

**WISDOM AS A MODEL FOR JESUS' MINISTRY
IN THE 'LAMENT OVER JERUSALEM'
(MATT 23:37-39 PAR. LUKE 13:34-35)**

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Thesis submitted to the University of Nottingham
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

May 2017

Abstract

This thesis establishes the influence of the Jewish wisdom tradition on the shaping of the earliest christology. A concept which invests Jesus with Wisdom's function as *Schöpfungsmittler* appears already in the earliest Christian sources (1Cor 8:6; Col 1:15; Hebr 1:3; John 1:1-3), and the early patristic writers characterised the relationship between the heavenly Christ and God the Father by identifying Jesus with the pre-existent personified Wisdom of Prov 8. The object of the thesis is to explore a parallel movement, which already takes place during the formation of the gospel traditions, and which ascribes functions of the divine Wisdom, most prominently her active participation in Israel's history, to the earthly Jesus.

Especially the Q-saying often called the "Lament over Jerusalem" (or Jerusalem Word) in Luke 13:34-35 and Matt 23:37-39, summarises Jesus' earthly ministry in terms that are reminiscent of Wisdom's function in the Jewish tradition. I demonstrate that Wisdom had come to be seen as an agent in Israel's history in Second Temple Judaism, and each of the four elements of the Jerusalem Word, which describe Jesus' mission (1. sending prophets and envoys; 2. gathering the children of Jerusalem; 3. representing God's presence in the temple and withdrawing when he is rejected; and 4. returning with, or as, the eschatological Son of Man), presents an action, which had formerly been ascribed to personified Wisdom.

One important feature of the divine Wisdom, which allows her to act in the above mentioned functions that impact on historical reality, is her relationship to God: Wisdom can be nearly identified with God, but takes on features of a separate agent when she becomes manifest in the immanent world. Therefore, Wisdom is a representation of God in the historical world, and as Jesus takes on the same role, he appears as a new manifestation of this very same representative.

I also demonstrate that the Jewish texts relate Wisdom to another representation of God, the Angel of the Lord, famously encountered as the pillar of cloud and fire on Israel's wilderness wanderings, acting as a manifestation and servant of God at the same time. Wisdom is associated or identified with the pillar of cloud in Sir 24:4, 10 and Wis 10:17. Thus, the role of the previously known mediator, the Angel of the Lord, is transferred to the divine Wisdom, portraying Wisdom as a new appearance of this 'older' divine representative. Matt 23:37-39 par. Luke 13:34-35 continues the tradition of actualising the image of the divine mediator by presenting Jesus in an analogous way as the contemporary representative of God in the world like Wisdom or the Angel of the Lord.

Acknowledgements

I would like to begin by thanking the many people whose support contributed to my writing of this doctoral thesis.

First of all, I am indebted to a range of academic teachers at the University of Tübingen, where I completed my first theological degree, for convincing me that historical investigation could establish rather than discredit the truth about God's real engagement with humanity. I have to thank especially Prof. Peter Stuhlmacher, who first introduced me to the role of the Jewish Wisdom in shaping a high Christology.

Next, I am grateful to Prof. Roland Deines, who accepted me as a PhD student after I had taken a seventeen years break from theology to look after my children. From the beginning, I benefitted immensely from many conversations dedicated to accuracy in historical research combined with respect for the theological truth conveyed by the ancient texts. In particular, my original intention to explore in what way Jesus was understood as a representation of the divine Wisdom by the early Christians was given a wholly new orientation, when Prof. Deines suggested to reverse the perspective by asking whether it was possible that Wisdom was, and had always been, a representation of the Son rather than the other way around. This task seemed quite impossible at the time, but it was truly helpful to look at the evidence from a different angle.

I would also like to thank Dr. David Armitage, Terry Roots, Tim Murray, Lucy Parks, and Dr. Ruth Whittle for reading parts of my thesis or related documents and giving their much valued feedback.

Finally, I have to thank my family. This thesis could not have been written without the support of my husband, Prof. Ulrich Günther, who allowed me time to pursue my research while he was earning a living, and without the patience of our children Leonhard and Sarah, and it has been much supported by the encouragement of friends and family, who took an interest in my progress and results, most of all my father, Prof. Bernhard Fischer, who is at home in a very different subject, mathematics, but made his way through long chapters of complicated theological concepts.

Abbreviations

Abbreviations generally follow the SBL format. For Sapiientia Salomonis (Wisdom of Solomon) I use the abbreviation Sap, and for the Jerusalem Word (Matt 23:37-39 par. Luke 13:34-35) I use the abbreviation JW.

Translations are my own where I have not indicated otherwise.

AB	Anchor Bible
AJEC	Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity
ANF	Ante-Nicene Fathers
ATDApokryphen	Das Alte Testament Deutsch Apokryphen
AzTh	Arbeiten zur Theologie
BEATAJ	Beiträge zur Erforschung des Alten Testaments und des Antiken Judentums
BWANT	Beiträge zur Wissenschaft im Alten und Neuen Testament
BKAT	Biblischer Kommentar Altes Testament
<i>BZ</i>	<i>Biblische Zeitschrift</i>
<i>BTB</i>	<i>Biblical Theology Bulletin</i>
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
CSEL	Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum
DCLS	Deuterocanonic and Cognate Literature Studies
DCLY	Deuterocanonical and Cognate Literature Yearbook
DDD	Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible
ECNT	Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament
EKK	Evangelisch-katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
<i>ExpT</i>	<i>Expository Times</i>
FC	Fathers of the Church
fzb	Forschungen zur Bibel
GCS	Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte
HNT	Handbuch zum Neuen Testament
HSM	Harvard Semitic Monographs
<i>HTR</i>	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
HCOT	Historical Commentary on the Old Testament
HKAT	Handkommentar zum Alten Testament
HthKNT	Herders theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
<i>JSJ</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic and Roman Period</i>
JSJSup	Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism
<i>JNSL</i>	<i>Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages</i>
JSNTSup	Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series
<i>JR</i>	<i>The Journal of Religion</i>
JSHRZ	Jüdische Schriften aus hellenistisch-römischer Zeit
<i>JSP</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha</i>
<i>JTS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>

KEK	Kritisch-exegetischer Kommentar über das Neue Testament
MAOG	<i>Mitteilungen der altorientalischen Gesellschaft</i>
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
NCB	New Century Bible
NCBCOT	New Collegevill Bible Commentary: Old Testament
NIGTC	New International Greek Testament Commentary
NTD	Neues Testament Deutsch
OBO	Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis
PTMS	Pittsburgh Theological Monograph Series
RB	<i>Revue Biblique</i>
RGG	Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart
SAPERE	Scripta Antiquitatis Posterioris ad Ethicam et Religionemque pertinentia
SBL	Society for Biblical Literature
SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
SOTSMS	Society for Old Testament Studies Monograph Series
SUNT	Studien zur Umwelt des Neuen Testaments
SBT	Studies in Biblical Theology
SVTP	Studia in Veteris Testamenti Pseudepigrapha
TDOT	Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament
TDNT	Theological Dictionary of the New Testament
THAT	Theologisches Handwörterbuch zum Alten Testament
TRE	Theologische Realenzyklopädie
TSAJ	Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism
TWNT	Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament
USQR	<i>Union Seminary Quarterly Review</i>
VT	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
VTSup	Vetus Testamentum Supplements
WMANT	Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
ZTK	<i>Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche</i>

Philo

<i>Cher.</i>	<i>De Cherubim</i>
<i>Congr.</i>	<i>De congressu eruditionis gratia</i>
<i>Deus</i>	<i>Quod deus sit immutabilis</i>
<i>Ebr.</i>	<i>De ebriitate</i>
<i>Her.</i>	<i>Quis rerum divinarum heres sit</i>
<i>Leg.</i>	<i>Legum allegoriae</i>
<i>Migr.</i>	<i>De migratione Abrahami</i>
<i>Mut.</i>	<i>De mutatione nominum</i>
<i>Post.</i>	<i>De posteritate Caini</i>
<i>Plant.</i>	<i>De plantatione</i>

<i>Prob.</i>	<i>Quod omnis probus liber sit</i>
<i>Spec.</i>	<i>De specialibus legibus</i>
<i>Somn.</i>	<i>De somniis</i>
<i>Virt.</i>	<i>De virtutibus</i>
<i>Mos.</i>	<i>De vita Mosis</i>

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Introductory Topics: Wisdom Christology in the Jerusalem Word?

1. Introduction

1.1. The Impact of the Jewish Wisdom on Christology

The aim of this study is to trace the influence of the Jewish Wisdom tradition on the shaping of Jesus' messianic role. The personified Wisdom of Prov 8:22ff. is clearly identified as a model for early Christology by patristic writers such as Justin Martyr and Origen. In fact, Wisdom can be ontologically identified with Jesus in statements such as these:

God has begotten himself a certain rational Power as a Beginning before all other creatures. The Holy Spirit indicates this Power by various titles, sometimes the Glory of the Lord, at other times Son, or Wisdom, or Angel, or God, or Lord or Word.¹

or

...the only-begotten Son of God is, seeing he is called by many different names, [...] termed Wisdom, [...]. The first-born, however, is not by nature a different person than the Wisdom, but one and the same. [...] the only-begotten Son of God is Wisdom, hypostatically ('*substantialiter*') existing, ...²

My thesis explores the origin of this claim. Jesus is not explicitly identified with the divine Wisdom in the NT,³ but they are set in a close relationship, as various

1 Justin, *Dialogue with Trypho* 61 (FC 6: 244 [Falls]).

2 Origen, *De principiis*, 1:2 (ANF 10:18). For further references to Christ's pre-existence being based on Prov. 8 see: Cyprian, *Ad Quirinium testimonia adversus Iudaeos*, 2.1 (CSEL 3.3: 62-64).

3 In 1Cor 1:24 Paul says that "we preach...Christ the power of God and the Wisdom of God" and similarly in 1 Cor 1:30 that Jesus Christ "became Wisdom to us from God", which may be taken as indicating Christ's identification with Wisdom, as held e.g. by Charles Kingsley Barrett, *A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*. Black's New Testament

functions of personified Wisdom are ascribed to him, both in the gospel tradition and Paul's epistles.

In fact, Jesus had already been assigned the role of the heavenly Wisdom in one of the earliest written Christian sources, in an "ancient formula"⁴ quoted by Paul in his letter to the Corinthians. In 1Cor 8:6 he confesses that "But for us, there is one God the Father, from whom everything [came], and we [are made] for him, and one Lord Jesus Christ through whom everything [is] and we [are] through him",⁵ ascribing Wisdom's role of the *Schöpfungsmittler* (God's assistant with the creation of the world) to the exalted Christ.⁶ This concept must have been well established by the year 54-56 when Paul wrote his letter, as he neither introduces Christ's identification with the preexistent Wisdom in 1Cor 8:6 as a new concept, nor does he defend it.⁷ Paul does not claim it as his own insight, whereas he feels free to do so regarding other subjects. Astonishingly, there is no opposition here

Commentaries (London: Adam & Charles, 1968), 59-60; Frederick Fyvie Bruce, *1 and 2 Corinthians* NCBC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 35-36. But most exegetes are not convinced that Paul is speaking of hypostasised Wisdom in this place, see e.g. Wolfgang Schrage, *Der erste Brief an die Korinther*, 4 Vols., EKK 7 (Zürich: Benziger Verlag/Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1995), 1:188, 214; Hans Conzelmann, *A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, transl. James W. Leitch, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975) 48, 51 n.25; Andreas Lindemann, *Korintherbrief*, 47; David E. Garland, *1 Corinthians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2003).

- 4 Aloys Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, transl. by John Bowden, second ed., vol. 1 (London & Oxford: Mowbrays, 1965), 15. See also Wolfgang Schrage, *Der erste Brief an die Korinther*, 4 Vols., EKK 7 (Zürich: Benziger Verlag/Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1995), 2:221.
- 5 Some examples of Wisdom's role as *Schöpfungsmittler*, whether as observer or as instrument of the creation, include Prov 8:30, Job 28:25-27, Ps 104:24, Sir 24:3, Wis 7:22; 9:1-2. See Grillmeier, *Christ*, 1:15, 28-29, 44 for the influence of the Jewish Wisdom on conceptions of Jesus' pre-existence. Anthony C. Thiselton, "Wisdom in the Jewish and Christian Scriptures: Wisdom in the New Testament", *Theology* 115 (2011), 260-268, here p. 266, speaks of "Christ represent[ing] the Wisdom of God in person."
- 6 See Schrage, *Korinther*, 2:224; Otfried Hofius, "Christus als Schöpfungsmittler und Erlösungsmittler" in *Paulusstudien* II, WUNT 143 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002), 181-192, here pp.191-192; Hartmut Gese, "Die Weisheit, der Menschensohn und die Ursprünge der Christologie als konsequente Entfaltung der biblischen Theologie" in *Alttestamentliche Studien* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1991), 218-48, here p.239.
- 7 See Larry Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity* (Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans, 2003), 125-126 for a presupposed notion of Christ's pre-existence, which is commonly based on an appropriation of Jewish wisdom tradition.

or in any other letter to this idea, which must have been a highly offensive attack on Jewish monotheism, in contrast to the conflicts which arose in the early church over other issues such as Paul's view of the law or of circumcision. Wide-ranging agreement with Jesus' identification with the pre-existent Wisdom, however this might have been precisely understood by these early writers, is confirmed by similar parallels between the heavenly Christ and pre-existent Wisdom being drawn in Col 1:15-20, the prologue of John's gospel and Heb 1:1-3.⁸

Further functions of Wisdom are transferred to Jesus in the gospel tradition: in Luke 10:22 par. Matt 11:27, the Son's intimate knowledge of the Father is reminiscent of Wisdom knowing and revealing God in Sap 9:9-10. In Matt 11:28-30, Jesus' invitation to receive instruction mirrors a similar invitation issued by the sage in Sir 51:23-30, whose offer is in turn based on the invitation extended by the heavenly Wisdom herself in Sir 24:19-22.⁹ In Luke 13:34-35 par. Matt 23:37-39, Jesus's ministry is compared to various forms of Wisdom's engagement in Israel's history; the significance of this logion will be explored in detail in this study. The synoptic references differ from all the other instances where Wisdom's functions are assigned to Jesus in that they concern Jesus' earthly ministry rather than refer to his role in creation or his exalted status after the resurrection.

The seemingly unproblematic transfer of Wisdom's role to Jesus by the early Christian authors creates the impression that they saw Jesus as somehow related to Wisdom, which has led to the conclusion that the historical Jesus had been un-

8 Especially the terms ἀπαύγασμα and εἰκὼν in Heb 1:3 and Col 1:15 connect Jesus to Wisdom in Wis 7:26. See Grillmeier, *Christ*, 29.

9 See Celia Deutsch, *Hidden Wisdom and the Easy Yoke: Wisdom, Torah and Discipleship in Matthew 11.25-30*, JSNTSup 18 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1987), 103-104, 114, 117, 137-138.

derstood as an earthly representation or even incarnation of Wisdom. Particularly the evangelist Matthew has been seen as a champion of this concept,¹⁰ because he twice substitutes Jesus as the subject of statements pertaining to Wisdom in Q (in Matt 11:19 it is Jesus who is justified by his works, whereas in the parallel Luke 7:35 it is Wisdom who is justified by her children; and in Matt. 23:34 Jesus is the sender of prophets whereas in the Lukan version in Luke 11:49, Wisdom is the sender of prophets). Other authors detect a Wisdom-Christology as early as in the pre-synoptic sources.¹¹ However, this explanation is not entirely satisfactory, because this conclusion is not drawn explicitly by Matthew or any other author of the NT, and they seem not to emphasise the hypothesis of Wisdom's incarnation in Jesus. Nevertheless, especially Matthew and Paul clearly imply an identification of some sort, but the relationship they have in mind may be more subtle. The so-called "Jerusalem word" (hereafter referred to as JW), or "Lament over Jerusalem" (Matt 23:37-39 par.) in particular will be crucial to our attempt to describe this more subtle approach. This logion has played a central role in determining Jesus' relationship to the divine Wisdom. It is preserved in nearly identical wording by Matthew and Luke:

Jerusalem, Jerusalem, killing the prophets and stoning those sent to her, how many times I wanted to gather your children as a bird gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing. See, your house is left to you [desolate]. And I tell you, you will not see me [from now on] until you say: Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. (Matthew's additions in brackets)¹²

10 See especially M. Jack Suggs, *Christology, and Law in Matthew's Gospel* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970), 67; also Martin Hengel, "Jesus as Messianic Teacher of Wisdom and the Beginnings of Christology" in *Studies in Early Christology* (London: T&T Clark, 2004), 73-119, here p. 87: "Matthew...consistently identif[ies] the divine Wisdom with Jesus".

11 So Deutsch, *Hidden Wisdom*, 103-104, 138; Felix Christ, *Jesus Sophia* (Zürich: H. Majer, 1970), 138, 145-148, 154. See also Hubert Frankemölle, *Frühjudentum und Urchristentum: Vorgeschichte-Verlauf-Auswirkungen (4. Jahrhundert v. Chr. bis 4. Jahrhundert n. Chr.)* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2006), 172: He speaks of a "Weisheitschristologie in der Logienquelle", referring to Luke 13:34-35 among others; more cautiously on pp. 184-185.

12 For a more detailed analysis of the two versions see below chapter 2.1.1.

It can be understood as summarising Jesus' earthly mission in a way that relates his work to a trans-historical agent who had sent generations of prophets; this agent has been taken as the divine Wisdom by some exegetes.¹³ The saying is the focus of the present investigation, which explores how Jesus was set in relation to the divine Wisdom in the synoptic tradition, whether by identifying Jesus with Wisdom or by more subtly incorporating aspects of Wisdom in the concept of Jesus as God's Son.

If patristic theology had identified Jesus ontologically with the divine Wisdom, modern exegesis did not see itself in a position to verify this claim. R. Bultmann saw the subject speaking in the JW as a "supra-historical entity", which he identified as the Jewish Wisdom, but, ruling out the possibility that Jesus may have suggested that he was more than a mere human being, he analysed the logion as a traditional Jewish prophecy, which Jesus had either quoted, or which was later ascribed to him by the post-resurrection church.¹⁴ Since E. Käsemann's article "The Problem of the Historical Jesus", Jesus has been widely seen as a teacher of wisdom,¹⁵ explaining the many sapiential themes in Jesus' ministry without identifying him outright with the divine Wisdom.

More recently, scholars have doubted for various reasons that the logion is a wisdom saying at all. In brief, there are three main challenges to reading the

13 So for example Rudolf Bultmann, *History of the Synoptic Tradition*, transl. John Marsh (Oxford: Blackwell, 1968), 114-115.

14 Bultmann, *Synoptic Tradition*, 114-115. See also Suggs, *Wisdom*, 66, D. Friedrich Strauss, "Jesu Weheruf über Jerusalem und die Sophia tou Theou", in *Zeitschrift für die wissenschaftliche Theologie* 6, 1863, 84-93, here pp.87-88; Géza Vermes, *The Authentic Gospel of Jesus* (London: Penguin, 2004), 328.

15 Ernst Käsemann, "The Problem of the Historical Jesus" in *Essays on the New Testament*, SBT 41 (Naperville, Ill.: Allenson, 1964), 15-47. here pp. 40-41.

logion as a wisdom saying: (1) The logion can be read simply as a summary of Jesus' earthly ministry, requiring no additional layer of meaning.¹⁶ (2) The frequently claimed origin of the logion as part of a longer wisdom text, where the JW followed on to Q 11:49, is uncertain. Without such a literary connection to a wisdom saying, which actually names Wisdom (such as Luke 11:49), it is more difficult to see why the actions of the trans-historical agent should refer to Wisdom.¹⁷ (3) The implied supra-historical agent to whom Jesus is related could be God as well as Wisdom, because all of the divine actions are primarily themes related to God in the Scriptures;¹⁸ they were only secondarily appropriated by Wisdom.

1.2. Aim and Structure of the Thesis

My own hypothesis is that the relationship between Jesus and Wisdom is more complex than Jesus simply being an embodiment of Wisdom: the JW portrays Jesus as a representation of God *like* the divine Wisdom.

Chapter 2 examines the challenges for interpreting the JW as a wisdom saying, scrutinising the existent exegetical options. Chapter 3 gives a short survey of the themes that characterise Wisdom in the Jewish tradition with a special focus on

16 This view necessitates interpreting the “many times” Jesus had wanted to gather the children of Jerusalem either as repeated visits to the city, as understanding “Jerusalem” as *pars pro toto* for the entire Jewish people, or as Jesus merely *desiring* to gather the people. See Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew*, 2 vols., WBC 33 (Dallas, Texas: Word Book, 1995), 2:680; R.T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, NICNT (Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans, 2007), 883; Maurice Casey, *Jesus of Nazareth* (London/New York: T&T Clark, 2010), 408; Joachim Gnllka, *Das Matthäusevangelium*, HThKNT 1 (2 Vols., Freiburg: Herder, 1986-88), 2:303; John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew*, NIGTC (Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans, 2005), 950; N.T. Wright, *Matthew for Everyone. Part 2* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox, 2004), 110.

17 See France, *Matthew*, 879-880, 883 n.5; Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 21-28: A Commentary*, transl. James E. Crouch (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 153, 159-160; Simon J. Gathercole, *The Preexistent Son: Recovering the Christologies of Matthew, Mark, and Luke* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006), 213.

18 Luz, *Matthew 21-28*, 159-160; Gathercole, *Preexistent Son*, 213.

the emergence of her role in the historical world, which helps to establish Wisdom as a possible candidate for the trans-historical agent who Jesus is related to in the JW. The personification of Wisdom in the sapiential texts poses a crucial problem because it impacts on how Jesus could be related to her. Some discussion of the possibility of conceptualising Wisdom as a hypostasis or as a divine being is therefore required, including a consideration of whether Wisdom could have a place in the heavenly court of the Hebrew Scriptures, before an analysis of specific Jewish traditions is undertaken.

The main investigation in chapters 4 to 7 demonstrates that the four elements of the JW, which relate to a supra-historical subject, namely sending the prophets, gathering the children of Israel under the wings of the mother bird, withdrawing the divine presence from the temple and returning as God's messianic agent, can be seen as references to functions of the divine Wisdom, as she is presented in sapiential texts from Proverbs through Ben Sira and the Wisdom of Solomon to the *Similitudes* of 1 Enoch. If it can be shown that Wisdom was understood as an agent in history in Second Temple Judaism, then Wisdom could have served as a model for Jesus' earthly ministry in the gospels, just as the pre-existent Wisdom served as a model for the heavenly Christ in 1 Cor 8:6; Col 1:15-17; Heb 1:3 and John 1:1-3.

If Wisdom's role as agent in history was transferred to Jesus, there are, however, *two* crucial aspects which contribute to shaping Jesus' messianic role: not only Wisdom's functions, but also her nature. In a second line of argument, I will contend that Wisdom was conceptualised as a representative of God in the Jewish

tradition. In order to determine the nature of that representation, I will consider whether personified Wisdom can be understood as an independently acting heavenly being or hypostasis¹⁹ rather than as an attribute of God in each of the Jewish texts. My thesis is that Wisdom is perceived as a tangible manifestation of God in the immanent world, acting as an independent agent to a certain degree, like the Angel of the Lord in older biblical tradition. I will show that Wisdom is merged at least functionally with the Angel of the Lord in the sapiential texts, and I will conclude in the final chapter that this creates the idea of a divine mediator, who represented God in the immanent world in different shapes throughout the ages, sometimes visible and more concrete, sometimes invisible and more abstract. As a result I postulate that Jesus is to be understood as a new manifestation of this divine agent in the ‘Lament over Jerusalem’.

19 See below ch.3.2.1. for an explanation of the term “hypostasis”.

2. The ‘Lament over Jerusalem’

2.1. Introduction of the Jerusalem Word

2.1.1. The Text of the Jerusalem Word in Q and Its Context in the Gospels

Following largely the *Critical Edition of Q*,²⁰ the original version of the saying can be reconstructed as:

Ἰερουσαλὴμ Ἰερουσαλὴμ, ἡ ἀποκτείνουσα τοὺς προφῆτας καὶ λιθοβολοῦσα τοὺς ἀπεσταλμένους πρὸς αὐτήν, ποσάκις ἠθέλησα ἐπισυναγαγεῖν¹ τὰ τέκνα σου ὃν τρόπον ὄρνις ἐπισυνάγει¹ τὰ νοσσία² αὐτῆς ὑπὸ τὰς πτέρυγας, καὶ οὐκ ἠθελήσατε. Ἴδου ἀφίεται ὑμῖν ὁ οἶκος ὑμῶν³. Λέγω δὲ⁴ ὑμῖν, οὐ μὴ ἴδετέ με⁵ ἕως ἂν⁶ εἴπητε· Εὐλογημένος ὁ ἐρχόμενος ἐν ὀνόματι κυρίου.

In cases of doubt, where Luke’s version had traditionally been judged as more likely to be the original,²¹ the *Critical Edition of Q* now often prefers Matthew’s reading regarding some minor details. Only in the two cases where Matthew’s additional phrases apparently serve to clarify the meaning are these omitted in the reconstruction of Q. Thus,

1) Matthew’s form of the inf. aor. of ἐπισυνάγειν is used, and his repetition of the verb is retained.²²

20 James M. Robinson, Paul Hoffmann, John S. Kloppenborg (eds.), *The Critical Edition of Q: Synopsis including the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, Mark and Thomas with English, German and French Translations of Q and Thomas*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 420-423.

21 See Christ, *Jesus Sophia*, 137; Odil Hannes Steck, *Israel und das gewaltsame Geschick der Propheten: Untersuchungen zur Überlieferung des deuteronomistischen Geschichtsbildes im Alten Testament, Spätjudentum und Urchristentum*. WMANT 23 (Neukirchen-Vllyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1967), 49-50; Suggs, *Wisdom*, 63, Hengel, “Beginnings”, 84, and Bovon, *Luke*, 322.

22 In contrast, Bovon, *Luke*, 222, holds that Luke’s ἐπισυνάξει is popular Greek and therefore more original than the attic form used by Matthew.

- 2) It is uncertain whether Luke's τὴν ἐαυτῆς νοσσία (her brood) or Matthew's τὰ νοσσία αὐτῆς (her chicks) was the original phrase.²³
- 3) Matthew elaborates by adding ἔρημος (desolate), possibly to suggest a reference to Jer 22:5. The word is omitted in Matthew's text according to codex B, but significantly attested in Papyrus⁷⁷ vid, κ, C and D etc.
- 4) Matthew possibly strengthens the causal relationship by replacing δὲ with γὰρ.
- 5) Matthew adds ἀπ' ἄρτι, emphasising the temporal distance between Jesus' disappearance and the arrival of the 'coming One'.²⁴
- 6) The ἥξει ὅτε present in some manuscripts in the Lukan version is dubious, as it reads ἂν even in Luke in papyrus⁴⁵, and codex κ etc.²⁵

The context of the logion in Q is not preserved, as Matthew and Luke place it in different contexts. From the perspective of Luke's gospel, the section which includes the JW is Jesus' journey to Jerusalem. In this part are included relatively unconnected sayings,²⁶ but Luke aims particularly to emphasize Jesus "setting his face" towards Jerusalem, where he knows that death awaits him.²⁷ Luke's context

23 Steck, *Israel*, 234, 293, argues that Luke's image must be older, because it refers to Wisdom as the original subject of the saying whereas Matthew's version is more suited to describe Jesus as acting subject. Contrary to Kim Huat Tan, *The Zion Traditions and the Aims of Jesus*, SMTSNS 91 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 103, who argues that Matthew's text is original, because Luke has a propensity for using ἐαυτός with a noun. Bovon, *Luke*, 222, thinks that the Lukan τὴν νοσσίαν is original while ἐαυτῆς is a grammatical improvement on the Q text, which was made by Luke.

24 Also Suggs, *Wisdom*, 70 n.22 notices that ἀπ' ἄρτι is characteristic of Matthew.

25 Contrary to Suggs, *Wisdom*, 70 n.22 who thinks that the Lukan version is original. Also Luz, *Matthew 21-28*, 158 n.4, Bovon, *Luke*, 222, thinks the phrase ἕως ἥξει ὅτε goes back to Q. Tan, *Zion Traditions*, 103 thinks that ἥξει ὅτε followed by subjunctive creates such an unusual syntax that it is unlikely that Luke added it. Robinson, *Q*, 422 includes ἥξει ὅτε as probable but uncertain.

26 Burkett, *Introduction*, 209; Marshall, *Luke*, 562; Bovon, *Luke*, 321, 333

27 Burkett, *Introduction*, 209.

is now widely regarded as editorial.²⁸ The Q logion was relocated by Luke who placed it after a passage that is unique to Luke's gospel.²⁹ In Luke's gospel, Jesus appears as a prophet in the line of those being killed in Jerusalem, because the logion is placed after Jesus' reply to well-meaning Pharisees that he must continue on his way to Jerusalem, as it would not be right for a prophet to perish outside the city. Bovon's exegesis reveals that the pericope that precedes the JW in Luke 13:31-33 already introduces the theme of the JW as it interprets Jesus' destiny in terms of salvation history by joining a biographical note with soteriological meaning.³⁰ But this context is hardly original, because Jesus is not speaking in Jerusalem when he addresses the city, and seems to have been chosen by the association with the word "Jerusalem".³¹

The journey to Jerusalem brings an important theme into focus, as the holy city is the destination of Jesus' ministry. Even the simple fact that Luke uses the Hebrew name of the holy city 26 times whereas it occurs only one time in Matthew's gospel, in the JW, indicates that the city has a theological significance for Luke, and he would likely interpret the JW in a way that supports the role that Jerusalem plays in his gospel. Jerusalem is the "centre of the Jewish world", which has the lead role in determining their relationship to God. This is where the final decision regarding Jesus' ministry must be made.³² Thus, Luke presents Jesus as a prophet who warns Israel of rejecting God's envoy, and being placed before the entry into Jerusalem, the JW may leave the decision open as to whether the

28 Burkett, *Introduction*, 209, *Introduction*; Nolland, *Luke*, 739.

29 Bock, *Luke*, 1243.

30 Bovon, *Luke*, 321.

31 Strauss, "Weheruf", 89; Bultmann, *Synoptic Tradition*, 115; Christ, *Sophia*, 136; Suggs, *Wisdom*, 64; he thinks the Lukan context is hardly original as it conveniently positions the logion before the triumphal entry into Jerusalem; W.D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to Saint Matthew*, 3 vols. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988-1997), 3:312; Bovon, *Luke*, 321. Contrary to Luz, *Matthew 21-28*, 158-159, who thinks that the saying is placed too awkwardly in Luke's context to believe that Luke had created that difficulty for himself.

32 Green, *Luke*, 534, 537, 538.

people of Jerusalem will welcome him as the “One coming in the name of the Lord” or not.³³ Luke confirms Jesus’ identity as a prophet by his editorial decision to link the JW with the saying about the necessity of prophets being killed in the city. By focussing on the city’s reaction, Luke gives a reason for the eventual destruction and the spiritual insignificance of Jerusalem as Jewish centre.³⁴ Thus, the JW is put in a context that suits Luke as he both links it to Jesus’ answer to the Pharisees’ warning that a prophet must die in Jerusalem (Luke 13:31-33) and emphasises the direction of Jesus’ travel towards Jerusalem and his death. The context of Luke’s gospel elucidates Luke’s interpretation of the JW and was not original to Q.

In Matthew, Jesus appears as Wisdom Incarnate³⁵ for two reasons: (1) Matthew combines the ‘Lament’ with the previous logion about sending prophets and envoys (Matt 23:34-36), which he had transformed from a word spoken by the divine Wisdom in Luke 11:49, into a word spoken by Jesus. The ‘Lament’ follows this saying, implying that Jesus continues to speak as Wisdom.³⁶ (2) The point in the plot where Matthew placed the logion, namely Jesus leaving the temple for the last time, is ideally suited to insinuating that the presence of God departs from the temple as Jesus leaves, perhaps suiting Matthew’s theology too well to be credible.

Since the original context is uncertain,³⁷ the pre-synoptic logion, whether it first appeared in Q or goes back to a dominical saying,³⁸ must be interpreted without

33 Schweizer, *Luke*, 230.

34 Conzelmann, *Theology*, 133-134.

35 So Suggs, *Wisdom*, 71; Christ, *Sophia*, 152 “Jesus erscheint...als die Weisheit selbst”; less sure p.150.

36 See Suggs, *Wisdom*, 70.

37 Christ, *Sophia*, 136, doubts both Luke’s and Matthew’s context. So also Steck, *Israel und Propheten*, 47-48 and Nolland, *Luke*, 739.

38 Christ, *Sophia*, 148 and Hengel, “Beginnings”, 76, 86 think it is possible that, the logion goes

reference to a context.

2.1.2. Contents

The ‘Lament’ appears primarily as a prophetic threat of imminent judgement, paired with the prospect of future hope. Particularly in Luke’s presentation of the logion, Jesus appears as a prophet.³⁹ As a reference to Wisdom is much more unlikely in Luke’s gospel, which distinguishes sharply between pre-existent Wisdom and Jesus who does not assume her role e.g. in Luke 11:49,⁴⁰ Jesus’ mission is usually interpreted as that of a prophet, who speaks and acts in God’s stead.⁴¹ Consequently, Jesus’ “I” represents God’s desire to gather the children of Israel when he says “I wanted to gather your children”.⁴² Thus, he is seen as speaking and acting in God’s place.⁴³ This avoids the difficulty of explaining how he could have called Jerusalem several times, in addition to extending the scope of his ministry to the wider Jewish community.⁴⁴ Accordingly, a favourite term of Luke’s in 13:32, “δεῖ”, indicates that Jesus obediently acts according to the divine imperative.⁴⁵ Equally, “your house is left to you” is usually not interpreted as referring to the divine presence in the temple. Rather, the “house” is understood as the city of Jerusalem and its people, which are left defenceless when God aban-

back to Jesus himself. See also Tan, *Zion Traditions*, 107-109.

39 Conzelmann, *Theology*, 139; Bock, *Luke*, 1243, 1245, 1249.

40 See Conzelmann *Theology*, 110 n.1. Bock, *Luke*, 1249. Contrarily, Marshall, *Luke*, 574, accepts that Jesus is using wisdom terminology, and thus appears as a messenger of Wisdom; Bovon, *Luke*, 323, 328 accepts a wisdom background and accepts that personified Wisdom is the speaker of Luke 13:34-35a.

41 Bock, *Luke*, 1249; Nolland, *Luke*, 742.

42 Bock, *Luke*, 1249.

43 Nolland, *Luke*, 742-743.

44 Nolland, *Luke*, 742. Alternatively, Nolland, *Luke*, 743 explains the address to an absent Jerusalem as a “soliloquy”. In contrast Conzelmann, *Theology*, 110, maintains that the context is difficult to explain because the logion must be spoken after Jesus had ministered to Jerusalem.

45 Bock, *Luke*, 1248; also Green, *Luke*, 534-535; Schweizer, *Luke*, 230.

dons the city.⁴⁶ However, interpreting the JW as as a prophetic warning to Israel, which foretells the destruction of Jerusalem does not link the removal of God's presence very well with Jesus being removed from sight by his death when he continues "and I tell you, you will not see me until..."⁴⁷

But Matthew's interpretation demonstrates that the JW can hint at a much deeper level of meaning: in outlining the events of Jesus' proclamation, rejection and death, it formulates his mission, which appears as part of, and indeed as the summarising culmination of, God's history with Israel. But Jesus' role in this history and his relationship to God are difficult to discern precisely. Apart from the obvious references to Jesus' historical ministry, where he speaks in the first person, indicating his many rejected attempts to win over the Israelites and predicting that he will soon be withdrawn from the company of his disciples, the logion alludes to a range of biblical themes which interpret Jesus' ministry as participating in God's dealings with his people. However, all of these themes are equally known in his Jewish environment as functions of the divine Wisdom.

The *crux interpretum* is the word ποσάκις ("how often did I want to gather your children".) The frequency of Jesus' attempts to gather the people of Jerusalem in a gospel that has not recorded any significant previous visits to Jerusalem has led exegetes to understand that Jesus' ministry extended to the previous generations addressed by the prophets,⁴⁸ particularly in its position in Matthew's gospel, which had just established Jesus as a sender of prophets in continuation of the

46 Bock, *Luke*, 1250; Green, *Luke*, 539; Marshall, *Luke*, 576, Schweizer, *Luke*, 231, Nolland, *Luke*, 742-743.

47 Green, *Luke*, 538, suggests a connection with Simeon's waiting to see the Messiah in Luke 2:29-32, and Nolland, *Luke*, 742, suggests that Jesus is snatched away until the eschaton like certain figures in Jewish tradition. The problem with both explanations is that neither the text of the JW nor Luke's context give prompts to justify such a farfetched interpretation.

48 See Bultmann, *Synoptic Tradition*, 113-114.

Old Testament tradition in 23:34.⁴⁹ Thus, he assumes either the role of God, who is the sender of prophets in the Hebrew Scriptures, or the role of Wisdom, who is also related to the sending of prophets in Prov 1:20-33, Sap 7:27 and Luke 11:49.

The perception that Jesus participates in God's role as he engages in Israel's salvation history is supported by further associations with divine functions: "Your house is left to you empty. I tell you, you will not see me..." suggests that the divine presence will leave the temple not only as a consequence of Jesus' rejection, but also in temporal agreement with Jesus being withdrawn from view by his death, implying that Jesus is the Shekinah, God's presence in the temple. Wisdom, however, is also known as the divine presence resident in the temple according to Sir 24:1-17.

Jesus' ministry is most directly portrayed as divine action by the metaphor of the wings of the mother bird offering protection and guidance to her young, which alludes to God carrying Israel like an eagle in Deut 32:11 and Ex 19:4. The image had been developed in the Jewish tradition, and the concept of seeking shelter under the divine wings also occurs in the psalms. Especially noteworthy is Ps 61:4, where the wings are associated with the temple. In this vein, the wings of the hen bring to mind the winged cherubim in the temple, indicating that the Israelites are invited to seek shelter with the Wisdom-Shekinah.⁵⁰

The pivotal verb ἐπισυνάγειν (to gather), denoting Jesus' mission, deserves special attention. It may indicate ways of supporting the Israelites throughout their

49 See Strauss, "Weheruf", 87, 90; Steck, *Israel*, 54; Christ, *Sophia*, 142, 146, Nolland, *Matthew*, 950; Gathercole, *Preexistent Son*, 216-218. Against Luz, *Matthew 21-28*, 161. Contrary to Nolland, *Luke*, 739, who thinks that the tenses of the Greek verbs prohibit Jesus' "gathering" referring back to the previous sending of prophets.

50 See Gese, "Die Weisheit, der Menschensohn und die Ursprünge der Christologie als konsequente Entfaltung der biblischen Theologie.", pp. 218-248 in *Alttestamentliche Studien* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1991), 237.

history other than calling them through the prophets. Origen suggested that it refers to Israel being brought back from captivity,⁵¹ a meaning which is supported by the use of the verb in Ps LXX 105:46-47 (“gather us from the nations”) and Isa 52:12. 1 Esdras 8:69; 8:88; 9:18; 9:55 use the verb for people gathering around Ezra to implement parts of the law; it could therefore refer to ending an ongoing spiritual exile as well as the historical exile in Babylon. Sapiientia Salomonis 10 offers a tradition where Wisdom is the agent who saves and guides Israel throughout its history.

