Wisdom receives a command from her creator to set up her tent in Jacob and to make her inheritance in Israel. Here she ministers before the Lord in the Tabernacle.

In these descriptions one can find the relationship between God and Wisdom. God is a creator of all, including Wisdom. Then what or who is Wisdom in Sirach 24? Rogers (1999:202) argued that ‘in his description of Wisdom dwelling in the pillar of cloud, journey through the cosmos and seeking a resting place, Ben Sira is employing the vehicle of Wisdom as angels of the Lord accompanying the people of Israel in their journeying toward the promised land and taking them into the land to find rest and claim their inheritance.’ Even though the text of Sirach 24 does not mention angel as Wisdom, his interpretation seems quite appropriate. Wisdom appears to be intimately associated with the Lord.

Then why was this relationship between God and Wisdom described like this in Sirach

24. In the confrontation of Judaism with Hellenism, one can say there were two dominating voices. Probably some groups followed a Hellenistic way of life, denying the fear of the Lord and the Torah, while other groups such as priests showed anti-Hellenism, focusing on the traditions of Israel such as the Torah and commandments of God. Di Lella (1993:136) interprets Sirach 24 as one of several passages “where Ben Sira reminds his students to resist the allure of Greek way and culture.”

However, for the researcher, Ben Sira shows his theology against two conflicting ideologies such as the extremes of Hellenism and Judaism. He does not show a strong polemic against Hellenism (Rogers 1999:52). Collins (1997:33) notes that the conflict that runs through Ben Sira’s ethical reflection is not between Greek and Jew, but against arrogance and temerity on the one hand, and humility and caution on the other. Hellenistic culture seemed to promote arrogance and temerity, but that was no reason to reject all aspects of it. Rather the relationship between God and Wisdom contains a Hellenistic way of explanation, even if it is a Jewish way in nature.

In this relationship between God and Wisdom one finds the theology of the relationship. As the existence of God is a mystery that human beings cannot explain, the origin of Wisdom and her activity in the world show mystery. However the mystery does not exclude a kind of ‘order’ with which God or Wisdom can be explained. God is the creator, and all other things including Wisdom were created by God. Order is revealed in the relationship between God and Wisdom. God has commanded Wisdom to pitch her tent in Israel. Wisdom obeyed the commandment of God. As the result, Wisdom has grown tall and flourished and bore much fruits.



### **6.5.3 God and Human beings**

The relationship between God and Wisdom implies the relationship between God and human beings. The location of Wisdom is in the midst of her people and in the assembly of the Highest. Then who are the people? Most scholars accept it as a reference to Israel among whom Wisdom settles in verses 8-12. Then Wisdom speaks both on earthly and heavenly level. The reader of Sirach 24 does not merely overhear Wisdom; His audience is directly addressed.

Wisdom belonged to the sphere of mystery originally. However, the mystery explicitly becomes a kind of order, since wisdom is identified with the law in Sirach 24: 'All this is the book of the covenant of the Most High God, the law that Moses commanded us as an inheritance for the assembly of Jacob.' Furthermore, wisdom also takes up residence in Israel and is exemplified in the lives of great men from Jewish history. All the things in the history of Israel are explained according to the purpose for which they were made.

The Torah and the commandment are closely bound up with the fear of the Lord (2:16, 23:27, 32:14-16). The theme of Sirach, the relationship between wisdom and the fear of the Lord has been discussed. Von Rad (1972:242) insists that wisdom is the fundamental theme, while Haspecker (1967:85) argues that the fear of the Lord is the total theme, For Crenshaw (1997:626), the two primary themes are interwoven from first to last, making it difficult to determine the dominant one. Wisdom can be acquired only by one who fears God and keeps the commandments. Di Lella (1997:114) concludes that Sirach's primary theme is wisdom as the fear of the Lord. "Practical wisdom and theoretical wisdom that has origin from the Lord, becomes possible only when one fears

the Lord by keeping the commandments.”

As dealt with in the study of intertexture, the fear of the Lord is the beginning, fullness, crown, and the root of wisdom in Sirach (1:11-20). Wisdom, keeping the commandment and fearing the Lord are all related. Both the fear of the Lord and keeping the Torah in Sirach 24 convey a message about the relationship between God and human beings. Both the fear of the Lord and keeping the Torah are all that human beings should do in the relationship between God and human beings. They are human beings' reverence and attitude toward God living according to divine order which God has ordained, since the fear of the Lord is the beginning, fullness, crown, and the root of wisdom (1:11-20).

These voices of keeping the Torah and the commandments formed a central role in the temple and the Priest. Ben Sira as a sage placed Wisdom in the sphere of the Torah, contributing to the theologizing of Wisdom. Now the Wisdom of Israel could be explained on the same level with the Torah and the commandments. His insistence would have been welcomed by the class of priests. However, the conservatism of Ben Sira was not all that Ben Sira characterized. Conversely, the Torah was placed in the sphere of Wisdom. The Torah does not always remain as the Torah and is extended as the sphere of Wisdom. All these things are a Jewish sage's response to the extreme ideologies of Hellenism and Judaism.

#### **6.5.4 Human beings and the World**

A theology of the sage in Sirach 24 proceeds toward the relationship between human beings and the world beyond the relationship between God and human beings. One can

find the search for order and the maintenance of mystery in the relationship between human beings and the world. Wisdom is order that human beings should search for in the world. Wisdom is identified with the Torah. Wisdom does not exclude the practical wisdom, which is also a part of the tradition of Israel. Nevertheless, the voice of the maintenance of mystery is still found in this relationship.

Much of the material in Sirach could be classified as 'practical wisdom.' There is a wide range of subjects including friendship, rearing children, pride, humility, and speech. They focus on how to live right in every area of life. Wisdom therefore continues to be successful living in the world. Furthermore Ben Sira emphasised academic study in the quest for wisdom. Wisdom educates the intellect through study and reflection, reading and travel and by listening to the elders and avoiding the foolish. The Torah and the fear of the Lord can also be related to practical wisdom. Practical wisdom enables a person to be in a right relationship with God and with other human beings. Thus this practical wisdom is order that human beings should search for.