The final phrase “You will not see me until you say ‘blessed is the One coming in the name of the Lord’” is the most difficult one to trace back to a wisdom tradition. However, in the *Similitudes* of 1 Enoch (1En 48:2-7; 49:1-3), Wisdom is united with the ‘Elect One’, the Son of Man, who is expected to be the eschatological ruler. Unlike the divine functions that are assigned to Jesus above, the “One coming” can only be understood as a representative or envoy of God.

The crucial problem to interpreting the logion is in demonstrating which divine agent Jesus is being related to here. It is possible to relate him to both, God and his Wisdom.

2.1.3. Date and Author

The Jerusalem Word can be understood as a word of Jesus, when it is read within the framework of Jesus’ earthly ministry: participating in God’s call to Israel through the prophets, Jesus can be seen as one in the line of prophets, indeed the last envoy, or eschatological representative. The image of the protective mother bird links well with his mission to seek and save the lost. Many attempts to gather

⁵¹ Origen, *Fragmenta ex comentariis in evangelium Matthaei* 461 (GCS 41:191).

the children may either be explained as multiple journeys to Jerusalem not recorded by the synoptic gospels or they may indicate that Jesus included the wider community of Israel in his address to the capital.⁵² Judgement on Israel is announced when God's efforts to move the people to repentance have come to an end with the rejection of his last envoy: the divine presence will leave the temple. Jesus' simultaneous departure implies that Jesus is actually the Shekinah, God's presence, which will be lost at his imminent death. The prophecy ends with a glimmer of hope: Jesus will be vindicated and reunited with his disciples at the eschatological arrival of the Son of Man.

Notably, the appellation "Coming One" in Matt 23:39 par., quoting Ps 118:26, does not claim a messianic title for Jesus. But the "Coming One" *can* refer to the expected Messiah; at least it does so when the crowds welcome Jesus to Jerusalem in Mark 11:9 par. and in the Baptist's enquiry in Matt 11:3 par. Luke 7:19. But while Jesus' followers had acclaimed him as the coming king on his entry into Jerusalem, Matt 23:39 par. is not committed to the same claim: if this logion belongs in the time of Jesus' earthly ministry,⁵³ he can be understood to be expecting his own vindication at the arrival of the eschatological kingdom, even if the agent of God was another than himself.

The judgement that the people are threatened with has often been interpreted as a reference to the destruction of the temple in AD 70, and dated close to that event,⁵⁴ but this interpretation is uncertain. Especially exegeses of Luke's version

⁵² See p. 18 n.16.

⁵³ Especially in Luke's version of the JW, which understands Jesus as a prophet, the logion is often seen an authentic Jesus word. See Bock, *Luke*, 1245; Nolland, *Luke*, 739; Bovon, *Luke*, 323, 328.

⁵⁴ Strauss, "Weheruf", 90. Steck, *Schicksal*, 237-238 and Luz, *Matthew 21-28*, 160-161 speak of an immediate anticipation of the destruction.

interpret the “house” not specifically as the temple but as the city and its people who remain unprotected and face the conquest and destruction by the Romans.⁵⁵ This lies in the trajectory of Luke concentrating on the role of the holy city as Jesus’ destination and the central place which moulds Jewish religious identity; therefore, their rejecting Jesus furnishes the reason for Jerusalem’s demise according to Luke.⁵⁶ However, Matthew, like Q, may well simply connect Jesus’ death, interpreted as his withdrawal, to the abandonment of the temple, corresponding to a similar correlation between Jesus and the temple, which he threatened to destroy and rebuild in three days according to Mark 14:58, and which goes back to the accusations made at Jesus’ trial.⁵⁷

Thus, all parts of the logion can be understood from a pre-resurrection Jewish perspective as a sapiential-prophetic saying thematising the significance of Jesus’ ministry. An early dating is also supported by the absence of messianic titles and any references to crucifixion and resurrection, which makes a church creation unlikely.⁵⁸ On the contrary, the death of God’s envoy is still expected to be by stoning.⁵⁹

However, the employment of multiple images or actions that refer to God’s actions in the Hebrew Scriptures suggest that Jesus’ mission is here portrayed as an agency of the divine. Therefore, the origin of the logion has often been analysed as a Jewish prophecy, which had been edited and put on Jesus’ lips by the church,

55 Bock, *Luke*, 1250; Green, *Luke*, 539; Marshall, *Luke*, 576; Schweizer, *Luke*, 231.

56 Conzelmann, *Theology*, 139; see also Bovon, *Luke*, 330.

57 See e.g. Gese, “Weisheit”, 237-238. Marshall, *Luke*, 576, also allows for a reference to Jesus’ word about the destruction of the temple. See also Ben Witherington, *Jesus the Sage: The Pilgrimage of Wisdom*, (Edinburgh: T&T Clarke, 1994), 366, for another parallel: Matt 12:6 claims that something greater than the temple was on the scene with Jesus.

58 See Hengel, “Beginnings”, 85-86.

59 James D.G. Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*. Vol. 1 of *Christianity in the Making* (Grand Rapids, Michigan/London, U.K.: Eerdmans Publishing, 2003), 1:79; Joachim Jeremias, *New Testament Theology: The Proclamation of Jesus* (London: SCM, 1971), 284.

possibly as late as immediately before the outbreak of the Jewish war.⁶⁰ Or again, the logion may have originated as a Christian prophecy, possibly uttered by an itinerant preacher belonging to the Q community.⁶¹

2.1.4. Form and Integrity

The Jerusalem Word has often been identified as a prophetic doom oracle in agreement with the form of Luke 11:49-51. It contains an accusation and a threat.⁶² However, it is questionable whether Q 13:34-35 had followed Q 11:49-51 in one original Jewish wisdom source because it speaks of prophets sent in the past rather than the future, and it has a different tone of voice.⁶³ If the ‘Lament’ is treated without assuming a context, however, the form of a doom oracle is less clear, because there is no introductory formula of sending like “thus says the Lord” or “the Wisdom of God said...”, and the tone is sad rather than angry.

Another difficulty created by identifying Matt 23:37-39 par. as a quotation of a Jewish doom prophecy is that verse 39 does not fit very well with the presumed prophecy of the wisdom word, because Jewish traditions do not speak of Wisdom’s return.⁶⁴ Her return is implied only in the *Similitudes* of 1En, where Wisdom is merged with the expected eschatological Son of Man ruler.

Matt 23:39 par. Luke 13:35b would also be difficult in a dominical saying, be-

60 See Bultmann, *Synoptic Tradition*, 114-115; Steck, *Israel*, 56-57, 238, Suggs, *Wisdom*, 66-67, 71.

61 Luz, *Matthew 21-28*, 160-161.

62 Bultmann, *Synoptic Tradition*, 114-15 “a Jewish prophecy”; Steck, *Israel*, 57; Christ, *Sophia*, 139-140; Gnllka, *Matthäusevangelium* 2:296; Luz, *Matthew 21-28*, 158.

63 See Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 3:314; Gathercole, *Preexistent Son*, 213.

64 So Luz, 159; Ernst Haenchen, “Matthäus 23”, *ZTK* 48 (1951): 38-63, 57. Haenchen does not even accept that Wisdom had been present in and withdrawn from the temple, and views verse 39 as a secondary addition to the original wisdom word.

cause Jesus would be referring to himself as the coming Son of Man. It has therefore often been regarded as a secondary addition.⁶⁵ However, if the verse was included in the saying by Jesus, he might not have envisaged his own parousia, but expressed the hope that he would be vindicated and reunited with his disciples at the eschatological arrival of God's agent, whether this agent would be Jesus himself or another. Furthermore, it is not unreasonable to include Matt 23:39 par. in the original composition of the logion, because the verse presents a very early stage in the development of Christology. It is still in the process of amalgamating a wisdom-based Christology with the Son of Man, a process which is also under way in other Q sayings such as Matt 11:27 par.,⁶⁶ and the appellation "Coming One" is still descriptive rather than titular. The concept of the coming Son of Man is not yet developed as far as in Mark 14:62, where Jesus is identified with the Son of Man, who in turn is related to the heavenly figure in Dan 7.⁶⁷ It will also be argued below that the reference to the coming Son of Man does not differ fundamentally from other references to the coming Son of Man in the synoptic gospels (ch.2.2.1. p.34-35).

65 See Bultmann, *Synoptic Tradition*, 115; Steck, 55; Gnllka, *Mattäusevangelium*, 2:306-307, Nolland, *Luke*, 739. Vermes, *Gospel*, 328, concludes that the logion must be a creation of the church, because it alludes to the parousia. Contrarily, Bock, *Luke*, 1245 speaks of authentic material. Luz, *Matthew 21-28*, 160, thinks that Q 13:35b fits in with the expectation of the coming Son of Man in Jesus' earthly ministry.

66 Gese, "Weisheit", 237; Hengel, "Beginnings", 85. This amalgamation may have been inspired by the *Similitudes* of 1 Enoch, it may have occurred as the Q-logia were being composed, or it may be owing to Jesus' own endeavor to define his role by conceptualising his messianic identity based on various Jewish traditions. Thus, Witherington, *The Jesus Quest: The Third Search for the Jew of Nazareth* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1995), 185-186: As various messianic patterns were converging in his Jewish environment, Jesus also "drew on them in the way he presented himself". Peter Stuhlmacher, *Biblische Theologie des Neuen Testaments, Band 1: Grundleitung: Von Paulus zu Jesus*, 3rd ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005), 1:114, 117, 119-121: Jesus' messianic identity transforms the Jewish expectations of the Davidic Messiah and the enthroned Son of Man by introducing the theme of suffering from the servant of the Lord in Isa 43:3-5; 53:11-12. Several Jewish traditions like that of the Son of Man, the servant of the Lord and the Davidic Messiah contributed to Jesus' self-image and were united in the process. See also Marshall, *Luke*, 577, sees a process of identifying the Messiah with the Son of Man still ongoing, and since the identification with Jesus is not explicit, he concludes that the phrase can be genuine.

67 Hengel, "Beginnings", 76, 85-86, views it as a sign of the antiquity of the Q logia that they still distinguish between Jesus and the coming Son of Man.

It must be considered, then, whether the saying was composed in one piece.⁶⁸ It is precisely the continuation “You won’t see me...” in Matt 23:39 which links the threat of the abandonment of the temple with Jesus, thus reinforcing a similar pattern in v. 37, where Jesus’ ministry of gathering was interpreted as participating in God’s care for Israel through the reference to the protective wings. Could the logion then be one skilfully constructed composition which is purposely combining Jesus’ ministry in the past, present and future to create a mission statement? It composes a review of Jesus’ ministry, which has a great deal in common with the summarising portrayals of Wisdom in Sir 24 and Sap 10, and could be continuing in the form used by the sages.

2.2. Survey of Exegetical Approaches to the Jerusalem Word

2.2.1. Matt 23:37-39 Par. Understood as a Wisdom Word

Since **D.F. Strauss**,⁶⁹ the Jerusalem Word has been seen as a quotation of a lost wisdom tradition, which contained the myth of Wisdom’s descent and ascent, making the divine Wisdom the subject acting in Israel’s history, R. Bultmann’s “supra-historical” or “trans-historical” agent. It must then have been quoted by Jesus, or the quotation was subsequently placed on Jesus’ lips by the church, because it was inconceivable that the historical Jesus could be the supra-historical

68 See Tan, *Zion Traditions*, 104; Luz, *Matthew 21-28*, 159 “symmetry of this well formed destruction saying”; Hagner, *Matthew*, 2:680 sees Matt 23:37-39 as a composition of lament, judgement and promise.

69 “Weheruf”, 88-90.

subject.⁷⁰ The approach to balance the origin of the logion between a creation of the church and a quotation of a Jewish composition, where Wisdom is the speaker, persists into the present,⁷¹ even though this position has lost much of its attraction, because no literary *Vorlage* for a quotable Wisdom myth has been found. It also seems unlikely that Luke 11:49-51 preceded 13:34-35 in Q, offering a reference to a continuous speech of Wisdom.⁷²

O.H. Steck has argued in detail for a somewhat modified form of this thesis, assuming a Jewish tradition which had conflated themes of the deuteronomical prophecy with the wisdom tradition as a basis for the pre-synoptic Christian redactor. He considers three alternative authors: The earthly Jesus, the early church, or a Jewish source (which would be the divine Wisdom speaking). According to Steck, Jesus cannot be the speaker, because the speaker was evidently active in sending the prophets for generations past. Also, he equates God's leaving the city with the destruction of Jerusalem, which is not a topic of Jesus' proclamation elsewhere in the synoptic gospels; it is therefore deemed unlikely that Jesus would mention the topic only here. Thirdly, he thinks that Jesus cannot be speaking of his own parousia here, because wherever he does say "you will see the son of man coming..." (Mark 13:26; 14:62; Matt 16:28) he uses the third person singular, whereas in Luke 13:35 you have to imply that he means "*I* will come again" from the previous phrase "you will not see *me*".⁷³ Reasoning that the logion cannot with confidence be placed either within Jesus' own message or the understanding of the early church, Steck concludes that the logion must be a quo-

70 Bultmann, *Synoptic Tradition*, 114, so also Suggs, *Wisdom*, 66; Strauss, "Weheruf", 87.

71 See Vermes, *Gospel*, 328.

72 See Steck, *Israel*, 47.

73 Steck, *Israel*, 53-55.

tation of a Jewish tradition.⁷⁴ He thinks it was composed by a Jewish prophet, who predicted judgement over Jerusalem between AD 66 and 70, when the threat of destruction was imminent and the city could have been threatened with incapable judgement.⁷⁵

Steck's reasons to deny an origin of the logion as a word of Jesus are not convincing. Regarding Jesus' attitude towards the temple, Jesus' word about the destruction of the temple (Mark 14:58) is sufficiently related to Matt 23:38 to permit the conclusion that he could be speaking about the divine presence withdrawing from the temple,⁷⁶ and both sayings associate the loss of the temple's function with Jesus' death. Conversely, it is a conjecture to understand God's withdrawal as a prophecy about the destruction of Jerusalem. Matt 23:38 does not refer to the destruction of the temple: the logion addresses a situation that results from rejecting Jesus, not a situation of political turmoil in anticipation of the Jewish war. Also, it is highly unlikely that a saying adopted by Q would have been composed as late as 66-70 AD anticipating the imminent destruction.⁷⁷ Regarding the reference to the parousia, Jesus had spoken of his (the Son of Man's) coming in several instances, e.g. Mark 13:26; 14:62; Matt 16:28, and each time he used 3. pers. sing. for "he will come..." but it is evident from the context that he is speaking about himself, just as in Matt 23:39 par., where the context is "you will not see *me*" and the announcement of the coming is "*he* who comes in the Name of the Lord".⁷⁸ Finally, Steck's categorical rejection of the possibility that Jesus could be under-

⁷⁴ Steck, *Israel*, 56-57.

⁷⁵ Steck, *Israel*, 238.

⁷⁶ See also Tan, *Zion Traditions*, 106.

⁷⁷ See Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 792-793.

⁷⁸ See also Tan, *Zion Traditions*, 106. His evidence relies on Luke 12:8-9. And see Luz, *Matthew 21-28*, 160.

stood as the subject who had sent the prophets of past generations,⁷⁹ is not completely self-evident, and even if Matt 23:37 presented the most exalted claim regarding his messianic identity in the gospel, it cannot be rejected on the grounds that this claim is perhaps singular in his proclamation.⁸⁰

Steck's reasoning is obviously based on the historical-critical approach following Troeltsch's postulate that the historical Jesus can only be reconstructed in analogy to a "normal" human being.⁸¹ The historical-critical method is indispensable for establishing the historicity of Jesus' life and the transmission of the traditions that reveal a process of the disciples understanding the significance of Jesus' appearance. The fact that God reaches out into human history is essential for Christian theology. However, it has been observed that with this methodological restraint, it is very difficult to explain unusual events and impossible to acknowledge the unique,⁸² such as God's unprecedented and unrepeatable sovereign acts of intervention in history.⁸³ And indeed, the strictly historical methodology, aiming at reconstructing a historical Jesus in analogy to a "normal" person has not been successful in reconstructing a consensual image of the historical Jesus.⁸⁴ Drawing up

79 Steck, *Israel*, 53-54.

80 See Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 793, for a similar consideration: the saying cannot be dismissed as an authentic Jesus word simply because it is the "clearest evidence" for his "sense of destiny", which Dunn however identifies as restoring Jerusalem to Yahweh's kingship according to this saying.

81 See Ernst Troeltsch, "Ernst Troeltsch: Historical and Dogmatic Method in Theology," in *The Historical Jesus Quest: Landmarks in the Search for the Jesus of History*, ed. Gregory W. Dawes (Leiden: Deo Publishing, 1999), 29-53, here pp.32-33.

82 See James Dunn, "Jesus: Teacher of Wisdom or Wisdom Incarnate?" in *Where Shall Wisdom Be Found?*, ed. Stephen C. Barton (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999), 75-92, here p.80-82.

83 See Martin Hengel, "Historical Methods and the Theological Interpretation of the New Testament", in *Acts and History of the Earliest Christianity* (London: SMC, 1979), 129-136, here point 1.2.7 and 2.4.3.

84 On the contrary, it has been noticed repeatedly that attempts to reconstruct the historical Jesus in analogy to a modern person led to each time and researcher arriving at a Jesus who represented themselves. See Albert Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* (London: A.&C. Black, 1910), 4; Joseph Ratzinger / Benedict XVI., *Jesus of Nazareth*, transl. Adrian J. Walker (London: Bloomsbury, 2007), xii; Scot McKnight, "The Jesus We'll Never Know". Accessed Oct 6, 2011. www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2010/april/15.22.html.

analogies to other messianic pretenders or envoys speaking on God's behalf in the Jewish environment has not been successful either in explaining the very exalted messianic claims that were made by Jesus' followers on his behalf.⁸⁵ In order to understand the Jesus who acted in history, it seems necessary to integrate historical reports with the theological conclusions drawn by the contemporary observers. It needs to be considered whether J.Ratzinger /Pope Benedict has a point in saying that the "real" Jesus must have been the same as the Jesus of the gospels with his very close filial relationship to God.⁸⁶

Drawing up such a theistic view of history and the "real, 'historical' Jesus"⁸⁷ would be a complex enterprise necessitating the development of new methodological guidelines that integrate theology and history.⁸⁸ Regarding Troeltsch's criteria for the historical-critical methodology we must be aware (1) that the historical-critical method is limited in its scope: It cannot ascertain the truth value of claims about a transcendental world either positively or negatively; it can only investigate claims made by historical persons and the explanations they gave for

85 For the difference between Jesus and other messianic figures see Roland Deines, "Jesus and the Jewish Traditions of His Time," pp.95-120 in *Acts of God in History*, WUNT 317 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 101, 119, and more comprehensive in Roland Deines, "Der Messiasanspruch Jesu im Kontext frühjüdischer Messiaserwartungen," pp. 49-106 in *Der jüdische Messias Jesus und sein jüdischer Apostel Paulus*, ed. Armin D. Baum, Detlef Häußner, and Emmanuel L. Rehfeld (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016), 65-66, 73-74. See Stuhlmacher, *Theologie*, 1:64-66, 73-74, 81-83, for Jesus' qualitative superiority to John the Baptist, and Dunn, "Wisdom Incarnate", 85-90 for Jesus surpassing prophets and patriarchs.

86 See Ratzinger/Benedict, *Jesus*, xxii and pp.xiv, 6.

87 Ratzinger/Benedict, *Jesus*, xxii

88 Thus, N.T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God: Vol. 2 of Christian Origins and the Question of God* (London: SPCK, 1996), 122, suggests that the third quest must go on to integrate history and theology. See Ratzinger/Benedict, *Jesus*, xxi, xxiii and Stuhlmacher, *Theologie*, 1:45 for a proposal to approach the gospels in a spirit of trust. See Deines, "Methodological Problem," 24-26 for a number of criteria permitting a rational evaluation of a theistic account of history in an academic discourse. Further approaches to account for a theistic history include consideration of typology (Christopher Seitz, "History, Figural History, and Providence," in *Go Figure: Figuration in Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Stanley D. Walters, PTMS 81 (Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 2008), 1-6); the fourfold sense of scripture (Ratzinger/Benedict, *Jesus*, xviii-xx); and serious attempts to explain appearances of Jesus in OT events (Anthony Tyrrell Hanson, *Jesus Christ in the Old Testament* (London: SPCK, 1965), 162, 172.).

the events they witnessed in terms of their religious traditions. (2) We should note that the criterion of analogy does not necessarily exclude a human being from having access to the transcendence: M.J. Borg's anthropological approach observes that people of the spirit who have access to a spiritual world are known in many cultures.⁸⁹ Furthermore, exalted claims by religious leaders are not unusual even in our enlightened age.⁹⁰ (3) The criterion of the interrelation of all historical developments must account for the first disciples' motivation and energy to proclaim the gospel, and their success in building a universal church, based on their encounter with Jesus. Apart from the impact made by Jesus' person, it should also be able to explain the origin of the messianic claims as a development of the *Geistesgeschichte*, the history of ideas, which must be considered as a factor in the evolution of humanity. We should be able to trace an uninterrupted tradition history from Jewish messianic concepts to the claims of the church. Jesus' role in understanding, interpreting and transforming Jewish messianic concepts as a foundation for further developments implemented by his followers after his death is an indispensable link in the history of tradition, which can contribute to our understanding of Jesus' conception of his messianic role.

Considering the limitations of the historical method which cannot penetrate as far as the real Jesus, an argument based mainly on a preconceived scepticism towards recognising more than a human being in Jesus, should be used with care.

Thus, **A.T. Hanson** argued already in 1965 in favour of a trans-historical ministry of Jesus. Taking 1 Cor 10:4 as a point of departure, he emphatically claims that

89 Marcus J. Borg, *Jesus in Contemporary Scholarship* (Valley Forge: TPI, 1994), 27, 127-129, 131-132; see also Borg, *Jesus: A New Vision* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987), 15-16, 49-51.

90 See Dunn, "Wisdom Incarnate?", 91.

Christ's appearance in the rock is not to be understood as a typology, but as a "real presence of the pre-existent Jesus in OT history."⁹¹ He extends this insight to comprehend multiple occurrences of the κύριος in the OT as encounters of Christ by Moses, David or Isaiah, claiming that knowledge of Christ and the gospel was available in pre-incarnate times.⁹² He makes the important observation that in Exod 14:19, God is distinguished from another one who accompanied Israel, namely the Angel of God in shape of the pillar of cloud, which Hanson identifies with the real presence of Jesus in the OT.⁹³

Hanson's other conclusion, namely that the name κύριος referred to Jesus throughout Exod 14, especially in vv. 24 and 30, in the interpretation Paul offered in 1 Cor 10:2-5,⁹⁴ is less convincing, as it may be appropriate to distinguish between God (the κύριος) and the pillar of cloud, which is his representative. The relationship between God and the Angel of the Lord in Exod 14:19-24 must be considered in greater detail below. In this vein, it is significant that Hanson notices that the κύριος is identified with Jesus by the author of Hebrews precisely where a revelation of God in the immanent world is concerned (Hebr 3:1-6: Jesus is the Lord who is encountered "face to face").⁹⁵ This leads Hanson to conclude that there is a "tendency to identify Jesus with both the *eidos* ("appearance") and the *phōnē* ("voice") of God in the OT," i.e. where God appears visibly or speaks audibly in the immanent world.⁹⁶ Thus, again, we see that the representative appears visibly or tangibly as a manifestation of God, who is not visible himself, and can therefore be distinguished from the Lord.

91 Hanson, *Jesus Christ*, 7, 172.

92 Ibid., 49-50, 59-60.

93 Ibid., 11-12.

94 Ibid., 11.

95 Ibid., 163, see also 49-50.

96 Ibid., 164.

In the 1970s, **J. Suggs** reinforced the thesis that at least the gospel of Matthew contains a Wisdom-Christology. According to Suggs, Wisdom is the speaker of Matt 23:37-39 par. in Q,⁹⁷ but Matthew transfers the saying to Jesus just as he did in the previous doom oracle (cf. Matt 23:34 with the original Luke 11:49).⁹⁸ Another clear transfer of Wisdom's function to Jesus occurs in Matt 11:19, where Wisdom's deeds are identified as Jesus' deeds by the context.⁹⁹ Thus, Matthew understands Jesus as incarnate Wisdom.¹⁰⁰

F. Bovon understands even Luke's version of the JW as a wisdom tradition, which Jesus quoted to elucidate his destiny. He explains that the judgment oracle, while rooted in prophetic literature, had been appropriated by the Jewish wisdom tradition by the time of Jesus. In the case of the 'Lament', there are several factors that indicate that the saying belongs into the wisdom tradition: The use of the capital's name, Jerusalem; the use of an image like the hen; the fact that the "I" is spoken by a "divine intermediary" rather than God himself; this indicates that the oracle is spoken by personified Wisdom.¹⁰¹ V.35b, attached by a Christian editor who links the abandonment of the temple with Jesus' death, quotes Ps 118:26 as a reference to the eschatological arrival of the Messiah.¹⁰² In the end, Bovon characterises Jesus as the "child of the Wisdom of God", who assumes the protective wings of the divine presence after his fulfilment in his death and the abandonment of the temple.¹⁰³

97 Suggs, *Wisdom*, 67.

98 Suggs, *Wisdom*, 59-60, 70-71.

99 Suggs, *Wisdom*, 56-57.

100 Suggs, *Wisdom*, 58, 67, 70.

101 See Bovon, *Luke*, 323, 328-329, and esp. 328 n.62.

102 Bovon, *Luke*, 331. See esp n.87 for the possibility of the Messiah being identified in Christian tradition with the Son of Man linked to Wisdom.

103 Bovon, *Luke*, 333.

Beyond the fairly consensual position that Matthew edited Q to the effect that he presents Jesus as Wisdom incarnate,¹⁰⁴ some authors have claimed that Wisdom-Christology goes back to pre-synoptic sources. **F. Christ** contends that the ‘Lament’, an original Jewish wisdom tradition, had already been presented as a word spoken by Jesus by its original Christian adaptation; he does not subscribe to the thesis that the ‘Lament’ had been part of the same Jewish tradition as Matt 23:34-36. Thus, a Sophia-Christology had not been created by Matthew; it had already been received from the pre-synoptic tradition and may go back to Jesus himself.¹⁰⁵ **C. Deutsch** demonstrated that Jesus is identified with Wisdom in Matt 25:25-27, and moreover in the Q logion it is derived from, as well as in the Mattheian source M of Matt 11:28-30.¹⁰⁶ Importantly, it became obvious that a Wisdom-Christology need not be based on a Hellenistic myth introduced by members of the Greek church, but is at home in the Palestinian Jesus tradition as well as in Paul’s theology, and it can be derived from Jewish traditions.

H. Gese contributed in particular to the question of how a Wisdom-Christology can be understood to have emerged from Jewish traditions,¹⁰⁷ explaining the “mutual interrelation of all historical developments” postulated by Troeltsch,¹⁰⁸ if ‘historical developments’ include the development of cultural settings and the evolution of ideas. According to Gese, the development of Jewish Wisdom tradi-

104 See Dunn, “Wisdom Incarnate?”, 78.

105 Christ, *Sophia*, 138, 145-148, 154.

106 Deutsch, *Hidden Wisdom*, 103-104, 138. See also Jeremy Corley, “Tracing Wisdom from Sirach to the Gospels” in *Weisheit als Lebensgrundlage: Festschrift für Friedrich Reiterer*, ed. R. Egger-Wenzel, K. Schöpflin and J.F. Diehl, DCLS 15 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2013), 27-46: “Matthew implies that Jesus is the embodiment of divine Wisdom” (p.34), and it is possible that the close parallels to Ben Sira “reflect Jesus’ own teaching” (p.43); Frankenmölle, *Frühjudentum*, 172: He speaks of a “Weisheitschristologie in der Logienquelle”, referring to Luke 13:34-35 among others; more cautiously on p.184-185.

107 Gese, “Weisheit”.

108 Troeltsch, “Historical Method”, 32.

tions on one hand and Messiah/Son of Man traditions on the other lead to their converging into a single figure, preparing a model for an early Christology: the expectation of a Davidian king in the OT developed into the vision of a transcendent universal son of man ruler (Dan 7), who also bears the features of a prophetic revealer (Moses and Ezekiel are a ‘son of man’ in the heavenly court). At the end of this development in 1 Enoch, the Son of Man is invested with features of the divine Wisdom and also becomes the all-knowing judge.¹⁰⁹ Wisdom on the other hand was originally a transcendent hidden person close to God himself and became increasingly accessible to mankind as she revealed herself as the logical order of the universe, as a counselling prophet, as word or torah, as God’s presence in the temple worship or Shekinah,¹¹⁰ where she almost sits on the throne and shines like the Davidian Messiah, who is born on Mount Zion.¹¹¹ Jesus is identified with the Sophia-Shekinah in Matt 23:37-39 par. at the same time as Wisdom resident in the temple is merged with the Messiah entering the temple in Ps 118:26 to create a new concept of the Messiah.¹¹² This unification of Wisdom and Son of Man traditions is not singular in the gospel tradition – it also happens in the Q logion Matt 11:27 par. Gese argues that the unification of the Wisdom and Messiah traditions was a necessary step in the trajectory of the Jewish tradition as is witnessed by the parallel creation of the Son of Man figure in 1 Enoch, but it may have happened independently of the *Similitudes* in the Christian tradition at any time.¹¹³

B. Witherington, pursuing the development following the era of Jesus, demon-

109 Gese, “Weisheit”, 232-233.

110 Gese, “Weisheit”, 224-231.

111 Gese, “Weisheit”, 234.

112 Gese, “Weisheit”, 237.

113 Gese, “Weisheit”, 233-234, 237-238.

strates that a sapiential understanding of Jesus' ministry offers a concept that can establish the interrelation between Jesus' lived life and his self-conception with the views of his Jewish followers, "both before and after Easter".¹¹⁴ In his mind, Jesus was "God's Wisdom come in the flesh", not only in the disciples' reflection, but according to his own self-understanding.¹¹⁵ As the royal and sapiential traditions had been merged in the figure of King Solomon, and similarly in the Son of Man of the *Similitudes* of Enoch, so Jesus blended these traditions in the model figure on which he based his self-conception.¹¹⁶

Apart from the sayings which link Jesus to Wisdom and may go back to Jesus himself,¹¹⁷ Witherington bases Jesus' identification with Wisdom on observations of Jesus' public ministry. Thus, Jesus, like Wisdom in Prov 9:1-6, invites unlikely, unseemly guests to a banquet in order to teach and save them.¹¹⁸ The form of his instruction uses sapiential devices such as parable, aphorism and beatitude,¹¹⁹ and the themes revolve around sapiential interests, such as the order of creation, human health and well-being far more than on legal discussions.¹²⁰ Jesus' life story reflects that of Wisdom who sought a dwelling place on earth, with Jerusalem as its focal point in Sir. 24, but was rejected according to 1En 42.¹²¹ Jesus sees himself as "a revealer of the very mind of God".¹²² Also, the expectation that God will requite the actions of the righteous with just rewards, even if an apocalyptic trait comes in when vindication of his followers is deferred to the eschatological arrival of God's kingdom, reflects the sapiential concept of a

¹¹⁴ Witherington, *The Jesus Quest*, 194.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 161, 187, 192.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 185-186.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 188-189.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 187.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 187.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 189-190.

¹²¹ Ibid., 188, 193.

¹²² Ibid., 193, 189.

deed-consequence nexus.¹²³ Jesus instructs his disciples to follow *him* rather than pointing to God.¹²⁴ He performs exorcisms as was believed in the first century of the sage-king Solomon.¹²⁵

The “Lament over Jerusalem” is included in the storyline of Matthew’s gospel, summing up the fate of Jesus, speaking here as Wisdom: embodied Wisdom is rejected when it should have been received as the Son of David.¹²⁶

More recently, the concept of a Wisdom-Christology in Matthew’s gospel has again been criticised,¹²⁷ and many exegetes have largely avoided a discussion of Jesus’ claim to a trans-historical ministry in Matt 23:37-39 par. Exegetical approaches which deny that Jesus is identified with Wisdom in the logion can be roughly divided into three groups, which can be combined in an individual scholar’s interpretation. (1) The logion could be a prophecy given by the risen Jesus, whose envoys, sent post-Easter, had been rejected. (2) The saying only summarises Jesus’ earthly ministry. (3) The supra-historical agent in the logion is God rather than Wisdom.

The main arguments for each proposition will be reviewed in the following.

2.2.2. Matt 23:37-39 Par. as a Prophecy of the Risen Jesus

This position has recently been taken by U. Luz in his commentary on Matthew’s gospel.¹²⁸ He understands the logion as a word of the exalted Jesus, uttered by a

123 Ibid., 190-191.

124 Ibid., 192-193.

125 Ibid., 193.

126 Witherington, *Sage*, 366.

127 Luz, *Matthew 21-28*, 152-153, 160; R.T. France, *Matthew*, 883 n.5; Russell Pregeant: “The Wisdom Passages in Matthew”, in *Treasures New and Old: Recent Contributions to Matthean Studies*, ed. David R. Bauer and Mark Allen Power (Atlanta, Georgia: Scholar’s Press, 1996), 197-232, here pp. 227-228, 230-231; Gathercole, *Preexistent Son*, 213. Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 3:312, 314, 321 remain undecided.

128 Luz, *Matthew 21-28*, 160.

missionary of the Q community, who might have pronounced judgement on Jerusalem after his fruitless attempt to proclaim the gospel in the city, bringing to a close an era of repeated attempts of Jesus' envoys to win over the inhabitants. In this way, he avoids ascribing the trans-generational ministry to the earthly Jesus. Luz discredits an alternative Wisdom interpretation of the Jerusalem Word by giving reasons why a reference to Wisdom was not intended. In particular, he denies that the two consecutive Q sayings in Matt 23:34-39 link Jesus (intentionally) with Wisdom, as (a) 23:34 does not make an effort to emphasise the link by making the transferral of Wisdom's function to Jesus transparent,¹²⁹ (b) in addition, he thinks that the saying in Matt 23:37-39 par. cannot be based on the classical Wisdom myth describing her descent and ascent, because Judaism does not prophesy the return of Wisdom. The logion, however, which originally included v.39, speaks of Jesus' return as the Son of Man,¹³⁰ (c) furthermore, he denies that the elements of the 'Lament' are reminiscent of Wisdom themes,¹³¹ as each of them refers rather to God's functions in biblical tradition.¹³²

These arguments are not entirely convincing. Regarding (a), it admittedly does not appear to be an interest of the first gospel to promote a Wisdom-Christology, but even if prophesying judgement on Israel was the main aim of Matt 23:34-36, Matthew's redaction still proves that the evangelist judged the identification of Jesus with Wisdom as legitimate, since he edited the Q logion to the effect that Jesus replaced Wisdom, and he permits readers to interpret it accordingly.

Regarding (b), Luz observes that Jesus' expectation of the Son of Man in v.39,

¹²⁹ Ibid., 153, see also France, *Matthew*, 879-880.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 159.

¹³¹ See also France, *Matthew*, 883 n.5.

¹³² Luz, *Matthew 21-28*, 159-160.

spoken at the end of his life, fits exactly with words about his indirect identification with the Son of Man coming as judge without a reference to crucifixion and resurrection.¹³³ I see no reason why the Son of Man should not be linked with Wisdom's return, as wisdom is expected to be revealed at the eschatological coming of the Son of Man according to the *Similitudes* of 1 Enoch.¹³⁴ It is not necessary to look for a Jewish tradition that could have been quoted in its entirety in Matt 23:37-39,¹³⁵ if the author of the composition assembled several suitable wisdom themes to characterise Jesus' mission as a reflection of the agency of the divine Wisdom.¹³⁶ Of course, the notion of Jesus prophesying his return has been widely challenged.¹³⁷

Regarding (c), the references to a divine agency in Israel's history indeed belong primarily to God, but it would not be a contradiction if the elements of the logion, which introduce traditional functions of God, likewise referred to God's Wisdom.¹³⁸ If it can be shown that these traditions had been transferred from God to Wisdom in Early Judaism, establishing Wisdom as a representative of God, Wisdom's agency could consequently have been used in the composition of the logion and be decoded by the audience.

Despite rejecting a Wisdom-Christology in Matthew's gospel, Luz admits that an

¹³³ Luz, *Matthew 21-28*, 160.

¹³⁴ See Gabriele Boccaccini, "Jewish Hellenism – Myth or Reality?," in *Jewish Literatures and Cultures: Context and Intertext*, ed. Anita Norich and Yaron Z. Eliav (SBL, 2008), 55-76, here p.66.

¹³⁵ For problems with the lack of a quotable wisdom passage or wisdom myth which includes all elements of the 'Lament', see Steck, *Israel*, 47-48; France, *Matthew*, 879, 883 n.5: "no verbal echo of a known wisdom passage", Tan, *Zion Traditions*, 110-111, does not recognise the existence of a descent-ascent Wisdom myth before the time of Jesus; Luz, *Matthew 21-28*, 159.

¹³⁶ See also Christ, *Sophia*, 138.

¹³⁷ See Steck, *Israel*, 55. See above p.29, esp. n.42.

¹³⁸ Hengel, *Beginnings*, 86 designates Wisdom as a "circumlocution of the Father revealing himself", Nolland, *Matthew*, 949 speaks of a "euphemism for God". Gnilká, *Matthäusevangelium*, 2:307 understands Jesus as the last envoy of God or his Wisdom (as God's representative) respectively.

identification of Jesus with Wisdom could have made sense to the readers, based on a broad distribution of such a notion in early Christianity and its occurrence in Matt 11:19 and 28-30; he only denies that a Wisdom-Christology is “a coherent christological model” or “a determining element of his [Matthew’s] Christology”.¹³⁹ This is a very important observation: Matthew did not create a Wisdom-Christology, but remnants of a Wisdom-Christology can still be found in his gospel.

This position had been argued for extensively by R. Pregeant: he showed that Matthew does not formulate a Wisdom-Christology sufficiently clearly to introduce it to an ignorant reader. He judges that a correspondingly predisposed reader can interpret Matthew’s use of the Q-material in the sense of a Wisdom-Christology.¹⁴⁰ Due to his comparison with Wisdom, Jesus appears as a transcendental being,¹⁴¹ but Matthew does not encourage speculation about Jesus’ relationship with Wisdom.¹⁴² Therefore, it seems that Matthew did not promote a Wisdom-Christology, but presupposed a previously accepted identification of Jesus with Wisdom, which he used to elaborate his Son-Christology.¹⁴³

Finally, Luz’ preferred interpretation that the speaker is the exalted Jesus speaking through his envoys¹⁴⁴ has several difficulties: firstly, an exalted Jesus could not predict that the Jerusalemites would not see him again, as he is already

¹³⁹ Luz, *Matthew* 21-28, 153, see also Nolland, *Matthew*, 475, who denies that Matthew is promoting a Wisdom-Christology, even though Jesus appears as Wisdom incarnate in Matt 11:28-30.

¹⁴⁰ Pregeant, “Passages”, 222, 225.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 227.

¹⁴² Ibid., 228-230; see also Nolland, *Matthew*, p.475.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 231.

¹⁴⁴ Luz, *Matthew* 21-28, 160.

removed from view.¹⁴⁵ Secondly, it is not necessary to construct an origin from an unknown Q community if the logion can be understood as a dominical saying. Thirdly, it is hardly conceivable that the logion speaks of the rejected missionaries abandoning the city, when the theme of abandoning the house so obviously referred to God leaving the temple in reference to Ezek 9-11; such a view of the unnamed missionaries would be extremely exalted and unique. Also, if the exalted Lord was the subject who tried to gather Jerusalem's citizens, the speaker talking as the "I" in v.37 would not be identical with the one leaving the city, namely the prophet of the Q community. Further, Tan argues that the Christian community did not confuse authentic words of Jesus with those of post-Easter prophets.¹⁴⁶

2.2.3. Matt 23:37-39 Par. as a Summary of Jesus' Earthly Ministry

Understanding Matt. 23:37-39 as a summary of Jesus' earthly ministry is a popular option. The difficult term ποσάκις may have referred to several journeys to Jerusalem.¹⁴⁷ Alternatively it has been explained as meaning that Jesus had only *desired* many times to gather the Jerusalemites¹⁴⁸ or had included the wider Jewish community in the term.¹⁴⁹ In keeping with his ministry to the wider Jewish community, Jesus may have designated himself as a prophet in the line of

145 See Steck, *Israel*, 57; Christ, *Sophia*, 148.

146 Tan, *Zion Traditions*, 107.

147 Hagner, *Matthew*, 2:680; R.T. France, *Matthew*, 883; Marshall, *Luke*, 575. M. Casey, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 408, even postulates that the saying must have been uttered on a previous, unrecorded visit to Jerusalem.

148 Nolland, *Matthew*, 950; Wright, *Matthew for Everyone* 2:110. This view is problematic, because the people actually rejected Jesus, which cannot be a reaction to a mere desire to gather them. Also Nolland, *Luke*, 742.

149 Gnilka, *Matthäusevangelium*, 2:303; Nolland, *Luke*, 742; Marshall, *Luke*, 575.

prophets,¹⁵⁰ and uttering a doom oracle would not be out of character (compare Matt 11:20-24; 23:35-36 par.).

Some exegetes find it difficult to reconcile the harsh judgement on the Jewish people with Jesus' mission if Matt 23:39 announced that there was no possibility for the people who had rejected him to repent until the Son of Man came for the final judgement.¹⁵¹ The finality of the judgement would be softened, though, if Matt 23:39 indicated that it is "this generation" of Jesus' contemporaries addressed in 23:36, particularly the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem, who cannot escape their judgement for rejecting him, but for those (present or future) who acclaim Jesus as the "One Coming in the name of the Lord", his return would be a positive reunion.¹⁵²

More serious is Luz' observation that, if the logion is to be taken as a word of Jesus, the interpretation of his death as his withdrawal would be in conflict with understanding his death as atonement.¹⁵³ However, John's gospel demonstrates that the notion of withdrawal (John 14:12 "I am going to the Father") does not exclude the concept of atonement (John 1:29 "Lamb of God"). The possibly very early Jerusalem Word may not offer a completely comprehensive understanding of Jesus' death and have only the one aspect in view that Jesus is in control of his mission.

150 Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 3:311, consequently, God is designated as the sender of prophets in Matt 23:37 by the *passivum divinum*, 320; also Gnilka, *Matthäusevangelium*, 2:302, 306-307, Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 662 n.221. In the same vein, Borg, *New Vision*, 162, quotes Luke 13:34-35 as Jesus' prophecy about the destruction of the temple.

151 so Luz, *Matthew*, 160, 164, see also Strauss, "Weheruf", 91-92.

152 See also Hagner, *Matthew*, 2:681: Matt 23:39 can be read as a condition, meaning that Jesus will only return when the people repent and greet him as God's envoy. Similarly, Davis and Allison, *Matthew*, 3:323-324. For France, *Matthew*, 884-885, the condition means that the disaster can be averted if Jesus is welcomed as Messiah. Nolland, *Matthew*, 953, suggests that v.39 is "prophetic of a change of heart".

153 Luz, *Matthew 21-28*, 160.

Placing Matt 23:37-39 in Jesus' earthly ministry is one reasonable option to interpret its meaning. The question is in what way the logion is intended to convey a more profound meaning to the visible actions by setting Jesus' earthly ministry in relation to God's, or Wisdom's, agency in Israel's history.

Another variety of seeing Matt 23:37-39 describe Jesus' earthly ministry includes the logion in a wider understanding of Jesus' aim to restore Israel as God's people as he approached Jerusalem. **N.T. Wright**, working on the assumption that Jesus is a prophet in the line of prophets, indeed the last prophet,¹⁵⁴ come to inaugurate the kingdom,¹⁵⁵ interprets the elements of the 'Lament' as describing his earthly mission to bring eschatological judgement and renewal in the form of socio-political change to the nation of Israel,¹⁵⁶ involving reform of the temple.

He identifies three themes in the logion that feed into his understanding of Jesus' ministry: Firstly, the metaphor of the hen, willing to sacrifice her life to protect her young, in Matt 23:37 contributes the notion that Jesus, as Israel's Messiah, was willing to accept the punishment that the nation incurred by provoking the Romans, thinking he might be able to avert the destruction of Jerusalem by taking its fate upon himself.¹⁵⁷ Secondly, the chance of salvation was forfeited and judgement has come on Israel as YHWH left the temple and the city now lies unprotected. Thirdly, the quotation from Ps 118 presents Jesus as a pilgrim on his way to the temple (pp. 570-572). The real offence for the Jewish leaders was the deeper meaning of the riddle that emerges when God is seen as the real speaker

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 185.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 197. Thus, he is God's agent or vicegerent, p. 630.

¹⁵⁶ Wright, *Victory*, sets out his position on pp.96-97 that apocalyptic expectations in Jesus' time must be read as metaphorical language referring to predicted changes of earthly, not transcendent, realities.

¹⁵⁷ See also *ibid.*, 608, for the Messiah suffering the fate of the rebels.

of the lines, leading to the claim that Jesus was “embodying the return of YHWH to Zion” (p.642). Wright’s analysis of the saying remains on the plane of historical events with a religious significance.

One problem with Wright’s interpretation is that he integrates individual elements of Matt 23:37-39 par. in his wider account of Jesus’ ministry, rather than begin by establishing the alternative, cohesive view of Jesus’ ministry in past, present and future offered by this particular logion.

Also, interpreting Matt 23:39 as the greeting extended to the pilgrim entering the temple as part of Jesus’ earthly ministry poses a chronological difficulty: How could God’s withdrawal due to the people of Jerusalem rejecting Jesus as announced by the prophetic threat in Matt 23:37-38 be reversed by Jesus’ entry into the city? Or are we to think that God had already withdrawn from the temple before Jesus entered Jerusalem, and Jesus’ ministry in the city (enacting the return of YHWH) was to reverse that judgement? This would create another problem, because the people did greet Jesus as the “One coming in the name of the Lord”, but their positive reception did not, in the end, result in Israel’s reformation nor prevent Jerusalem’s downfall; Wright simply puts this contradiction down to irony.¹⁵⁸ But Matt 23:39 (ἀπ’ ἄρτι) is much better explained as envisaging a future hope, which can only be eschatological if it follows Jesus’ rejection and death. Wright’s immanent concept of Jesus’ messiahship also has the disadvantage that he has to explain the discrepancy between his Jesus’ expectations of establishing a kingdom on earth and the actual outcome of his life as taking a “huge gamble”¹⁵⁹ by challenging the authorities in Jerusalem. It must appear then that

¹⁵⁸ Wright, *Victory*, 572.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 609.

this mission had failed.

Similarly, **J. Dunn**, on the basis that the ποσάκις can be explained as several journeys to Jerusalem,¹⁶⁰ quotes the Jerusalem Word to reconstruct Jesus' sense of calling. Jesus' calling is reconstructed on account of the wider context of the gospel as restoring the city to Yahweh's kingship as the Messiah, reforming the temple worship and setting up the new covenant at the Last Supper.¹⁶¹ This aim corresponds to Jesus' main theme of proclamation, the kingdom of God.¹⁶² Jesus is seen as a prophet in the line of rejected prophets,¹⁶³ and no consideration is given to the possibility that Jesus' mission may be tied up with Wisdom's trans-historical mission. At the most, he appears as something more than a teacher of Wisdom, namely as the "eschatological spokesman for Wisdom, acting in God's stead".¹⁶⁴ As far as I can see, Dunn's interpretation hinges on the summarising term "to gather", which is interpreted by themes provided by the wider context of the gospel, whereas the elements of Jesus' ministry mentioned particularly in the 'Lament' are not analysed in detail, and the specific explanation of Jesus' mission launched by this composition is lost.

2.2.4. Understanding the Supra-Historical Agent in Matt 23:37-39 Par. as God

The actions which indicate a divine subject, such as sending the prophets, spreading protective wings over Israel and abandoning the temple may set Jesus

160 Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, p.323 note 344.

161 Ibid., 791-793.

162 Ibid., 791.

163 Ibid., p.662, note 221.

164 Ibid., 701.

directly in relationship to God. This view has been expressed repeatedly,¹⁶⁵ and was advanced in particular by **S. Gathercole**.

He contends that a claim to Jesus' "divine identity" is more prevalent in the saying than any Wisdom motifs. The Old Testament motifs employed present Jesus as God's glorious presence in the temple, and identify him in some way with God through the image of the protecting mother bird that referred to Yahweh in Deut 32:11.¹⁶⁶ In conjunction with that exalted claim, he explains the "many times" Jesus wanted to gather the Israelites as a concern that reaches across many generations and includes the whole history of Israel, in agreement with Jesus' announcement in Matt 23:34-36, which amalgamates the present generation with the practice of their ancestors of rejecting God's prophets.¹⁶⁷ Thus, Matthew ascribes to Jesus a "preincarnate longing for Israel's repentance".¹⁶⁸

The main reason for denying a reference to the Jewish Wisdom in Matt 23:37-39, is that Gathercole is sceptical about an identification of Jesus with Wisdom in Matthew's gospel in general.¹⁶⁹ Even though he acknowledges that Wisdom motifs are present in Matt 11:28-30 and 27, it does not seem to be Matthew's aim to show that Jesus is identified with Wisdom in the pericope of the easy yoke; regarding Matt 11:27, he judges that the similarities between Wisdom and the Son are limited, and it would be hard to envisage Jesus as an incarnation of Wisdom

165 See Tan, *Zion Traditions*, 110-113; Nolland, *Matthew*, 949-951, but he allows that Wisdom can be a "euphemism" for God. Less decisive Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 3:320, 322-323: interpret God as sender of the prophets and conclude that Jesus is identified with the Shekinah.

166 Gathercole, *Pre-existent Son*, 213, 218.

167 Ibid., 216-218.

168 Ibid., 219. Similarly, Roland Deines, "Jesus and Scripture: Scripture and the Self-Understanding of Jesus" in *All That the Prophets Have Declared: The Appropriation of Scripture in the Emergence of Christianity*, ed. Matthew R. Malcom (Croydon: CPI Group (UK), 2015), 39-70, here p.62, judges that taking God's role, Jesus claims to be the one sending the prophets.

169 Ibid., 213.

because of the different gender.¹⁷⁰ Without a reader's predisposition to identify Jesus with the divine Wisdom, it is far more difficult to catch the allusions to the wisdom tradition in 23:37-39.

I have already commented on Matthew's use of a Wisdom-Christology above: if it is not Matthew's concern to *establish* an identification of Jesus with Wisdom, the references in his sources may indicate remnants of an earlier Wisdom-Christology; the Wisdom motifs are obvious enough in Matt 11:25-30 to suggest that Jesus is portrayed in the role of Wisdom. After all, Matthew writes decades later than Paul's letter to the Corinthians, where the role of the pre-existent Wisdom had already been ascribed to Jesus. Matthew does not need to establish this; he can build on such an accepted notion to develop his Son-Christology. Unfortunately, our sources (1Cor 8:6; Col 1:15; Heb 1:3; Matt 11:19, 27, 28-30, Matt 23:34 in conjunction with Luke 11:49) only attest that such an identification was widely accepted, and facilitated the shaping of a Son-Christology; they do not reach back to the stage where this identification was first made and therefore do not reveal in what way the notion of Wisdom was first included in the emerging Christology.

If, however, we can presuppose that Jesus is identified with Wisdom in some sense because of Matt 11:25-30, the reader may also be predisposed to pick up allusions to Wisdom's agency in the Jerusalem Word. Jesus is identified more easily with Wisdom in Matt 11:27, 28-30 than in the 'Lament', because in the former, Jesus takes a role that is clearly and exclusively Wisdom's role: Wisdom is traditionally given the role of the teacher in the immanent world (see Prov. 8:32-36; Sir 24:19-22; 51:23-26; Sap 6:16-19); and Wisdom knows and reveals

¹⁷⁰ Gathercole, *Pre-existent Son*, 213, 196, 198-199, 202. For the issue with Wisdom's feminine character he quotes especially G.N. Stanton, "Salvation Proclaimed: X. Matthew 11:28-30: Comfortable Words?", *ExpT* 94 (1982-83), 3-9, here p.6.

God's ways (Prov 8:30-35; Sap 9:9-11). This is the role Jesus takes in Matt 11:27-30. Notably, the function of revelation distinguishes Wisdom from God in the Jewish tradition, where Wisdom was God's intimate companion, who knew and revealed God. Jesus takes the role of Wisdom, the revealer, not of God. Matt 23:37-39 taps into a different pool of Wisdom motifs, which is concerned with Wisdom's agency in salvation history. These references are more ambiguous, because Wisdom's agency often mirrors God's actions or executes God's intentions in the Jewish literature. A closer examination of the relevant traditions will be required to establish whether Wisdom can be distinguished from God as a separate agent.

The most serious problem with Gathercole's proposition is that Jesus would appear to be a representation of God, which allows a range of views from Jesus being a representative to Jesus being identified with God. In the Jerusalem Word, Jesus can hardly be identified with God, because the last phrase identifies him as an envoy coming in the name of the Lord. When the references to a trans-historical agent are interpreted as references to God, Jesus' role as God's representative is most often construed in a way that Jesus becomes a human (prophetic or royal) representative,¹⁷¹ who merely participates in God's mission during his lifetime, even if he stands out as the final envoy, whose ministry forms the culmination of all previous, rejected missions to gather the people. Therefore, we must ask in what way Jesus could be taken as a representation of God. Matthew designates Jesus as "Emmanuel" in 1:23, acknowledging that God is present in Jesus; but the formulation "God with us" permits more interpretations than an ontological iden-

¹⁷¹ For one way to avoid the conclusion that Jesus was a human being like any other, see Stuhlmacher, *Theologie*, 1:73. He designates Jesus as a "parable of God", metaphorically spoken, to indicate that he was more than a human representative.

tification with God, and could emphasise God's salvation accomplished through Jesus.¹⁷² The gospel also offers the term "Son" to describe the relationship, which clearly designates Jesus as a representative of God. This leaves the question of the manner in which the filial relationship was envisioned. The reception of certain functions of the divine Wisdom in Jesus' characterisation suggests that the Jewish concept of Wisdom was responsible for extending the understanding of the "Son" beyond that of an obedient follower (as in Sap 2:18) or an anointed king/messiah (Ps 2:7). With the divine Wisdom being one possible representation of God (this is particularly obvious in Sir 24:1-10 and Sap 7:25-26), and Jesus actually replacing her in Paul's theology, the best option to conceptualising the relationship between God and his representative seems to be the model of Wisdom, which can be inferred from the various parts that constitute the Jerusalem saying.

2.3. Conclusion

On one level, Matt 23:37-39 par. may well refer to Jesus' earthly ministry. But the main difficulty and significance of the logion is constituted by the relationship that is suggested between Jesus and a divine agent by interweaving the earthly ministry of the historical Jesus with the trans-historical ministry of a divine figure. This suggests that there is a hidden significance to Jesus' visible actions. In some way, the Jerusalem Word sets Jesus in relation to God's agency in salvation history, and the question remains whether a reference to the Jewish Wisdom is intended to elucidate that relationship.

¹⁷² See Hagner, *Matthew*, 1:24-25; Nolland, *Matthew*, 102, does not see an equation of Jesus and God suggested by the name Emmanuel at this point of the story. Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 1-7. A Continental Commentary*, trans. Wilhelm C. Linss (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), 121-123, sees the name Immanuel in conjunction with Matt 28:20 as an indication that the earthly Jesus is already the same person as the exalted one.

The claim that Jesus is identified with Wisdom in this logion has often been based on a literary argument, which saw Matt 23:37-39 par. as a continuation of Matt 23:34-36 par. in a lost document from which both pericopes had been quoted. However, a quotation of a Wisdom myth or prophecy cannot be demonstrated. Also, there are no convincing reasons that the 'Lament' might have been attached to Matt 23:34-36 par. Luke 11:49-51 in Q, pointing to one continuous source where Wisdom had been the subject. The Jerusalem Word must therefore be interpreted as a separate tradition, and it needs to be shown that the language of the 'Lament' itself is indebted to wisdom motifs. A reference to Wisdom's functions is not unlikely, given that Matthew is known to identify Jesus with Wisdom in Matt 11:19, 27-30; 23:34. If Matthew presupposes such an identification, and all of the elements of the 'Lament' are known as functions of the divine Wisdom, then it is likely that he intended, or inherited, a reference. Recent publications have made it increasingly clear that Matthew, while he does not hesitate to endow Jesus with functions of the divine Wisdom, does not promote a Wisdom-Christology. He only uses Jesus' association with Wisdom to elaborate his Son-Christology.

Even so, the argument is not dependent on Matthew's intentions. Since there is a parallel movement in the very early tradition quoted by Paul in 1 Cor 8:6, which also associates Jesus with a traditional wisdom theme, both Paul's reference to Jesus' *Schöpfungsmittlerschaft*, and the gospel reference to Jesus as agent in remote salvation history may go back to the same original notion that related Jesus to the divine Wisdom, which must have been developed and circulated before

Paul's letter. We can therefore assume that there was some knowledge of the Jewish wisdom traditions among the early Christians, and a predisposition to recognise the parallel to Christ. Consequently, a reader of the JW could make the connection without Matthew prompting him explicitly, and it is equally possible that Matthew's source text in Q had already been understood as alluding to Wisdom's functions.

Seeing that Jesus may be identified with Wisdom, but not in a very strong sense, we can now review again the options for understanding the manner of the supra-historical agency ascribed to him in the Jerusalem Word. The divine agent who had been working throughout the generations of salvation history has alternatively been identified as Wisdom or as God, and both approaches have their merits and their difficulties.

If the saying was referring simultaneously to Wisdom's and Jesus' mission, the dual character of the subject could be explained (a) if Jesus was the last envoy, representing Wisdom on earth.¹⁷³ However, Jesus is more than a human representative. He surpasses all previous envoys due to a new quality of his mission; in particular he surpasses John the Baptist, who was the last of the prophets, in contrast to Jesus, who inaugurates the kingdom of God (see Matt 11:11-13; Luke 7:28).¹⁷⁴ Alternatively (b), the dual character could be explained if an identification of Jesus with Wisdom was intended, but it is questionable how far such an

173 See Hengel "Beginnings of Christology," 86: Jesus speaks "as the plenipotentiary of the wisdom of God," or "its eschatological representative." Jesus as speaker appears somewhat less exalted in Schnackenburg, *The Gospel of Matthew*, trans. Robert R. Barr (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2002), 235, as "God's last emissary". According to Gnllka, *Matthäusevangelium*, 302, Jesus is one of Wisdom's messengers.

174 See Stuhlmacher, *Theologie*, 1:73. Thus John belongs to the human realm, Jesus to God. See also Gese, "Weisheit," 234-235 and Dunn, "Wisdom Incarnate?," 85-91.

identification can be taken, because the NT is peculiarly quiet about a close identification of Jesus with Wisdom, just as the ‘Lament’ does not name Wisdom specifically.

On the other hand, all of the attributes of Wisdom in question have previously belonged to God. God sent the prophets, God sought to save and collect Israel repeatedly, God carried the people as an eagle on his wings, God was resident in the temple, God threatened to abandon Jerusalem. Wisdom only appropriated these attributes secondarily when acting as the tangible, revealed side of God. If Jesus’ agency was directly related to God, his mission could a) be conceptualised as that of a royal or prophetic representative, but as in (a) above, Jesus is more than a human envoy. Or b) he could be identified with God. This conclusion is already prohibited by the last description “One Coming *in the name of the Lord*,” which characterises Jesus as a representative of God rather than God himself. Similarly, Matt 11:27 par. presents Jesus as God’s revealer, who is intimately acquainted with the Father, but not identified with God. If Matthew presents Jesus as the Emmanuel (Matt 1:23), the Shekinah (Matt 23:38) or the Son, there is an element of representation in the acknowledgment of the divine presence in Jesus.

There may be an explanation for Jesus assuming the role of both, God and his Wisdom, without being outright identified with either one: when Jesus does the same thing as Wisdom in describing his own mission in terms of God’s actions, he may be presented as a revelation of God equal to Wisdom, not as her envoy and not as her incarnation.

The main investigation is guided by the question of whether Jesus – and his contemporaries – could draw on a tradition of Wisdom acting in the historical world,

which may have supplied the themes and formed the structure of Jesus' ministry as it is summarised in the 'Lament'. It will also consider in what way Wisdom's relation to God provides a template for the way in which Jesus represents God.

Main Investigation: Jewish Wisdom Traditions Related to Jesus' Actions in the Jerusalem Word

3. The Jewish Tradition Concerned with Wisdom as Agent in History

The short overview of the themes of the Jewish Wisdom tradition given here traces particularly the movement from identifying Wisdom as agent in creation towards a perception of Wisdom as agent in history.

3.1. Wisdom's Functions in the Jewish Tradition

3.1.1. Proverbs and Job: Wisdom Involved in the Creation and Teaching the Fear of the Lord

Prov 8 and Job 28 establish the themes of Wisdom's preexistence, the hidden Wisdom, Wisdom as observer of God's creation or his advisor on cosmic order. In later tradition, Wisdom's involvement with the cosmic order is intensified; she is increasingly perceived as pervading the whole universe (Sir 1:9; 24:5-6) and maintaining its order (Sap 7:24, 27; 8:1). From the very beginning, Wisdom functions as a mediator, who reveals God's order to humans, teaching them the fear of God (Job 28:28; Prov 8:32-36).

The personification of Wisdom is a central theme of many sapiential books, which raises the question of what this literary device is designed to express: is it a rhetorical embellishment or a metaphor for a divine being, or a mythological ex-

pression of a theological insight? Numerous studies have been concerned with identifying her origin in the model of an oriental goddess¹⁷⁵ or a gnostic myth.¹⁷⁶ However, no one definite model has been identified,¹⁷⁷ and it seems more appropriate to speak of features of divinities borrowed from the environment to formulate a genuine Jewish theology¹⁷⁸ of God revealing himself to the rational mind in the created order.¹⁷⁹

3.1.2. Ben Sira: Wisdom Manifest in Israel's Cult and Inspiring the Sages

Ben Sira delves deeper into the traditional topics. His achievement is in recognising Wisdom's agency in the historical world, especially in Israel's salvation history.¹⁸⁰ Wisdom's close relationship with God and her function as mediator are anchored in the immanent world by identifying her place of residence in the temple, where she both represents God and serves in a priestly ministry in Israel's cult (Sir 24:10, 13-15).

Wisdom has a concrete effect in several areas of the sages' lives: Wisdom prompts the sages to praise God and to fear God as they learn to understand the patterns of God's order in creation and his dealing with human beings (Sir 39:13ff.). The fear of God leads to a sinless life, and produces fruits of honour, grace and wealth, which are visible in the life of the disciple (Sir 24:17, 22).

175 See Conzelmann, "Mother", 243: He suggests the syncretistic Isis as predecessor of Wisdom. See p. 230-231 for literature on possible antecedents of Wisdom.

176 See Bultmann, *Synoptic Tradition*, 115 n.3 and "Der religionsgeschichtliche Hintergrund des Prologs zum Johannesevangelium", pp. 10-36 in *Exegetica* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1967), 26-27. Wilckens, "σοφία, σόφος" TWNT 7:497-528, here p. 508-510, constructs a Wisdom myth, which was received by both Judaism and gnosis.

177 Conzelmann, "Mother", 230.

178 See Burton Lee Mack, *Logos and Sophia: Untersuchungen zur Weisheitstheologie im hellenistischen Judentum*, SUNT 10 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck&Ruprecht, 1973), 20, 60.

179 See Gese, "Weisheit", 222.

180 See Johannes Marböck, *Weisheit im Wandel: Untersuchungen zur Weisheitstheologie bei Ben Sira*, BZAW 272 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1999), 56, 62-63.

Wisdom also becomes manifest in the written torah (Sir 24:23). The review of the ancestors' lives in the *laus patrum* recognises Wisdom's role in inspiring Israel's leaders in past times (Sir 44-50, esp. 44:3-4).

3.1.3. Sapientia Solomonis: Wisdom Saves the Fathers of Israel in Critical Situations in Their Lives

Sapientia Salomonis investigates the manner of Wisdom's influence on the human world further. The book uses the Stoic concept of *pneuma* to explain her omnipresence and subtle influence on material entities (Sap 7:24). Due to the subtle material quality of a spirit which she possesses, she can enter into people to inspire them to become God's friends (Sap 7:27), and she has an influence on physical nature as well (Sap 8:1; 10:16-19). Examples of Wisdom's concrete impact on the lives of specific protagonists of Israel's history are given in chapter 10. Sapientia also tries to grasp Wisdom's nature ontologically by defining her relationship to God with a philosophical term as an emanation (Sap 7:25). Wisdom's functions include supporting God in pronouncing judgement (Sap 1:4-7), maintaining the cosmic order (Sap 8:1), and teaching humans God's ways to their benefit (they acquire skill, power and wealth according to Sap 6-9).

3.1.4. 1 Enoch: Wisdom Given to the Son of Man

The apocalyptic movement reverses the perception of Wisdom being increasingly revealed in the human world (1En 42). Wisdom becomes an arcane discipline revealed only to the visionary, who passes his insights on to the elect. Wisdom is again hidden in heaven, but in the *Similitudes*, she is united with the Son of Man enthroned next to God, awaiting his revelation in eschatological times, where she will aid his just judgement (1En 48:1-7; 49:1-3; 51:3).¹⁸¹

¹⁸¹ See Boccaccini, "Hellenistic Judaism," 66.

3.2. The Personification of Wisdom

3.2.1. Hypostases, Divine Beings, Poetic Personification

One feature of the Jewish Wisdom which is particularly important for our consideration of her possible role in the JW is her personification, as it plays an important role in the way Jesus' relationship to Wisdom can be conceptualised. Wisdom appears personified in the central parts of many sapiential writings, and the question whether she was conceived as a hypostasis has been much debated. Therefore, some general thoughts on the concept of hypostatisation are in order before turning to explore Wisdom's role in four different Jewish traditions, which may form a backdrop for Matt 23:37-39 par.

The main reason to reject the impression that Wisdom is presented as a divine being in the Jewish writings has often been that a second divine being could allegedly not be tolerated in Jewish monotheism.¹⁸² The personification has therefore often been understood as a mere literary device. However, Wisdom's personification in the Hebrew Scriptures and Jewish tradition is exceptionally vivid and diversified, attributing to her a character and domain of action of her own. Therefore, Wisdom has often been characterised as a hypostasis, an effective power of God, which is thought of as independent of God and attached to God in varying degrees.

The problem with the term "hypostasis" is that not only its definition but also the phenomena referred to vary considerably. In the first place, it should be noted that the term carries connotations from its use in the trinitarian dogma, which must be

¹⁸² See Dunn, "Wisdom Incarnate?", 80.

distinguished from the designation of divine manifestations in Judaism. Another problem is that the terminology conveys the idea that there is a whole class of similar beings located between heaven and earth, which participate in the nature of a divinity, but it is actually difficult to capture the diverse examples of these elusive divine beings in one crisp definition.¹⁸³

Oesterley and Box defined a hypostasis as: “a quasi-personification of certain attributes proper to God, occupying an intermediate position between personalities and abstract beings”.¹⁸⁴ This definition immediately raises the question what is meant by a ‘personality’ or an ‘abstract being’, other than a general reference to a divine power with some personal traits, which places it between a deity and a quality of a god.

Bousset’s definition: “Die ‘Hypostasen’ sind wie Engel Mittelwesen zwischen Gott und Welt, die sein Wirken auf die Welt ermöglichen” includes the important functional aspect designating the hypostases as God’s instruments to act effectively in the immanent world, without giving up their ontological definition as angelic beings.¹⁸⁵ Frankemölle¹⁸⁶ and Neher¹⁸⁷ strengthen the functional aspect further. Ringgren additionally complicates the matter by including in the category of hypostases non-personal hypostatizations of divine qualities that are spoken of as

183 For a comprehensive overview over the development of the term ‘hypostasis’ see Martin Neher, *Wesen und Wirken der Weisheit in der Sapientia Salomonis*, BZAW 333 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2004), 9-17.

184 W.O.E. Oesterley and G.H. Box, *The Religion and Worship of the Synagogue: An Introduction to the Study of Judaism from the New Testament Period*, second ed. (London: Pitman, 1911), 195. Similar H. Mowinckel, “Hypostasen” RGG² 2:2065-2068.

185 Wilhelm Bousset and H. Gressmann, *Die Religion Des Judentums im Späthellenistischen Zeitalter*, 4th ed., HNT 21 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1966).

186 Frankemölle, *Frühjudentum* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2006, 151 designates a hypostasis as a “Wirkungskraft Gottes”.

187 See Neher, *Wesen*, for his presentation of the important functional aspect stressed by G.Pfeifer, p.16, and pp.119-120, 133-134.

“independent entit[ies].”¹⁸⁸

Ringgren’s definition of a hypostasis takes notice of two different usages of the term: in a philosophical context it denotes the substance or nature (οὐσία) of a particular thing.¹⁸⁹ It should be noted, however, that “hypostasis” can be set apart from the more abstract “ousia” in Hellenistic schools as something existent which can be perceived by human senses (“sinnenfällige Existenz”).¹⁹⁰ This aspect of enabling a tangible perception of the divine in the immanent world forms an important part of the concept of hypostatisation in the antique Jewish world.

In a history of religions context, the term highlights the development of an attribute of a superior god, which acquires features of an individual divine agent in Egyptian and other antique pantheons.¹⁹¹ As every case is different,¹⁹² the evidence of hypostatisation in the Jewish traditions is treated separately. A rudimentary beginning of hypostatisation can be detected in the OT, particularly with the figure of Wisdom, while antique Judaism later shapes a variety of divine attributes into mediators.¹⁹³ Ringgren draws attention to the fact that the personification of an abstract effect of a divinity can differ in intensity, and the borderline to hypostatisation is fluid.¹⁹⁴

The question whether a personification is actually a hypostasis or merely a poet-

188 Helmer Ringgren, *Word and Wisdom: Studies in the Hypostatization of Divine Qualities and Functions in the Ancient Near East* (Lund: H. Ohlssons Boktr., 1947).

189 Helmer Ringgren, “Hypostasen” in RGG³ 3:504-506.

190 Michael Erler, “Hypostase” in RGG⁴ 3:1980-1981.

191 Ringgren, RGG³ 3:504-505.

192 See Ringgren, *Word and Wisdom*, 193.

193 Ringgren, RGG³ 3:506, “Mittelwesen”.

194 Ringgren, RGG³ 3:504.

ical metaphor, which had already been touched on in *Word and Wisdom*,¹⁹⁵ very much came to dominate the debate. Ringgren suggests a partial solution to the ambiguity of such images by observing that the antique authors and their audiences would not have distinguished as sharply as a modern reader between abstract and concrete things, and taken their personification more naturally.¹⁹⁶ “Whether we like to call this a poetic metaphor or not, is of less importance if we only remember that the metaphor has not been so faded and empty as we like to imagine”.¹⁹⁷ It should also be noted that the hypostatisation of divine attributes must be differentiated from the personification of human attributes in literary products.¹⁹⁸

G. Röhser includes personification in his comprehensive study of metaphorical representation of antique deities as a special case among those metaphors.¹⁹⁹ He not only confirms that the antique mindset reckoned with the real existence of divine beings referred to in metaphorical language,²⁰⁰ but draws attention to two factors that give weight to the “perceived reality”²⁰¹ of personifications such as hypostases (Wisdom, Logos), which are less intensely perceived as divine beings than God or the angels; abstract powers (sin) rank even lower on the scale of perceived reality: firstly, from the perspective of the author, personifications “do not ‘construct’ reality but they ‘structure’ reality according to certain experiences.

They contain a receptive and a creative element like any religious or religious

195 Ringgren, *Word and Wisdom*, 8.

196 Ibid., 154-155.

197 Ibid., 155. Similarly Mowinckel. “Hypostasen” in RGG² 2:2065: hypostatisation is not merely metaphorical speech (“bildliche[n] Redeweise[n]”) but is rooted in a way of thought that understands the actions and properties of a person as something relatively independent of that person.

198 See also Frankemölle, *Frühjudentum*, 151.

199 Günther Röhser, *Metaphorik und Personifikation der Sünde: Antike Sündenvorstellungen und die paulinische Harmatia*, WUNT 2/25 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1987).

200 Ibid., 23-25.

201 “Wirklichkeitswert”, Röhser, *Metaphorik*, 24.

philosophical metaphor.”²⁰² The author thus perceives a transcendent reality and helps to imagine it by using accessible images for it. Secondly, from the perspective of the audience, the reality of the personification depends on the perceived reality of the metaphor which constitutes the personification (the action performed by the personified entity like sin ‘entering’ or ‘deceiving’ a person) (pp.).²⁰³

Importantly, Röhser’s analysis of personifications establishes that they work – like any metaphor – because the audience have encountered the power of the image in their own lives. We may presume that in the domain of Wisdom, the reader is predisposed to understand personified Wisdom as a real entity, if he has experienced Wisdom’s personal appeal to seek her out, and her power to impart insights and encourage discipline in a way that surpasses the reader’s own abilities.

The question of whether such a personified entity has a real, tangible effect on people’s lives prioritises the observable functional aspect over the more speculative ontological characterisation of the hypostases. Thus, **Frankemölle** merely describes the hypostases as real entities, which participate ontologically in the godhead and serve as an effective power of the god in the world.²⁰⁴ Significantly, the effective powers are never quite detached from God, but serve as expressions of the transcendent God in the immanent world. He argues that the functional approach is appropriate, because the Hebrew Scriptures only know God in the way he acts in the world, from the perspective of a human observer – functionally –

202 Ibid., p.138, my translation.

203 Ibid., 138-139.

204 See Frankemölle, *Frühjudentum*, 174-175.

rather than attempting ontological speculations.²⁰⁵ The “effective powers” like Wisdom, however, receive a more independent character (“eigenständige(n) Wirkungskraft Gottes”)²⁰⁶ in Hellenistic times, where they can then be described as a hypostasis.²⁰⁷

It is not easy to determine how much the effective powers are separated from God as they are mostly invisible, with the exception of the Angel of the Lord, who is sometimes included among the effective powers or hypostases.²⁰⁸ The ability of this mediator to appear as a material entity in human shape (Judg 6; 13) or as fire (Exod 3:2) or cloud (Exod 14:19) must be taken into consideration in our conception of hypostatisation.

M. Neher’s recent study *Wesen und Wirken der Weisheit in der Sapientia Salomonis* construes Wisdom as God’s attribute (in Proverbs),²⁰⁹ his law (in Ben Sira),²¹⁰ or his instrument or spirit (in the Wisdom of Solomon). Even in the Wisdom of Solomon, which is the latest of the apocryphal writings and is usually seen as having the most hypostatised conception of Wisdom, Neher views Wisdom as a power or instrument of God in dealing with the world in an enlightened manner, and claims that even the ontological statements which designate Wisdom as an “emanation” (Sap 7:24-27) must be understood in functional terms as describing Wisdom’s mediatory function.²¹¹

205 Ibid., 146, 151, 153.

206 Ibid., 151.

207 Ibid., 151, 153, 182.

208 Ibid., 148, and Mowinkel, “Hypostasen”, RGG² 2:2067.

209 Neher, *Wesen*, 58-59.

210 Ibid., 87-88.

211 Ibid., 115, 119-120, 133-134, 151-154.

Considering the diversity of definitions of the term ‘hypostasis’, and the fact that there is no such class of beings defined or seen in antiquity, it seems advisable to follow Neher’s deductive approach to study the evidence of each individual biblical and Jewish text to establish how they present the divine Wisdom, rather than begin with a definition of the term that may not fit the evidence.²¹² For good reasons, recent interest has been in assessing the observable function or the real impact of an alleged divine agent on events in history. The independence of such action from the superior god determines to what extent a personification is perceived as a hypostatisation by the community of the ancients. Another important aspect is whether a poetical personification is *meant* to describe a mystical person, and whether the audience would understand it that way. There is little doubt that the personified heavenly Wisdom is portrayed in various sources as participating in God to a certain extent; it is far more controversial whether she is also conceived as a separate being. Three considerations will help establish how much Wisdom appears as a separate being: (1) Beginning with the more accessible functional aspect, the question is whether Wisdom is presented merely as an effective power of God or also as an independent agent. (2) In a second step, we need to ask in what way Jewish sources interpret their observations of Wisdom’s function, and whether they move on to make ontological statements. (3) To establish the range of possibilities for understanding the nature of Wisdom as a heavenly being, we must first ask what kind of heavenly beings the Hebrew Scriptures could allow without seeing God’s sovereignty compromised.

212 Ibid., 17.

3.2.2. Heavenly Beings in the Hebrew Scriptures

In spite of biblical monotheism, the Hebrew Scriptures refer to other heavenly or divine beings, both in the ancient narratives of Genesis and in later prophetic visions. As Esther Hamori sums up her investigation of supernatural beings in the OT, “many biblical texts depict a populated heaven.”²¹³ These transcendent beings can be divided into three groups: (1) visions or representations of a collective heavenly court, (2) angels or heavenly messengers who appear on earth, and (3) the “Angel of the Lord”.