Perdue (2007:236) argued that a theology as creation is a central theme of Sirach. According to the creation theology, "God is the creator and sustainer who determines fates and acts to reward the faithful and punish the wicked. This matrix is the theological construct of wisdom literature from the beginning, and the teachings of Sirach continue this emphasis." Even though the theology of Sirach is not significantly different from that of Proverbs, more major additions were done to the earlier traditional teachers' extant writings. The order of Wisdom is now equated with the order of the Torah. It implies that the order of creation is emphasised in a specific way.

The order of creation exhibits the emphasis on the doctrine of retribution in Sirach. Those who fear the Lord will have a happy ending. On the day of their death they will be blessed. Virtue becomes rewarded, with health and prosperity, children and a long life and enduring name (Sirach 41:12-13). Human responsibility is presumed and even affirmed. 'Do not say, it was the Lord's doing that I fell away. It was he who created human beings in the beginning and he let them in the power of their own free choice' (Sirach 15:11-14).

At the same time the mystery of God was an aspect of creation theology in Sirach, as Proverbs, Job, and Ecclesiastes have shown. The opening poem (Sirach 1:1-10) emphasises that God's wisdom is incomprehensible and unreachable. According to Beentjes (2008:142), "God's unique wisdom and awe for his sovereignty over the cosmos are presented in order to emphasise that God is totally different from all a human being can discover and track down." In Sirach 18:1-14, the eternal and righteous creator as well as his majesty and inscrutability is praised. Human beings' insignificance is emphasised. (Sirach 33:12).

Sirach 24 also recognises the limitations of searching for wisdom, maintaining mystery. The statement that the practical wisdom should be accompanied by the fear of the Lord and the Torah implies to the limitation of practical wisdom. Thus Ben Sira's theology was different from the ideologies or theologies of priests and the Hellenists, as the previous Wisdom texts have shown. In the face of Hellenism and Judaism, a Jewish scribe expressed two themes of order and mystery in an integrated way. This combination of order and mystery reflexes such a theology of the scribe. The integrated

coexistence could maintain the core of Judaism, while accepting a new way of life such as the Hellenistic.

### **6.5.5 Conclusion**

Based on previous textures, Sirach 24 conveys ideological and theological textures. Against two conflicting ideologies as Hellenism and Judaism Sirach 24 suggests a critical theology which includes the core of Judaism and open-mindedness toward Hellenism. It implies that Sirach conveys a reformulated creation theology in the face of Hellenism and Judaism. This theology produces an integrated coexistence of order and mystery which is a way of coexistence compared with other Wisdom texts.

Such theology can be found in the relationship between God, Wisdom, human beings, and the world. In the confrontation of Judaism with Hellenism, there were two dominating voices in the time of Ben Sira. Probably some groups followed a Hellenistic way of life, denying the fear of the Lord and the Torah, while other groups such as priests showed anti-Hellenism, focusing on the traditions of Israel such as the Torah and commandment of God. Ben Sira's theology can be a creation theology against two conflicting ideologies such as the extremes of Hellenism and Judaism.

Ben Sira as a sage placed Wisdom in the sphere of the Torah, contributing to the theologizing of Wisdom. Now the Wisdom of Israel could be explained on the same level with the Torah and the commandment. His insistence would have been welcomed by the class of priests. However, the conservatism of Ben Sira was not his only characteristic. Conversely, the Torah was placed in the sphere of Wisdom. The Torah

does not always remain as the Torah and is extended as Wisdom. This is a Jewish sage's theological response to the extreme ideologies of Hellenism and Judaism. Creation theology of the sage explained mystery and order in every relationship between God, Wisdom, human beings, and the world. In the face of Hellenism and Judaism, the Jewish Sage expressed two themes of order and mystery as an integrated way. The integrated coexistence could maintain the core of Judaism, while accepting a new way of life as Hellenism.

In this relationship between God and Wisdom one finds the mystery of the relationship. The origin of Wisdom and her activity in the relationship with God show mystery. Even though Wisdom contains mystery, it does not exclude a kind of 'order' with which God or Wisdom can be explained. Both the fear of the Lord and the keeping the Torah in Sirach 24 convey a message about the relationship between God and human beings. Both the fear of the Lord and the keeping the Torah are all that human beings should do in the relationship between God and human beings, which represent both the search for order and the maintenance of mystery.

The theology of the scribe proceeds toward the relationship between human beings and the world beyond the relationship between God and human beings. Wisdom is order that human beings should search for in the world. Even though Wisdom is identified with the Torah, Wisdom does not exclude the practical wisdom, which is also a part of the tradition of Israel. Practical wisdom including the fear of the Lord and the Torah enables a person to be in a right relationship with God and with other human beings. Thus this practical wisdom is order that human beings should search for, maintaining the

limitation of searching for wisdom. The search for order and the maintenance of mystery become integrated. This integration of order and mystery reflects the theology of the scribe. The integration includes the history of Jewish tradition.

# **CHAPTER 7 CONCLUSION**

## **7.1 Summary of Previous Chapters**

In Chapter 1 Introduction the background of this dissertation and the problem, hypothesis, and the methodology were discussed. Current scholars recognised the tension or the contradiction regarding the concept of wisdom in Wisdom Literature. Attempts to solve the problem have been made by scholars. The contradiction between the search for order and the maintenance of mystery has been explained by presuming a linear development from the proverbial wisdom to the theological wisdom. According to the assumption, it seems that one aspect was overemphasized, neglecting the other aspect in the study of each wisdom book in the Old Testament. Yet the researcher proposed the coexistence of both order and mystery in each book, leaving space for a difference in the relationship between them. Thus this dissertation argued for investigating the relationship between the search for order and the maintenance of mystery in each Wisdom Literature.

In Chapter 2 a Survey of Wisdom Literature was done before proceeding toward the specific chapters for the investigation. The history of interpretation has shown diverse interpretations of the contradiction regarding the concept of wisdom. On the whole Proverbs in the earliest stage shows the search for order as traditional wisdom in human society and the universe. In the later stage the books of Job and Ecclesiastes were read as protesting and unorthodox, calling into question the traditional wisdom. The voice of mystery as the concept of wisdom was suggested. Sirach again protests the voices of Job and Ecclesiastes, returning to the Jewish wisdom. Against this linear development,



some scholars such as Von Rad (1972), Murphy (1996), and Perdue (2007) have shown the possibility that in Wisdom Literature both the search for order and mystery coexist. Nevertheless, the coexistence in each wisdom text was not dealt with adequately. In order to investigate the possibility, four chapters of Wisdom books that belong to different periods were chosen (Proverbs 16, Job 28, Ecclesiastes 3, and Sirach 24).

In Chapter 3 Proverbs 16 whose date is attributed to the Monarchic period was investigated by means of socio-rhetorical criticism. Inner texture of Proverbs 16 has shown that Yahweh, king, and human beings are main characters and human activity and the search for wisdom in the world can be main topics. While the reference of Yahweh serves as the basic foundation and frame, human beings and kings can serve as major targets of Proverbs 16. Furthermore, the King can play a mediating role between God and human beings, both reflecting a model of God and a real human being. On the one hand, human beings should search for wisdom, serving God and kings in the world. On the other hand, human beings including kings should understand human limitation and the inscrutability of God. Thus inner texture suggests both the potential and the limitation of human beings.

In order to clarify the meaning of inner texture, intertexture of Proverbs 16 was discussed. Human limitation and the fear of the Lord, and the search for wisdom were discussed in the book of Proverbs, especially in Proverbs 10-22. The recognition of the limitations of human beings and the fear of the Lord is the same as the recognition of the mystery of Yahweh. The search for wisdom is related to accept some kind of social order. In the Ancient Near East the recognition of human limitations is related to the

mysterious inscrutability of deities. The search for order is also prevalent in the Ancient Near East. The book of Proverbs and Wisdom Literature in Ancient Near East show many examples of both the search for order and human limitation and the fear of the Lord.

In social and cultural texture, the social setting of Proverbs 16 is based on temple and kingdom in early and late Monarchic periods. The educational institutions in Israel could be inspired by Egyptian institutions and that some part of Proverbs, including Proverbs 16 served as learning material in school-like institutions. As specific social topics, despite the aspect of thaumaturgical response, Proverbs 16 reveals a manipulationst response which can be found in much developed societies. Concerning cultural categories, Proverbs 16 reflects either dominant culture or subcultural culture. As in Mesopotamia and Egypt, the monarchy of Israel might have experienced an economy centered in the temple. The King and priests held authority. Proverbs 16 exhibits such power of the King and temple. Subjects should obey God and the King for stability of the kingdom. Despite the dominant voice of Proverbs 16, it does not exclude counterculture or alternative culture rhetoric.

Based on the various preceding textures of Proverbs 16, ideological and theological texture was discussed. Ideologically, for the stability of the King and kingdom, the support of Yahweh was essential. On the other hand, the creation theology of Israel let even the King seek for the order of Yahweh, since Yahweh is a real King. The theology of Yahweh as a King caused all human beings including earthly Kings to uphold social order and obey the law of Yahweh. Yet the belief that Yahweh controls everything with

justice leads human beings to fear Yahweh. The acknowledgement of limitations of human ways also leads human beings to commitment to Yahweh (16:3), while the position and role of human beings are emphasised. Thus Proverbs 16 demonstrates the prevailing order, while showing the mystery of Yahweh and limitation of human activity in the world.

In Chapter 4, Job 28 was investigated. It belongs to a later period (6<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> century BCE) than Proverbs 16. Inner texture showed that a main theme is related to the place of wisdom. A poet or a narrator begins by declaring a narration: “there is a mine for silver and a place where gold is refined” (verse 1). This declaration is accompanied by human activities to search for valuables (verse 2-6, 9-11). Yet human beings do not know the place and the price of wisdom. Only God understands the way of wisdom and knows the place of wisdom (verse 23). The final verse (verse 28) suggests the fear of the Lord as practical conclusion, which implies both the potential and the limitation of human beings.

In order to clarify the meaning of Job 28, it was discussed by means of intertexture. Wisdom and the fear of the Lord in Job 28 were interpreted in the context of dialogue between Job and his friends. Job’s friends explained the disaster, depending on the doctrine of retribution. The fear of the Lord followed the doctrine of retribution. In this context, Job 28 says that human beings do not know the place of wisdom and that wisdom is the fear of the Lord, regardless of its reward. The meaning of wisdom and the fear of the Lord was interpreted as the search for order and the maintenance of mystery in the context of wisdom tradition in Israel as well as the Ancient Near East. Thus the

study of intertexture came to elaborate the theme that human beings should access wisdom or the search for order by recognising the limitations of human beings and fearing God.

The date of Job 28 was attributed to the Exilic or early Post-Exilic period (6<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> century BCE), even though the tradition of Job's tale was much earlier. Regarding specific social topics, Job 28 contains both the manipulationist and thaumaturgical response, as Proverbs 26 did. Regarding the cultural categories, Job 28 denotes the combination of dominant and contraculture. Thaumaturgical response as specific social topic and contraculture as cultural categories in Job 28 explain the maintenance of mystery. As human beings do not know the answer of the tongue (Proverbs 16:1), or divine steps (Proverbs 16:9), human beings in Job 28 do not know the place of wisdom. At the same time, the manipulationist response and dominant or subdominant culture in Job 28 shows that the search for order is still significant and undeniable. The fear of the Lord in Job 28 shows both of those voices.

Based on previous textures on Job 28, ideological and theological texture in Job 28 suggests the reason for the coexistence of the search for order and the maintenance of mystery. While Job's friends stick to the doctrine of retribution, Job shows an ambivalent view on the doctrine. However, Job 28 shows a theology that God knows the place of wisdom, while human beings do not know it. The theology that human beings do not know the place of wisdom shows the sphere of divine mystery that does not belong to human beings. Yet one cannot deny that there is divine order in the world. The fact that God knows the place of wisdom and searches for it shows that Job 28 also does

not deny the search for a kind of order or design. Thus Job 28 referred to both the sovereignty of God and the potential of human activity, depending on the creation theology.

In Chapter 5, Ecclesiastes 3 was discussed which belongs to a later period (5<sup>th</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> century BCE) than Proverbs 16 and Job 28. Inner texture shows the importance of 'time' in all verses of verse 1-9. It occurs twenty nine times. The reference to 'all' occurs twelve times in Ecclesiastes 3. God is related to all human activities. God gave the burden (verse 10). God made everything beautiful in his time and gave eternity in their heart (verse 11). Nevertheless, human beings cannot know the time. Everything is vanity. The fate of human beings does not differ from that of animals. Thus it is good for human beings to enjoy life and to do goodness (verse 12). It is the gift of God that human beings eat, drink and seek goodness (verse 13 and 22). The potential and limitation of human beings are found in inner texture.