(1) Visions of the heavenly court occur from Genesis to Zechariah. In Gen 28:12 and 32:2-3, Jacob sees the “angels of God” (מַלְאָכֵי אֱלֹהִים) on the heavenly ladder or encamped in Mahanaim; in 1 Kgs 22:19-21 the prophet Micaiah sees the “host of heaven” (כָּל־צְבָא הַשָּׁמַיִם) standing besides God’s throne; this heavenly company includes specifically a “spirit” (הָרוּחַ), who offers to deceive king Ahab. Zechariah envisions “all the Holy Ones” (כָּל־קְדוֹשִׁים, Zech 14:5), but also mentions specifically his anthropomorphic guide (מַלְאָךְ, Zech 2:3) and Satan (Zech 3:1). Seraphim (Isa 6:2-7) and Cherubim (Ezek 10:2-20) are mentioned in the prophets’ visions of God’s throne as specific members of the heavenly court with particular functions. All of the specific heavenly beings are depicted, or made visible to the prophet in a form which suits their present function, as for example a spirit deceives Ahab unnoticed and the Cherubim with their wings carry God’s throne up

²¹³ Esther J. Hamori, *When Gods Were Men: The Embodied God in Biblical and Near Eastern Literature*, BZAW 384 (Berlin, New York: De Gruyter, 2008), 118. Similarly, Heinz-Dieter Neef, *Gottes himmlischer Thronrat: Hintergrund und Bedeutung von sôd JHWH im Alten Testament*, AzTh 79 (Stuttgart: Calwer, 1994), 13, speaks about the OT mentioning divine figures in God’s nearest environment repeatedly, using multiple terms for the heavenly council. See also Boccaccini, “Jewish Hellenism”, 62, 71: In his view, Wisdom had been a divine being in the post-exilic biblical texts such as Job 28 and Prov. 8, and had only been reduced to “poetic imagery” by the Christian and Rabbinic understanding of Christ and the torah respectively, which assumed Wisdom’s attribute of pre-existence.

into the air.²¹⁴

The heavenly host reappears in the psalms and sapiential literature, mostly as a collective body. The functions of these heavenly beings are praising God, serving God, serving disadvantaged people, speaking in God's council and being mediators between God and man.²¹⁵ Where Ugaritic or other Phoenician literature is concerned, the summarising presentation of the heavenly court which lacks individual features of various members, has prompted the – uncertain – assumption that they are all hypostases of the highest God rather than separate groups of gods.²¹⁶ If this was the case, the same argument might apply to the heavenly beings in the Hebrew Bible, which are probably analogous to the Canaanite concept.²¹⁷

However, the members of the heavenly court can hardly be seen as hypostatised properties of God in Ps 82, which characterises the divine members of God's court (אֱלֹהִים, Ps 82:1) as fundamentally different from God because of their inadequate judgement, which is the reason for their degradation.²¹⁸

(2) Another matter are the encounters of divine beings on earth. Angels appear in concrete anthropomorphic form when they visit Lot in Gen 19: they look like men and they are tangibly real as they grasp Lot's hands and pull him away in vv.10 and 16, but they have the supernatural ability to strike the Sodomites with blindness (v.11). The supernatural nature of the messenger is also obvious where

214 See Hamori, *Gods*, 119-122, 127.

215 Neef, *Thronrat*, 15-17.

216 Ibid., 21, 22, 24-25.

217 Ibid., 59.

218 Cf. *ibid.*, 14. He lists a range of functions that distinguish the *elohim* from God, but doesn't draw a conclusion about how this impacts on a possible hypostatisation theory.

the angel appears to Elijah in his sleep, but then leaves tangible food beside him, a long way from human settlements in the desert (1Kgs 19:4-7).

(3) However, most of the angelic appearances are categorised as the “Angel of the Lord”. He can appear in anthropomorphic shape (Num 22; Judg 6; 13) or as a disembodied voice (Gen 16:7-12; 21:17-18), as fire in the burning bush (Exod 3:2) or as pillar of cloud (Exod 14:19; 23:20-23). Furthermore, he can act invisibly as deadly disease (Isa 37:36 and 2 Sam 24:15-17)²¹⁹ or effective terror that cripples Israel’s enemies (Exod 23:27).²²⁰ The “Angel of the Lord” is the tangible or visible presence of God as represented by an angelic mediator. The Angel is an immanent physical appearance, which enables, and at the same time hides, God’s presence in the immanent world. This particular divine agent will receive more attention below (ch. 4.1.).

In summary, heavenly beings are envisioned in the Hebrew Scriptures as members of the heavenly court, some of which have been encountered in the immanent world as messengers or servants of God, sometimes in anthropomorphic shape, sometimes as fire or cloud, as invisible power, which inflicts illness or death. Most of these heavenly appearances are called angels, while others appear as a spirit, like the deceptive spirit. As Wisdom is perceived as an invisible spirit by human beings and is conceived as a spirit in *Sapientia Salomonis*, she could have a place among the heavenly host like that ‘deceptive spirit’. On the other hand, she can sometimes be related to the Angel of the Lord in sapiential texts.

219 A similar figure, closely associated with God, is the “destroyer” in Exod 12:23. For Hamori, *Gods*, 124, the *mashit* is a “type of divine being”.

220 See Carol Meyers, *Exodus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 204. For her, this manifestation of God’s presence represents a “second tier of divine beings”.

4. Wisdom as Sender of the Prophets

The most widely discussed interpretation of Jesus' trans-historical activity in Matt 23:37 is that of deploying prophets throughout the generations to call Israel back to God. If the "many times" Jesus sought to win the Israelites are linked to Jerusalem rejecting the prophets, and can be explained by Jesus assuming Wisdom's role, we should expect to see an established tradition of Wisdom as the sender of prophets in Early Judaism.

The number of texts that align wisdom and prophets is very limited. The sapiential tradition is largely separate from the prophecy of the Hebrew Scriptures and began to flourish as the era of scriptural prophets came to an end; the two strands of tradition flow together only towards the end of the pre-Christian era in the apocalyptic movement.²²¹ Some texts featuring Wisdom's role of sending out prophets are Prov 1:20-33, Sap 7:27, 11:1 and Luke 11:49.

4.1. Prov 1:20-33: Is Wisdom a Messenger or a Sender of Prophets?

Prov 1:20-33 is one extensive passage that sets Wisdom in relation to prophecy, with Lady Wisdom appearing as a prophet herself. The speech she delivers at the beginning of this book to engage the reader follows on from a passage of advice given by parents and teachers, and serves to encourage the audience to take seriously the choice between a godly life and undisciplined behaviour. Wisdom's ap-

²²¹ See e.g. Hartmut Gese, "Die dreifache Gestaltwerdung des alten Testaments" in *Alttestamentliche Studien* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1991) 1-28, here p.22, "...in der Transformation der Prophetie zur Apokalyptik ist die Weisheit das bestimmende Element".

peal, however, transcends that of a human teacher, as she is speaking with the authority of God.²²² Excerpts from the passage outline her ministry:

- 20a Wisdom cries out in the street,
 ...
 22 ‘How long, O simple ones, will you love being simple?
 How long will scoffers delight in their scoffing and fools hate knowledge?
 23 Give heed (תְּשׁוּבוּ) to my reproof (לְתוֹכְחָתִי),
 I will pour out my thoughts (רִיחִי) to you
 I will make my words known to you.
 ...
 24a Because I have called and you refused
 ...
 26 I also will laugh at your calamity;
 ...
 28 Then they will call upon me, but I will not answer;
 they will seek me diligently, but will not find me.
 ...
 32b the complacency of fools destroys them;
 33 but those who listen to me will be secure
 and will live at ease, without dread of disaster. (NRSV)

Prophetic form and sapiential contents are merged in this passage, portraying Wisdom as a prophetess. But does that mean that Wisdom took the initiative to send out prophets (or envoys), or does the passage merely employ established prophetic forms of address to promote her sapiential teaching as originating in God?²²³

Gerlinde Baumann’s comprehensive study, which builds on many previously made observations, lists a number of aspects in Wisdom’s speech which are borrowed from the prophetic tradition to the extent that Wisdom appears as an “Israelite prophetess”:²²⁴

222 See Roland Edmund Murphy, *Proverbs*, WBC 22 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998), 11-12; William McKane, *Proverbs: A New Approach*, OTL (London: SMC, 1970), 277, summarises the presentation of Wisdom as a “charismatic wisdom teacher and no more”. See also Ellen F. Davis, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Songs*, Westminster Bible Companion (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox, 2000), 32: Wisdom echoes the parental instruction.

223 Gerlinde Baumann, *Die Weisheitsgestalt in Proverbien 1-9: Traditionsgeschichtliche und Theologische Studien* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1995), 289, suggests the latter.

224 Baumann, *Weisheitsgestalt*, 197. This analysis reflects the observation of most exegetes.

She speaks in a public place and launches a violent appeal.²²⁵ She laments rejection like God in Jeremiah 4:2f.²²⁶ She entreats the people to return from their foolish ways using the prophets' term 'šwb' (תשובה, v.23).²²⁷ She promises the gift of the Spirit (and as in Isa 59:21, knowledge of her words) to those who repent.²²⁸ The threat of judgement is delivered in a form which is typical of prophecy.²²⁹ Wisdom will turn away when she is rejected, just as the prophets repeatedly state that God called and the people did not listen (Isa 50:2; 66:4; Jer 7:13, 24-27; Zech 7:13); they even speak of God responding to the rejection with corresponding judgement as he refuses to listen to them when they cry out to him (Zech 7:13, Mic 3:4). He will reject them (Jer 7:29) and withdraw (Jer 7:13-14).²³⁰ Finally, the judgement Wisdom announces is similar to the prophetic principle that God will hold people to account for their deeds, even if the consequences come in

Robert Balgarnie Young Scott, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes*, AB 18 (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1965), 39. Otto Plöger, *Sprüche Salomos (Proverbia)*, BKAT 17 (Neukirchen-Vlyun: Neukirchener Verlag, 1984), 20: Wearing the cloak of a prophet. Also Murphy, *Proverbs*, 8: "stance of a prophet". Davis, *Proverbs*, 33 "imitates" the prophets. James Alfred Loader, *Proverbs 1-9* (Leuven: Peeters, 2014), 91, 93 sees a prophetic overtone, but not Wisdom presented as a prophetess. Against McKane *Proverbs*, 273, 276, who thinks that "Wisdom speaks like a teacher".

225 Baumann, *Weisheitsgestalt*, 178, also Murphy *Proverbs*, 10, Davis, *Proverbs*, 34.

226 Baumann, *Weisheitsgestalt*, 179, Murphy, *Proverbs*, 12 "feels rebuffed".

227 Baumann, *Weisheitsgestalt*, 179-180 shows that the verb 'šwb' must be understood as 'return' or 'repentance' in a context which depends on the form of a prophetic threat. There is no unavoidable judgement announced as Wisdom exercises all care to instruct the people to betterment; see also: Plöger, *Sprüche*, 18; against this see Murphy, *Proverbs*, 7-8, 10 who interprets the verse as a condemnation for manifest behaviour rather than an invitation to repent; Loader, *Proverbs*, 94-96, only sees an appeal to the crowd to stop and listen to Wisdom's speech. McKane, *Proverbs*, 276 says that Wisdom calls for attentiveness rather than repentance.

228 Baumann, *Weisheitsgestalt*, 181-182. Against this see Murphy, *Proverbs*, 10 and Loader, *Proverbs*, 95-96, who interpret the 'spirit' as Wisdom's anger or a piece of her mind which she wants people to listen to.

229 Baumann, *Weisheitsgestalt*, 182ff. Cf. also Plöger, *Sprüche*, 20 and McKane, *Proverbs*, 274, "Scheltrede" and "Drohrede"; Davis, *Proverbs*, 34, "judgement speech(es)"; Murphy, *Proverbs*, 8 "style of a prophet denouncing the failure of the people"; R.N. Whybray, *Proverbs*, NCB (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 43.

230 Murphy, *Proverbs*, 10. However, Baumann, *Weisheitsgestalt*, 189, points out that even though the prophets speak of God refusing to listen, the lexical terms are different from the ones used in Prov 1:28. More examples of God refusing to listen in prophetic speech are given by Loader, *Proverbs*, 98.

their own sapiential shape: Wisdom will withdraw and leave the unwise to their own counsels, which will result in disaster, in contrast to the prophets who announced God's coming for judgement.²³¹

At the same time, there is equally an agreement that Wisdom differs from the scriptural prophets in her sapiential diction²³² and teaching goals,²³³ such as the deed-consequence nexus, and in the fact that she neither delivers God's message nor admonishes the people to turn to God. Instead, she speaks on her own account, feels rejected by inappropriate behaviour herself, endeavours to convert people to listen to herself (1:33), and threatens with her own withdrawal (1:28). Closer scrutiny reveals that she assumes the role of God rather than that of a prophet in that what had previously been referred to God is now referred to her.²³⁴ Wisdom assumes divine authority in two ways: by confronting people as an invisible but engaging divine counterpart, and by devising her own sapiential message.

Considering that she is likened to God by doing all the things which had previously been God's role, the figurative representation of Wisdom in Prov 1 may be due to the fact that Wisdom now appears as a personal counterpart to the human addressee as God does when he engages with human beings.²³⁵ For a more comprehensive judgement on the significance of the literary personification of

231 Baumann, *Weisheitsgestalt*, 290, Plöger, *Sprüche*, 19, McKane, *Proverbs*, 276 "an order which maintains itself without outside intervention"; Whybray, *Proverbs*, 47: "not the agent of the calamity but a scornful observer of it."

232 Plöger, *Sprüche*, 19, also: Murphy *Proverbs*, 8, 10-11.

233 McKane, *Proverbs*, 275-276; also Baumann, *Weisheitsgestalt*, 198, Loader, *Proverbs*, 100.

234 Murphy, *Proverbs*, 10, 12; Whybray, *Proverbs*, 44. Also Baumann, *Weisheitsgestalt*, 198, more cautiously McKane, *Proverbs*, 275, 277 "with the authority of Yahweh". Scott, *Proverbs*, 39, recognises that Wisdom speaks not as a messenger, but for herself, and Plöger, *Sprüche*, 19 observes that Wisdom speaks with the words we are used to hear from God while remaining Wisdom, but they stop short of drawing the conclusion that Wisdom assumes the role of God.

235 Contrary to McKane, *Proverbs*, 277, for whom Wisdom in Prov 1 is a representation of the wisdom teacher.

Wisdom in Proverbs, Prov 8, too, must be consulted.²³⁶ Wisdom does impress as a “persona” with an authoritative voice which exceeds the authority of a parent, and she has personal traits as she loves and feels hurt at her rejection.²³⁷ The personified Wisdom, who makes a vivid impression like a goddess, may go back to a Ugaritic myth where the goddess laughs at her enemies when she does battle with them.²³⁸ The “quasi-divine claims”²³⁹ made on Wisdom’s behalf in Prov 1:20-33 may indicate that she is portrayed as God’s “intermediary”.²⁴⁰ Or, as Murphy puts it with a wider view encompassing Prov 1-9, she is portrayed as “self-revelation of God” addressing humankind through his creation,²⁴¹ giving her a “divine status” as God’s “surrogate”; in his view, she is the female side of God rather than an attribute.²⁴²

However, scholars have rejected the idea of any additional, even though subordinate, deity in Proverbs, even if she exhibits some traits of an independent divine agent.²⁴³ On the whole, the wisdom of Proverbs is seen more as a personification than a hypostasis.²⁴⁴ Thus, Wisdom’s profile as an independent divine agent is only just emerging in the book of Proverbs.

236 See James D. Martin, *Proverbs* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 87. Scott, *Proverbs*, 39. Also McKane, *Proverbs*, 277: God is the fountain of wisdom. Plöger *Sprüche*, 18; Murphy *Proverbs*, 8, 278-80; Davis, *Proverbs*, 32.

237 Murphy, *Proverbs*, 11-12; cf. also McKane, *Proverbs*, 275: Wisdom's authority derives directly from Yahweh which makes her superior to any human teacher.

238 Scott, *Proverbs*, 39.

239 Whybray, *Proverbs*, 44.

240 Ibid.

241 Murphy, *Proverbs*, 55.

242 Ibid., 280.

243 Scott, *Proverbs*, 39; also McKane *Proverbs*, 277; Martin, *Proverbs*, 87.

244 See Martin, *Proverbs*, 87; Scott, *Proverbs*, 71-72; Loader, *Proverbs*, 89-90 speaks of personified Wisdom as a trope rather than a goddess; Davis, *Proverbs*, 32 “a literary device”. Nevertheless, some, like Whybray, *Proverbs*, 28, think that this is difficult to decide as the distinction between personification and hypostasis may not have been made by the original audience. See also Ringgren, *Word and Wisdom*, 154-155.

Regarding the contents of Wisdom's message, her speech creates the prototype of an appeal to make a choice between folly and discipline, between the gifts promised by the world and by God, delivered in the form of OT prophecy. She is superior to the prophets, and her message is more original than theirs, as her speech provides the pattern of the sapiential message, which will then be delivered by countless sages in the particular circumstances of their environment. In that sense, she is a sender of sages. Ben Sira is an example of such a sage who delivers Wisdom's curriculum in the particular setting of his school, and he explicitly legitimises his teaching as being akin to prophecy: "I pour out wisdom like prophecy" (Sir 24:33).²⁴⁵ The apocalypse of 1 Enoch may be viewed as a further example of a sapiential book where insights of heavenly wisdom are delivered in the form of prophetic visions thematising the eschatological judgement.²⁴⁶ These sages may be who Matt 23:37 par. is referring to by the 'envoys' who had been killed in Jerusalem alongside the prophets.

In conclusion, Wisdom's message is portrayed as a new kind of prophecy, and therefore derives its legitimisation from the recognised divine origin of prophecy. However, personified Wisdom assumes God's role by speaking on her own account and by creating a new pattern of sapiential address, which will be adapted by her messengers, the sages, as they each teach in their particular environments. Thus, Wisdom appears as both, a prophet and the sender of prophets or envoys. Wisdom's identification with God constitutes the most astounding similarity to

245 See Randal A. Argall. *1 Enoch and Sirach: A Comparative Literary and Conceptual Analysis of the Themes of Revelation, Creation, and Judgement* (Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1995), 56-57. See also p.54-55, where he traces elements of a prophetic calling in Wisdom's portrayal in Sir 24.

246 See Michael Knibb, "The Ethiopian Book of Enoch in Recent Research.", pp. 17-35 in *Essays on the Book of Enoch and Other Early Jewish Texts and Traditions*, SVTP (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2008), 24-29. He speaks of "mantic wisdom" or "revealed wisdom".

the Jerusalem Word: the speaker also speaks about himself in a way which had previously been known as God's way of dealing with Israel (gathering the people, possibly sending them prophets, protecting them like a mother bird, being rejected, living in the temple, announcing his withdrawal as a judgement). Wisdom behaves like God, and Jesus also behaves like God.

In some of those activities, Jesus' role is the same as Wisdom's, including their ambiguous relationship to the prophets. Jesus speaks as a prophet in the logion, as shown by several themes in Jesus' words which imitate the message of the prophets: the intention of bringing Israel back to God, giving the reason for judgement (in this case the rejection of God's envoys), the announcement of the judgement, and in correspondence with the second and third Isaiah, the future hope. As with Wisdom, Jesus' role is not exhausted in being a prophet, but he steps into God's role, claiming to be the one who takes care of Israel, calling them to himself, and he is the one who inflicts judgement, not by bringing calamities over Israel, but by leaving the temple empty when he removes his presence (οὐ μὴ με ἴδετε, Matt 23:39).

Just as Wisdom moves on from classical prophecy, finding new ways to appeal to the people, Jesus evokes the prophets, but allows for other approaches when he says "I wanted to *gather*." Wisdom can likewise be seen to 'gather' the people, in much the same way as the prophets did, but with a new sapiential theme.

Excursus: The Angel of the Lord

The portrayal of Wisdom's dual nature, which we observed in Prov 1:20-33, deserves more attention: Wisdom appeared as a servant of God behaving like a

prophet, at the same time as she was virtually identified with God. In the course of this investigation, this feature was observed again and again in other sapiential texts, suggesting that it is an important way of characterising Wisdom. The concept of a dual-nature mediator is not new. In older texts, the Angel of the Lord possessed the same quality. It will be helpful to establish some characteristics of the Angel of the Lord before going on to interpret further sapiential texts, in order to be alert to the brief allusions, where Wisdom is aligned with this divine manifestation.

The Angel of the Lord appears in anthropomorphic shape to Balaam in Num 22:31, he calls Gideon in Judg 6, announces Samson's birth in Judg 13, appears in Josh 5 as the "commander of the Lord's army", and finds Hagar and speaks to her in Gen 16:7-12 and 21:17-18. The Angel in Dan 3:25/Dan LXX 3:92, who saves the three Jews in the furnace, looks like a man to Nebuchadnezzar, but is rationalised as a "whistling spirit of a dew" in Dan LXX 3:49-50.

The Angel had at times been visible as a material entity like the fire in the burning bush or the pillar of cloud. He had acted invisibly in form of a deadly disease (Isa 37:36 and 2 Sam 24:15-17) or as the terror that crippled Israel's enemies (Exod 23:27). In a positive manifestation of the invisible Angel reported in Gen 48:16, he sustained Jacob throughout his life.

Unlike most angels, who are clearly distinct from God, the Angel of the Lord is very closely linked to God. In fact, he is rather difficult to separate from God himself, even if he appears as a phenomenon which can be perceived separately.

Thus, in Gen 16:7, 13 for example, the Angel and the Lord are used interchangeably. On one hand, God is set apart from the Angel who performs God's instructions, vocalises his message, or indicates God's presence while protecting him from view (when he appears as the pillar of cloud or the fire Moses encountered in the burning bush). On the other hand, the Angel can be virtually identified with God.

The divine encounter constituted by the appearance of the Angel of the Lord has been understood in very different ways, by a representation theory, an identification theory, a hypostatisation theory, a logos theory, and an interpolation theory.²⁴⁷

Given that the term מַלְאָכִים can mean "messenger" as well as "angel", the term is usually translated as "messenger of YHWH". Westermann claims that the messenger in the narratives of Genesis is a representative of God, who carries a divine message which rescues individuals from a desperate situation. In his view, the messenger is merely an ordinary human being unknown to the story's protagonist.²⁴⁸ This natural explanation of the messenger corresponds to instances where the term 'angel of the Lord' is used for obviously human messengers commissioned to deliver God's message like the priesthood in Mal 2:7, or the prophet Haggai in Hag 1:13.

In contrast, for von Rad, the Angel is identified with God, as their identity is frequently confused within one narrative, e.g. when speaking to Hagar in Gen

247 See R. Ficker, "מַלְאָכִים Bote", THAT 1:900-908, here 907, and Freedman-Willoughby, "מַלְאָכִים", TDOT 8:308-325, here p.321-322, for variations on these theories.

248 Claus Westermann, *Genesis 12-36: A Commentary*, trans. John J. Scullion (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1985), 243. At a later time though, as in Gen 48:16, the Angel is identified with God, see Claus Westermann, *Genesis 37-50: A Commentary*, trans. John J. Scullion (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1986), 190.

16:7ff., Gen 21:17ff., and the roles of God and his Angel are similarly confused in Gen 22:11ff.; 31:11ff.; Exod 3:2ff.; Judg 2:1ff. One important observation in this context is that the Angel tends to replace YHWH in the narratives at the point where God “enters the apperception of man”. Von Rad designates the ‘Angel’ as a “personification of God’s assistance to Israel.”²⁴⁹ Freedman-Willoughby’s slight modification of this expression, “an agent of God’s assistance”, referring to Gen 24:7, 40; Exod 23:20, 23; 32:2, 34; Num 20:16, Mal 3:1; Exod 14:19; Num 22:22; 1Kgs 19:7; 2Kgs 19:35, ascribes the same function to a representative.

The contrasting representation and identification theories reflect precisely the dual nature of the mediator, who can be understood either as an envoy of God or as an appearance of God himself. If the messenger were a natural entity like a fire, cloud or prophet, he would be the bearer of a divine message, power or spirit; if the Angel was a veiled appearance of God himself, the term would signify a theophany where God becomes tangible in the sensual world. The fact that such appearances in the material world occur again and again reveals God’s desire to communicate with human beings in their physical form, without however, revealing the essence of his own being.²⁵⁰

The fact that the figure of the Angel of the Lord appears repeatedly as a substitution for a direct theophany has called for an explanation, which is provided either

249 Gerhard von Rad, “ἄγγελος”, TDNT 1:76-80, here p.77 and Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis. A Commentary*, trans. John H. Marks (London: SMC, 1961), 188. However, in Gerhard von Rad, *Theologie des Alten Testaments*, vol.1 (München: Chr. Kaiser, 1960), 299-300, he identifies other encounters, where the Angel of the Lord is God’s surrogate.

250 See Hamori, *Gods*, 153-154: she concludes that the many different theophanies, none of which reveals God completely as he is, serve to allow communication between God and man, when God appears in a form which is approachable for the human in a particular situation. On the other hand, the variety of shapes of these theophanies precludes any conclusions about God’s own nature. See p.127 for the shapes of *mal’ākīm* adopted to their function.

by a theory of hypostatisation, leading to a logos theory, or by a theory of interpolation,²⁵¹ which claims that later generations theologised crude original accounts of a divine encounter. The proposition that the ‘Angel’ later replaced direct encounters with God is, however, problematic, because the Angel appears precisely in the most ancient stories of Genesis.²⁵² Another observation that indicates the antiquity of these encounters with God’s mediator is that the mysterious figure occurs without being identified with the technical term ‘Angel of the Lord’. Thus, the “commander of the Lord’s army” in Josh 5:13-15, who displays the same ambiguous features, being a servant of God (commander), and commanding Joshua’s veneration in the same way as Moses – taking off his shoes at the burning bush – is reminiscent of the Angel without bearing his name.²⁵³ Joshua’s unique encounter with the undefined divine person points to a genuine experience, which had not yet been processed as the theological concept of the ‘Angel’ at the time when the story was fixed.²⁵⁴

Conversely, it has been suggested that the anthropomorphic figure of the Angel

251 So for example Meier, “Angel Of Yahweh”, DDD 53-59, here 58-59. For him, the mal’āk YHWH is not one coherent figure, but a different appearance each time he occurs.

252 See Westermann, *Genesis 12-36*, 243. Similarly James Barr, “Theophany and Anthropomorphism in the Old Testament” pp. 31-38 in *Congress Volume*, VT Sup 7 (Leiden: 1959), 33-34, and Hamori, *Gods*, 117.

253 Trent C. Butler, *Joshua*, WBC 7 (Mexico City: Thomas Nelson, 1983), 61-62 identifies the commander with the “divine messenger”; Robert Boling, *Joshua*, AB 6 (New York: Doubleday, 1984), 199, specifies the character of the messenger as a “forerunner” based on Mal 3:1. Daniel L. Hawk, *Joshua* (Collegeville, Minn.: The Liturgical Press, 2000), 83-84, speaks of an encounter with a divine being comparable to the Angel of the Lord. Thomas B. Dozeman, *Joshua 1-12: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, Anchor Yale Bible 6B (New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 2015), 327-328, includes the traditional figure of the Angel of the Lord in his concept of a “divine warrior”. Hartmut N. Rösel, *Joshua* (Leuven: Peeters, 2011), 88-89, speaks of “an angel”, but relates the appearance to a range of stories of the Angel of the Lord, such as Num 22:23, 31; 1 Chr 21:16; Exod 3:5.

254 The explanation that Josh 5:13-15 preserves the remainders of a very old narrative fitted into the beginning of the story of Joshua’s conquest (Boling, *Joshua*, 196), is more convincing than the idea that the three verses have been created from various elements of previous theophanies in order to construct a second introduction to the conquest of Jericho, intended to give a justification for the holy war (Dozeman, *Joshua*, 323-324, 327).

belonged to an ancient time, where he replaced the *numina* in various Canaanite worship sites commemorating local encounters with the divine.²⁵⁵ But the physical appearances of divine manifestations cannot be reduced to reflections of the Canaanite religion either, because the figure likewise features in original Israelite tradition,²⁵⁶ such as the Exodus and prophetic visions.

One account which provided a powerful symbolism and was later taken up by the wisdom tradition is that of God's appearance in the pillar of cloud and fire. Exod 23:20-23 identifies the cloud that led Israel through the desert according to Num 9:15-23 with God's Angel. The relationship between God and his Angel borders on identification, as God places his name on the messenger and speaks through him according to Exod 23:21.²⁵⁷ At the same time, God speaks of a messenger, whom he sends, who is therefore distinct from God himself.²⁵⁸ A new appearance of the Angel in Exod 32:33; 33:2-3 is expressly contrasted with God's presence for the reason that the unfaithful people could not survive in the holy presence of the Lord.²⁵⁹ When the Angel is predicted in Exod 23:23, 27 to act as "my terror" during the conquest of the promised land, he can be related to the "commander of

255 See von Rad, *Theologie*, 1:299 for this explanation.

256 Von Rad, *ibid.* quotes 2Kgs 19:35; 1Kgs 19:7 and Num 22:22 as the origin of this concept.

257 See John I. Durham, *Exodus*, WBC 3 (Mexico City: Thomas Nelson, 1987), 335: "extension of Yahweh's own person and presence"; Philip Hyatt, *Exodus*, NCB (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 251: "a full representative of Yahweh", A.H. McNeile, *The Book of Exodus*, 2nd ed., trans. Johan Rebel and Sierd. Woudstra, HCOT (London: Methuen, 1917), 211, "Yahweh himself".

258 Cornelis Houtman, *Exodus*, vol. 3 (Leuven: Peeters, 1993-2002), 274-275: A messenger who represents YHWH. He is distinguished from God, because the messenger does not participate in the divine prerogative to forgive sins in 23:21.

259 See Durham, *Exodus*, 437; Meyers, *Exodus*, 262: "a separate emissary", Martin Ravndal Hauge, *The Descent from the Mountain: Narrative Patterns in Exodus 19-40*, JSOTSup 323 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 90: "angel substituting for YHWH himself...is not experienced as satisfactory"; Brevard S. Childs, *Exodus: A Commentary* (London: SMC, 1974), 587: "divine messenger", "God himself will no longer guide Israel on its way", Hyatt, *Exodus*, 311: "separate from Yahweh himself", 313 "Yahweh or his surrogate". This new perspective on the guiding Angel not symbolising the divine presence has caused scholars to ascribe the verse to another source. Contrary to McNeile, *Exodus*, 211, who does not distinguish between the Angel in Exod 33:2 and the one in Exod 23:20.

God's army" in Josh 5; a similar appearance of God's agent in history with an adverse impact on Israel's enemies is that of the "destroyer" in Exod 12:23 and Isa 37:36. God's Angel has an effect not only on those who believe in him and lend their human efforts to carry out God's instructions, but also on those who do not cooperate.

In addition to the function of guiding the people through the desert, the Angel of the Lord protects Israel, according to Exod 14:19, from being attacked by the Egyptians, as the pillar of cloud obscures the view by standing between the two armies. In this episode, the cloud is associated with both, the Angel of the Lord (14:19)²⁶⁰ and with God (14:24).

The triangular relationship between God, the Angel of the Lord and the pillar of cloud is difficult to define precisely, and the texts remain somewhat ambiguous. However, it is clear that there was a mysterious visible phenomenon, namely the pillar of cloud and fire, and the guidance and protection it provided was ascribed to the Lord, while God himself remained invisible. Thus, the cloud both signifies and veils God's presence. Whether the expression 'the Angel of the Lord' is more associated with the outwardly visible sign or with the inward presence of God, is difficult to decide, but it certainly links the two. Where God becomes discernible by human senses, the appearance is described as an intermediary called the Angel of the Lord.

In a further example, Isa 63:9 uses a telling image to describe the relationship between God and his Angel: The "Angel of his face (וּמַלְאָךְ פָּנָיו) delivered them"

²⁶⁰ Durham, *Exodus*, 193, speaks of "God's attendant".

explains the phenomenon as the tangible or visible presence of God as represented by an angelic mediator. As the context refers to Moses and the days of old, the angel of God's presence probably refers to the divine presence in the pillar of cloud. In contrast to God's visible presence in the Angel, God is present in Israel by his "Holy Spirit" in the next verse, which probably means God's invisible presence.

The Hebrew tradition continues to exploit the symbolism of divine aid being received from the theophanic cloud. Ps 34:7, "the angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him, and delivers them" (NRSV), reminds one of the incident in Exod 14:19-20,²⁶¹ and uses the image of the pillar of cloud which had protected the Israelites as a metaphor for God's tangible salvation of his faithful in subsequent times (in this case David). The Angel is a mediator, who acts in the physical world when practical help is needed, whilst the psalm refers directly to the Lord where worship or general attitudes are concerned ("extol the Lord", "seek the Lord", "the Lord heard him", "the eyes of the Lord are on him").

In conclusion, the 'Angel of the Lord' can be understood in two ways: he is a manifestation of God in the physical world, but the fact that he sometimes appears distinct from God, and he is typically associated with the visible appearance or tangible effect of the divine aid, characterises him as an intermediary.

4.2. Other References to Wisdom Sending Out Prophets

If Prov 1 did not go as far as pointing out Wisdom's role in sending prophets, Sap

²⁶¹ See Hamori, *Gods*, 107. But it is possible that various traditions contribute to the image (thus Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalmen*, vol.1 (Neukirchen-Vlyun: Neukirchener Verlag, 1966), 269).

7:27 ascribes to Wisdom the function to inspire and equip the prophets, confirming her priority over the prophets:

And entering into holy souls through generations,
she makes (κατασκευάζει) them friends of God and prophets.

Her influence is described in more detail in the way she empowered Moses in Sap 10:16 and 11:1:

She entered the soul of a servant of the Lord
and withstood frightening kings with signs and wonders.
...
She prospered their works in the hand of a holy prophet.

Another indication that the notion of Wisdom being a sender of the prophets was known in the first century, can be found in Luke 11:49: “The Wisdom of God said: ‘I will send them prophets and apostles.’” The evangelist Luke does not promote a Wisdom-Christology in his gospel. If he had no reason then to introduce the figure of Wisdom in this saying, he transmits a logion, which already presupposes this function of Wisdom.

A further reason to think that the concept of Wisdom sending out prophets was widely known is a brief remark by Origen, where he comments on Jeremiah’s lament about being born to a life of conflict, saying that the prophets are born of the Wisdom of God: “Who is it that bears prophets but the Wisdom of God? So what he [Jeremiah] said was, Woe to me my mother, how hast thou born me, O Wisdom.”²⁶²

²⁶² Origen, *Selections from the Commentaries and Homilies of Origen*, trans. R.B. Tollington. Translations of Christian Literature. Series 1 Greek Texts. (London: Society for promoting Christian knowledge, The Macmillan Co., 1929), 170-171.

5. Wisdom as Agent in Salvation History

This chapter will consider the concept of Wisdom acting in the history of Israel, which may form the backdrop to the trans-historical ministry alluded to by “how many times have I tried to gather you as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing” in Matt 23:37 par. The statement was mostly taken to refer back to the sending of the prophets mentioned at the beginning of the verse, but there is another manner in which the ministry of the speaker may be related to the divine engagement in salvation history. Origen regarded the statement as a reference to Israel’s liberation from captivity, an interpretation which is supported by the use of the word ἐπισυνάγειν (‘to gather’) from Matt 23:37 par. in Ps LXX 105:47 and Isa 52:12. I will argue that Sap 10 provides a tradition which ascribes an ongoing activity of saving and guiding Israel, or its representatives, to Wisdom.

In order to assess whether Wisdom’s activity of saving and guiding could have been transferred to Jesus’ ministry of gathering the children of Jerusalem, we have to ask in what way Wisdom’s agency is presented as a mission that spans centuries and is still ongoing. Is Wisdom perceived as acting on her own as an independent agent, or does she appear only as a new face of God, representing something like a personified divine providence? How are the particular actions ascribed to Wisdom in Sap 10 related to Jesus’ ministry?

5.1. General Introduction to *Sapientia Solomonis*

5.1.1. Date, Provenance and Intention of the Book

Sapientia Salomonis itself does not refer to its author, its place of origin or any specific historical events, which would allow us to date it confidently. We therefore have to draw conclusions from the response the book makes to the challenges posed by its environment. Most likely, the Wisdom of Solomon (from now on referred to as *Sapientia*, or *Sap*, to avoid confusion with Lady Wisdom) was written in the decades preceding the ministry of Jesus around the turn of the era as an encouragement to the Jews in Alexandria to continue to cherish their ancestral traditions in face of the temptation to abandon their heritage by adapting to the Hellenistic customs and cults of the ruling Greek class.²⁶³ *Sapientia* provides guidance for Jewish believers in a time of increasing insecurity in their social setting, where they needed to reassure themselves of God's salvific presence.²⁶⁴

Several waves of Jewish immigrants had settled in Egypt since the time of Jeremiah. They often served as auxiliary troops, but also settled as civilian communities within the multicultural society, and the Jewish population in Alexandria could have exceeded 180,000. Since Alexander the Great had conquered Egypt, the country was dominated by a Greek upper class, which was segregated from the native Egyptian population. The Greeks welcomed foreigners and allowed the

263 David A. deSilva, *Introducing the Apocrypha: Message, Context, and Significance* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Publishing Group, 2004), 136-137; Udo Schwenk-Bressler, *Sapientia Salomonis als ein Beispiel frühjüdischer Textauslegung: Die Auslegung des Buches Genesis, Exodus 1-15 und Teilen der Wüstentradition in Sap 10-19*, BEATAJ 32 (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1993), 30, 113.

264 Mack, *Logos*, 184-186, John Kloppenborg, "Isis and Sophia in the Book of Wisdom." *HTR* 75 (1982): 57-84, here p. 61, 82 and Alice M. Sinnott, *The Personification of Wisdom*, SOTSMS (Aldershot, England: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2005), 168-170, see a struggle to reconstruct a Jewish identity in testing times.

self-administration of larger communities to a certain extent.²⁶⁵ One possible incentive for the translation of the LXX is that the Jews sought the accreditation of their history and law in the foreign environment.²⁶⁶ Educated Jews sought the company of Greek society, enrolled their sons in gymnasium education in the hope of attaining citizenship,²⁶⁷ and sometimes rose to powerful positions in the Ptolemaic or Egyptian government.²⁶⁸ They were part of the hellenised society, which was separate from the native Egyptian population.²⁶⁹ There is a debate about whether the Jews in Alexandria ever had the status of citizens, because the term (*politai*) could also be employed for members of foreign communities (*politeuma*),²⁷⁰ and they remained a separate community in so far as they retained their religious identity.²⁷¹ After the Roman conquest, however, the situation of the Jews had become more difficult. They were classified as non-Greek commoners, who were required to pay capital taxes since 24/23 BCE, and made enemies for themselves when trying to assert their status by mingling with the Greek population. In 38 CE, this animosity culminated in a mob attacking the Jews.²⁷²

As far as quotations go, Sapiaientia must have been written between 200 BC, as it quotes the LXX version of the OT,²⁷³ and 100 AD as Clement's letter to the Cor-

265 As for example the Jewish community in Cyrene, see John Collins, *Jewish Wisdom in the Hellenistic Age* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 137-138.

266 So Siegfried Kreuzer, "Entstehung und Publikation der Septuaginta im Horizont frühptolemäischer Bildungs- und Kulturpolitik." in *Im Brennpunkt: Die Septuaginta: Studien zur Entstehung und Bedeutung der griechischen Bibel:2*, ed. S. Kreuzer and J.P. Lesch, BWANT 161 (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2004), 61-75, here pp. 70,73.

267 See Collins, *Jewish Wisdom*, 149-151.

268 For some examples see Collins, *Jewish Wisdom*, 143 and 147 or Hans-Joachim Gehrke, "Das sozial- und religionsgeschichtliche Umfeld der Septuaginta.", in Kreuzer and Lesch, *Brennpunkt*, 44-60, here pp. 47, 50.

269 Gehrke, "Umfeld", 50-51.

270 See Collins, *Jewish Wisdom*, 142-143 for details; also Gehrke, "Umfeld", 52.

271 See Gehrke, "Umfeld", 56-58.

272 See Collins, *Jewish Wisdom*, 143-144.

273 See David Winston, *The Wisdom of Solomon: A New Translation With Introduction and Commentary*, AB 43 (New York: Doubleday, 1979), 21 and deSilva, *Apocrypha*, 131 gives two examples of the LXX version of Isa 44:20 and 3:10 being quoted in Sap 15:10 and 2:12. See also Kreuzer, "Umfeld", 63 for the date of the LXX translation of Isaiah.

inthians²⁷⁴ refers to it. The description of foreign rule in Sapiientia necessitates a date after the Roman conquest in 60 BC,²⁷⁵ which leaves two options, either the early Roman period under emperor Augustus, or as late as emperor Caligula.