In the study of intertexture, the concept of vanity was considered as inscrutability or mystery of the divine world. Despite an emphasis on mystery, Ecclesiastes 3 shows continuity of traditional wisdom, maintaining the search for order in the prevailing mystery. Qoheleth recommends the wholehearted pursuit of enjoyment. The fear of the Lord can function as the search for order as well as the mystery of divine activity. In Ecclesiastes 3 Qoheleth realizes that human beings should fear the Lord, since no one can change God's plan. Yet in the Epilogue (12:13) and other units (8:12-13), fearing the Lord is following human duty (12:13) and its result is blessing (8:12). This theme of Ecclesiastes 3 appears throughout the entire book. The Prologue (Ecclesiastes 1:1-11)

starts with a particular message about the 'vanity of vanities'. While the book reaches its conclusion, Qoheleth's message is accompanied by the positive perspectives.

The book of Ecclesiastes was produced during the Persian period (5<sup>th</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> century BCE), according to the linguistic evidence of Persian loanwords, as well as Aramaisms, and late developments in Hebrew form and syntax. This information indicates a date in the Persian period when the author of Qoheleth represented a voice of a particular elite class of sages or scribes along with a common question regarding ordinary people in that period. This social background made the writer of the book consider both thaumaturgical and manipulationist responses. A kind of divine determination can be a thaumaturgical response, while the enjoyment of life as the gift of God is a manipulationist response. Divine time and the fear of God can accommodate both thaumaturgical and manipulationist responses. As cultural category, Ecclesiastes 3 reflects a dominant culture in post-Exilic Judaism. However, the dominant security of a royal voice is challenged by the other contra or liminal voice.

In Qoheleth one can encounter the ideology of dominating classes such as priests in the second temple period. The priests believed that human beings could control divine time. It implies that they were much more concerned with the arrangement of many feasts and time related ceremonies. Furthermore, they stuck to the achievement of human beings neglecting the recognition of limitations of human potential, reflecting the dogmatized doctrine of retribution as the means of understanding world order. Against this trend, the writer of Ecclesiastes 3 can function as a critical theology against the ideology of the Persian period. By declaring that time for all belongs to God, Qoheleth criticises the

priests' perspective on time, retaining the voice of the search for order.

In Chapter 6, Sirach 24 which belongs to Hellenistic period (3th-2th century BCE) was discussed. Inner texture has shown repetition of the first person pronoun, indicating Wisdom. Some specific terms such as God, Wisdom, people, inheritance, and tent proceed in one direction, which is the Law of Moses and inheritance in Israel. At first Wisdom declares her own praises amidst her people. She said that she came forth from the mouth of the highest. Yet Wisdom wanted something special as her resting place. Then the creator of all commanded her to take inheritance of Israel. Wisdom took root in a glorified people. It was Israel as Wisdom's inheritance. Finally Wisdom calls people to approach her and to eat and drink the fruit of Wisdom. The poet declares that Wisdom which was dealt with previously is the book of the covenant of God the Highest, the law by which Moses commanded us.

As intertexture of Sirach 24, the origin of Wisdom, the keeping of the Torah, and the search for Wisdom was discussed in the context of the book of Sirach. As human beings cannot approach the secrets of the creation completely in Sirach 1, they cannot understand the secret of Wisdom. That is the voice of mystery which human beings cannot control. In the context of the entire book of Sirach, the mysterious Wisdom becomes the Torah, the commandment. Studying the Torah and commandments, and fearing the Lord are the means of acquiring wisdom, implying the search for order. Sirach 24 has many similarities with Proverbs 8. Sirach also has recontextualization and reconfiguration from the Ancient Near East Literature. The investigation of intertexture of Sirach 24 elaborated the theme of the search for order and the maintenance of

mystery in God, Wisdom, and the World.

Social and cultural texture of Sirach 24 reflects the Hellenistic period (the second century BCE). Ben Sira belonged to the Jewish upper elite class as professional sage or scribe, living in Jerusalem. As specific social topics, Sirach 24 reflects both thaumaturgical and manipulationist responses. The integration of thaumaturgical and manipulationist responses reflects the social and cultural background of Sirach 24. As cultural categories, Sirach 24 demonstrates two conflicting cultural categories between Judaism and Hellenism. The emphasis on the Torah and religious traditions of Israel reflect the dominant cultures of priests and ruling class in Jerusalem. Nevertheless, the emphasis on the supernatural element of Wisdom and the rational process from Wisdom to Torah can reflect another verdict against the ruling dominant culture.

Based on previous textures, Sirach 24 conveys ideological and theological texture. Against two conflicting ideologies as Hellenism and Judaism Sirach 24 suggests a critical theology which includes the core of Judaism and open-mindedness for Hellenism. It implies that Sirach conveys a reformulated creation theology in the face of Hellenism and Judaism. This theology produces an integrated coexistence of order and mystery which is a way of coexistence compared with other Wisdom texts. In the face of Hellenism and Judaism, the Jewish scribe expressed two themes of order and mystery as an integrated way. The order of creation as wisdom is now equated with the order of the Torah. At the same time, God is totally different from all that a human being can discover and track down. The integrated coexistence could maintain the core of Judaism, while accepting a new way of life as Hellenism.



## **7.2 Comparison of Wisdom Textures**

The study of four texts (Proverbs 16, Job 28, Ecclesiastes 3, and Sirach 24) in Old Testament Wisdom Literature has shown common and different elements. Every text has contained inner texture, intertexture, social and cultural texture, and ideological and theological texture, which shows the importance of a multidisciplinary approach to the texts. In each texture, one could find both commonness and difference. The commonness of every texture contributes to the concept of Wisdom as the coexistence of the search for order and the maintenance of mystery. The difference of these texts clarifies the relationship between order and mystery, which is a main theme of this dissertation.

### **7.2.1 Inner Texture**

Inner textures in four Wisdom texts have common topics and themes. God, human beings, the world as creation, wisdom, and the fear of the Lord (keeping of the Torah) were seen as main topics in all texts, even though wisdom does apparently not occur in Ecclesiastes 3. In each Wisdom texture, the existence and the role of God and human beings were crucial to understand the text. The fact that the fear of the Lord appears in all texts conveys the importance of the relationship between God and human beings. The fear of the Lord is developed in the keeping of the Torah in Sirach 24. Furthermore, the relationship between human beings and the world as creation becomes a crucial message of the texts, suggesting both the search for wisdom and the limitation of human beings. The search for wisdom implies the potential of human beings, which is interpreted as the search for order in the study of intertexture.

The name of God, human beings, and the fear of the Lord were somewhat different in each wisdom book. In Proverbs 16 the name of God was Yahweh, while in other wisdom texts that was God (אלהים). It seems that in Proverbs 16 the name of Yahweh as Israelite God was preferable in Judean kingdom, while in other later wisdom texts the name of God (אלהים) was preferable. Even though the topic of Yahweh reflects the limitations of human beings, these limitations are much more emphasised in later texts. The name of human beings reflects the trend, since man (איש) is used in Proverbs 16, while later texts use the general term (אדם) for human beings. While the fear of the Lord in Proverbs 16 strongly underlines human potential, maintaining the voice of mystery, the fear of the Lord in Job 28 shows both voices ambivalently. The fear of the Lord in Ecclesiastes 3 becomes the strong voice of human limitation, maintaining human potential, while the fear of the Lord in Sirach 24 exhibits both voices integrally.

In the study of opening-middle-closing texture as the structure of each chapter, middle texture opposes opening texture while opening texture is complementary. Closing texture combines both opening and middle textures. While opening textures in Proverbs 16 and Sirach 24 focus on the human limitations, the middle textures convey the human potential as the search for wisdom. In contrast to Proverbs 16 and Sirach 24, the opening textures in Ecclesiastes 3 and Job 28 show human potential, while the middle textures emphasise human limitation. All closing textures convey both human limitation and potential. Yet in Proverbs 16 human potential as the search for wisdom is emphasised, maintaining human limitation, while in Ecclesiastes 3 human limitation is emphasised, maintaining human potential. In Job 28 two voices are heard ambivalently, while in Sirach 24 closing texture shows the integrated voice which is heard as the voice

of human potential. This theme of human potential and limitation is connected to the theme of the search for order and the maintenance of mystery.

**Table 10 Inner Texture**

	<b>Proverbs 16</b>	<b>Job 28</b>	<b>Ecclesiastes 3</b>	<b>Sirach 24</b>
<b>Topic, Theme</b>	Yahweh, King	God (אלהים)	God (אלהים)	God (θεου)
	People (איש)	People (אנוש)	People (אדם)	People (λαω)
	Wisdom(חכמה)	Wisdom (חכמה)	Time (את)	Wisdom (σοφια)
	Fear (אף)Yahweh	Fear Lord (אדני יראת)	Fear him (שיראו)	Law of Moses
<b>Structure</b>	Opening (1-9)	Opening (1-11)	Opening (1-9)	Opening (1-22)
	A poem (Yahweh)	A poem (mining)	A poem (time)	A poem (wisdom )
	Human limitation	human potential	Human potential	Human limitation
	Middle (10-25)	Middle (12-27)	Middle (10 -18)	Middle (23-29)
	Search for wisdom	Nowhere wisdom	Unknown time	Search for Torah
	Human potential	Human limitation	Human limitation	Human potential
	Closing (27-33)	Closing (28)	Closing (19-22)	Closing (30-33)

	God sovereignty	Fear of the Lord	Enjoy of life	Search for wisdom
	Limitation and potential*	Potential and limitation	Potential and limitation	Human potential (limitation)

\* Human potential refers to human capacity to search for wisdom. The topic of human potential will be related to human search for order in the study of the following textures, since the human potential is based on the assumption that there is divine order in the world. Human limitation will be recognised as the maintenance of the mystery of God. The fear of the Lord functions not only as human limitation but also as human potential.

### 7.2.2 Intertexture

The topics and the themes of inner textures of Wisdom books became elaborated in the study of intertexture of each wisdom text. The concepts of the wisdom texts such as human limitation, human potential to search for wisdom, the fear of the Lord were explained in the entire book of each wisdom text and in the context of Jewish Wisdom tradition as well as the Ancient Near East Wisdom Literature. It was evident that all wisdom texts shared common elements not only in the Ancient Near East Wisdom, but also in Jewish Wisdom tradition. Nevertheless, each Wisdom text has shown a particular voice in the Wisdom tradition. This study of intertexture elaborates the fact that all wisdom texts have shown both the search for order and the maintenance of mystery, even though topics and themes were different.

Intertexture of Proverbs 16 has shown that the search for wisdom is related to accept some kind of social order in the book of Proverbs and Wisdom Literature in Ancient Near East. The search for order was accompanied by the maintenance of mystery and

the fear of the Lord in the Ancient Near East, since the recognition of human limitation originated from the mysterious inscrutability of deities. Nevertheless, the search for order in Proverbs 16 prevailed. The fear of the Lord could be located in the sphere of the search for order. Yet in Job 28 both verdicts on the search for order and the maintenance of mystery occurred ambivalently. Even though human beings can search for valuables, they cannot know the place of wisdom. Yet since God alone knows the place of wisdom, human beings can acquire wisdom by means of the fear of the Lord.

Yet in intertexture of Ecclesiastes 3, the voice of mystery is much more emphasised, utilising the term of vanity. The meaning of vanity is not a literal meaning, but the expression of the mystery of divine time and inscrutable life. Along with the prevailing voice of vanity, there is still the voice of the search for order, which can be found in the topic of happiness of life and the fear of the Lord. The voice about wisdom that seems to have been weakened in Ecclesiastes 3 reappears in Sirach 24. Wisdom in Sirach 24 strongly confirmed both the mystery and order. In origin Wisdom was mysterious being like the God. Yet the Wisdom becomes the Torah, related to the fear of the Lord. This integrated voice reflects the Ancient Near East Wisdom Literature as the context of the Hellenistic period.