The latter date was proposed by Winston for two reasons: firstly, Sapiientia employs many words which are not attested in secular Greek with the same meaning before 40 AD. Secondly, he thinks that the ferocious threat of destruction made in Sap 5:16-23 and the author's glaring hatred of the Egyptians in the second part of the book can only be understood if it was a desperate response to the violent attacks under emperor Caligula.²⁷⁶ However, the first reason is an argument *ex silentio* and considering the relatively scarce amount of literature we possess from that time and Sapiientia's love for *hapax legomena*, it is not compelling evidence. The second reason is not convincing either, as apocalyptic scenarios were a well established genre in the last two centuries BCE which do not require the prompting of a particularly distressing situation,²⁷⁷ and Sap 2:12 identifies the enemies of the righteous as apostate Jews rather than an Egyptian mob; the book contains no complaints about repressive Roman legislation either.²⁷⁸

Sapiientia is accordingly best dated at the end of the last century BCE when Jews were still hoping to gain higher social status by assimilating into the dominant

274 Winston, *Wisdom*, 67 notes the influence of Sap 12:12; 11:21 on 1Clem 27:5 and Lester L. Grabbe, *Wisdom of Solomon* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 29, adds the reference of Sap 7:17 in 1 Clem 60:1.

275 See e.g. Winston, *Wisdom of Solomon*, 21-22, deSilva, *Apocrypha*, 132-133, Collins, *Jewish Wisdom*, 179.

276 Winston, *Wisdom*, 22-25, 63-64.

277 See Collins, *Jewish Wisdom*, 179; Emile Puech, "The Book of Wisdom and the Dead Sea Scrolls: An Overview", in *The Book of Wisdom in Modern Research: Studies On Tradition, Redaction and Theology*, ed. Angelo Passaro and Giuseppe Bellia, DCLY (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2005), 117-141: pages 127-132 give a detailed account of how Sapiientia builds its view of immortality on the established Jewish apocalyptic tradition.

278 Giuseppe Bellia, "Historical and Anthropological Reading of the Book of Wisdom", in Passaro and Bellia, *Modern Research* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2005), 83-115, here pp. 104-105.

Greek culture. The book aims to counter the temptations posed by the Hellenistic culture by demonstrating the superiority of their Jewish heritage.²⁷⁹

In addition, the concept of the transcendent world, which is mediated through wisdom and the word, is an early stage of the more mature concept developed by Philo, indicating an earlier date.²⁸⁰

It also seems fairly obvious that Paul refers to the theology of Sapiientia without quoting the book as scripture.²⁸¹ Paul's reference to Sapiientia in 1Cor 10:4, which is the most important one for this study as it concerns Wisdom's agency in history, will be considered in more detail below (pp.105-106). Paul's familiarity with the book necessitates a date early enough to allow for its widespread reception before Paul's letters, unless both Paul and Sapiientia draw on a common source unknown to us.²⁸² But such a common source would likewise suggest that

279 Kloppenborg, "Isis", 63; Neher, *Wesen*, 240; Puech, "Scrolls", 127; deSilva, *Apocrypha*, 136; Sinnott, *Personification*, 142; Schwenk-Bressler, *Sapiientia*, 25, 112-115. Bellia, "Historical Reading", 104-105, opts for a date between 30 BC-14AD. Cf. however Collins, *Jewish Wisdom*, 179, Andrew T. Glicksman, *Wisdom of Solomon 10: A Jewish Hellenistic Reinterpretation of Early Israelite History Through Sapiiential Lenses*, DCLS 9 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2010), 24, 180, and Markus Witte, "Jakob der Gerechte: Beobachtungen zum Jakobslied in der Sapiientia Salomonis" in *Die Erzväter in der biblischen Tradition*, ed. Anselm C. Hagedorn and Henrik Pfeiffer, BZAW 400 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2009), 323-45, here p.338, leave a date between late first century BCE and early first century AD open.

280 Mack, *Logos*, 106 and 63. Cf. also Martin Neher, *Wesen*, 229-230, 239-240: Sapiientia's concept of Wisdom as mediator between God and man is a precursor of Philo's system of hypostases.

281 See deSilva, *Apocrypha*, 150. Also James D.G. Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, WBC 38 (Dallas, Texas: Word Books, 1988), 53, who sees a particular influence of a polemic against idolatry from Sap 11-15 on Rom 1:18-32; Troels Engberg-Pedersen, *Cosmology and Self in the Apostle Paul: The Material Spirit* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p.25 esp. n.69 "It seems likely that Paul had read the Wisdom of Solomon" as 2 Cor 5:1-10 closely resembles the diction of Sap 9:15 σκῆνος and βάρος. Hans Hübner, *Die Weisheit Salomos*, ATD Apokryphen 4 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1999), 17-19 and p.108.

282 This may be suggested by the link between 2 Cor 3:18 to Sap 7:26 observed by James M. Reese, "Christ as Wisdom Incarnate: Wiser than Solomon, Loftier than Lady Wisdom." *BTB* 11 (1981): 44-47, here p. 46. Even though he does not claim literary dependence, he observes that Paul "was acquainted with this form of wisdom literature". See Peter Enns, *Exodus Retold: Ancient Exegesis of the Departure from Egypt in Wis 15-21 and 19:1-9*, HSM 57 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997), 137-139 for Sapiientia referring to commonly known extra-biblical traditions, which have not been transmitted to us.

the concept of Wisdom designed by Sapiientia had been available to Jesus' contemporaries,²⁸³ and that includes the location in the Jewish homeland. Even though Paul had been born in the diaspora and later discoursed with the Jewish communities in the diaspora, where he might have encountered Sapiientia, we are not aware of any direct connections he had to Alexandria. Sapiientia (or a similar book) must therefore have spread to other parts of the empire, and Paul may as well have encountered the book in Jerusalem, where he received his education. After all, the upper class and the educational system in Jerusalem had been hellenised for some time: there was a gymnasium in Jerusalem from 175 BCE, and accordingly there must have been Greek elementary schools. There had also been a Greek-speaking synagogue from Herodian times.²⁸⁴ If Hellenistic-Jewish theology like that of Sapiientia was discussed in the city, it is quite possible that Galilean pilgrims became acquainted with it, as they spent time at the temple during Passover celebrations (see Lk 2:46-47). Further confirmation of the widespread availability of Sapiientia is Nestle-Aland's compilation of two columns of quotations and allusions to the book in the NT,²⁸⁵ which include the use of Sapiientia (Sap 2:18-20) by gospel traditions such as Matt 27:43.

Sapiientia was never part of the Jewish Scriptures or the Hebrew Canon, but is listed in the Canon Muratori at the end of the 2nd century CE.²⁸⁶

283 So for example Karl-Wilhelm Niebuhr, "Einführung in die Schrift" in *Sapiientia Salomonis (Weisheit Salomos)*, ed. Karl-Wilhelm Niebuhr, SAPERE 27 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015), 3-37, here p.34, the authors of the NT could base their theology on the ideas circulated by Sapiientia, even if they did not have access to the book as such.

284 Martin Hengel, *The "Hellenization" of Judea in the First Century after Christ* (London: SMC, 1989), p.22 and p.13, 16.

285 *Novum Testamentum Graece*, ed. Ernst Nestle and Kurt Aland, 26th ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelstiftung, 1981), 772-773.

286 See Bruce M. Metzger, *The Canon of the New Testament: Its Origin, Development and Significance* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 197-198; Grabbe, *Wisdom*, 28; deSilva, *Apocrypha*, 132.

5.1.2. Contents, Theme and Structure

Sapientia's core theme is the salvation of the righteous, designed to encourage its Jewish readers to continue to worship their God in the universal way of wisdom. This involves exploring the topics of eschatology, the order of the cosmos, the law of Wisdom, the nature of Wisdom and the history of Israel. The book is divided into three sections, the exact boundaries of which are disputed, as they are skilfully linked with transitional passages that could belong to both the preceding and the following sections. The first roughly comprises chapters 1:1-6:11 (God's righteous judgement), the second chapters 6-9 (the nature of Wisdom) and the third chapters 10-19 (Wisdom and God respectively acting in Israel's history).

The first section is an exhortation to lead a righteous, god-fearing life in view of the coming judgement, as God and his Spirit of Wisdom know everybody's deeds and discern even the secret intentions of the heart; no evildoer can escape the judgement (Sap 1:1-15). On the other hand, the righteous who suffer at the hands of the wicked in this life are promised immortality as a reward (Sap 3:1-4; 5:15). The second section (chapters 6-9) advises the rulers of the earth to seek Wisdom, who will teach them God's ways. The author sketches the mysteries of Wisdom's origin as an emanation from God (7:25), and her nature as a spirit who pervades and directs all of the cosmos (7:22-8:1). She is characterised in divergent ways: on one hand as God's companion (8:3; 9:4,9), and on the other as his instrument (9:2) and his gift to man (7:7). She directs not only nature but also inspires people to become friends of God (7:27).

The third section (chapters 10-19) gives evidence of Wisdom's involvement in historical events as she worked alongside God in rescuing his people. Chapter 10

contains a unique description of personified Wisdom engaged in steering Israel's history by guiding and saving the Fathers. The chapter connects the first part of the book about the universal Wisdom with the second part containing observations about God's salvation and judgement in the exodus.

5.1.3. Formative Influences on *Sapientia Salomonis*

5.1.3.1. *Jewish Roots*

Sapientia's Wisdom figure remains essentially Jewish in its reversion to traditional sapiential themes²⁸⁷ like her pre-existence and personification, her role in creation and the order of the cosmos and her function to teach humans what pleases God.

Another key topic which originates in the Jewish tradition concerns Wisdom's tangible impact on historical situations: as the pursuit of wisdom leads to many blessings throughout Israel according to Ben Sira, she blesses the fictive Solomon, as a type of Wisdom's student,²⁸⁸ with all good things such as wealth, health and power when he gives Wisdom top priority (Sap 7:7-12). *Sapientia* de-

287 See deSilva, *Apocrypha*, 137-139; Neher, *Wesen*, 240; Sinnott, *Personification*, 151; Schwenk-Bressler, *Sapientia*, 62-63; Karl-Wilhelm Niebuhr, "Die *Sapientia Salomonis* im Kontext hellenistisch-römischer Philosophie" in Niebuhr, *Sapientia Salomonis*, 219-256, here p. 254-255. Puech, "Scrolls", 127, asserts that both the anthropology and eschatology remain essentially Semitic even if *Sapientia* takes up some Stoic or Platonic ideas. See also David Winston, "A Century of Research on the Book of Wisdom," in Passaro and Bellia, *Modern Research*, 1-18, here p.9. Also Kloppenborg, "Isis," 72-73, 82 asserts that *Sapientia* models Wisdom predominantly on Jewish traditions and only intends to revitalise these by incorporating some features of the Hellenised Isis. In this context it worth noting that it is questionable whether all of Isis' traits that have been compared to Wisdom could have impacted on *Sapientia*, since some are only attested at a later time by Plutarch. The final expression of Isis being the source from whom and through whom everything originated is only found in Athenagoras (see Mack, *Logos*, 66 n.22), long after 1Cor 8:6, and therefore shows that the mystery cult could appropriate Christian images as well as the other way around.

288 See Kloppenborg, "Isis", 73, and Sinnott, *Personification*, 154, for Solomon representing the sages.

velops the theme of Ben Sira's *laus patrum*, which had acknowledged wisdom's role of guiding Israel's revered ancestors, by observing how personified Wisdom determined the course of history by engaging with particular historical situations as she saved and guided the protagonists of Israel's history.

Another feature which emphasises the Jewish character of the book, is its apocalyptic outlook: it expects a judgement day with vindication of the righteous rather than following the Greek idea of the immortality of all souls, and Wisdom assumes a new role in assisting God with the judgement of people's secret thoughts.²⁸⁹ The judgement is clearly envisioned as an eschatological event, because it is accompanied by a cosmic catastrophe (5:17-23) and the place where the righteous will be vindicated lies beyond the historical world as

- 3:2a in the eyes of the foolish they seemed to have died,...
- 3:3b but they are at peace...
- 3:7a In the time of their visitation they will shine forth...
- 3:8 They will govern nations and rule over peoples, and the Lord will reign over them for ever.

Thus, "[t]he righteous will live for ever, and their reward is with the Lord" (5:15 NRSV), and the wicked "will come with dread when their sins are reckoned up" (4:20).

5.1.3.2. The Influence of Greek Philosophy

Sapientia has, however, also incorporated themes, terminology and metaphors borrowed from its pagan environment which play a role in characterizing Wisdom. The description of Wisdom vacillates between that of a spirit akin to the

²⁸⁹ Puech, "Scrolls", 127-129, 136-137.

Stoic *pneuma* and a goddess like the Egyptian Isis. Different scholars have emphasised either the philosophical or the mythological influences, even though all acknowledge that both contribute to Sapiencia's image of Wisdom. Depending on which influence is seen as the dominant one, Wisdom would appear more like a heavenly being or more like a divine spirit.

John Collins' brief overview of influences from Greek philosophy highlights the following: God's Wisdom exhibits many traits of the Stoic *pneuma*, which was originally conceived as the living spirit within man and then as the spirit of the cosmos. As such it pervades all things as a "fine, fiery substance", like Wisdom in Sap 7:24. It holds all things together like the spirit of God that is identified with Wisdom in Sap 1:5-7. Wisdom knows about the structure of the universe which is constituted by the 'elements', another Greek concept (Sap 7:17-18), and the description of her nature in Sap 7:22-24 adopts several Stoic terms which not only convey the rationality but also the "physical quality" of the Stoic *pneuma*: in her is a rational spirit (πνεῦμα νοερόν), and she is "subtle (λεπτόν), agile (εὐκίνητον), lucid (τράνων) – more mobile than any motion."²⁹⁰

In addition to this Stoic concept, Sapiencia also leans on Platonic ideas, which make a clearer distinction between God and the world, and come closer to the Jewish belief in a transcendent creator.²⁹¹ The relation between God and Wisdom, with Wisdom being an emanation, reflection and mirror of God's glory in Sap 7:25-26, calls to mind Plato's metaphor of light and sun to describe the relation of the immanent good to the transcendent idea of it, although the image of Wisdom as effluence of God's glory also elaborates on Ben Sira's presentation of

²⁹⁰ Collins, *Jewish Wisdom*, 196-198.

²⁹¹ deSilva, *Apocrypha*, 140-141.

Wisdom's origin from the mouth of God (Sir 24:3).²⁹² Another idea which uses Platonic terminology is the immortality of the soul.

The philosophical framework adapted by Pseudo-Solomon is usually identified as Middle Platonism, which is a synthesis of Stoic and Platonic ideas.²⁹³ Sapiientia does not simply refer selectively to a variety of Greek concepts as a rhetorical device, but develops the Jewish Wisdom figure through characteristics of the Greek *logos/pneuma*. For Collins, the nature of Wisdom in Sapiientia is a synthesis of the Jewish figure with Greek philosophy; he only sees "tacit allusions" to the goddess Isis.²⁹⁴

Similarly, David Winston points out that Pseudo-Solomon is well educated in Middle Platonism and embeds his view of wisdom in contemporary philosophical concepts, without subscribing to them. He tries to validate his Jewish tradition by reconciling it with philosophical concepts.²⁹⁵ Likewise, David deSilva thinks that Sapiientia draws heavily on Middle Platonism and uses its concepts to form a synthesis with Judaism, even though biblical traditions remain the predominant source.²⁹⁶ Hans Hübner points out the many terms borrowed from Greek literature which dominate Sapiientia, but also supports Mack and others in seeing a polemic against the goddess Isis, especially in the middle section (6:22-11:1).²⁹⁷

Martin Neher also portrays Wisdom as a spirit, but his approach differs from the above, as he recognises only a marginal influence of Stoic and Platonic concepts.

292 Collins, *Jewish Wisdom*, 198-200.

293 See Winston, *Wisdom*, 33; Winston, "Research", 144; Collins, *Jewish Wisdom*, 201; deSilva, *Apocrypha*, 140.

294 See Collins, *Jewish Wisdom*, 200-204.

295 Winston, "Research", 9.

296 See deSilva, *Apocrypha*, 137-141.

297 Hübner, *Weisheit*, 16-17, 27.

He thinks those ideas were not united in the concept of any one contemporary philosopher, who might have served as a model for Pseudo-Solomon, and therefore they are only used selectively to broaden the image of a Wisdom derived principally from the Biblical sapiential traditions. In Neher's view, none of the Middle Platonic philosophers of the 1st century BCE offered a model for Wisdom's role as mediator between transcendence and immanence.²⁹⁸ He hardly mentions Wisdom's relation to Isis and portrays her as spirit, in a sense derived from both the OT tradition and Stoic philosophy.²⁹⁹ He consequently identifies her with the Holy Spirit (following Sap 1:5) to define her relationship to God through her function as mediator between God and world.³⁰⁰

5.1.3.2. Influence of the Egyptian Isis Cult

Burton L. Mack acknowledges that Wisdom is a πνεῦμα according to Sap 1:6; 7:7, 22; 9:17. But while the term reminds one of the Stoic spirit, it attained a new dimension in Sapientia, taking on the character of a transcendent person "*sui generis*." This character of a divine person ("ein echtes Gotteswesen") is owed to the connection with the Egyptian goddess Isis, whose attributes were successively applied to the Jewish Wisdom.³⁰¹

Mack views Sapientia as part of the sapiential traditions, which try to comprehend the world from the perspective of God's wisdom, making sense of an unsettled post-exilic life, where people struggled to recognise a caring God in their lived experience.³⁰² Jewish authors used Egyptian myths as a pictorial language ("Bildersprache") to express their insights about transcendental truths, so the per-

298 Neher, *Wesen*, 237-240.

299 Ibid., 106-107.

300 Ibid., 119-120, 233-235.

301 Mack, *Logos*, 64-65, 185; see also Boccaccini, "Hellenistic Judaism", 62.

302 Mack, *Logos*, 184-185.

sonification which happens in mythological speech serves to express a theological truth in an accessible image in a language available to the speaker.³⁰³

Among the functions of Isis transferred to Wisdom he mentions in particular her motherly care, her relation to the light (Isis was the goddess of the sun) and her relation to God (Isis was the spouse of Osiris, who was likewise known as the sun-god),³⁰⁴ which express her powers of revelation and salvation needed by the Israelites to overcome a world perceived as hostile.³⁰⁵

John Kloppenborg's study reinforces the thesis that it is the mythic character of Wisdom, which has been strengthened by incorporating features of Isis. The allusion to her mythologies emphasises Wisdom's personal structure and enables the author to convince the audience of her saving power when challenged by the appeal of the Egyptian goddess³⁰⁶ in a time of uncertainty and unrest.³⁰⁷ The appeal of the goddess Isis was in her personal caring nature, which distinguished her from the unapproachable Greek power of Fate, and it is precisely this personal character the author incorporated in his Wisdom-figure in Sap 6-10.³⁰⁸ Kloppenborg draws parallels between Wisdom as a saviour and Isis, who was acclaimed as saviour of the sailors and prisoners in the Medinet Madi from the first century BCE, as well as giver of wealth.³⁰⁹ Another parallel is her relationship with the king: Isis myths provide the themes of Solomon's relationship to wisdom as the king.³¹⁰ He emphasises the intention of the author to revitalise the Jewish faith in

303 Ibid., 20, 60.

304 Ibid., 65-68, 186.

305 Ibid., 186.

306 Kloppenborg, "Isis", 66-67, 72-73.

307 Ibid., 82.

308 Ibid., 68, 70. See also Sinnott, *Personification*, 163, 166-167.

309 Kloppenborg, "Isis", 67-68, 71 and 69.

310 Ibid., 74.

trying circumstances with his powerful Wisdom-figure.³¹¹

Udo Schwenk-Bressler likewise sees Wisdom as Jewish saviour figure, who can compete with the mystery cult of Isis as she incorporates components derived from the Egyptian goddess. Wisdom is presented as an essentially Jewish alternative, similar but superior to Isis, whilst she continues in the tradition of God's relationship with Israel. *Sapientia* is written to dissuade Jews from turning to the attractive mystery cults of Alexandria that offer worship of a powerful saviour goddess.³¹² *Sapientia* presents contemporary Judaism as a mystery religion which surpasses other mystery cults through its evidence of older accounts of Wisdom's saving activity in history.³¹³

Alice Sinnott supports the thesis that the Jewish Wisdom was developed by incorporating features of the Hellenistic Isis and provides a list of vocabulary and roles shared between *Sapientia* and various Isis-hymns.³¹⁴ Even though she admits that up to 20% of the text is made up of Greek philosophical terms,³¹⁵ Wisdom as a saviour is presented like a goddess rather than the impersonal Stoic *logos* or *pro-noia* because she can respond to prayer. The answer *Sapientia* gives by creating the powerful image of Wisdom as a saviour and guide suggests that it was challenged by the saviour-goddess Isis.³¹⁶

311 Ibid., 82.

312 Schwenk-Bressler, *Sapientia*, 63, 113.

313 Ibid., 30, "eine zum σοφία-Mysterium umgestaltete Religion". Similar Glicksman, *Wisdom*, 102, 105, 147: the re-casting of the Jewish Wisdom in Sap 10 with features reminiscent of the goddess Isis reassures Jews tempted by the Hellenistic saviour goddess of the superiority of their own religion.

314 Sinnott, *Personification*, 145, 162.

315 Ibid., 150.

316 Sinnott, *Personification*, 163, 166.

Thus, the link to the goddess Isis has three effects on Sapiencia: it strengthens the personal structure of Wisdom, providing a powerful sapiential concept of a new encounter with God in threatening historical circumstances, and it endeavours to persuade the Jewish community of the superiority of their own religion over the promises of the Hellenistic mystery cults.

5.1.4. The Text, Structure, Genre and Context of Sap 10

Sapientia 10 contains a unique description of personified Wisdom engaged in directing Israel's history throughout the ages. The chapter elaborates the theme given in Sap 9:18,³¹⁷ acknowledging Wisdom as saviour and guide of the righteous in a *Beispielreihe*,³¹⁸ which gives short impressions of the critical situations in the lives of the protagonists of Genesis and Exodus. It is structured by the repeated emphatic *she* (αὐτή) referring to *Sophia* as the subject of the action.³¹⁹ The complete passage including the transitional verses 9:18 and 11:1 reads in my translation:

- 9:18 And thus the ways of those on the earth were set right,
 and the humans were taught what pleases you,
 and they were saved by Wisdom.
- 10:1 *She* guarded the first-formed father of the world carefully
 who was the only one who had been created
 and released him from his own transgression
- 10:2 and gave him the strength to rule over everything.

317 So Armin Schmitt, "Struktur, Herkunft und Bedeutung der Beispielreihe in Weish 10." in *Der Gegenwart verpflichtet. Studien zur biblischen Literatur des Frühjudentums*, ed. Christian Wagner (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2000), 223-244, here pp.224-226: he gives formal reasons for Solomon's prayer to include only Sap 9:13-17 and observes that the content of 9:18 refers to ch.10, giving 9:18 the function of a title. He is followed by Schwenk-Bressler, *Sapientia*, 57-58; Sinnott, *Personification*, 161-162; Hübner, *Weisheit*, 132. Witte, "Jakob", 325 speaks of the transitional function. Conversely, Winston, *Wisdom*, 11, 208; Neher, *Wesen*, 121, 132 and Glicksman, *Wisdom*, 45 treat the transitional verse as part of Solomon's prayer in chapter 9.

318 Wisdom as saviour is widely seen as topic of the chapter. See Schmitt, *Beispielreihe*, 230. So also Glicksman, *Wisdom*, 45; Schwenk-Bressler, *Sapientia*, 108-109; Neher, *Wesen*, 137; Sinnott, *Personification*, 167. Witte, *Jakob*, 324-325, adds to the theme of salvation Wisdom's function of guiding and teaching the Fathers, according to Sap 9:18.

319 See Schmitt, *Beispielreihe*, 228.

- 10:3 But when an unjust man rejected her in anger
he perished together with his fratricidal passions.
- 10:4 When the earth was flooded because of him Wisdom again saved
the righteous man, steering him by a shabby piece of wood.
- 10:5 *She* also, when the nations were confounded in unanimity of
wickedness,
recognised the righteous one and preserved him blameless before God
and maintained him strong against the compassion for his child.
- 10:6 *She* rescued a righteous man from among the perishing godless men
as he fled from the Five Cities while fire was falling down,
10:7 a place which, still a witness to their wickedness,
became dry land blackened with smoke
and plants bear fruit at unfinished times,
a pillar of salt stands as memorial to an unbelieving soul.
- 10:8 For when they passed Wisdom by
they were not only hindered from knowing what is beautiful,
but also left a remembrance of folly behind for life
so that it could not escape notice in what they had failed.
- 10:9 But Wisdom rescued those who serve her from their troubles.
- 10:10 *She* guided a righteous man who fled from his brother's anger
on straight paths,
she showed him the kingdom of God
and gave him knowledge of the saints (or: holy things):
She let him prosper in his hardships
and she increased the fruit of his work.
- 10:11 When some increased in strength against him in greed, she stood by him
and made him wealthy.
- 10:12 She protected him from enemies
and secured him from those who lay in wait for him
and decided a violent contest for him,
in order that he might know that godliness is stronger than
anything.
- 10:13 *She* did not leave a righteous man behind when he was sold
but rescued him from sin:
- 10:14 She descended with him into the cistern
and did not give him up in the prison
until she brought him the sceptre of a kingdom
and power over those who had tyrannised him:
she exposed those who had found fault with him him as liars
and she gave him eternal glory.
- 10:15 *She* rescued a holy people and blameless offspring
from oppressing nations:
- 10:16 She entered the soul of a servant of the Lord
and withstood frightening kings with signs and wonders.
- 10:17 She rendered the holy ones a due wage for their troubles,
she guided them on a wonderful way
and became a shelter for them during the day
and a flaming fire of stars at night.
- 10:18 She carried them across the Red Sea

- and led them through much water,
 10:19 but she washed their enemies away with a flood
 and threw them up from the depths of the abyss.
- 10:20 Therefore the righteous plundered the godless ones
 and they sang, Lord, to your holy name
 they praised your hand which was fighting for them in one accord,
- 10:21 because Wisdom opened the mouth of the dumb
 and made the speech of the infants clear.
- 11:1 She prospered their works in the hand of a holy prophet.

Whether Sap 10 is viewed as a demonstrative encomium³²⁰ or as an exhortatory protreptic³²¹ depends on whether the chapter is interpreted on its own or as part of the whole book.³²² The chapter utilises various features of genres to which the audience was accustomed, such as synkrisis and *Beispielreihe*,³²³ without subscribing to the particular pattern of any one of them.³²⁴

Chapter 10 plays an important role in linking the first part of the book about Wisdom inspiring every person who seeks to act righteously with the second part about God's active involvement with Israel's history, which gives another analysis of the exodus.³²⁵ Both Wisdom and God are designated in turn as acting to secure Israel's salvation, which has led to very different explanations of their relation to each other. Sap 7:25-26 must be considered as the key to how the author conceptualises that relationship with Wisdom being an emanation and reflection of God's power and glory.³²⁶

320 So Sinnott, *Personification*, 162; Hübner, *Weisheit*, 145; Glicksman, *Wisdom*, 88.

321 See Winston, *Wisdom*, 18-20; Schwenk-Bressler, *Sapientia*, 112-113; Collins *Jewish Wisdom*, 181.

322 See Hübner, *Weisheit*, 26.

323 Schmitt, "Beispielreihe", 239-242.

324 See also deSilva, *Apocrypha*, 134-135: various genres dominate the different sections of *Sapientia*. Overall, he sees more features of a demonstrative *encomium* than an exhortatory *protreptic*.

325 Schwenk-Bressler, *Sapientia*, 119, calls Sap 10 a transition chapter ("Schaltkapitel").

326 Schwenk-Bressler, *Sapientia*, suggests that their relationship must be conceptualised according to Sap 6-9. Winston, *Wisdom*, 226 constructs the relationship as Wisdom being the "Divine Mind".

5.1.5. The End of the Encomium and Transition to Sap 11-19

The paragraph following chapter 10, Sap 11:1-4, functions as a transition³²⁷ between the Wisdom hymn and chapters 11-19, changing the acting subject gradually from Wisdom to God:

- 1 She prospered their works through the hands of a holy prophet.
- 2 They travelled through the uninhabited desert
and pitched their tents in desolate areas.
- 3 They withstood adversaries and defended themselves against enemies.
They were thirsty and called on you,
- 4 and water was given them from the sharp edged rock
and a remedy of thirst from a hard stone.

The brief summary of the wilderness wanderings in Sap 11:1-4 is not introduced with the emphatic αὐτή, and therefore cannot be taken as the final episode of the Wisdom hymn either.³²⁸ But for many scholars, Sap 11:1 still belongs to the encomium as the 3rd pers. sing. subject continues to refer to Wisdom.³²⁹ Winston, however, translates εὐόδοσεν τὰ ἔργα αὐτῶν as “their works prospered”,³³⁰ making the verse an introduction to the subsequent chapters; his translation is unlikely, because the intransitive use of εὐοδοῦν is rare, and because the short statement about Moses’ agency is not a fitting summary of the subsequent chapters.

Moreover, the verse refers back to the exodus episode in Sap 10:15-21 in many ways, linking it with chapter 10. Firstly, like 10:15, verse 11:1 serves as a sum-

327 Schmitt, *Beispielreihe*, 227; Schwenk-Bressler, *Sapientia*, 117: “Schaltverse”.

328 See Schmitt, *Beispielreihe*, 227; Winston, *Wisdom*, 226.

329 So Hübner, 145; Glicksman, *Wisdom*, 146 and Neher, *Wesen*, 136-137. Schmitt, *Beispielreihe*, 226-228, takes Wisdom as subject of v.1, but includes the verse in the paragraph 11:1-4 due to structural arguments.

330 Winston, *Wisdom*, 226.

marising title of the paragraph.³³¹ Secondly, it refers to Moses' leadership role as a prophet inspired by Wisdom, as does 10:16a.³³² Thirdly, 11:3 repeats the verb ἀντέστη from 10:16b, which may indicate why Wisdom was said to have stood up to kings, in the plural, rather than just one Pharaoh ("she withstood frightening kings with signs and wonders"): namely to refer proleptically to further fighting during the wilderness wanderings.³³³ In 11:3 the subject is the Israelites, but there can be no doubt that they owe their victory to divine support, and the repetition of ἀνθιστάναι ('to withstand') suggests that this may have been provided by Wisdom. Fourthly and most importantly, Sap 10:20 had already begun to introduce a change of subject, reminding the reader that God was the ultimate cause of Israel's salvation, when their praise was directed at God rather than Wisdom. While Wisdom is still the subject in 11:1, the perspective changes as Israel is seen as acting in 11:2-4 and addressing God in prayer. However, the *passivum divinum* in 11:4b "water was given them" is still open to be interpreted as either God giving the water or supplying it through his Wisdom, who had been the agent providing Israel with aid in the previous chapter. It is not until 11:10 that the change of subject is completed and the acting subject is identified as God the Father. The author apparently allowed for the ambiguity on purpose, demonstrating the fluid boundaries between the actions of God and Wisdom.³³⁴

Therefore, it seems best to take Sap 11:1-4 as a transitional paragraph continuing the format of the Wisdom hymn to a certain extent with Wisdom as acting saviour in 11:1, and at the same time moving on to the theme of the following chapters,

331 See Schmitt, *Beispielreihe*, 227 n.25.

332 See Hübner, 145; Glicksman, *Wisdom of Solomon*, 146; Neher, *Wesen*, 136.

333 See Schwenk-Bressler, *Sapientia*, 98. Winston, *Wisdom*, 219, and Glicksman, *Wisdom*, 138, take it as an allusive plural.

334 Schwenk-Bressler, *Sapientia*, 57, 116-117.

where God saves Israel and teaches them a lesson by contrasting their salvation with the punishment of the Egyptians. The transitional paragraph is important, because it illustrates in a narrative fashion the tension between God and Wisdom, who are both agents in Israel's salvation. This has even led to the conclusion that the reader is being prompted to transfer Wisdom's involvement in the events explained in chapter 10 to the stories explored in Sap 11-19.³³⁵

5.2. *Wisdom as Agent in Israel's History*

The main significance of Sap 10 for the present study is its account of Wisdom's deeds in the lives of the protagonists of Israel's history. My first concern is whether Jesus, and his contemporaries, could draw on a tradition of Wisdom acting in the history of Israel in a way that resembled gathering the children of Israel throughout their history similar to Jesus gathering them under the wings of the mother bird in Matt 23:37. Pseudo-Solomon ascribes to Wisdom an ongoing activity of saving and guiding people from the time of Adam and Abraham to the exodus, and it is of particular interest whether this activity was understood to be continuing to the time when Israel was "gathered" (ἐπισυνάγειν) from their captivity (so in Ps LXX 105:46) and possibly even into the time of Pseudo-Solomon, or indeed of Jesus. As the verb ἐπισυνάγειν could also be used by 1 Esdras 8:69; 8:88; 9:18; 9:55 to speak about Ezra gathering people around himself to implement parts of the law in their lives, the activity of "gathering" could refer to bringing Israel back under God's protection from a spiritual captivity as well as from the historical exile.

³³⁵ So Neher, *Wesen*, 153.

Apart from determining whether such a tradition was available, it would be helpful to establish whether Sapientia's account of Wisdom's activity raised an expectation that Wisdom could be manifested in the historical world and thus prepared the idea of her incarnation. To assess whether Wisdom's agency was perceived as a real activity of a heavenly power in the world distinct from God, the investigation has to consider whether (1) Wisdom's actions are tangible or visible events in the immanent world and (2) whether the actions ascribed to her are genuine actions of Wisdom, or whether they are really God's acts presented in a sapiential framework.

A cursory reading of Sap 10 shows immediately that the passage provides a template for God's mediator, who brings the people of Israel back to God: Wisdom released Adam from his sin, steered Noah over the waters of the flood, preserved Abraham blameless when he was tested, rescued Lot from among the perishing Sodomites, protected Jacob on his journey, saved Joseph when he was enslaved in Egypt and rescued the holy people by leading them out of Egypt. The role of Wisdom in history is described sufficiently clearly in Sap 10 to enable Jesus (or another composer of Matt 23:37–39 par.) to refer to the concept of Wisdom gathering the people by bringing them from captivity or danger into safety, and teaching them to follow God's wholesome instructions.

The author creates a type of a righteous man with whom the audience can readily identify by using a method called *antonomasia*.³³⁶ instead of referring to the heroes by name, Sapientia only alludes to the biblical narratives by relating the

³³⁶ See Schmitt, *Beispielreihe*, 229 and 243. Also Schwenk-Bressler, *Sapientia*, 109-111; Witte, *Jakob*, 323-325, 338-340; Collins, *Jewish Wisdom*, 214; Enns, *Exodus Retold*, 145-149.

main line of action and characterises the protagonists as righteous men (δίκαιος, or in the case of Israel as holy, ὅσιος). This trait is emphasised by omitting all of the reproachable behaviour on the part of the heroes as we know it from the Biblical narratives, as well as by contrasting them with their unjust counterparts Cain, the people who conspired to build the tower of Babel, the Sodomites, Jacob's pursuers, Joseph's accusers and the Egyptian oppressors.³³⁷

The transfer of Wisdom's relationship with the Fathers to Pseudo-Solomon's audience is further supported by the episode of Jacob in Sap 10:10-12, where Jacob functions not only as a representative of Israel but also of the Jewish community in the diaspora.³³⁸ It is furthermore supported by the example of the pseudonymous king Solomon in chapters 6-9, which demonstrates that an intimate relationship with Wisdom leads to a successful life, which probably represents the author's own experience of pursuing Wisdom.³³⁹ Wisdom's activity as saviour and guide in Israel's history is therefore extended into the present time of the author.

However, seeing that Wisdom had endeavoured to collect the people under her wings from generation to generation does not warrant the conclusion that Jesus is identified as her incarnation, because it is unclear whether Wisdom had even been conceptualised as a hypostasis, who could appear as a person. Sap 10 presents Wisdom as the agent in the exodus and other stories that originally described people's encounter with God, but as the following chapters (Sap 11-19) ascribe

337 Schwenk-Bressler, *Sapientia*, 70; Glicksman, *Wisdom*, 112.

338 See Witte, "Jakob", 338.

339 See Sinnott, *Personification*, 154, 157-160. See also Kloppenborg, "Isis", 73-74 treating the figure of Solomon in Sap 6-9 as a "cipher for the sage".

the agency in the exodus to God, Sapiientia can leave the impression that Wisdom only appears as the revealed side of God. Nevertheless, there are some indications that Wisdom bears features of an independent agent:

Firstly, a closer reading of Sap 10 will have to show whether Wisdom impresses with her own genuine contribution to Israel's relationship with God, or whether she only appears as a different face of God or even an instrument of God. To this end, the next section of the thesis will compare primarily the verbs which denote her actions with what had been recognised as God's activity in the Hebrew Scriptures: Does Wisdom do the same things as God did in the original narratives, or does she act in her own unique way?

Previous investigations have easily found correlations between Sap 10 and the stories of the Fathers in theme and plot,³⁴⁰ and it has been noted that Sapiientia additionally introduces interpretations made by the prophets and psalms.³⁴¹ Sapiientia's presentation of Israel's history also includes material from extra-biblical traditions that were circulating at Pseudo-Solomon's time.³⁴² On the other hand, some new traits of Wisdom's agency presented in Sap 10 by introducing themes borrowed from Greek philosophy and the goddess Isis, have been noted.

Secondly, the reception history of the text reveals the conclusion drawn by the apostle Paul about the nature of Wisdom: when he says in 1Cor 10:4 that Christ followed the people of Israel through the desert as the rock which gave them

340 So Schwenk-Bressler, *Sapiientia*; Hübner, *Weisheit*, 135-143, Witte, "Jakob", 328-330, 334-335.

341 Schwenk-Bressler, *Sapiientia*, 107.

342 See Enns, *Exodus Retold*.

water, he most likely refers to Sap 11:4, where the people call on God to give them water and are given water from the rock. There are several reasons to think that Wisdom is implied as the traditional subject of this image. (1) In Sap 11:1, Wisdom is still the subject facilitating Israel's journey through the desert, and the contrasting account of the biblical narratives in Sap 10 and Sap 11-19 with Wisdom or God respectively as agent in history must indicate that in some way, Wisdom is involved in carrying out God's intentions to save. (2) Wisdom's power over nature as the spirit that maintains the cosmic order in all things gives her the ability to work miracles, and in particular to change her shape into that of the pillar of cloud that had guided the people through the desert according to Sap 10:16-17. She can be easily imagined as appearing analogously as a rock in order to provide water. (3) It has been noticed that Paul apparently knew Sapiientia as a number of probable references can be detected in his letters.³⁴³ (4) It is also likely that there was a general understanding that Wisdom was the subject who nourished Israel with water from the rock as Philo knows of the tradition (in *Leg.* 2.86, Philo uses the same phrase as Sap 11:4, ἐκ πέτρας ἀκροτόμου, for the rock which provided water for Israel and explains that the rock was wisdom³⁴⁴ (ἡ γὰρ ἀκρότομος πέτρα ἡ σοφία τοῦ θεοῦ ἐστίν)).³⁴⁵ (5) Paul had identified the pre-existent Christ with Wisdom in 1 Cor 8:6, therefore it is probable that the identification is in the back of his mind.³⁴⁶ (6) 1Cor 10:4 takes up the context of

343 See above p.94 n.281.

344 See also *Det.* 115. Further, Wisdom is also portrayed as the well in *Ebr.* 112.

345 Enns, *Exodus Retold*, 137-139, has shown how Sapiientia's exegesis draws not only on Biblical material but also includes many Jewish traditions that were circulating at this time.

346 The view that the reference to the pre-existent Christ can be based on the Jewish Wisdom speculation, due to Paul's identification of Christ with Wisdom elsewhere in the letter and to Philo's identification of Wisdom with the rock, is widely held (Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids, Mich., Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans and Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2000), 726-729, Dieter Zeller, *Der erste Brief an die Korinther*, KEK.NT 5 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck&Ruprecht, 2010), 328, Schrage, *Korinther*, 2:795-796, William F. Orr and James Arthur Walther. *1 Corinthians: A New Translation: Introduction with a Study of the Life of Paul, Notes, and Commentary*, AB 32 (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1976), 245, Lietzmann, 45, Hans

Sap 11:5-8 by characterising the water as ‘spiritual drink’. The water is spiritual (and is therefore sourced from Wisdom) in Sap 11, because it teaches Israel to understand how God saves them in troubles in contrast to the Egyptians who perish through God’s judgement. If Paul as an educated Jewish exegete can transfer Wisdom’s activity to the pre-existent Christ, who definitively appeared on earth as a person, the Sapientia text surely has at least the potential to view Wisdom as a hypostasis.

Thirdly, some consideration must be given to the impact Wisdom had on the actual life of the community which wrote, read and transmitted the book. If they made the effort to preserve the writing and continued to engage with it, they must have been convinced to a certain extent of its truth value, which in turn is validated by experience of the divine power in their lived lives.³⁴⁷ We have taken

Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians: A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, transl. James W. Leitch, Hermeneia. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), 167, Jean Héring, *The First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians* (London: Eppworth, 1962), 87, W.G.H. Simon, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: Introduction and Commentary* (London: SMC Press, 1959), 104), except Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, NICNT (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1987), 449 and Markus Öhler, “Wasser in der Wüste: Exod 17 und Num 20f. in den Texten von Qumran und bei Paulus” in *Biblical Figures in Deuterocanonical and Cognate Literature*, ed. Hermann Lichtenberger and Ulrike Mittmann-Richert: DCLY (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2008) 415-137, here p.432. Andreas Lindemann, *Der erste Korintherbrief*, HNT 9,1 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 219, avoids the link without discussion, this approach leads to a lack of explanation for the unusual claim that Christ is identified with the rock “stellt Paulus lapidar fest”. Öhler 431-432, presupposes Christ’s pre-existence without reference to the Wisdom tradition, leading to the result that Paul’s exegetical method here seems to be simply unique. An interpretation of Paul’s claim which relates to the widespread wisdom speculation, participating in common practice, should therefore be preferred, see Thistelton, 728-729. Interestingly, most exegetes base Paul’s statement on a Jewish tradition of the following rock, which is not extant in writing until around 100 AD, but do not consider Sap 11:4, which is far more likely to have been known to Paul, as possible source, except James D.G. Dunn, *The Theology of the Apostle Paul* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 279-280 and Thiselton, *Corinthians*, 728-729, who specifically includes Sap 11:4 in the traditions speaking of Wisdom’s provision of water, occurring in a sequence of Wisdom’s guiding and sustaining actions, which include the passage through the Red Sea and the shelter under the cloud just like 1 Cor 10:1-4. Öhler rejects the reference to Sap 11:4, but this is not convincing: He bases his view solely on Hübner’s analysis that Wisdom ceases to be the subject after Sap 11:1 as he makes a clear break between the sections dedicated to Wisdom’s agency and God’s agency.

³⁴⁷ See Roland Deines, “Revelatory Experiences as the Beginning of Scripture: Paul’s Letters and the Prophets in the Hebrew Bible” in *From Author to Copyist: Essays on the Composition, Redaction, and Transmission of the Hebrew Bible in Honor of Zippi Talshir*, ed. Cana Werman (Eisenbrauns, 2015), 303-335, here pp. 316-319. He observes the important

note above that the value of a poetic personification of an abstract entity as a metaphor for a real transcendent power depended on whether the audience had experienced the power of that entity.³⁴⁸ Therefore we must ask whether it is credible that the Jewish community in the diaspora had experienced Wisdom as a new revelation of God, when many of their traditional ways to relate to God were less accessible for them, because they were no longer settled in the country God had given to his people, where they could fashion their government, legal system and state cult according to the torah. Did the author of *Sapientia* (and the Jewish community with him) discover that their God still related to them, in a new way which arose out of the environment they lived in and in contest with the categories of Greek philosophy and the powerful goddess Isis or the promises of other popular mystery cults? A first indication of such a new conception was the antonomasia of the righteous heroes in Sap 10, which introduced a certain universalism: the heroes were saved because they were righteous, not because God had made a covenant with Israel, shifting the focus of teaching from covenantal theology to righteous behaviour.³⁴⁹ Also, the righteous could expect to be rewarded with immortality; and Wisdom, God's omnipresent presence, could be sought everywhere without a temple and its sacrifices. We will have to see whether the impression that Judaism had gained new perspectives in the Hellenistic environment is ascribed to Wisdom's agency in Sap 10. If a real

role of the transmitting community in validating a prophetic oracle as a divine word, which interprets and transforms their lives: The process of canonisation itself bears witness to the conviction of the transmitting community that the word of a prophet was received by a revelatory experience. Factors that determine the canonisation are the acceptance and transmission of the word by the community, and its validation in the life of that community is as important as the author's own conviction that his communication is based on a revelation. It seems only logical that the process of validation could similarly be applied to the insights of the sages with the difference that their inspired knowledge is based on understanding the patterns of the cosmic order rather than on visions or auditions. (See p.306 n.6 for the inclusion of sapiential texts as one mode of divine disclosure).

348 Röhser, *Metaphorik*, 138-139.

349 See Schwenk-Bressler, *Sapientia*, 111 for the detachment of the righteous from their being part of Israel.

religious experience arose out of the pursuit of Wisdom, it is more likely that Wisdom was viewed as a transcendent power or heavenly being.

5.2.1. The Main Areas of Wisdom's Activity in History

Taking both the theme in Sap 9:18 and the frequency of employing certain lexical fields into account, Wisdom acts firstly as a saviour, secondly by guiding people on straight paths, thirdly as a teacher and fourthly by giving wealth and honour. Fifthly, there are some miraculous acts which require Wisdom to manipulate the order of nature.

5.2.1.1. *Wisdom as Saviour*

Sapientia's special interest in Wisdom acting as a saviour is evident in that the verb σώζειν (to save) appears both in the headline 9:18 and in 10:4, while ρύεσθαι (to rescue) appears four times in chapter 10. Other semantically-related verbs include διαφυλάσσειν (to guard carefully, 10:1; 12), ἐξαιρεῖν (to release, 10:1), παριστάναι (to stand by somebody, 10:11), ἀσφαλίζειν (to keep safe, 10:12), βραβεύειν (decide as an arbiter, 10:12), διαβιβάζειν (to carry across, 10:18), διάγειν (to lead through, 10:18) and κατακλύζειν (to wash away, 10:19).

5.2.1.1.1. Σώζειν and ρύεσθαι in the stories of the Fathers

Surprisingly, the words σώζειν and ρύεσθαι are rarely used in the narratives of Genesis to which Sap 10 refers.

The verb σώζειν appears only in Sap 10:4 “when the earth was flooded on his

account, Wisdom again saved it by steering the righteous one by a shabby piece of wood”.³⁵⁰ In this episode, Pseudo-Solomon supplies the verb ‘to save’ as there are no references to σῶζειν in Gen 6-9 in the original Noah narrative. The verb is used sparingly in the Pentateuch (nine times) and only becomes increasingly common in Judges, Kings, Psalms and the prophets. As σῶζειν does not appear in the account of the flood, so ρύεσθαι does not appear in the narratives of either Lot, as it does in Sap 10:6, or Joseph, as it does in Sap 10:13. How, then, does Genesis describe God’s role where Israel’s heroes are saved?

Instead of employing σῶζειν, Gen 7:23 states that “only Noah was left” (κατελείφθη μόνος Νωε), *implying* that God had spared Noah, after he had given the instructions to build the ark. Noah went into the ark and out of the ark with his family, and all other people perished. At the end, God promised not to extinguish human life again by a flood, but the words emphasise the “not killing” instead of assuring Noah of God’s saving grace!

Whilst the verb σῶζειν is not used in the Noah narrative, it does occur several times in Genesis. However, apart from Gen 32:31, it does not denote God’s saving action: in Gen 19:17, 20, 22 angels bid Lot save (σῶζε) his own life by running away. The story does not ascribe salvation clearly to either God, the angels or Lot. At first the angels appear as saviours as they warn Lot, and they act in leading the family out by their hands (19:15-16). Then Lot acts by running away (this is where the verb σῶζειν is employed in 19:17, 20, 22). Finally the identity of the angels is confused with the Lord, because the Lord rains down

350 Kloppenborg, “Isis,” 70, detects an influence of Isis in Wisdom’s power to save from the threatening sea.

sulphur from heaven in 19:24, whereas the angels had previously announced (Gen 19:13) that they were going to destroy the city. In the end, the narrator concludes in 19:29 that God had “sent Lot away” (ἐξάπέστειλεν), remembering his conversation with Abraham. It is obvious that Genesis is dropping several hints that God saw to Lot being saved but without overtly appearing himself, while Sap 10:6 identifies Wisdom as the one who saved (ἐρρύσατο) Lot when he was fleeing from the fire and destruction.

As Lot saved himself, so Jacob’s family are to save *themselves* by escaping from Esau in Gen 32:8 (σώζεσθαι), whereas Sap 10:9 introduces the paragraph about Jacob with “Wisdom saved (ἐρρύσατο) those who served her from their troubles,” and affirms in 10:12 (“she protected him from enemies and secured him from those who lay in wait for him”) that this salvation includes saving Jacob from enemies like his brother.³⁵¹

The only phrase which relates σώζειν directly to God in Genesis is: “I saw God face to face and yet my life was spared” in 32:31. Here, ἐσώθη is a *passivum divinum*, but who did what remains mysterious, giving Sapientia the opportunity to ascribe the function of the arbiter who gave Jacob victory to Wisdom (10:12c). It looks like the *passivum divinum*, which avoids designating God directly as agent, is repeatedly interpreted by Sapientia as an action of the mediator Wisdom. As we have seen above, the *passivum divinum* in “Noah alone was left” in the Noah narrative was elaborated in Sap 10:4 as Wisdom saving Noah and steering the ark. Correspondingly, the *passivum divinum* in Sap 11:4 “they were given

351 As Glicksman, *Wisdom*, 128-129 observes, the enemies are not defined precisely; they could include Laban and his sons, Esau, or Canaanites.

water from the rock” allows the interpretation that Wisdom provided the water although the people pray to God for help.

Wisdom saves (ἐπρύσατο, Sap 10:13) Joseph from his brothers’ sin of selling him to Egypt, as she does not desert him during his ordeal. It has been disputed whether Joseph had been saved from committing sin with Potiphar’s wife³⁵² or from his brothers’ sin of selling him;³⁵³ Sap 10:13 allows both references, and Wisdom acted as a saviour in either case.

One phrase in Genesis which suggests that it was God who supported Joseph is in Gen 39:2-3 “the Lord was with Joseph” in Potiphar’s house as well as in the prison and caused all of his work to prosper (εὐοδοί), but this support is not termed “saving” in Genesis and it came long after Joseph’s need to be saved from his brothers’ hands.³⁵⁴

In contrast to Sapientia, Joseph never speaks about God saving him in Genesis. When Joseph reviews his achievement, he recognises that God had sent him to preserve his family’s life according to Gen 45:5; 45:7-8 and 45:11. In Gen 50:20-21, he expands his mission to preserve the life of many. The Egyptians use the word σώζειν for Joseph having saved their lives in Gen 47:25 – but here it is Joseph who saves people, not God!

The verb ἐπρύσατο occurs only once in the whole of Genesis, and then it appears in Jacob’s review of his life in the (sapiential) Joseph narrative, where he

352 So Neher, *Wesen*, 146 n.234; Glicksman, *Wisdom*, 131; Hübner, *Weisheit*, 140.

353 So Schwenk-Bressler, *Sapientia*, 86.

354 More about “the Lord was with Joseph” further down, p. 130.

summarises his relationship with God in a rather abstract way as “the Angel who has saved me from all evil” (Gen 48:16). This is a generalising statement rather than a reference to a specific action in the narrative and will be considered in the section about God as saviour in the OT.

In conclusion, the verbs ῥύεσθαι and σώζειν are rarely used to denote God’s involvement with the Fathers in Genesis. Human actions are prevalent here in people saving themselves or each other, even though we can infer from the general plot that God had a role in sending the angels to Lot, in blessing Jacob so he would be saved from Esau, and that he had helped Joseph interpret Pharaoh’s dreams, which enabled him to prevent his brothers from starving. We expect that God interfered with an undefined sort of supernatural assistance, but Genesis does not say exactly what he did. On the contrary, the supernatural intervention is sometimes ascribed to a mediator (the Angel in Gen 48:16 and the Spirit of God in 41:37).

Sapientia, on the other hand, identifies Wisdom as agent in those stories where the precise workings of divine intervention had been veiled in Genesis: Sap 10:4, 6, 9 and 14 identify Wisdom as the saviour and carry on giving details of the rescue mission. It appears then, if Sap 10 has not taken the specific divine intervention in saving the patriarchs from Genesis, that Pseudo-Solomon is recognising a subtle way of God directing history through his Wisdom.

5.2.1.1.2. ῥύεσθαι in Exodus

However, Wisdom’s activity reflects the interpretations of God’s actions in the

Hebrew Scriptures regarding one crucial event: God saving Israel by the exodus is described repeatedly using the term *ρύεσθαι* in the narratives and in summarising reflection (Exod 2:17,19; 5:23; 6:6; 12:27 and 14:30). This must be considered as the origin of the perception of God as Israel's saviour, and the action is transferred directly to Wisdom in Sap 10:15: "she saved (*ἐρρύσατο*) a holy people and blameless race from the peoples who oppressed them". In Sap 10:15 Wisdom assumes precisely the role which was previously God's domain, to be the saviour of Israel, and it appears that this role was then transferred to the narratives of Genesis, where Wisdom is likewise acclaimed as saviour, and her action is also recognised in the encounters of the patriarchs with God.

5.2.1.1.3. Σώζειν and *ρύεσθαι* in the Psalms, Isaiah and the OT in general

The trend of proclaiming God in a general way as Israel's saviour is continued in the later parts of the Hebrew Bible. In the historical books, *σῶζειν* occurs frequently in the meaning 'to save from enemies' or 'to give victory over enemies'. Isaiah contributes several themes taken up by Sapientia 10: he compares God with foreign gods and idols which are unable to save (Isa 43:11; 45:20; 46:7); he encourages Israel to believe that God will save them again in a new historical situation (Isa 30:15), and his trust is rewarded when God saves Jerusalem from the Assyrian attack. The continued experience of God's salvation culminates in a generalised statement that God is Israel's saviour (Isa 43:3 *ἐγὼ κύριος...ὁ σῶζόν σε*).³⁵⁵ This theme is the foundation for Sapientia's main goal, which is to reassure the Jewish community that God takes care of them in their

³⁵⁵ Similar in Deut 33:29. Schwenk-Bressler, *Sapientia*, 348, speaks about an existential interpretation of God's salvation.

new situation in the Hellenistic diaspora through his Wisdom.

Many psalms offer a template to Sapientia by promising salvation to the righteous rather than all of Israel: God saves the humble (Ps LXX 75:10) and those who fear him (Ps LXX 144:19; 59:6-7; 107:6). God saves from enemies and the lawless (Ps LXX 58:3; 17:49), from sinners (Ps LXX 16:8; 70:4; 96:10) and from sin (Ps LXX 27; 79:4; 105). Carrying on the theme of moral behaviour, Ps LXX 118:166-174 suggests that obedience to the law or righteousness entitles one to a claim on God's salvation.³⁵⁶

The generalised statement that God is Israel's saviour is applied to Wisdom in Sap 10:9: "Wisdom saved (ἐπρύσατο) those who served her from their troubles". This statement could serve as a summary of the cases presented so far,³⁵⁷ but it could also introduce the theme of the longer paragraph, which presents Jacob – a representative of Israel – as an example of a wise man who models the pious life which Jews could live in the Hellenistic environment.³⁵⁸ Wisdom guides Jacob, Wisdom teaches Jacob, Wisdom saves Jacob and Wisdom makes Jacob wealthy. Jacob's life is modelled on the righteous supplicant of the psalms (compare Sap 10:10 with the nearly identical diction of Ps LXX 26:11: "guide me on straight ways" ὁδήγησόν με ἐν τριβῶ εὐθείᾳ).³⁵⁹ Accordingly, the nature of the righteous as "those who served her" in Sap 10:9 reflects the statement from Pss LXX 59:7

³⁵⁶ Ezekiel likewise connects salvation with righteousness of the individual as only the δίκαιος will be saved (see Ezek 14:14,16,18; 33:12).

³⁵⁷ Neher, *Wesen*, 142, views the verse as the final line of the paragraph about Lot, forming an inclusio with Sap 10:6a. Schwenk-Bressler, *Sapientia*, 58-59, 77-78 suggests that Sap 10:9 refers to the fathers mentioned both before and after the verse as a summary of Wisdom's activity of saving the righteous. Witte, "Jakob", also confines his observations about Jacob to Sap 10:10-12.

³⁵⁸ See Witte, "Jakob", 338.

³⁵⁹ Differently *ibid.*, 330: Witte recognises a reference to LXX Isa 40:3.

and 107:7 that God saves those who are personally attached to him.

The general statement mirrors Jacob's own appraisal of the divine salvation he experienced throughout his life in Gen 48:15-16: "God who nourished me..., the Angel who saved me from all evil" (ὁ θεὸς ὁ τρέφων με..., ὁ ἄγγελος ὁ ῥυόμενός με ἐκ πάντων τῶν κακῶν). It is remarkable that Jacob here uses a parallelism assigning his salvation first to God and then similarly to his Angel. This method is reflected by Sapientia ascribing all of the saving acts in Israel's history first to Wisdom and then to God. The summary of Jacob's experience in the sapiential Joseph narrative already introduces the Angel as a mediator of the divine action and thus prepares for the role of Wisdom as saviour in Sapientia.

Sap 10:10-12 recounts the story of Jacob as a model of the man saved by Wisdom. The threefold assertion in vv.11-12 that Wisdom "*stood by* him when some overpowered him in greed...*protected* him from enemies and *secured* him from those who lay in wait for him" elaborates on the traditional meaning of 'to save' as saving in danger from enemies, which was not the plight of any of the Fathers mentioned before. The last verse of the Jacob paragraph forms an inclusion with the general statement by formulating the aim of Wisdom's guidance as teaching Jacob that godliness will prevail over all adversities. Another reason why verse 9 describes Jacob more precisely than the previous Fathers is that he, not Lot, is known as acting wisely by multiplying his speckled sheep and thus serving Wisdom; moreover, the word 'troubles' (πόνων) is better related to Jacob's hard work (and accordingly reappears in Sap 10:10e in a variation on its meaning) than to the trials of the Fathers mentioned previously.

θεραπεύοντας is also better connected with Jacob as he renewed the covenant with God in Gen 28:20-22; 35:7, and therefore served him whereas no such thing is reported about Lot.

Sapiential texts scarcely dwell on the subject of salvation, with the exception of Prov 10:2 and 11:4/6 (“righteousness saves (ρύεσθαι) from death”) and Prov 28:26 (“he who walks in wisdom will be saved (σωθήσεται)”), which prepare for Sapientia’s confidence that Wisdom saves the righteous, because they link righteousness and wisdom with salvation.

In conclusion, the general statement in Sap10:9 sums up neatly what the Hebrew Scriptures say about God’s relationship with Israel, or with Israel’s representative Jacob. However, Sapientia does not quote the verb ρύεσθαι from the Jacob narrative in Gen 25-35, and as the author gets a hold of how God interfered in many veiled ways in saving Jacob, he calls the divine presence which had acted in history ‘Wisdom’.

5.2.1.1.4. God’s role in saving his people according to the historical Psalms LXX 77; 104; 105

Given that Sapientia does not quote Genesis, but continues to develop the insights gained by the prophets and psalms in an ongoing process of proclaiming God’s saving presence with his people in every new age and new historical situation, we may expect that his account of Wisdom’s agency in history is modelled on Pss LXX 77; 104; 105, each of which presents a summary of Israel’s salvation history.

There are similarities between Sap 10 and the historical psalms in diction,³⁶⁰ in structure,³⁶¹ in the extension of Israel's salvation from the exodus to previous and subsequent generations,³⁶² and in the aim to tell the Fathers' stories for a didactic purpose (particularly obvious in Ps 77:1-4). Each of the historical psalms revolves around a particular aspect of Israel's history, such as the stubbornness of the Fathers (Ps 77), the covenant (Ps 104), Israel's rebellion (Ps 105), and learns lessons for the present from it. Sap 10 is independent of each of them, choosing its own theme 'salvation by Wisdom'.

It is noteworthy at this point that the summary of salvation history in Matt 23:37 par. also shows a certain independence from Sapiientia. Strikingly, the author of the 'Lament' uses the term ἐπισυνάγειν from Ps LXX 105:47, while the word is not employed at all by Sap 10, and it is not commonly used in the positive meaning that God takes care of his people either in the gospels or in the LXX. The verb "to gather" refers to liberation from the exile in Ps LXX 105:47, but it may also have taken on a meaning of guidance in the JW as it was used in 1Esdras 5:49; 8:69, 88; 9:5, 18, 55 for people being gathered in the temple around Ezra for the purpose of implementing the law in their communal and family lives. Whether an eschatological dimension is also present,³⁶³ is difficult to decide, but it would suit the eschatological bias of Jesus' ministry.

360 διήγαγεν, ὠδήγησεν, θαυμασίοις, θλιβόντος, σημεία, τέρατα appear in Ps 77; ἐπράθη Ἰωσηφ, σημείων, τέρατων, νεφέλην εἰς σκέπην in Ps 104 and τὰ θαυμασία, ἐν ἀβύσσῳ, τοὺς θλιβόντας in Ps 105.

361 See Schmitt, *Beispielreihe*, 232-234 for similarities and differences.

362 See for instance Schwenk-Bressler, *Sapiientia*, 87. He comments on the similarities between the description of Joseph in Ps 105:17-22 and Sap 10:13-14, but thinks they are not sufficient to establish literary dependence.

363 See Wolfgang Schrage, "ἐπισυναγωγή" TWNT 7:840-841. His study of the noun ἐπισυναγωγή adds a new dimension to the word used by Jesus as he emphasises that the gathering refers to the eschatological collection of the Christians according to the theme that had been prepared by the LXX in 2 Macc 2:7f.

It appears then that Jesus' saying is not only modelling his trans-historical ministry on Sapientia's analysis of God's Wisdom as the agent in Israel's history. The presentation of his trans-historical ministry is equally inspired by this psalm, as Jesus, too, denounces the continual rebellion of the people, he threatens with judgement, and he uses the same word to sum up the continuing effort of salvation into the present time, ἐπισυνάγειν. Given his independence in composing his own view of the saviour's role in Israel's history by referring to Ps LXX 105 as well as to Sap 10, it might be fairer to say that Jesus identifies his role in history with that of God in Ps LXX 105 in the same way as Sapientia identified Wisdom's role with that of God: His agency in history and his relation to God are comparable to that of Wisdom.

5.2.1.1.5. Other verbs describing Wisdom as saving one of the Patriarchs: παριστάναι, διαφυλάσσειν, ἀσφαλίζειν, βραβεύειν

Wisdom protected Jacob from enemies (διαφυλάσσειν Sap 10:12). The verb can be traced back to Gen 28:15 where God promises to take care of Jacob (διαφυλάσσων σε) on his whole journey and bring him back home. It is this promise that is honoured by Wisdom in Sap 10:12, and her support in three particular situations is detailed, where God's role had not been elaborated in Genesis: She stood by him when greedy people rose against him (κατισχυόντων αὐτὸν παρέστη v.11). She secured him from an ambush (ἠσφαλίσατο v.12).³⁶⁴ She

³⁶⁴ This role of Wisdom who effects changes in nature or in the enemies to save the patriarchs is recognised by the Targum Pseudo-Jonathan to Genesis 33:16 as a miracle, which is necessary to understand Esau's change of mind: "Now, a miracle was performed for Jacob, and Esau returned on that day on his way to Gabla." (see Michael Maher (ed.), *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan: Genesis: Translated, with Introduction and Notes*, vol.1B in *The Aramaic Bible*, ed. Kevin Cathcart, Michael Maher and Martin McNamara (Edinburgh: T&T Clark Ltd., 1992), 116.) The Targum is content to describe the invisible agent, who had not been mentioned in Genesis, in the form of a *passivum divinum*, but that is exactly the role assumed by Wisdom in Sap 10:12ab.

decided in the function of an arbiter (ἐβράβευσεν v.12) that Jacob had won “a violent contest.” βραβεύειν is a *hapax legomenon* in LXX and therefore reflects a concept which is unique to Sapientia, with Wisdom ascribing victory to Jacob in the mysterious contest, presumably with God or his angel (here the text remains obscure, but it can only refer to the fight at the Jabbok river).³⁶⁵ Presenting Wisdom as an arbiter over God’s contest with Jacob is really outrageous, as it places Wisdom above God, guiding his actions; therefore it is not surprising that the author keeps this line rather vague.

The three times where Wisdom saves Jacob from his enemies in 10:11-12b make it especially clear that she not only acts by strengthening her followers as an inward presence in their souls, but also saves from physical attack by enemies. They furthermore emphasise that Wisdom is a real power who can make an impact on those who do not willingly submit to her guidance and lend their human efforts to accomplish her goals.

5.2.1.1.6. ἐξαιρεῖν and διαφυλάσσειν

διαφυλάσσειν (v.1 ‘to guard carefully’) is not used in relation to Adam in Genesis. Guarding Adam from whatever evil in Sap 10:1 is an action which is characteristic of Wisdom alone. There are two possible ways to translate μόνον κτισθέντα in Sap 10:1: “when he alone was created” or “who alone was created”. If v.1ab referred to the time when only Adam was created, and it was common knowledge that Wisdom had been with God from before the creation, then Sap 10:1 might infer that she took up her task of guarding man from the very

³⁶⁵ The place is, however, seen as the Jabbok river by the exegetes: Neher, *Wesen*, 145; Schwenk-Bressler, *Sapientia*, 83; Glicksman, *Wisdom*, 129; Hübner, *Weisheit*, 139.

beginning.³⁶⁶ However, she did not prevent Adam from violating God's command, causing the author to withhold the attribute 'just' from Adam.³⁶⁷ Therefore, the sapiential saying in Prov 2:8 that God watches over the way of those who fear him can hardly be a reference for Wisdom here. If μόνον κτισθέντα is translated 'alone created' and means that Adam was created, rather than begotten like all other human beings,³⁶⁸ the verse reinforces Adam's role as firstborn representative of humanity (προτόπλαστον), and it is more likely that the most critical situation in Adam's life, when he ate the forbidden fruit, is in view, rather than a new topic of Wisdom having shared God's responsibility from the beginning. The meaning of διαφυλάσσειν would then be the same as in Job 2:6 where it means 'to preserve one's life'. Wisdom then mitigated the original verdict that Adam would have to die when he ate the fruit.³⁶⁹ Sap 10:1c—2 continues correspondingly to say that she had saved Adam from his transgression and enabled him to rule over everything.

The verb ἐξαίρειν (v.1c) can be used synonymously to ρύεσθαι for God saving the people from the Egyptian slavery in Exod 3:8; 18:8, 9, 10. In Ps LXX 114:8 and Sir 33:1 God saves from death and from temptation respectively, but there is no use of ἐξαίρειν as saving from sin. Even if the verb ἐξαίρειν is frequently used of God, it is not used in Genesis for saving Adam from his transgression. The term παραπτώμα does not appear in the Pentateuch or the historical books at all.

In addition, God's forgiveness of sins is not easily obtained in the Hebrew Scriptures. When David is forgiven for committing adultery with Bathsheba, both

366 Schwenk-Bressler, *Sapientia*, 65 and Hübner, *Weisheit*, 135.

367 The observation that Adam is the only protagonist in Sap 10 who is not called righteous was made frequently, see e.g. Hübner, *Weisheit*, 135 and Glicksman, *Wisdom*, 110.

368 Neher, *Wesen*, 134 translates "den allein erschaffenen"; Winston, *Wisdom*, 213, and Glicksman, *Wisdom*, 108-109, can accept both readings.

369 Schwenk-Bressler, *Sapientia*, 65-66.

he (see Ps 51; 2Sam 12:5) and Nathan (2Sam 12:10-12) perceive the forgiveness as a dramatic, unmerited act of God's grace, which only came through repentance and at the cost of the child's death. When Israel is forgiven for turning away from God, the forgiveness comes after a long process of harsh punishment by exile and after thorough repentance. Thus, Isaiah and Hosea emphasise the necessity of repentance to turn around God's wrath. Ezek 18:26 is very clear that transgressions lead to the death of the offender. The atonement through a sin offering offered in the Hebrew Scriptures is also an institution which is set up by God's grace, and it involves the death of the animal in place of the sinner.³⁷⁰

Sapientia 10 extends the salvation from sin to the primeval man Adam in his role as representative of mankind. Neher aligns Wisdom with the pattern of God forgiving due to repentance by suggesting that Wisdom saved Adam by encouraging him to repent.³⁷¹ However, Sap 10:1 does not mention Adam's repentance although other sapiential writings do include this, therefore it should not be made too much of.³⁷² It should not be forgotten that forgiveness necessitates God lifting his verdict as well as man's repentance, and Wisdom may be acting in both ways in Sap 10:3. She acts quite sovereignly in saving Adam from God's verdict as well as neglecting the traditional deed-consequence pattern. The general amnesty goes far beyond the forgiveness of sins God granted to his people in special circumstances in the Hebrew Scriptures. This means that Pseudo-Solomon introduces a new concept here when he says that Wisdom saved

370 See George W. E. Nickelsburg, *Ancient Judaism and Christian Origins: Diversity, Continuity, and Transformation* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 64-68. He lists several means of atonement in the OT: sacrifices, repentance, suffering, discipline, martyrdom, righteous deeds, prayers of confession. None of these are presupposed by Sap 10:1 as Wisdom saves Adam unconditionally from his transgression.

371 Neher, *Wesen*, 138-139.

372 Cf. Glicksman, *Wisdom*, 109.

Adam from his transgression.

5.2.1.1.7. Οὐκ ἐγκαταλείπειν, συγκαταβαίνειν, οὐκ ἀφιέναι, κυβερνᾶν

Wisdom saves Joseph with subtle support by staying with him in danger until he is rescued. Her general oversight of Joseph's fate is expressed by the phrase οὐκ ἐγκατέλιπεν (Sap 10:13), corresponding very much to God's overall plan to send Joseph to Egypt ahead of the famine to put him in a position to feed his family (Gen 45:5; 50:20).³⁷³ The phrase οὐκ ἐγκατέλιπεν does not occur in the Joseph narrative, but may have been transferred from God's promise to watch over Jacob in Gen 28:15. In Genesis, God's support during Joseph's ordeal is expressed as "God with him" (Gen 39:2-3, 21) in Potiphar's house and later in the jail, where Joseph's success at his work impressed his masters. This success may also include Joseph's amazing skill in interpreting dreams. Gen 41:38-39 introduces God's spirit as a mediator to deliver insights into the meaning of the dreams.³⁷⁴

However, there is a difference between God's actions and Wisdom. Wisdom's support is conceived as a continual comforting or strengthening presence from the beginning, when the brothers sold Joseph as a slave, to the end when he became ruler over Egypt.³⁷⁵ Sap 10:14 emphasises Wisdom's continual tangible

373 Wisdom's foreknowledge and her role in manipulating history to secure a successful outcome for God's friends are especially clear in the Abraham notice, see below.

374 See Neher, *Wesen*, 147. He observes that Joseph's ability to interpret the dreams is given by God's spirit, and it should be remembered that the spirit is closely linked to Wisdom considering that she is almost identical with God's Spirit in Sap 1:5-7.

375 A further indication that more specific actions are needed to implement God's aid is made by Targum Pseudo-Jonathan on Genesis 39:21, 23, as it replaces the "the Lord was with him" of Genesis by "the Memra of the Lord was at the assistance of Joseph" (Maher, *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan: Genesis*, 132). In Gen 41:1 "At the end of two years the remembrance of Joseph came before the Memra of the Lord", and Gen 41:10 "It was arranged from before the Lord that Pharaoh was angry with his servants" adds another detail of divine action in saving Joseph, however without ascribing the activity to the *Memra*, or like Sap 10:14, to Wisdom (ibid., 135).

presence in the dungeon with the verbs συγκαταβαίνειν (‘to descend together with’) and οὐκ ἀφιέναι (‘not to leave alone’), which can perhaps be understood in terms of Sap 7:27 “[Wisdom] passes into holy souls”. In this way, Wisdom is perceptible for the person whom she accompanies, even though she remains invisible to others. Οὐκ ἀφίεται (‘not to give up’) occurs frequently in the OT with widely varying meanings, but throughout Genesis there is no example of the sense in which it is used by Sap 10:14, namely ‘she did not give up on him’. Therefore this phrase contributes to the genuine activity of Wisdom in sustaining Joseph in the prison. συγκαταβαίνειν is not a verb used to denote God’s actions in the OT at all. Dan LXX 3:49 provides an example of a heavenly helper who descended into the furnace with the faithful Jews (ἄγγελος δὲ κυρίου συγκατέβη...εἰς τὴν κάμινον), but it is a mediator, the Angel of the Lord, rather than God who descends into the dungeon.³⁷⁶

God is not described as steering the ark (κυβερνήσασα in Sap 10:4) in Gen 6-8. Pseudo-Solomon, on the other hand, describes the constant presence of Wisdom and her support of Noah as pilot of the ark, emphasising the need for divine help by describing the ark as a “shabby piece of wood” in face of the massive flood.³⁷⁷ Sap 10:4 does not assign God’s saving action to Wisdom in this place. The recontextualisation works the other way around: after establishing Wisdom’s function as pilot of the ark in Sap 10:4, it is transferred to God in Sap 14:6, where God is the subject who guided the ark. So, whatever Wisdom does, she does in agreement with God.

376 Kloppenborg, “Isis”, 71, suggests that Wisdom’s function of saving the prisoner has been derived from the goddess Isis who is known to save the prisoners. However, the source of Medinet Madi which he adduces for Isis’ salvation uses different diction, whereas the verb συγκαταβαίνειν points to a reference to the biblical tradition of Daniel.

377 See also Glicksman, *Wisdom*, 114.

5.2.1.1.8. Ὁδηγεῖν, διαβαίνειν, διάγειν, ἀνθιστάναι, κατακλύζειν

When Wisdom saved Israel from the Egyptian slavery, some of her actions take up the verbs of the exodus narrative which describe her (or God respectively) leading the people out of the country whilst some do not. As with the term ῥύθessται, Wisdom assumes God's role in the exodus, but there are some situations where she acts in her own peculiar way.

The verb ὀδηγεῖν in v.17, which describes Wisdom leading the people on a wonderful way takes up Exod 13:17 where God did the same.

Διαβιβάζειν ('to carry over' or 'lead over') generally refers to people taking possessions or family across a river. It is only in Josh 7:7 that God led Israel over the Jordan river.³⁷⁸ Adding this term to Wisdom's portfolio expresses a closer companionship with the people than Exodus had reported of God.

God does not "drown" the Egyptians in the Red Sea in Exodus as Wisdom "drowned their enemies" (κατακλύζειν 'to flood, drown', v.19). What happens in Exod 14:26 is that Moses raises his hand following God's order to make the waters return to their place in the Red Sea. As in many of the Fathers' stories, Wisdom takes an intermediate position between God giving orders with the intention to save and the human acting accordingly: she is the agent who effects the event that saves Israel.

³⁷⁸ Winston (*Wisdom*, 219) judges that "[m]uch of the saving activity here ascribed to Wisdom has been assigned directly to God in Isa 63:11-14." However, while that may be true for the general idea of God leading the people through the Red Sea, in detail the verbs used in Isa 63:11-14 and also some of the actions are different from Sap 10: ἀναβιβάζειν instead of διαβιβάζειν and ἄγειν instead of διάγειν. The giving of the Holy Spirit and the overpowering of the water do not appear in Sap 10.

The verb occurs eight times in the LXX, and is mostly used as a metaphor for coming judgement (Sap. 10:4, Jer 29:2; Ezek 13:13). However, we should be wary of assigning Wisdom a role in bringing judgement on the Egyptians, the enemies, here. In Sap 10:18, Wisdom acts primarily to ensure a safe passage for Israel, in contrast to God's judicial role in Sap 18:5, where he destroys the Egyptians by a mighty flood in return for their killing the infants of the holy people; Sap 19:4 speaks explicitly of "punishment". In addition, the reference to the destruction of the Egyptian army in Sap 10:20 may be seen as a first step towards introducing the perspective of God's judgement, which is the theme of Sap 11-19, rather than a specific feature of Wisdom's activity.³⁷⁹ From this point onward, the author begins to confuse Wisdom's action with that of God: Sap 10:20 gives the glory for the rescue to the Lord and 11:1-4 completes the change of subject from Wisdom to God.

5.2.1.1.9. Wisdom's role as saviour excludes punishment of adversaries

Sapientia 10 sets Wisdom's saving acts apart from the perdition of the godless people. Adam is contrasted with Cain, Abraham with the peoples building the tower of Babel, Lot with the Sodomites and his unbelieving wife, Jacob with his brother and Laban, Joseph with his brothers and the Egyptians, Israel with the Egyptians. The contrast helps to define the righteous who are saved by Wisdom. However, Wisdom is not the person who acts in destroying the wicked. They perish because they turn away from Wisdom (Cain turns away and perishes in his

³⁷⁹ See Schwenk-Bressler, *Sapientia*, 112, who sees the drowning of the Egyptians followed by v.20, where God appears for the first time as subject in the historical summary, as a first indication of the transition to the next part of Sapientia, chapter 11-19, which deal with God's judgement on the Egyptians. Neher, *Wesen*, 148, on the other hand, sees Wisdom as punishing the pursuers and assuming God's role in all details of the story.

passions ἀποστὰς δὲ ἀπ' αὐτῆς...συναπόλετο θύμοις in 10:3, and the Sodomites perish as ungodly people, because they had evaded Wisdom ἐξαπολλυμένων ἀσεβῶν...σοφίαν γὰρ παροδεύσαντες in 10:6, 8). This observation is reinforced by Wisdom's corresponding role in exposing the wicked to God's judgement in Sap 1:4-6. The approach to passing judgment is one of the areas where Wisdom acts distinctly from God.³⁸⁰ God *punishes* the wicked (so in Sap 19:4), as his role is to achieve justice by saving and punishing people according to their merit, whereas Wisdom merely exposes the wicked to perdition by withdrawing from those who reject her.³⁸¹

5.2.1.1.10. Summary: Wisdom's role in saving Israel

Sapientia's frequent references to Wisdom saving the patriarchs are not recontextualised from the corresponding stories in Genesis. While Genesis ascribes the instances of salvation to God's intentions, it often remains mysterious how salvation is effected. Sapientia fills the gap by describing how the salvation was accomplished by Wisdom.³⁸²

On one hand, Sap 10 recognises σώζειν and ῥύεσθαι as expressing a major theme

380 See Schwenk-Bressler, *Sapientia*, 115-116.

381 Contrary to Winston, *Wisdom*, 211-216. He makes "Wisdom's saving and punishing power" the theme of Sap 10 and dwells more on the judgement than on Wisdom as a saviour. However, I think even though the negative examples are treated quite extensively as a contrast to the righteous heroes, it is striking that Wisdom does not have an active part in punishing the wicked. They perish because they leave her. The only exception is v.19, where Wisdom drowns the Egyptian army, and this happens primarily to ensure a safe passage for Israel.