**Table 11 Intertexture**

	<b>Proverbs 16</b>	<b>Job 28</b>	<b>Ecclesiastes 3</b>	<b>Sirach 24</b>
<b>Repetition and Recitation</b>	Human limitation as divine mystery ( 16:1,9; 19:21, 16:2; 21:2, 16:25;	Place of wisdom as retribution (order) 28:18, 27,28; 4:21,4:7	Vanity of life as divine inscrutability 3:19; 4:7; 6:2;	Origin of Wisdom as divine mystery 23:3; 1:1 24:9; 1:4

<b>(In the book)</b>	14:12; 21:30,31)	11:6; 20:5	8:14	24:5: 1:3
	Fear of the Lord 16:6; 14:26,27, 15:33; 1:7; 9:10	Human limitation as divine mystery 9:4,22; 12:2; 17:10 34:34; 38:36, 37	Fear of God 3:14; 5:7; 12:13 8:12,13	Keep the Torah 24:23; 1:26; 6:37; 19:20 1:14, 20, 27.
	Wisdom as order* 16:14,16,21,23; 10:1,8; 13:14; 21:20,22; 25:12	Fear of the Lord 28:28; 1:1, 8, 9 1:20-22; 4:6; 22:4 37:22; 42:5-6	Enjoyment of life 3:12,22 2:24 5:17; 8:15	Wisdom as order 24:8; 1:9 24:19, 21, 6:27 51:26, 1:2; 1:6.
<b>Reconfiguration (ANE)</b>	Divine inscrutability as divine mystery 16:1,9; <i>(Amenemopet</i> xix:16, xx:5: <i>Ahikar</i> viii:111-125 Counsels of Wisdom lines 143-7)	Retribution* or divine order  Amenemope vi:7 <i>Ludlul bel nemeqi</i> I 5-8 Theodocy lines 65-66.	Vanity as divine mystery  Sumerian, the Ugarit and Emar copies (ANET 79:7) BWL 108:10 Ugaritic tablet 164	Wisdom as divine mystery 24:3-7 Papyrus Insinger, Isis Wisdom (IS.Osir 372-373) Hellenistic trend EgyptianWisdom:
	Wisdom as Divine order  16:11 Amenemope xvi:15 The balance of deity 16:12 Egyptian <i>Maat</i> Righteousness throne	Limitation as divine mystery  <i>Ludlul bel nemeqi</i> (BWL 41); Counsels of Wisdom 143-7; Ankhsesonqy xiv:10	Enjoyment of life as order  Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic (X iii 6-14) Ecclesiastes 9:7-9.	Wisdom as Torah  The reaction to Hellenism. Retribution or order <i>Ludlul bel nemeqi</i> I 5-8
<b>Recontextualization (Jewish)</b>	Search for order  Weighing the Heart (2Chronicles 26:16) (1Samuel2:3) (1Samuel16:7b) (Psalms 131:1)  Proverbs 3:5-6	Search for order  Wisdom like gold (Proverbs 16:16) (Proverbs 3:13).  Profit of wisdom (Proverbs 21:20)	Search for order  An apt answer, word in season (Proverbs 15:21-)  A discernible purpose (Proverbs 16:4)	Mystery of God  Proverbs 8:22 Proverbs 8:27 Proverbs 16:1,9  The Fear of the Lord Job 28:28.

	Mystery of God  Commit the Lord (16:3) Trust in the Lord (3:5-6) Have faith in the Lord (2 Chronicles 20:20)	Mystery of God  The fear of the Lord: Proverbs 10:27 Proverbs 19: 23 Proverbs 16:6 Proverbs 16:9.	Mystery of God  Inscrutability Proverbs 16:1,9 19:21, Job 28:13 Job 28::23	Search for order  Proverbs 8:36 Proverbs 15:21 Proverbs 16:4 4,16,20,23 10:1,8; 13:14;
<b>Thematic elaboration</b>	(Theme) Search for order, Maintain mystery	(Theme) Search for order, Maintain mystery	(Theme) Maintain mystery, Search for order	(Theme) Maintain mystery, Search for order
	(Rationale) Divine Order and inscrutability of God	(Rationale) Limitation of human beings	(Rationale) Sovereignty of God	(Rationale) Origin of Wisdom

\*When the search for wisdom is interpreted as the search for order, it does not mean that the search for wisdom does not include the maintenance of mystery. Despite the voice of coexistence, one can recognise that the search for order prevails.

\*The doctrine of retribution can be considered as the search for order, but the doctrine of retribution cannot coexist with the maintenance of mystery. The search for order is suggested as a theme for Wisdom texts, since the maintenance of mystery is allowed

### 7.2.3 Social and Cultural Texture

The voice regarding the relationship between order and mystery is based on the social and cultural background. All four Wisdom texts show voices of the elite class of each period to which they belonged, even though the texts contain voices of other classes.

Proverbs 16 reflects a voice of aristocratic elites in the Monarchic period. Job 28 and Ecclesiastes 3 reflect a voice of an elite scribe in the post-Exilic and Persian period. Finally Sirach 24 shows a voice of a scribe in the Hellenistic period.

As social topics, all four texts show both manipulationist and thaumaturgical responses. While in Proverbs 16 the manipulationist response is strong, in Ecclesiastes 3 the thaumaturgical response prevails. While Job 28 demonstrates a conflict voice between two responses, Sirach 24 exhibits the integration of both responses. At the same time, as cultural categories, all four texts show dominant or subdominant cultures, even though the voice of contra or liminal cultures still exists. Proverbs 16 and Sirach 24 show dominant or subdominant cultures much more strongly. However, Job 28 and Ecclesiastes 3 accept the voice of opposite categories, on account of the authors' terrible experiences. This social and cultural context seems to have affected the relationship between order and mystery in Wisdom Literature.

The emphasis on order in Proverbs 16 reflects the voice of a court sage in the Monarchic period. In the Exilic and post-Exilic periods, situations have been changed. After experiencing national disaster, Job 28 shows an ambivalent voice between the search for order and the maintenance of mystery. In the Persian period, economic opportunity and crisis have yielded the emphasis on the voice of mystery, still maintaining the search for order. Sirach 24 reflects an elite scribal voice that refers to the integrated coexistence of order and mystery in the Hellenistic period, reacting to Judaism and Hellenism.