382 Schwenk-Bressler, *Sapientia*, 107-108, reaches the conclusion that Sap 10 refers mostly to Genesis and Exodus, but also uses Psalms, especially Ps 8; 104; 105 LXX, and is sometimes close to the prophetic tradition. It also introduces sapiential concepts into the interpretation. In addition, Sapientia can be shown to use material from outside the Bible. I suppose Schwenk-Bressler arrives at this conclusion because he examines the motifs and plots used in Sap 10, which do mostly relate to Gen/Exod, whilst my study focusses on the precise actions of Wisdom. The study of the verbs employed for Wisdom's actions showed that most are independent of Genesis and Exodus, but are frequently borrowed from the prophets and psalms.

in the characterisation of God in the Hebrew Scriptures (especially *ρύεσθαι* in Exodus) and transfers this theme to Wisdom. Further recontextualised verbs are *ὀδηγεῖν* (Sap 10:17) and *διαφύλασσειν* (Sap 10:12). But on the other hand, Sap 10 illustrates Wisdom's role in saving the patriarchs of Genesis in places where God had not featured as 'saviour' in the original stories. Wisdom takes the role of effecting the salvation God had planned for Noah, Lot, Jacob, Joseph and the holy people. She does not take the visible shape of an angel or speak in dreams and visions, but she is tangible in her comforting and inspiring presence and in the wonderful results that she produces. In places, she is involved in details of the rescue mission which were never reported of God. Thus, she delivers Adam from his sin, she steers Noah's ark, she decides on the victor in the contest at the Jabbok river, she descends into the prison with Joseph, she withstands the Pharaoh, she escorts the people through the Red Sea and brings the waters back to drown the Egyptian pursuers. In some of these actions, Wisdom takes the role of the Angel of the Lord, who had 'descended' into the furnace in Dan LXX 3:49 like Wisdom 'descended' into the prison with Joseph. Gen 48:16 recognises God's Angel as the one who saved Jacob in all dangers throughout his life, just as Wisdom is generally recognised as saviour of those who serve her in Sap 10:9, especially Jacob, who serves here as a model for all the Israelites who live according to the new pattern of *εὐσέβεια*.

5.2.1.2. *Wisdom Leading People on Straight Ways*

5.2.1.2.1. *Ὀδηγεῖν and κυβερνᾶν*

The second area of Wisdom's activity which had been mentioned by the headline

in 9:18 is keeping people on straight ways. One verb which denotes steering the right course is κυβερνᾶν (v.4). It does not occur in the narrative of Noah's ark. It is reminiscent of Isis' function to safeguard seafarers,³⁸³ and it may allude to the Stoic use of the word in conjunction with the *logos* regarding the directions provided by reason.³⁸⁴

The verb ὀδηγεῖν is used in the same sense of keeping someone on God's righteous ways in Sap 10:10 (ὀδήγησεν ἐν τρίβοις εὐθείας).³⁸⁵ It is not used for Jacob's journey in Genesis, but Jacob's life is modelled on the righteous supplicant of Ps LXX 26:11 "instruct me in your way, Lord, and lead me on straight paths because of my enemies (ὀδήγησόν με ἐν τρίβῳ εὐθείᾳ)."³⁸⁶ The concern which dominates Ps LXX 26, like Pss 5:9; 22:3; 24:5; 30:4; 72:24, is people asking God to lead them on his way to safety,³⁸⁷ but it also involves the person's godly behaviour, whereas in Ps 118:35 and 138:24, the theme of God's commandments dominates. Both themes, the righteousness and the safe ending, are included in the scope of ὀδηγεῖν in Sap 10:10. In addition to Jacob's safe return, Sap 10:12 emphasises the knowledge of God and the piety which Jacob gained on the way. Wisdom led Jacob in a good way as many things happened to him, in order that he understands that godliness prevails over everything.

5.2.1.2.2. Wisdom giving strength to carry out God's instructions

Wisdom enables both Adam and Abraham to do what God told them to do. Signi-

383 See Kloppenborg, "Isis", 69.

384 See Winston, *Wisdom*, 214, for quotations from Greek sources.

385 So also Witte, "Jakob", 330.

386 See Schwenk-Bressler, *Sapientia*, 78-79.

387 Glicksman, *Wisdom*, 124, claims that ὀδηγεῖν generally means to lead to safety. Therefore he lists ὀδηγεῖν among the synonyms of "to save" on p. 105.

ificantly, Sapientia's view of Wisdom's support differs from God's orders in Genesis in that Wisdom not only demands, but gives strength, to carry out what God had commanded.

Wisdom enables Adam to do exactly what God had intended for him to do as 'she gave him strength to rule over everything' (v.2 ἔδωκεν τε αὐτῷ ἰσχὺν κρατῆσαι πάντων). However, the verse does not quote Gen 1-3 as Sapientia does not use the same verb for 'rule over' as Gen 1:28 which says κατακυριεύσατε and ἄρχετε. Another difference between the account of Genesis and Sap 10:2 is that in Gen 1, Adam and Eve are given the task to rule rather than the strength to rule. And the command to rule is God's original intention for human beings in Genesis whereas Sap 10:2 talks about the situation after Adam had been rescued from his sin when Wisdom gave the fallen man strength to do what he was supposed to do.³⁸⁸ Empowering fallen man to carry out God's orders is a genuine role of Wisdom, which has not been appropriated from God's original deeds in history.

Similarly, Wisdom keeps Abraham on the right path according to v.5, where "she preserved him blameless before God (ἐτήρεσεν αὐτὸν ἄμεμπτον θεῷ)". God does not 'keep' Abraham, or anybody else, as the verb τηρεῖν occurs only once in Genesis (Gen 3:15), in a completely different meaning from Sap 10:5. He *challenges* Abraham to continue to believe that God will give him a son twenty-four years after the promise was first made, when he demands in Gen 17:1 "please me and become blameless (γίνου ἄμεμπτος),³⁸⁹ and I will set my

388 See Glicksman, *Wisdom*, 111. He adds that Wisdom is the right person to bestow power to govern the earth according to Sap 8:1; 6:20-21; Prov 8:15-16.

Hübner, *Weisheit*, 135, observes that the sequence of events in Gen 1-3 differs from Sapientia 10:1-2.

389 The word ἄμεμπτος is rare in the OT apart from Job, and Sap 10:5 clearly refers to Gen 17:1.

covenant... .” Wisdom, on the other hand, supports Abraham to remain faithful in the difficult circumstances “keep[ing] him strong in the face of compassion for his child”³⁹⁰ (Sap10:5c), when Abraham is asked to sacrifice his son. Contrary to Wisdom’s supportive attitude, God tests Abraham in Gen 22 (Gen 22:1 ἐπείραζεν). These two approaches are almost mutually exclusive, as it is no longer a real test of Abraham’s loyalty, when Wisdom gives him her supernatural support.

This is not to say that God is perceived as lacking compassion or a sense of justice, because God does stop Abraham killing Isaac and later forbids the practice of child sacrifice which had been practised in Canaan. However, God is to be feared: he is the one who exercises judgement on the wicked Egyptians in Sap 11-19, and in Gen 22 he even puts his friend Abraham into the hideous situation of demanding the sacrifice of his son as a test of his loyalty. Wisdom on the other hand appears as life-giving (in her involvement with creation), empowering and supportive.

The verb τηρεῖν (‘to keep’) is not very frequent in the LXX except in Proverbs; it may allude to the sapiential ideal of Prov 2:10-12 that “when wisdom comes into your reasoning,...,the attitude of godliness will keep (τήρησει) you”. The context of the verb ‘to keep’ in Proverbs gives an idea how a person can keep themselves pure by disciplining themselves working from the inside out: above all else, one must ‘keep’ one’s heart (Prov 4:23), and then by guarding one’s tongue (Prov 13:3) and guarding one’s ways or keeping the commandments (Prov 16:17; 19:16), one ‘keeps’ one’s soul. We could easily transfer this working of wisdom

390 According to Glicksman, *Wisdom*, 117, Sapientia again takes up the diction of an Isis hymn with δίκαιον... ισχυρόν.

to Sap 10:5 and imagine that Wisdom kept Abraham blameless by entering his soul as she does to make people friends of God, and directing his desires towards pleasing God. In that way she strengthened his resolve (ἰσχυρόν ἐφύλαξεν) to obey God in spite of his love for the child he had to sacrifice.

The verb in v.5b ‘she kept him blameless’ is reinforced by describing Wisdom’s support in the temptation: ‘she kept him strong in face of his love for his child’ (ἰσχυρόν ἐφύλαξεν). Φυλάσσειν is a common word throughout the OT and often means straightforwardly ‘to guard, to watch’ in Genesis, but it is not God who watches over people. In Exodus, φυλάσσειν usually means ‘to observe’ God’s directions and laws. This very common sense of the word is perhaps alluded to in Sap 10:5 and may reflect the result of Abraham’s trial in Gen 22:5, where Abraham is praised for obeying God’s directions. The difference is that Sap 10:5 gives the glory to Wisdom by identifying *her* as the source of the resolve to obey God.

5.2.1.2.3. Summary: Wisdom’s role in leading people on straight ways

Wisdom clearly acts in her own domain in leading people, like Adam, Noah and Abraham, on the right way. This ministry was not appropriated from God’s activity in Genesis. She empowers the heroes inwardly to carry out the instructions given by God. Only ὁδηγεῖν as Wisdom’s guidance of Jacob reflects the use of the verb in the psalms.

5.2.1.3. Wisdom Imparting Knowledge

The third area of Wisdom's activity mentioned in 9:18 is that "she taught humans what was pleasing [to God]". The previous chapters of Sapiaientia had acknowledged that Wisdom had been with God from the beginning of creation and therefore knows all the workings of the cosmos and can teach man all mysteries (Sap 7:21-22; 9:9-10). This is why Solomon asked God for his Wisdom (Sap 7:7 and 9:4) and was taught sciences (Sap 7:17-22) as well as disciplined godly behaviour (Sap 8:7; 9:9), understanding of human destiny (Sap 8:8) and the origin of the heavenly Wisdom herself (Sap 6:22). Sap 10 mentions further areas of Wisdom's knowledge concerning specific people and historical events.

5.2.1.3.1. Wisdom's discernment of people's character

Wisdom herself has extraordinary knowledge of people's inmost thoughts which allows her to avoid the sinners (Sap 1:4) and empower the holy souls (Sap 7:27). According to Sap 10:5, she knew Abraham as a righteous person even before he had proved his faith. The term *ἐγνώ* is not used in Genesis' account of Abraham's calling (Gen 11:26-12:9), and it is not until after Abraham proved his willingness to sacrifice his son that God recognised in Gen 22:12 "now I know that you fear God (*νῦν γὰρ ἔγνων ὅτι φοβῆ τὸν θεόν*)". Sapiaientia, however, puts this insight of Wisdom in the context of Abraham being called out of an environment of wicked nations (Sap 10:5ab), ascribing prior knowledge of Abraham's character to her. She then supports Abraham to remain faithful in difficult circumstances.

5.2.1.3.2. Wisdom reveals the kingdom of God to Jacob

Sap 10:10 (“she showed him the kingdom of God and gave him knowledge of the holy ones”) subtly changes the dream of the heavenly stairs Jacob had in Bethel, making the imparting of the knowledge of heavenly things the main benefit of the dream, instead of the renewal of the covenant in Gen 28:13-15. This new perspective is created on one hand by employing new terms to describe the vision and on the other hand by relating it to the religious context of the first century where people valued apocalyptic visions and sought after mystic visions.

Δείκνυμι (‘to show’) is a common verb, which does not occur in the report of Jacob’s dream in Gen 28:12-15. But it is used in the sense of revealing something of God’s world in Gen 41:25 and 28: first, God ‘showed’ Pharaoh through the dreams what he was about to do. Then God ‘showed’ the meaning of the dream to Joseph in an equally divine revelation according to Gen 41:39. Pseudo-Solomon applies both ways of ‘showing’ to Jacob’s dream: at first, Jacob had a dream with a message about God’s covenant with him. Then Sap 10 interprets the vision seen in the dream further as revealing the ‘kingdom of God’ to him.

There are several possible ways to understand the term ‘kingdom of God’, which is not a technical term in the Hebrew Bible: it could possibly refer to the earthly kingdom of Israel promised to Jacob in Gen 35:11,³⁹¹ which is understood to be God’s kingdom according to 1Sam 8:7. However, the primary content of Jacob’s dream in Sap 10:10 must be the heavenly realm with the angels and God in it,

³⁹¹ So Witte, “Jakob”, 331. He recognises that Sap 10:10 may well refer to God’s heavenly kingship as well as to Israel’s earthly kingdom.

because it is placed between Jacob's flight from his brother and the hard work he had to do for Laban. The appearance of God in Gen 35:9-13 at the end of Jacob's journey is not linked to Jacob's dream and the term 'kings' in Gen 35:11 is not connected with the vision in the dream at all. It is therefore better to see Gen 35:11 as a separate prediction.

It is more probable that the term 'kingdom of God' connects Jacob's dream with the visions of the heavenly court ascribing a universal kingship to God in the psalms and prophets. Isaiah (Isa 6:1-2) sees the Lord seated on his heavenly throne, and like the stairs in Jacob's dream, the train of God's robe reaches down into the earthly temple; God is attended by heavenly beings (Pss LXX 81:1; 102:19-20 and Sir 24:2). The scope of God's kingdom is extended from the heavenly host to all his works (Ps LXX 102:19-22); it includes all the nations (Ps LXX 21:28-29; Isa 37:16) and is everlasting (Ps LXX 144:10-13, see also Dan LXX TH 4:34). In that sense, the 'kingdom of God' is an abstract, God's kingship.³⁹²

However, Pseudo-Solomon steers the reader towards an eschatological understanding of the kingdom when he replaces the angels in Jacob's vision with the 'Holy Ones'. The term 'Holy Ones' can simply be another expression for the angels (see Job 5:1, Zech 14:5 and Dan 8:13), but it could equally refer to the saints ruling God's kingdom in Daniel's vision (Dan 7:22, 27), where the kingdom may be perceived as an eternal though immanent human kingdom.³⁹³ An allusion to

392 Hübner, *Weisheit*, 139, takes this further, giving the βασιλεία θεοῦ an existential meaning as an understanding of God meeting man in mercy which will be extended over all the earth in eschatological times. Jacob, or the author of Sapiientia, already has an understanding of this kingdom of God.

393 See Gerhard von Rad "Βασιλευς. מלך und מלך im AT.", 1:563-569 TWNT, here p.569. See also George W.E. Nickelsburg and James VanderKam, *1 Enoch 2. A Commentary on the Book of 1 Enoch Chapters 37-82* (Fortress: Minneapolis, 2012), 100: in the book of *Parables*, the

the saints is quite possible, as Sap 5:5 combines the fate of the righteous deceased with the angels: "...he is counted among the Sons of God and his place is among the Holy Ones". The scene is placed in eternity and described with royal attributes:

The righteous live into eternity (εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα ζῶσιν)
and their reward is in the Lord,
and their care with the Most High.
Therefore they will take the glorious kingdom (τὸ βασίλειον)³⁹⁴
and beautiful diadem from the hands of the Lord." (Sap 5:15-16)

The apocalyptic themes in Sap 3-5 show how much the author valued the visions of the apocalyptic literature, which multiplied in the Hellenistic age, such as 1 Enoch and Daniel, where the seer is given a tour through the heavens by an angelic guide, or the Sabbath hymns from Qumran, where the visionary observes the heavenly liturgy. In the trajectory of rabbinical Judaism, the מְלָכִיּוֹת שְׁמַיִם becomes a strictly eschatological entity which is invisible and expected to be revealed.³⁹⁵ Emile Puech studied in detail the features of Jewish eschatology that had been received by Sapientia and concluded that the divine visitation, the judgement of the wicked in contrast to the salvation of the just and the cosmological battle in chapters 3-5, as well as the physical new creation of the cosmos in the final part of the book even indicate a concept of resurrection which is based on Isa 25:8; Dan 12.³⁹⁶

Considering that Sapientia shares 'knowledge' about the vindication of the righteous in God's judgement and their life at God's side after death, the concept of an

human 'holy ones' can be identified with the angels in the eschaton, where the holy dead rest with the angels (p.39, 100). In contrast, in the *Book of Watchers* the term "holy ones" designates the members of the heavenly court (see George W.E. Nickelsburg and James VanderKam, *1 Enoch 1: A Commentary on the Book of 1 Enoch Chapters 1-36; 81-108* (Fortress: Minneapolis, 2004), 139-141). See also Collins, *Imagination*, 184.

394 Βασίλειον can be translated as many royal attributes such as the kingdom, palace or diadem.

395 See Karl Georg Kuhn, "מְלָכִיּוֹת שְׁמַיִם in der rabbinischen Literatur," TWNT 1:570-573, here p.572.

396 Puech, "Scrolls", 128-132.

eschatological kingdom for the righteous in God's world is endorsed by Sapiaientia. Therefore, the 'kingdom of God' shown to Jacob by Wisdom in Sap 10:10 most probably alludes to visions of the eschatological kingdom. The apocalyptic outlook would then transform Jacob's vision into a mystical revelation of heavenly places.³⁹⁷

5.2.1.3.3. Wisdom gives knowledge

If the most immediate reference of the ἁγίων will be the angels on the stairs of the original vision, which can include the saints in the context of the kingdom of God, ἔδωκεν αὐτῷ γινῶσιν ἁγίων (v.10) could also refer to 'holy things', implying that Jacob received insights into more heavenly mysteries.³⁹⁸ God gave (ἔδωκεν) many things to Jacob, especially his blessing (Gen 28:4) and the land (Gen 35:12), while Jacob reads God's promise in the dream at Bethel in Gen 28:20 as giving him food, clothing and protection, all things necessary to live an ordinary life. Sapiaientia, however, recognises that Jacob had also been given special knowledge of heavenly things, which was imparted by Wisdom.

³⁹⁷ Witte, "Jakob", 332-333. See there for further evidence of Jacob participating in the angelic world like other recipients of revelations in Second Temple literature. See also Schwenk-Bressler, *Sapiaientia*, 80.

Further indications of a general interest in mystical ascent to heavenly regions can be found in Philo, *Spec. 6:1-6* and Philo *Plant.* 18-26, see John R. Levison, *The Spirit in First-Century Judaism* (Boston, Mass.: Brill, 2002), 156-157. He discusses the superiority of spirit induced visions of the divine world over the rational powers of a philosopher's mind, which emphasises the mystical character of an ascent into heavenly spheres.

³⁹⁸ Winston, *Wisdom*, 217, suggests that what he translates as 'holy things' in Sap 10:10 could be the heavenly temple which is known from Test. Levi 9:3; 5:1-2 and Heb 9:12., but this is not very clear since the vision in Test. Levi is not Jacob's vision of the heavenly temple.

Glicksman, *Wisdom*, 125-126: there are several possible ways to understand γινῶσιν ἁγίων, as 'holy ones' or the angels, as the heavenly sanctuary, as 'holy things', or as 'the Holy One' or God. The term may have included all of these meanings.

Schwenk-Bressler, *Sapiaientia*, 79-80, also notices that γινῶσιν ἁγίων can refer to both, seeing the saints and gaining knowledge of heavenly mysteries.

Witte, "Jakob", 332, sees the ἁγίων primarily as the angels, but concedes that the genitive could also mean knowledge belonging to the angels. According to Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch 1*, 140-141, the "holy ones" is a common term for the angels.

The word γνῶσις does not occur very frequently in the OT and is restricted to sapiential literature apart from a few entries in the historical books and psalms; it does not occur in relation to Jacob's dream. The mysterious quality of knowledge is evident as it belongs to Wisdom (Prov 8:12); she must be sought (Prov 8:17) to impart her gifts to people. In Prov 30:3 LXX God gives knowledge of the holy things through his wisdom (θεὸς ἐδίδαξέν με σοφίαν, καὶ γνῶσιν ἁγίων ἔγνωνκα).

5.2.1.3.4. Wisdom teaches Jacob godliness

One of the things that Wisdom teaches Jacob is that a God-fearing attitude and lifestyle are key to success in life. Sap 10:12 introduces the value of εὐσέβεια as a new way to relate to God instead of relying on the covenant which had been reaffirmed in Gen 28:13-15. Indeed, the purpose of giving Jacob victory in life was 'that he knows that godliness is stronger than everything' (ἵνα γνῶ ὅτι πάντος δυνατότερα ἐστὶν εὐσέβεια, v.12). Wisdom's dealings with people are educational and the goal of her teaching is to encourage godliness.³⁹⁹ Jacob learns like a sage by deriving a general rule from observing a recurrent experience of salvation, but more importantly, Wisdom appears as a divine agent who works in the opposite direction: she acts repeatedly in a sequence of events for Jacob to learn his lesson. Εὐσέβεια is a sapiential concept which does not occur in the LXX before 1Esdras and is most used in 4 Macc. According to Prov 1:7, godliness (εὐσέβεια) is another word for 'fear of God', describing an appropriate attitude towards God as a contemporary form of worship practised in a Hellenistic environment, which had cultivated its own Greek ways of practising εὐσέβεια.⁴⁰⁰

³⁹⁹ See Schwenk-Bressler, *Sapientia*, 84 and Witte, "Jakob", 335, 339.

⁴⁰⁰ See Witte, "Jakob", 338-339, for the paradigm that Sap 10:10-12 establishes for successful Jewish life in the Hellenistic environment. He emphasises the rivalry with Greek concepts of piety instead of the contrast to Israel's older concept of the covenant.

Can the sapiential approach to worship, which comprises Jacob's mystical knowledge, his acquisition of wealth, and the protection he enjoyed as a consequence of his piety, possibly replace the previous concepts of faithfulness to the covenant and obedience to the law in the view of the Alexandrian author?

5.2.1.3.5. Wisdom reveals the truth about Joseph and his opponents

Another instance of Wisdom giving insight or revealing the truth is in Sap 10:14e (“she revealed as liars those who had mocked him” ψευδεῖς τε ἔδειξεν τοὺς μωμησαμένους αὐτόν) where she shows up the people who had found fault with Joseph as liars, whether the author has the brothers (who had sold him) or Potiphar's wife (who had lied about him) in mind.⁴⁰¹ Even though the word ‘liar’ naturally seems to allude to Potiphar's wife and there might be an allusion to the episode, Sap 10:13-14 doesn't deal with Joseph's temptation. The paragraph about Joseph in Sap 10:13-14 spans the plot of the complete narrative with Wisdom saving Joseph, when he was sold by his brothers, and keeping him company all the time until she gives him authority over his oppressors. The story is concluded when Joseph as steward of Egypt's corn supplies is able to feed his family and they have to bow before him as the young Joseph had dreamed (Gen 37:6-11). The accomplishment of Joseph's journey shows that he had been right and his brothers had been wrong about these dreams. The insight which Joseph pronounces in Gen 50:20, that God had intended this outcome from the beginning, is another revelation Sapientia ascribed to Wisdom as she “showed” the truth by supporting Joseph until he became ruler over Egypt.

⁴⁰¹ Hübner, *Weisheit*, 140, thinks of Potiphar's wife. Schwenk-Bressler, *Sapientia*, 88, allows for both options. Glicksman, *Wisdom*, 133-134, prefers the idea that Joseph's brothers were found to be wrong about their rejection of Joseph.

5.2.1.3.6. Summary: Wisdom imparting knowledge

Knowledge of the cosmic order is one key area of Wisdom's expertise and had been combined with the responsibility of teaching man to fear God from the very beginning. In Sap 10, Wisdom's domain goes beyond a general knowledge of God's law and raising awareness that God also enforces his law: Wisdom now knows the heart and mind of an individual (Abraham).

The knowledge Wisdom imparts to Jacob goes beyond the original gifts given to him in Genesis: he learns about God's transcendent kingdom and about the destiny of the saints. She teaches him to understand that godliness paves the way to victory. One of Wisdom's unique domains of activity is accordingly giving insight into the transcendental world and the working of God's justice or God's ways.

5.2.1.4. *Wisdom Prospers Righteous People*

In addition to the three areas of Wisdom's activity introduced in the theme in Sap 9:18, there is a fourth recurring motif: Wisdom prospers the righteous people. Wealth and glory being generated by Wisdom (Sir 24:17) as a consequence of the diligent study and hard work is a typical sapiential theme.

5.2.1.4.1. Wisdom gives wealth

Three verbs in the Jacob notice identify Wisdom as the giver of wealth.

'To prosper' (εὐπορεῖν v.10) occurs in the LXX only in Lev 25:26,28,49, in the passive voice, signifying that the prospering happened to the man. Sap 10:10 ascribes the prospering of a man's labour as a new type of divine blessing to

Wisdom. Jacob is working hard (ἐν μόχθοις), probably by breeding the speckled sheep, but Sapientia emphasises the active role of personified Wisdom in creating and allocating this wealth.

‘To increase’ (πληθύνειν v.10) occurs frequently in the OT. Many things can increase, but the most common use is God promising or encouraging to increase the number of descendants. Sap 10:10 transforms God’s promise to increase the number of Jacob’s descendants (Gen 28:3, 35:11; 48:4) to Wisdom increasing the fruit of Jacob’s labour.

The wealth generated in part by Jacob’s diligent work (πόνους here means the fruit of hard work), which is accordingly blessed by Wisdom, differs profoundly from the descendants given out of God’s free will or as part of the covenant. Contrary to the positive presentation of Jacob’s wealth in Sap 10:10, the Hebrew Scriptures are sceptical of the blessings of wealth. While God gives his people plenty to live on (Ps 65:9-13; Ps 144:13-15; Ps 92:12), Hos 2:8 points to the problem with wealth: when Israel does not acknowledge that their wealth had been a gift of the Lord, this separates them from God (see also Deut 8:13; Hos 8:11,14; 9:7; 10:1; 12:1; Hab 2:6; Isa 57:9; Jer 5:6; 37(30):14-15; Ezek 16:25,29).

‘To make wealthy’ (πλουτίζειν v.11): as Wisdom increases the fruit of one’s labour, Wisdom consequently makes wealthy. Here again, Sap 10 claims a field of activity for Wisdom which had been rather neglected in the OT, but may have been inspired by the rare use of πλουτίζειν in Prov 10:22: “The Lord’s blessing comes on the head of the righteous and makes him wealthy.”

Wisdom also ensures that the Israelites' hard work in Egypt is remunerated appropriately (ἀποδιδόναι μισθόν in v.17, 'to pay wages'). The idea of coupling deed and consequence by offering a justified wage⁴⁰² differs from the interpretation of the Egyptian jewellery being taken as 'plunder' in Exod 12:36.⁴⁰³

Wisdom continues to bless Israel's 'work' on their journey through the desert (εὐόδοσεν τὰ ἔργα αὐτῶν, 11:1). The verb εὐοδοῦν does not occur in the accounts of the wilderness wanderings from Exodus to Deuteronomy, but may have been inspired by Gen 39:3 "to whatever he [Joseph] did, the Lord gave success in his hands" which resembles Sap 11:1 closely. As we have seen before, Pseudo-Solomon likes to ascribe these invisible workings of divine support to Wisdom, who is still the subject of Sap 11:1 before the focus shifts to God's action in saving Israel.

5.2.1.4.2. Wisdom gives a kingdom and eternal glory

In Gen 45:8-9 Joseph claims the titles of "father of Pharaoh and Lord over his whole house and ruler over all of Egypt", but not that of a king. Ἦνεγκεν αὐτῷ σκήπτρα βασιλείας in Sap 10:14 ('she brought him a sceptre of a kingdom') applies Wisdom's function ascribed to her in Sap 6-9, namely empowering the kings of the earth to rule effectively. Most concretely, Solomon is given 'sceptres and thrones', generated by Wisdom, when he made Wisdom his first priority (Sap 7:8, 12).⁴⁰⁴

402 See Glicksman, *Wisdom*, 138. Just reward is a typical sapiential theme in Prov 11:21; Sap 2:22; Sir 51:30.

403 Winston, *Wisdom*, 220, thinks that Jewish writers felt a need to defend the despoiling of the Egyptians because they were frequently blamed for the robbery by antique writers. See also Schwenk-Bressler, *Sapientia*, 98-99; Enns, *Exodus Retold*, 53-55; Glicksman, *Wisdom*, 138.

404 See also Prov.8:15: "Kings rule through me [Wisdom]."

Sap 10:14 extends the earthly glory given to Joseph in Gen 45:13 to *eternal* glory (ἔδωκεν αὐτῷ δόξαν αἰώνιον, v.14).⁴⁰⁵ This is possible because Wisdom can prepare the righteous one, who is a sage according to Sap 4:17, in his earthly life for immortality (1:15 ἀθάνατος; 2:23 ἀφθαρσία; 3:4 ἀθανασία; 3:8 εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας; 5:15 εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα ζῶσιν). Even though the narrative shows that Joseph rose to a position of honour, obtaining δόξα αἰώνιος exceeds his achievements in Genesis. The gift of everlasting honour can be seen as imparted by God, as God will give kingship and diadem to the righteous according to Sap 5:16, or by Wisdom, as Wisdom crowns the righteous in 10:14 with everlasting glory.

5.2.1.5. Other Verbs: Wisdom's Miraculous Effects on Physical Nature

Some other verbs which describe Wisdom acting in space and time have another theme in common, namely Wisdom acting visibly on physical nature. During the exodus, Wisdom is engaged in four different activities, which are not ascribed directly to God.

Ἀναβρᾶσσειν ('she threw them up from the depth of the sea', v.19) is a word which, apart from Sap 10:19, only occurs twice in the LXX with a different meaning. Consequently, Sap 10:19 goes beyond God's doing in the exodus where the observer only noticed that the bodies were found on the shore,⁴⁰⁶ by assigning a role of manipulating nature to Wisdom. Wisdom's power over the sea is in keeping with Sir 24:5-6, where she professed that she had pervaded and taken

⁴⁰⁵ See Schwenk-Bressler, *Sapientia*, 89.

⁴⁰⁶ Cf. Hübner, *Weisheit*, 144.

possession of heaven and earth and the deepest depths alike.⁴⁰⁷ The following verse Sap 10:20a gives us the reason for casting up the armoured bodies from the depths of the sea, which is to enable the Israelites to despoil the beaten Egyptians, again adding to their possessions.⁴⁰⁸

“She opened the mouth of the dumb” (ἤνοιξεν, v.21) acknowledges one of Wisdom’s genuine works which is not taken over from God’s role, namely Wisdom working wonders in opening the mouths of the dumb and making the infants speak clearly. As the whole point of the action is to enable the praise of God, this is a ministry which can only be provided by somebody else than God. The best explanation of the situation is that of Glicksman, namely that all of Israel, including the dumb and the infants, were able to join in with the song of Moses. Isa 35:6 may have prompted the idea of the dumb being able to sing.⁴⁰⁹ Isa 35:6 doesn’t indicate an agent who gives voice to the dumb, and it fits into the pattern of Sap 10 to ascribe the divine action in the concrete world to Wisdom.

When Wisdom enters Moses’ soul and performs miracles to force Pharaoh to let the Israelites depart (εἰσῆλθεν εἰς ψυχὴν θεράποντος κυρίου καὶ ἀντέστη βασιλεῦσιν φοβεροῖς ἐν τέρασιν καὶ σημείοις, v.16), we are dealing with two separate actions: one action is that Wisdom inspires God’s servant according to the function ascribed to her in Sap 7:27 to equip holy souls to act as prophets. As Sap 7:27 states explicitly, Wisdom “remains in herself” as she “renews all

407 In addition, the goddess Isis was known as the ruler over the sea, which may be another reason to introduce Wisdom as controlling the waters, according to Glicksman, *Wisdom*, 143.

408 Schwenk-Bressler, *Sapientia*, 103-104, observed that there is a tradition of collecting the weapons of the dead Egyptians which was taken up by Josephus (Josephus *Ant.* 2.349 (2.16,6)) and may likewise have been known to Pseudo-Solomon.

409 Glicksman, *Wisdom*, 145. This is another example of Wisdom being likened to Isis who was also praised for performing miracles.

things”; therefore she is not Moses’ wisdom or his attribute, making Moses the agent who led the people out of Egypt, as Neher suggests when he describes Wisdom’s agency as a spirit which works on and through people.⁴¹⁰

She remains an autonomous agent, which becomes quite obvious in the second activity recorded in Sap 10:16: Wisdom is the one who withstands Pharaoh with signs and wonders. It is not Moses’ wisdom or ability which enables him to work miracles, but Wisdom herself.⁴¹¹ Moses could give the sign for the miracles or the movement of the waters to happen, but Wisdom’s divine powers are required to effect the event. She is the subject of all the verbs in the paragraph Sap 10:15-19. And even if Moses could be imagined to have performed miracles and led Israel through the Red Sea, one part of the sequence of actions can certainly be ascribed only to Wisdom: she *became* the pillar of cloud and fire in v.17.⁴¹² Her ability to direct physical nature is owing to her nature as a spirit; as she “pervades and penetrates all things” according to Sap 7:24, she “reaches mightily from one end of the earth to the other, and she orders all things well” (Sap 8:1, NRSV), giving her power over the elements of nature.⁴¹³

410 Neher, *Wesen*, 149-150. He builds this idea on his previous analysis of Wisdom working as a spirit in human souls, which mutates into a human ability “von Gott verliehene Eigenschaft”, p.140. Similarly Hübner, *Weisheit*, 143 understands Moses’ leadership skills as “Geistbegabung”. Sinnott, *Personification*, 162, interprets more ambiguously “she worked through Moses.”

411 Against Neher, *Wesen*, 150, who attributes the actual leading of Israel through the Red Sea to Moses, according to his view that Wisdom works by empowering human servants as a spirit within elected prophets and friends of God, as is suggested by the inclusion of the passage through 10:16a and 11:1. He acknowledges that Wisdom works through natural phenomena, wherever the activity surpasses human abilities as in the miracles or in becoming the cloud. However, he does not explain how Wisdom can “enable” Moses to do miracles by entering his soul, unless we accept that she was active as a divine power.

412 See Schwenk-Bressler, *Sapientia*, 96. He ultimately sees Wisdom as the agent in Sap 10:16-11:1 in spite of the possible association of the exodus events with Moses.

413 This may also be an explanation for the new creation in Sap 19:6 which is formed to protect Israel during the exodus, including the cloud and the dry passage through the sea. Even though Sap 19 does not mention Wisdom again, it has been considered whether the new creation, which is based on the re-ordering of the elements according to Sapientia 19:18 could be connected with Wisdom (see Ivor H. Jones, “The Finale of the Wisdom of Solomon: Its Context, Translation and Significance.” *JSP* 19, (2009): 3-43, here p.37-38). Jones is

On the other hand, Wisdom's agency has been played down, because Israel's salvation is ultimately ascribed to God in Sap 10:20. But God is not the agent who entered into Moses' soul, because he is nowhere in the scriptures reported to have entered the soul of a prophet; and God does not *become* the pillar of cloud, which appears to veil his presence.

We therefore arrive at a threefold hierarchy of effecting the exodus: Wisdom is the grammatical subject, who effects the miracles and Moses' leadership skills, God is inferred as the ultimate cause of Israel's salvation, and Moses is seen to lead the people, speak with Pharaoh and give the signs for the miracles to happen.⁴¹⁴

Finally, Wisdom became (ἐγένετο, Sap 10:17) a visible physical entity as the sheltering cloud and starry fire. Possibly, Pseudo-Solomon uses these images to rationalise the appearance of the pillar of cloud and fire, and to draw a parallel to the goddess Isis, whose domain included the governance of the stars.⁴¹⁵ However, the term σκέπη is well established as corresponding to the pillar of cloud in Ps LXX 104:39, and both, protection and guidance, are its traditional functions in Exod 13:21 and 14:24. In Exodus, God is the agent who leads the people by the cloud, but this is not exactly the action which Sapientia assigns to Wisdom: she

sceptical whether the *stoicheia* are another representation of Wisdom, as Wisdom is not mentioned any more in the later chapters of Sapientia, 11-19.

However, creation is one of Wisdom's domains and the explanation given for the restructuring of nature in 19:18 is that "the elements (*stoicheia*) changed places with one another" (NRSV). Considering that the concept of the στοιχεῖα goes back to the Stoic idea, which saw the *pneuma* as the all-penetrating source of life that ordered the *stoicheia* in the first place, it would be the spirit of Wisdom according to Sap 7:27 who can renew, or reorder nature. Cf. Winston, *Wisdom*, 330-332: the *stoicheia* are a popular stoic concept which was also employed by Philo: the elements which constitute tones of music, or parts of nature can be rearranged by different components of air and fire to appear as different things. This is one way to explain how God who creates things out of unordered masses, achieves miracles.

414 See Schwenk-Bressler, *Sapientia*, 96-97, for the three levels of effective agents.

415 See Glicksman, *Wisdom*, 140; Kloppenborg, "Isis and Sophia", 69.

becomes the cloud, which is necessarily distinct from God, because it provides a screen to protect God from view. The pillar of cloud is neither merely an instrument of God, but has already been identified as a mediator in Exod 23:20, 23, namely the Angel of the Lord, sent to lead the people through the desert. It is this mediator with which Wisdom is identified.

This significant identification of Wisdom with the guarding Angel of the Lord is not confined to appropriating the symbol of the pillar of cloud to Wisdom in Sap 10:17. Sap 9:11 (“She will lead me wisely in my actions and guard me with her glory”), substituting the symbol of the cloud with God’s glory, applies Wisdom’s guarding and guiding her followers to the experience of the sages in the time when the book was written, if the fictive Solomon in Sap 6-9 is interpreted as a type of the sages’ student.⁴¹⁶ The verb ὀδηγεῖν which indicates the manner of Wisdom’s salvific engagement with the post-exilic Jewish community further links the agency of the cloud in Sap 10:17 with its significance for Jacob-Israel in 10:10.

In summary, Wisdom’s power over nature is another domain which makes her clearly visible in the historical world. Sapientia’s view of Wisdom as an all-pervasive spirit explains how she is not only the static order of the cosmos, but also the vibrant power who *keeps* the cosmos in order and can therefore be active in history and work miracles. The two verbs εἰσῆλθεν and ἐγένετο distinguish Wisdom’s activity from God’s, making her a mediator who is part of both, God’s transcendence and our world. Wisdom is God’s mediator where the divine

⁴¹⁶ See Sinnott, *Personification*, 160 and Kloppenborg, “Isis”, 73, for the identification of Solomon with the sages’ students.

presence becomes tangible.