**Table 13 Social and Cultural Texture**

	<b>Proverbs 16</b>	<b>Job 28</b>	<b>Ecclesiastes 3</b>	<b>Sirach 24</b>
<b>Social Setting</b>	Monarchic period	Post exilic period	Persian period	Hellenistic period
	Sage or scribe*	Sage or scribe	Sage or scribe	Sage or scribe
<b>Social Topics</b>	Manipulationist (Wisdom pursuit)	Manipulationist (Retribution)	Thaumaturgical (Determination)	Thaumaturgical (Wisdom- Torah)
	Thaumaturgical (16:1,9) (Divine element)	Thaumaturgical (Limitation of wisdom)	Manipulationist (Enjoyment of life)	Manipulationist (Calling of Wisdom)
<b>Cultural Category</b>	Dominant culture (Power of kings and temple)	Dominant culture (Retribution)	Dominant culture (Time for all)	Dominant culture (Keeping of Torah)
	Contra liminal* (The peasant or labourer)	Contra liminal (Job's experience)	Contra liminal (Vanity for all)	Contra liminal Appropriating Hellenism)

\* The writing or editing of a wisdom text is attributed to a sage or a scribe. It is not clear how to distinguish between the sage and the scribe. Overlapping of their role is possible.

\* Since all wisdom texts are the products of dominant or subdominant classes, it is sometimes difficult to detect the voices of the contra or liminal culture. Nevertheless, one can recognise the element of contra or liminal culture in each wisdom text. The experience of disaster might enable the author to express that contra or liminal culture.

#### **7.2.4 Ideological and Theological Texture**

Responding to social and cultural situations, sages or scribes in four wisdom texts produced ideological and theological texts. All wisdom texts were theology of the sages or the scribes against the ideology that arose from the context of social, cultural, economical, and religious power. In the Monarchic period, court ideology or Zion ideology prevailed regarding the security of the kingdom. In the post-Exilic period, the search for order as a theology was changed into the doctrine of retribution, removing the maintenance of mystery. In the Persian period, the ruling class and priests might have changed creation theology into ‘creation ideology’, mentioning only perfect order as divine time. Even in the Hellenistic period, the priest produced ‘only Torah ideology.’

Against various ideologies, creation theology was suggested by the sages or the scribes. The voices of the scribes could function as critical voices against the dogmatized ideologies. Yet the criticism does not attack or reject the ideologies, but suggest alternative voices. The alternative creation theology could include the core of the doctrine of retribution as the search for order. Even though creation theology itself put on different clothes according to the period, its core has continued. That is the coexistence of the search for order and the maintenance of mystery. Whenever they mentioned one side, the other side was still there. One element could be emphasized, while maintaining the other element. Both sides could be in conflict, and both sides could be integrated. Thus this creation theology suggests both searching for order and maintaining mystery, referring to human potential and limitation in all relationships between God and human beings, human beings and the world.

**Table 14 Ideological and Theological Texture**

	<b>Proverbs 16</b>	<b>Job 28</b>	<b>Ecclesiastes 3</b>	<b>Sirach 24</b>
<b>Ideological Texture</b>	Royal Ideology (king and priests)	Retribution Ideology (priests)	Creation Ideology (priests)	Judaism Ideology (priests)
	Order for the King and kingdom	Order as the doctrine of retribution	Order as time of God	Order as the Torah and Judaism
<b>Theological Texture</b>	Creation theology	Creation theology	Creation theology	Creation theology
	Coexistence	Coexistence	Coexistence	Coexistence
	Emphasis on order (Proverbs 16:10-33)	Ambivalent order and mystery (28:28)	Emphasis on mystery.(3:10-18)	Integrated order and mystery 24:23
	Maintain mystery (Proverbs 16::1-9)	The fear of the Lord	Search for order (3:1-9)	The keep of Torah

### 7.3 Retrospect and Prospect

To conclude, the study of four Wisdom texts has shown that the hypothesis of this dissertation is correct. In the different Wisdom texts that belonged to different periods, one could find the coexistence of the search for order and the maintenance of mystery. Different topics and the theme of the texts were the result of different relationships between order and mystery based on the creation theology, responding to the special ideology in a particular class of each period. It was of no use to explain the development of wisdom in a linear way, as McKane (1970) and Fox (2009) held. The theology of

wisdom was not just the product of the later period. From the early wisdom to the late wisdom both the search for order and the maintenance of mystery were common elements.

Von Rad (1972), Murphy (1998:xxv), and Brueggemann (2002:176) recognised that wisdom teaching assumes undestructive order of deed and consequence, but they also observed that Proverbs 16:1, 2, and 9 acknowledge that the search for order without maintenance of mystery and the fear of the Lord is not adequate. In *Wisdom literature* Perdue (2007:343) insisted that order in world and life can be discerned adequately in the ancient religious contexts. However, it is also recognised that there are contingencies in life that are not under human control or that cannot be anticipated. There are mysteries of both the reality experienced and the world.

In the article: *Reading Proverbs 10-22*, Clifford (2009b) argued that the proverb of Proverbs 10-22 comes from God in order to render human beings fully human. Even in the study of Proverbs 1-9, Dell (2009a) argues that Yahweh is the centre of concern, standing behind the quest of wisdom. For her (Dell 2009b:874), God is the creator of the world and of the order that holds the fabric of life together. The researcher agrees with these scholars in recognising both order and mystery in the book of Proverbs. Yet, furthermore, the researcher focuses on the relationship of coexistence between order and mystery in Wisdom Literature. That is coexistence theology based on creation theology.

The coexistence of order and mystery in Job 28 reflects recent trends of scholars regarding Job 28. Current scholars recognised the two voices of Job 28. One voice

focuses on mystery. In *Job 28 Cognition in Context*, Van Wolde (2003) showed the negative aspect of human activities and emphasised the importance of acknowledging the limitations of human imagination. In *Rumors of Wisdom: Job 28 as Poetry*, Scott (2009:244) concludes that wisdom in Job 28 remains only as a rumour. The other argument for the study of Job is not rejecting the traditional wisdom. In WBC, Clines (1989; 2006) insisted that the book of Job has no intention of contradicting or confirming traditional wisdom, which entails the doctrine of retribution, even though he attributed Job 28 to Elihu. In *The book of Job: A Contest of moral imagination*, Newsom (2003) attempted to prompt a dialogue between monologic truth and dialogic truth. Instead of proceeding toward a deconstructive interpretation, the researcher explains a kind of coexistence between order and mystery. Job 28 exhibits an ambivalent coexistence.

In Ecclesiastes 3 current scholars focused on one aspect rather than the other regarding order and mystery. While Seow (1997:47) and Murphy (1992a:ixvii) focused on the mystery of God, Gordis (1978:100) and Odgen (1987:14) emphasised the pursuit of enjoyment or the search for order. Fox (1999a:49) simply tried to accept two voices at the same time, first deconstructively and later constructively. However, in current Jewish tradition, the book of Ecclesiastes has been read on the feast of the tabernacles, both to teach people to despise mundane matters as vanity and to celebrate the joy of farmers' harvests (Ostriker 2007:92). The recognition of the search for order in Ecclesiastes 3 can share the various global perspectives of Ecclesiastes 3. In an Asian (Song 1999:92) and a Latin American perspective (Tamez 1999:77), Ecclesiastes 3 is received as the time for hope. When the limits of human conditions are recognised, then

hope can be recognised. As there is time for vanity, there is time for no vanity. The search for order does not stop here. Agreeing with the scholars recognising the coexistence, the researcher tries to accept the contradiction in the relationship of coexistence between the search for order and the maintenance of mystery.

In Sirach 24 creation theology may well experience a new development in the context of Hellenistic philosophy. Both the order of creation and mystery of God could be emphasised at the same time. As Argall (1995:135-155) mentioned, a Jewish sage was able to see both an observable and a hidden aspect in creation integrally. The identification of wisdom with Torah could be explained by the way of the coexistence of order and mystery, clarifying the relationship between Wisdom and the fear of the Lord in Sirach. According to Corley (2009:290), among Israel's wisdom writers, Ben Sira's particular contribution was his doctrine of balanced opposing pairs. "Good is the opposite of evil and life is the opposite of death. If that explanation fails to satisfy some people, Ben Sira ultimately invokes the mystery of God, for everything has been created for its own purpose (39:21)." Thus Corley (2009:290) explained the problem of the theodicy as this coexistence

In the discussion of current scholarship, the researcher contributed to the understanding of contradiction regarding the concept of wisdom. That is the understanding of coexistence. The researcher argued that when one considers the concept of wisdom, one should focus on the relationship as coexistence between order and mystery, which can be found in each Wisdom text. Facing the ideology, the theology of wisdom could suggest a critical voice to the ideology, embracing some element even this ideology. The

concept of wisdom as coexistence of order and mystery can help the current readers understand the reality and the world with open mind, criticising one side understanding, of the dogmatised doctrine of retribution.

For the researcher, creation theology includes the universe and all creatures in the world such as human beings, kings, time, and practical wisdom. Creation theology does not separate the world from God. In other words, the search for order in the created world is impossible without the fear of the Lord, or the keeping of the Torah. There is no distinction between the sacred and the secular, and everything is sacred in this relationship. Thus the researcher argues that the concept of wisdom can be defined as the search for order, maintaining mystery in the relationship between God, human beings, and the world. Furthermore, the struggle for the coexistence is not an easy problem. Order is not something that can be found automatically, Human beings should try to 'search for' the hidden order. At the same time the voice of mystery is not 'maintained' without efforts, as the history of Wisdom Literature has shown. While human beings should search for order, human beings should maintain mystery. Thus one can conclude that this struggle for balance between them is a significant activity of human beings.

This spirit of coexistence and inclusivity of Wisdom Literature might have contributed to the formation of the canon of Hebrew Bible or the Old Testament as a whole. The scribes could include all Jewish traditions in a book. For the scribes, the messages of Wisdom Literature could coexist with those of other traditions such as priests' documents and prophetic books. Even though the spirit of integration played a crucial

role for the canonisation, the scribes did not give up the critical role against the harmful ideologies that prevailed in the society and religious institutions. Yet the criticism was not excluding or rejecting other voices, but suggesting alternative voices, while including the cores of other voices.

The spirit of coexistence of wisdom can also help all current readers including Korean readers to understand the Bible and the reality, providing a new relationship between Christianity and other cultures, as it did for the communities of Jews and Christians in the world. The fact that there are other mysterious elements in life irrespective of the doctrine of retribution can comfort the suffering church and society, since the doctrine of retribution lacking the maintenance of mystery injure people who are in poor and unhappy conditions. Nevertheless, the fact that the search for order still exists can provide some hope for the righteous and suffering people. Furthermore, the coexistence that is found in the Bible can provide a dialogue as 'contact point' with other cultures and religions especially in Korea, as Jewish Wisdom Literature shares common elements in the Ancient Near East.

This study of the relationship between the search for order and the maintenance of mystery can also suggest a biblical voice to complexity theory. Complexity theory is a recent development emerging from chaos theory (Waldrop 1992:12). Since late twentieth century, many scholars consider complexity theory as significant scientific advances with application in such diverse fields as biology, anthropology, economics, and history, even though the science of complexity has developed in physics and computational mathematics. According to complexity theory, the understanding of the



world is considered as the process between order and chaos (Cilliers 1998:97). The nature of complex system will try to balance itself at a critical point between rigid order and chaos. The dynamic relationship between order and chaos in complexity theory shows the similarity to the tension relationship between order and mystery in the Old Testament Wisdom Literature, which can provide interdisciplinary dialogue between the Old Testament Wisdom Literature and the complexity system.

This dissertation on four wisdom chapters can provide a way for the study of further wisdom texts such as Baruch 3:9-4:4 and Wisdom of Solomon 7-9 which belonged to much later periods. Baruch 3:9-4:4 explains exilic punishment as the result of abandoning wisdom. The identification of Wisdom with the Torah continues in Baruch. Yet like Job 28, no one knows the way to wisdom (Baruch 3:20-21, 23, 27, 31), only God knows it (Baruch 3:32-37). In the Wisdom of Solomon, Wisdom surpasses all riches, gems, gold, and silver as in Proverbs 16. Yet here in Wisdom of Solomon, one can see one of the most mysterious elements of wisdom, i.e. the identification of Wisdom with the Lord's spirit. Beyond the Old Testament period, the topic of wisdom as the search for order and the maintenance of mystery can be discussed in the relationship with the New Testament (1Cor 1:24, Christ is the wisdom of God).

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