5.2.1.6. Summary: Wisdom's Working in Sap 10

The investigation of Wisdom's actions in Sap 10 showed that Wisdom is clearly presented as an agent in Israel's history based on two lines of argument, one exegetical and one experiential. The exegetical approach establishes which hitherto unnoticed divine actions in the stories of the Fathers are here ascribed to Wisdom. Pseudo-Solomon's new insights into Wisdom's involvement in the lives of the Jewish people are apparently based on the religious practice and experience of his contemporary community, as the description of Jacob's life and piety is suspiciously transparent for these. We have observed the following specific characteristics of Wisdom as an agent in history:

5.2.1.6.1. Analysis of the Verbs

Analysis of the verbs denoting Wisdom's actions revealed that Wisdom as an agent in history is modelled closely on God, who is recognised in the Hebrew Scriptures as Israel's saviour, but there are also some new aspects in Wisdom's agency. She relates to the heroes in her own specific way and does things that were not reported of God in the original narratives.

Sap 10 recontextualises only three verbs denoting God's actions from Genesis and Exodus: ῥύεσθαι and ὁδηγεῖν are quoted from the exodus narrative and appear in both, Sapientia's rendering of the exodus (10:15 and 17) and in its presentation of the patriarchs' stories (10:6, 9, 13, and 10). διαφυλάσσειν may be taken as a quotation from the Jacob narrative, even though Gen 28:15, 20 uses it in a general way to describe God's support of Jacob throughout his whole

journey, while Sap 10:12 specifically applies the verb to protecting Jacob from enemies, emphasising the salvation theme. In addition, Sap 10 recurs to the interpretations of the narratives in the psalms, Proverbs and prophets in its use of σώζειν, πλουτίζειν, διάγειν and of ὁδηγεῖν in the sense of guidance on the right way.

But in the majority of cases, Sapientia employs new verbs to describe Wisdom's actions, some of them hardly ever used in the OT: διαφυλάσσειν and ἐξαιρεῖν were not connected with Adam previously; κυβερνᾶν, τῆρειν, εὐπορεῖν, ἀσφαλίζειν, βραβεύειν, συγκαταβαίνειν, ἀνθιστάναι, κατακλύζειν, ἀναβρᾶσσειν are not used in Genesis and Exodus for God's actions. In fact, συγκαταβαίνειν and ἀνθιστάναι never describe God's actions, but only the actions of God's angel, while κυβερνᾶν and τῆρειν are typical of wisdom (Sap 10:4, Prov 4:6), and βραβεύειν is a *hapax legomenon* altogether. These verbs indicate that Wisdom has her own role in dealing with the Fathers, distinct from God's engagement in Genesis and Exodus, when she delivers Adam from his transgression, she steers Noah's ark, she strengthens Abraham's resolve to obey God, she descends into the prison with Joseph, she multiplies Jacob's possessions rather than the number of his descendants, and she provides for the holy people by giving them the Egyptian jewellery as wages and by casting up the bodies of the Egyptian soldiers from the bottom of the sea so Israel can despoil them.

In addition, some very common verbs are used in a context new for the OT narratives: γινώσκειν in Sap 10:5 claims that Wisdom knew Abraham's righteousness before his faith was tested. δεικνύναι and διδόναι γνῶσιν in v.10

introduce a new interpretation of Jacob's dream of the heavenly ladder, where Wisdom teaches Jacob about heavenly things. διδόναι in v.14 speaks about the eternal glory given to Joseph, and διδόναι in v.2 ascribes to Wisdom the function of giving Adam power to rule over everything after his fall. If she can enable the prototype of the fallen man to please God, v.5 provides an example of Wisdom empowering a specific man, Abraham, to be blameless and carry out God's order.

5.2.1.6.2. Wisdom as Saviour

Wisdom reflects God's relationship with Israel especially in that she is portrayed as a saviour. Even though Sap 10 does not quote the word 'to save' from Genesis, it elaborates on the concept of God as saviour of Israel, which originated in the exodus narrative and was reinforced by Isaiah and the psalms, where the words σώζειν and ρύεσθαι occur frequently.

Nevertheless, Wisdom's character as a saviour differs in certain aspects from the God of the Hebrew Scriptures: She is perceived as a saviour of all righteous people, which achieves a universalisation and individualisation of people's relationship with God.⁴¹⁷ Focusing on the righteous individual also introduces an educational function, which is particularly obvious in the two verses that frame the Jacob notice: Sap 10:9 summarises Wisdom's dealings with mankind so as to encourage readers to serve the Wisdom who saves every righteous person, which probably demands taking a disciplined approach to embracing her laws according to Sap 6:17-18 and 8:7. According to Sap 10:12, Jacob is encouraged to live piously as Wisdom teaches him the reliable pattern of God requiring his devotion

⁴¹⁷ See Schwenk-Bressler, *Sapientia*, 110-111 for universalisation and individualisation in the sapiential approach.

with divine support.⁴¹⁸ She is also a saviour who does not actively punish the wicked (10:3, 8, cf. 1:4, 6).

Wisdom often acquires the function of a mediator between God and the Fathers, where God's role as Israel's saviour is transferred from Exodus and Isaiah to the narratives of Genesis in Sap 10. The plot of the narratives, which is driven by God's intention to save, remains unaffected by Sapiientia's attention to the details of how the salvation of Adam, Noah, Lot, Jacob and Joseph is effected by Wisdom's engagement on the ground. Wisdom reflects God's role in the OT narratives in most cases to the degree that she can be viewed as God's presence on earth carrying out God's intentions by making the actual impact on people and nature on earth. Wisdom's nature of a mediator is confirmed when she is identified with the pillar of cloud and fire (10:17), the old symbol of the Angel of the Lord, who is a manifestation of God and at the same time God's visible representative.

5.2.1.6.3. Wisdom's Specific Fields of Activity

In supporting Israel's heroes, Wisdom often uses her specific abilities of teaching, guiding, prospering and supervising the cosmic order. Sapiientia extends the scope of Wisdom's responsibility for the order of creation by envisioning her as the spirit that permeates everything, giving her the ability to inspire or equip "holy souls" (7:27) and govern, or manipulate, physical nature (8:1). The dominance of the traditional wisdom themes in her specific involvement with Israel's history retains her individual character distinct from God's. Wisdom's specific domains of action are predominantly in the area of enabling people to relate to God in the

⁴¹⁸ Ibid., 77, 84. Also, Enns, *Exodus*, 146, Sap 10-19 are "a lesson in God's justice".

proper way and conversely conveying God's blessing to them, emphasising again her role as a mediator.⁴¹⁹

As a teacher and guide, she gives Adam strength to carry out God's instructions (10:2), she keeps Abraham blameless by strengthening his resolve (10:5). She comforts Joseph by keeping him company in his captivity (10:14). She inspires Moses and gives success to his leadership (10:16; 11:1). She gives insights into God's ways and his transcendental kingdom (10:10). She gives wealth as a reward to her followers (10:10, 17, 19-20). In all of these functions, Wisdom's guidance is closely linked to the successful outcomes she guarantees.

Wisdom's nature as a cosmic power that goes beyond making people wise is also evident in her ability to work miracles. This permits her to change the appearance of physical nature to allow the departure of the Israelites in the exodus. She withstands Pharaoh with signs and wonders, she becomes the pillar of cloud which protects the Israelites from the sight of the Egyptian army, she brings the waters of the Red Sea down on the Egyptians, she brings up the dead bodies of the soldiers for Israel to despoil, and she gives articulate voice to the dumb and infants.

Wisdom's function as cosmic order is expanded as she takes responsibility for directing the course of history according to God's good order, by supporting the righteous Abraham and Joseph in order to prove Abraham's faithfulness and the

⁴¹⁹ See Hübner, *Weisheit*, 139 for Wisdom's role as mediator. Neher avoids the term "mediator" but speaks of Wisdom as a link between God and man ("Bindeglied", p. 98, "Zwischenglied" p.153), and her function is to mediate (pp. 119, 126, 127, 149).

validity of Joseph's dreams of ruling over his brothers (10:5 and 13-14). She also manipulates the events in Jacob's life to teach him that godliness is more powerful than anything (10:12). Importantly, she acts not only on people who willingly submit to wisdom's guidance, but also on the enemies: she protects Jacob from Laban's greedy sons and from enemies who lay in wait for him (10:12). She predisposes the Egyptians to give their jewellery to the departing Israelites (10:17).

5.2.1.6.4. Wisdom Acting Distinctly from God

Wisdom mostly cooperates with God, carrying out his salvation plan through her specific abilities. But Wisdom's actions do not always simply reflect God's actions. There are also instances where she complements God's strict approach of judging a person by their behaviour, while she gives inward support to the person to enable them to carry out God's instructions.

When Wisdom empowers Abraham to fulfil the task which is set by God as a test of his loyalty, it is logically necessary that this aid is offered by a distinct person. She endows Abraham with strength to obey God's command, instead of testing the resolve of his own faith (10:5). Wisdom also helps Adam (or all humans, if Adam is seen as the prototype of humanity) in a similar way to fulfil God's command when she first releases him from his sin and then enables him in spite of his fallen nature to rule over the earth (10:1-2), even though God had announced punishment with death as a consequence of Adam's sin. In these cases, Wisdom works towards the same goal as God when she teaches people to be, or to become, righteous, but she strengthens them inwardly, whereas God

confronts the person and challenges them to act righteously on their own. Wisdom serves a fallen humanity: she does not pass judgment on Adam, she enables Abraham to act faithfully in a seemingly impossible situation, and she teaches the fraudster Jacob godliness. A similar discrepancy between God's and Wisdom's field of action is that Wisdom does not bring judgement on the wicked, but only departs from them and leaves them to be destroyed without her helping influence (10:3, 8; cf. 1:4). A further example of Wisdom's amazingly powerful role in protecting her followers is her setting herself up as an arbiter between the contesting parties at the Jabbok river.

5.2.1.6.5. Wisdom's Personal Presence

Wisdom is portrayed as a personification in Sap 10 in continuation of the tradition which characterised her as Lady Wisdom in Prov 1:8 and Sir 24. Sap 10 portrays her as a personal companion of real people in Israel's history. She has a personal bond with the people who serve her, whose attachment she rewards with her support (Sap 10:9); she keeps Noah, Joseph and Israel company in times of danger. Even though she often inspires a person inwardly, she is not simply an enhanced ability of the person, but she is perceived as a distinct divine presence; she maintains her individuality when she passes into a holy soul or permeates nature (Sap 7:27). On the other hand, she cannot be directly identified with God: she impresses as an individual and a real divine being because she acts perceptibly and distinctly from God with her gentle touch. This distinct existence is emphasised by her own name. Therefore, Wisdom is perceived as a personal presence rather than as an inanimate pattern of God's just ways.

5.2.1.6.6. Wisdom's Activity in Sap 10 Reflects the Experience of a New Spirituality of the Jewish Community

Sapientia goes far beyond the previous sapiential literature in recognising Wisdom's contribution to saving Israel in actual historical events. Even if this conception was facilitated by reference to the Stoic *pneuma* and the Hellenistic saviour goddess Isis, it remains essentially Jewish and must be understood as a genuine Jewish response to the challenging life in the Egyptian metropolis.

Rather than simply persuading the Jewish community of the superiority of their traditional religion, Sapientia facilitates a new spirituality adapted to life in the Hellenistic diaspora, as it transforms the stories of the Fathers into a timeless pattern of God's relationship to Israel. Thus, Sap 10 introduces Wisdom as the saviour of all righteous people, shifting the focus of teaching from covenantal theology to righteous behaviour.

When the aspects of Wisdom's relationship to Jacob are added up, we receive a framework for a new sapiential Jewish spirituality, which could possibly replace the lost identity markers of Israel's land and kingdom and be practised in the diaspora without immediate access to the temple: the new teaching is summarised in the lines framing the paragraph about Jacob as a model for Israel: Firstly, Wisdom rather than God saves those who serve her, and Wisdom takes on the personal features of God, whose role she takes over (10:9). Secondly, "godliness" (εὐσέβεια) is the new relationship to God, the behaviour to be acquired (10:12). It can be practised everywhere without a temple and its sacrifices (neither temple nor sacrifices are mentioned in Sapientia).⁴²⁰ Further, Jacob's spirituality is char-

⁴²⁰ See Schmitt, *Beispielreihe*, 243-244. Schwenk-Bressler, *Sapientia*, 110-111: Wisdom deals with the righteous individual rather than the nation of Israel, possibly including even non-

acterised by insights into heavenly mysteries (10:10), and the divine favour procures him wealth and protection in the face of envious neighbours (10:10-12). All of these features characterised the Jewish community in Alexandria: Philo's work demonstrates how important philosophy or wisdom was for a devout Jew, who sought a new approach to God through his understanding or even an ecstatic ascent to heavenly spheres. The Jewish community was affluent and managed to secure a social position above the native Egyptians due to their skills in trade and establishing relationships with the cultivated Greeks. Protection was needed from both apostate Jews who derided their peers and from envious Egyptians, and Sap 10:11-12 assures the faithful that Wisdom can guarantee this safety, as she had done so far. As this new spirituality matches the situation in the Alexandrian practice so well, and the author is probably enthusiastically describing in Sap 6-9 his own experience of acquiring and benefitting from Wisdom's gifts under the pseudonym of king Solomon, Sapiientia's model probably reflects the attainment of a new religious identity mediated by Wisdom, as much as it promotes its practice. It is based on the author's religious experience of God's continued attachment to the Jewish community in a different cultural environment through Wisdom's saving and guiding activity. References to the Stoic spirit are utilised to rationalise Wisdom's way to impact invisibly on the world, while references to Isis are made to enhance the personal appearance of a caring saviour.

5.2.2. The Nature of Wisdom in Sapiientia Salomonis

Sap 10 offers a unique presentation of Wisdom as an agent in history, who is not

Jews. Witte, "Jakob," 338-340: the educational function concerns especially the Jews in Alexandria who can identify themselves with their Father Jacob and hope to meet the challenges of their life in the Hellenistic city as they adopt Jacob's godliness (εὐσέβεια).

Collins, *Jewish Wisdom*, 214: The unnamed types can be appropriated by any righteous people.

merely a new image of God, but possesses her own characteristic domains of action. However, there is always the possibility that personified Wisdom is meant to be understood as a poetical personification rather than as a representation of a heavenly being. Therefore, the wider context of the book must be consulted to explore how the author conceptualised Wisdom's nature. Particularly chapters 6-9 are devoted to instruction about Wisdom's origin and nature, endeavouring to reconcile Wisdom's near identification with God with the observations of her own specific agency in the immanent world. Further insights about Wisdom's relationship to God can be drawn from her cooperation with God in the judgement of all humanity in chapter 1.

5.2.2.1. *Wisdom as Divine Personage*

Sapientia continues the sapiential tradition of personifying Wisdom, who addresses people in a personal way, taking on the personal character of God himself.⁴²¹ The attainment of Wisdom is the result of the reciprocal engagement and emotional involvement typical for forming a relationship between two people: Solomon pursues and requests Wisdom (Sap 6:12-14; 7:7; 9:10), while she seeks and meets people proactively (6:16) or conversely separates herself from them (1:4-6). She enters and inspires human souls, without however mixing with them (7:27). In Sap 7:7-12 Wisdom encounters the righteous king in a personal way rather than as an abstract principle that leads to calculable consequences: the “Wisdom-Spirit” (v.7) acts like a person: she “came to” Solomon (v.7), she “leads” the good gifts (v.12), she is presented as their “mother”; conversely, Solomon treats her like his bride: he “preferred her” (v.8), he “loved her” (v.10) and he “chose her” (v.10). Accordingly, she honours the devotion of her followers by saving those who serve her in Sap 10:9.⁴²²

Even in the more philosophical chapters of Sapientia, the traditional personification of Wisdom is strengthened by the use of the graphic images of a “craftsman-creator” (7:21b πάντων τεχνίτης) and “mother” of all gifts (7:12 γενέτιν εἶναι τούτων). The image of the mother is so clear that it has been suggested that it is reminiscent of the oriental goddess who was received into the older Hebrew wisdom tradition.⁴²³ Likewise, Wisdom is the “consort” on God’s

421 See Gese, “Weisheit,” 224: the nature of Wisdom, who is conceived in closest proximity to God, has a personal structure like God, as much as revelation and human knowledge are received through the authority of the personal God. Also Hübner, *Weisheit*, 109: “Es siegte die ontologische Denkform, angereichert durch den personalen Akzent des biblischen Erbes.”

422 Notice that the verb θεραπεύειν draws a parallel to serving God, as in Isa 54:17, see H.Beyer, “θεραπεία κτλ.,” TWNT 3:128-132.

423 See Boccaccini, “Hellenistic Judaism,” 67.

throne (9:4 τὴν σὺν θρόνων πάρεδρον).⁴²⁴ The epithets γενέτις, τεχνίτις and πάρεδρον, which only occur in Sapientia within the LXX, are not relics of past times, but rather fresh images employed by Pseudo-Solomon that heighten her appearance as a goddess.

As a living being, Wisdom also possesses a spirit (7:22).

5.2.2.2. Wisdom's Function

Wisdom makes her own contribution to four main areas of God's work in the world by exercising her specific ability of pervading the cosmos and entering into the souls of good people: firstly, she is the craftsman-creator, who was with God from the beginning and knows his works (9:9) as in Prov 8 and Sir 24, but her role is further developed: Wisdom is the "craftsman who made everything" (Sap 7:21), and she continues to control the ongoing processes of life. She can effectively achieve the divine control of the universe, because she is a spirit, which is related to the concept of the Stoic *pneuma*, an "intelligent 'gas'... holding the world together."⁴²⁵ Being made of infinitely fine substance, she pervades – and directs – everything: she is so flexible that "because of her pureness she pervades and penetrates all things" (7:24) and she "reaches mightily from one end of the earth to the other, and she orders all things well" (8:1NRSV, see also 7:23: Wisdom is the πανεπίσκοπον).

Secondly, as in the Jewish tradition, she teaches mankind the virtues God likes them to practice. She possesses knowledge of how God designed the world and

424 See Mack, *Logos*, 67. See Liddell, Scott and Jones, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 2:1332, for the title πάρεδρος describing a pagan goddess in Greek literature.

425 Winston, *Wisdom*, 100.

has almost become the archetypal pattern of that order.⁴²⁶ The commandments spring from Wisdom's knowledge of how God designed the world (9:9), they are "her laws" (6:18), they begin with the desire to understand and obey (6:17-18), which is fulfilled through the Greek virtues of "self-control and prudence, justice and courage" (8:7). She enables the king to rule justly (9:12) and attain all good things like power, health and wealth (7:7-12). In her supervision of the cosmos and the instruction of humanity, Wisdom mediates between God and world.

Thirdly, Wisdom's omnipresence enables her to inform God's judgement (1:1-10).⁴²⁷ Fourthly, Wisdom helps to shape history as she "makes friends of God and prophets by passing into holy souls" (7:27), and she carries out God's plans to save the righteous (chapter 10). She becomes a "constant salvific presence in the history of Israel."⁴²⁸

426 See Winston, *Wisdom*, 43. See also Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Law and Wisdom from Ben Sira to Paul: A Tradition Historical Enquiry into the Relation of Law, Wisdom and Ethics*, WUNT 2/16 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1985), 132: "[T]he law is conceived as a universal entity. The significance of the particularistic Jewish law is played down."

427 See deSilva, *Apocrypha*, 141.

428 Boccaccini, *Hellenistic Judaism*, 67.

5.2.2.3. *Wisdom's Ontological Classification*

Wisdom's characterisation as a divine personage with her own range of action creates such an acute sense of a divine being that the author guards against the impression of a rival to YHWH by subordinating Wisdom to God: "he is the guide even of Wisdom" (7:15), at times even to the extent that she can appear as an instrument or property of God (9:2 "through your wisdom you have formed man"; and in 9:4 Solomon prays: "give me the wisdom.") In that way, *Sapientia* reinforces Wisdom's ambiguous nature of a divine being on one hand and functioning as instrument of God on the other hand.

One of the great achievements of the author is to move on from a narrative approach to this phenomenon to an ontological concept expressed in philosophical terms. He proposes a model which can unite both aspects of Wisdom's nature:

[S]he is a breath (or: mist) of the power of God,
and a pure emanation of the glory of the Almighty
...
a reflection of eternal light,
an untarnished mirror of God's working,
and an image of his goodness. (7:25-26).

In this concept, Wisdom shares in God's divinity, while she is definitely subordinated to God and her nature has a lower rank.

The concept of emanation introduced here by Pseudo-Solomon goes beyond Ben Sira's narrative description of Wisdom emerging from the mouth of God and covering the earth like a mist (Sir 24:3), but it also goes beyond conceptions of

emanation in contemporary Greek philosophy.⁴²⁹ The Greek terms emanation (ἀπόρροια) and reflection (ἀπαύγασμα) are both *hapax legomena* in the LXX and underline the innovative conception of the elusive Wisdom, who belongs to the transcendent realm as well as to the earthly sphere, and who is described as property of God at the same time as she appears as his counterpart. Considering that the philosophical model of an ‘emanation’ was not a popular concept in contemporary philosophy, it must be seen as pioneered by the Jewish sage, who endeavoured to reconcile the powerful manifestations of a divine Wisdom with his monotheistic God.

5.2.2.4. Wisdom and Spirit

‘Spirit’ is another term which describes Wisdom’s nature in the ambiguity of being a part of God at the same time as she is an independent agent. She is the “Spirit of Wisdom” (Sap 7:7) sent at God’s discretion, she is characterised as an ultra-fine substance that pervades and directs the whole cosmos like the Stoic *pneuma* (7:24; 8:1), and she is identified as a (or: the) ‘holy spirit’ (7:22; 1:5; 9:17). The divisive issue is whether the term ‘holy spirit’ here characterises the very specific sapiential spirit described by Pseudo-Solomon, or whether the term identifies Wisdom with the Holy Spirit, which is much more perceived as a property of God.

Thus, Neher suggests that wisdom and spirit are identified in their function to teach man in 9:17: “you have given Wisdom and sent your Holy Spirit” and

⁴²⁹ See Winston, *Wisdom*, 184ff. He observes that the terminology of ‘emanation’ originates in the Middle Stoa, although the idea of an effluence from God himself is rare in Greek thought and not attested until Marcus Aurelius. See also Collins, *Jewish Wisdom*, 199: The philosophical model of emanation was not formed before Plotin’s Neo-Platonism.

indeed, Wisdom often acts in history in a way we are used to expect from the Holy Spirit, when she acts in the souls of God's people as an invisible inward guidance.⁴³⁰ Collins accepts the equation of Wisdom and the Spirit of the Lord, but qualifies the spirit as having a Stoic character.⁴³¹ Mack goes even further in making a distinction between Wisdom and the Holy Spirit by recognising Wisdom as a spirit "*sui generis*", who owes her very individual character to her relationship with both, Isis and the Stoic *pneuma*.⁴³²

5.2.2.4.1. Conceptions of the divine Spirit in 1st century Judaism

Just how far the Stoic influence on the Jewish concept of the Spirit reaches, and whether the first century concept of Spirit, which influences Sapientia's presentation of the Wisdom-Spirit, can be identified with the Holy Spirit, needs to be established. J.R. Levison treats the Wisdom-Spirit of Sapientia as the Hellenistic variety of the divine spirit.⁴³³ According to him, the Jewish authors of the 1st century AD incorporated a measure of the Stoic omnipresence of the spirit and its influence on the rational human mind into their concept of the spirit, transforming the temporary gift of God's Spirit to certain leaders in the Hebrew Scriptures into the spirit of life in the human.⁴³⁴ The question is whether this conception does not go far beyond the biblical tradition and whether Sapientia, as an example of a first century writing really conceptualises the 'Wisdom-Spirit' as

430 Neher, *Wesen*, 106, 152-153. On pp. 141-148 he supports his view that Wisdom is not meant to be an actual person but God's spirit by the observation that the angelic appearances mentioned in Genesis are not ascribed to Wisdom when the author had the opportunity to do so. This observation must be challenged, as we have seen above that Wisdom steps into the role of the Angel of the Lord repeatedly in Sap 10.

431 Collins, *Jewish Wisdom*, 196-198.

432 Mack, *Logos*, 64.

433 Levison, *Spirit*, 144-145.

434 See Levison, *Spirit*, 78, 144-145, and see John R. Levison, *Filled with the Spirit* (Grand Rapids, Mich. /Cambridge, U.K.: Eerdmans, 2009), 136-137. For the link between the spirit and wisdom in Sap 1 and the teachability of the spirit which resembles the 'spirit within' that had appeared already in the OT in Micah, Bezalel, Joshua and Daniel see pp. 144-145.

‘spirit of life’, or as a deliberately acting spirit bestowed on certain people.

The association of the spirit with the rational mind entails that the recipient of the spirit remains in full control of his mind while he receives insights from the divine spirit through methods such as conjecture, or that the operation of the mind on the part of the human is exercised in coordination with guidance or prompting on the part of the spirit.⁴³⁵ Thus, Philo keeps reading the scriptures in his autobiographical account of the ascent of his spirit (*Spec.* 3:1-6), and the experience results in communicable exegetical insights.⁴³⁶ Importantly, the sober inspiration of the sage’s mind also exhibits features of God-given superhuman experience such as the elevation of the soul to heavenly spheres.⁴³⁷ Philo also portrays that divine spirit who guides the sage’s mind as a daemonic being in accordance with the *daimonion*, who inspired Socrates according to the philosophical tradition.⁴³⁸

Levison traces the concept of the inspiration of the human mind back to the Hebrew Scriptures, where he encounters the same spirit, which might be called the spirit of wisdom, as the ‘spirit within’ given to all human beings in shape of the ‘spirit of life’ according to Gen 6:3. His hypothesis is that being filled by the spirit was in early days not a temporary endowment, but a constantly present quality of character: the quality of life itself and a certain vitality and energy (David’s holy spirit in Ps 51 is his vitality), but then also a keen sense of justice

435 See Levison, *Filled with the Spirit*, 180-189; Levison, *Spirit*, 177-178: The spirit can guide the mind or guide the inspired person by prompting, as an alternative to ecstasy.

436 Levison, *Filled with the Spirit*, 194-195, 201.

437 Ibid., 116, 189, 190-196.

438 Levison, *Spirit*, 185-187. See also *Filled with the Spirit*, 180-182. See *Filled with the Spirit*, 190-195 for Philo’s description of an external spirit prompting ecstatic experiences of his rational mind in *Somn.* 2.252, *Cher.* 27 and *Spec.* 3.1-6.

(in Micah 3:5-8), of truth and integrity (Joseph's spirit of God in Gen 41:38 in contrast to Pharaoh's spirit in 41:8), of skill (Bezalel) and of wisdom (Daniel 5:11-14).⁴³⁹ This spirit is especially characterised by its teachability.⁴⁴⁰

However, we should be cautious in generalising the concept of spirit enhancing the human mind or spirit. Firstly, this concept is rare in the Hebrew scriptures, and the spirit of God in Levison's proof-texts, Gen 41:38; Mic 3:8; Ps 51:11, cannot be securely identified with the human spirit, the 'spirit within' or 'breath of life'. On the other side, Levison plays down the pervasive phenomenon of the Spirit in the Deuteronomic history, which is given as an extraordinary gift to prophets, judges and kings as leaders of Israel.⁴⁴¹ The outward influence of the Spirit on these leaders is conveyed by expressions like the preposition "on" (Judg 3:10; 11:29, "the Spirit of the Lord was upon him"), being "clothed" (Judg 6:34) or "stirred" by the Spirit of the Lord (Judg 13:25) and the Spirit "rushing on" (Judg 14:6, 19; 15:14). Prophets move in ecstasy (1Sam 10:5-6). The experience of inspiration is described as "the hand of God on me" (Ezek 1:3; 40:1; Isa 8:11), "the word of the Lord came to me" (e.g. Ezek 1:3; Zech 1:1), "the Spirit lifted me up" (Ezek 11:24-25) and being shown "in visions" (Ezek 40:2; Zech 1:8; Isa 6:1). This tradition is charismatic in the sense of an additional, extraordinary inspiration (*superadditum*), without relying on the divination or ecstatic outbursts of the Hellenistic culture, and in contrast to the permanent endowment with a gifted rational mind. Levison puts the emphasis on the wisdom-spirit which enhances the human soul of people like Joseph and Daniel being highly valued in

439 Levison, *Filled with the Spirit*, 29-33, 48-51, 77-79. Levison, *Spirit*, 178-180.

440 See Levison, *Filled with the Spirit*, 83.

441 Ibid., 72. Levison acknowledges that "[t]hroughout the Deuteronomistic History, the spirit comes powerfully upon renowned heroes and kings, supplying them with extraordinary power to accomplish fantastic feats".

the scriptures.⁴⁴² But even if both are valued equally, they are not the same.

Even in the first century, Jewish authors do not subscribe totally to the stoic concept of a universal spirit. Firstly, the divine ‘spirit of life’, which becomes the ‘spirit within’ is not everywhere. Philo uses Gen 6:3 to assert that the spirit is given only for a limited time. Reservations against an omnipresent spirit are also maintained by the Palestinian Pseudo-Philo, who introduces the concept of judgement into the story of Balaam, which ends in his version of the story with Balaam loosing the life-giving spirit after his treacherous act.⁴⁴³ We may add that the same caution is made by Sapiaentia, where the function of the all-pervasive spirit of 1:5-7 is to assist God in his just judgment. Thus, they maintain the biblical concept that the spirit is a special endowment given to those who serve God.

Secondly and more importantly, divine inspiration is not limited to the inspiration of the rational spirit. Philo makes a distinction between the inspiration of the rational mind and prophetic inspiration. When Philo speaks of Moses’ insights gained by his enhanced rational mind as “conjectures” that are “*closely akin to prophecies*” (my italics), he infers that wisdom and prophecy are two different things.⁴⁴⁴ As both of them give insights by divine inspiration, Philo is claiming that the rational understanding of the sages is *also* a God-given insight. In *Her.* 264-265, Philo makes the distinction between rational reasoning and prophetic

442 Levison, *Filled with the Spirit*, 81. According to p.83, this is the spirit which is associated with “acquired learning”, which is in essence, wisdom.

443 Levison, *Spirit*, 58, 78-79, 217-220.

444 *Mos.* 2.259. See Levison, *Filled with the Spirit*, 178-179. In spite of the distinction, Levison thinks that Philo takes Moses as a prophet par excellence, perhaps not inspired by the ecstatic kind of inspiration described by the Greek tradition. On p.195-196 however, he distinguishes between two different modes of inspiration.

trance even clearer:

As long therefore as our mind still shines and hovers around, ..., we are not possessed by an extraneous influence; but when it approaches its setting, then, as is natural, a trance, which proceeds from inspiration, takes violent hold of us, and madness seizes upon us, for, when the divine light sets, this other rises and shines, and this frequently happens to the race of prophets; for the mind that is in us is removed from its place at the arrival of the divine Spirit, but is restored to its previous habitation when the Spirit departs...

In conclusion, the Spirit as it is described by Levison, was perceived in the enlightened 1st century AD to a large extent as what we might call the ‘Wisdom-Spirit’, which is a divine gift that enhanced the rational thinking and built competence through diligent study and discipline. This concept could be based on a tradition, which reached back into old Israelite tradition. However, it should not be forgotten that this sapiential spirit could be distinguished from extraordinary prophetic inspiration, which likewise continued to be acknowledged as a manifestation of God’s Spirit in the Hellenistic era. Thus, Wisdom can be distinguished from manifestations of God’s Spirit.

The inspiration of the rational mind, which was usually associated with wisdom, was not only perceived as a God-given gift and insight which transcended human abilities, but it is characterised by Philo as a supernatural experience; it is not common human property. In *Sapientia Salomonis* Wisdom is given the status of a divine spirit, which is distinguished from God’s Spirit by its own name, Wisdom, and by its distinct personal appeal, bearing in mind the traits of personified Wisdom which occur in chapter 10 as well as in chapters 6-9. As the spirit of Wisdom had such an independent profile, it is quite comprehensible that Pseudo-Solomon could enhance her stature further by presenting her as a rival of the goddess Isis.

5.2.2.4.2. The Wisdom-spirit in Sapiientia

Wisdom is related to the Spirit in Sapiientia Salomonis twice in a parallel structure. The statement in 9:17 (“you have given Wisdom and sent your holy spirit”) is ambiguous as the two are not necessarily identified, because the parallelism could juxtapose two agents of God, who cooperate in the same task. The other passage in 1:4-7, where Wisdom discerns people who are plotting evil, and the spirit of the Lord knows every word spoken, will be given more attention below. In both cases, even if Wisdom was identified with the spirit, we could not presuppose that the term ‘holy spirit’, or ‘spirit of the Lord’ means the same that we are used to being called ‘Holy Spirit’ in the New Testament, or even ‘God’s Spirit’ in the Hebrew Scriptures. Therefore, it is better to establish how Wisdom and her relationship to the spirit is characterised in Sapiientia, instead of labelling her with pre-formed terminology.

Thus, the term ‘spirit’ is used first of all for the living soul within human beings (Sap 2:3; 5:3; 15:11,16; 16:14), but also in Wisdom (7:22-23): therefore, Wisdom is a being, who possesses a spirit, which is characterised by 21 properties (it is rational, holy, beneficent, steadfast, philanthropic, all-powerful, all-controlling, etc.).

But there is more to say about Wisdom’s relationship to the spirit. Wisdom not only possesses a spirit, Wisdom is a spirit by nature (Sap 7:24 and 1:6): according to Sap 7:24 she is of an ultra-fine invisible substance that permits her to permeate the creation and enter into human beings.⁴⁴⁵ This “Spirit of Wisdom” (πνεῦμα

⁴⁴⁵ See also Roland E. Murphy, *The Tree of Life: Exploration of Biblical Wisdom Literature*, second edition (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 88. “As spirit, Wisdom is of utter purity, acting on all other spirits and penetrating all things (v.24).”

σοφίας) entered the author, who poses as king Solomon, according to Sap 7:7:

Therefore, I prayed, and understanding was given to me,
I called on [God?], and the Spirit of Wisdom came to me.

The passage Sap 7:7-12 makes it quite clear that the Wisdom-spirit is a separate being, and not just an enhanced human spirit. Firstly, Wisdom here is not an equivalent to the “understanding” and as such an enhanced human ability. Instead of positioning “wisdom” parallel to “understanding”, the author changes it to the “Spirit of Wisdom”, which comes actively instead of being given, and thus appears more like a subject than an attribute.

Secondly, the phrase πνεῦμα σοφίας must be read as a genitive epexegeticus,⁴⁴⁶ because the text continues to speak of that spirit in the feminine; therefore, it refers to a “Spirit who is *Wisdom*” rather than to a wise *spirit*. What might seem at first as a human ability of understanding and wisdom that is given to Solomon at his request (7:7), is then revealed as a creative divine power in Solomon’s life: Wisdom is the ‘mother’ of such gifts as wealth, beauty and power (7:8-12). This confirms the general rule given in 7:27 that Wisdom remains intact as a separate being even when she enters the soul of a holy person. Wisdom cannot be identified with the rational human spirit.

If the Wisdom-spirit cannot be reduced to a human ability, can it be equated with God’s Holy Spirit in Sap 1:4-7? The passage begins by characterising Wisdom as God’s assistant with properties that are typical of her in *Sapientia*: it introduces Wisdom as supporting God’s judgement through her ability to permeate all of the

⁴⁴⁶ So also Neher, *Wesen*, 106.

cosmos and to enter human souls (7:24, 27). In that way, she can discern their attitudes and avoid the wicked:

- 1:4 Wisdom does not enter a soul which is plotting evil
 and does not dwell in a body involved with sin.

As her ability to know the thoughts of human souls depends on her nature as a spirit, she is a spirit in the first place, who is then characterised as holy and philanthropic in Sap 1:5-6:

- 1:5 For a holy spirit of discipline will flee from deceit
 and depart from thoughts without understanding
 and the injustice at hand will be convicted.
1:6 For a philanthropic spirit is Wisdom
 and she will not let the blasphemer go unpunished from what he said,
 because God is a witness of his kidneys
 and a true overseer of his heart
 and a hearer of his tongue.
1:7 Because the spirit of the Lord has filled the earth
 and that which surrounds everything, has knowledge of [people's]
 voice.

Sap 1:5 has also been interpreted as referring to a holy human spirit, which behaves in a holy way by practicing discipline and avoiding deceit.⁴⁴⁷ This might be possible, but the context is more closely associated with Wisdom: apart from the attributes holy and philanthropic, which both describe the spirit of Wisdom in 7:22-23, the attribute παιδείας also belongs to Wisdom as much as it does to the person who practices discipline. And the parallel structure of verses 5-6 suggests that two similar actions of the same Wisdom-spirit are juxtaposed.

Wisdom is the appropriate agent for the task of informing God's judgement, because she oversees everything (see Sap 8:1 and 7:23 'πανεπίσκοπον') and is

⁴⁴⁷ Levison, *Spirit*, 69-70.

able to enter the human soul. Only after Wisdom has been established as God's assistant in 1:4-6, she is identified as πνεῦμα κυρίου in 1:7. This expression can be read in two different ways: (1) One option is that Wisdom is identified with the Holy Spirit, but this is a difficult conjecture, because the Holy Spirit does not occur as a property and agent of God anywhere else in the book.⁴⁴⁸ It does not seem to play a major role in Sapientia's concept of God's agency in the world and can only be interpreted as an allusion to the Old Testament concept of the Spirit. However, in the OT, God's Spirit is not universally present, but given specifically to God's selected servants. It is only as a consequence of integrating the omnipresent Stoic *pneuma* into the nature of Wisdom in Sapientia, that the Spirit is, like Wisdom, omnipresent in Sap 12:1 "your immortal spirit is in all things", and 1:7 "the Spirit of the Lord has filled the world" just as "[Wisdom] pervades and penetrates all things" in 7:24. In a similar manner, the Spirit of God who knows every word that people say, may be identified with Wisdom in 1:6-7.⁴⁴⁹ In 1:4-7, Wisdom has the priority over the Spirit: she is mentioned first as God's helper in v.4 and the concept of omnipresence, which allows Wisdom to know all thoughts, is Wisdom's domain. The "Spirit of the Lord" (1:7) assumes the same function as Wisdom, not the other way around.

(2) The other option is that Wisdom is simply recognised as a spirit in 1:7 (as in 1:6 and similar to the 'spirit who is Wisdom' in 7:7), and quite appropriately so, because her nature as a spirit enables her to obtain the required knowledge of people's secret thoughts. This spirit is then characterised as God's spirit, because

448 Apart from 8:17, where the term 'your holy spirit' is parallel to 'wisdom' and presents the same difficulty as 1:7 in determining the relationship between the two.

449 Different again: Cornelis Bennema, *The Power of Saving Wisdom*, WUNT 2/148 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002), 65-66, speaks of the "accompanying Spirit", who is closely linked but still separate from Wisdom. In his analysis, Wisdom is indwelt with the spirit according to Sap 7:22-23.

that is her affiliation and her origin. Thus, Wisdom is *a* holy spirit affiliated with God.⁴⁵⁰ There is an allusion to the “Spirit of the Lord” in the Hebrew Scriptures, but Sapiientia says very little about Wisdom’s relation to the Holy Spirit; instead the Wisdom-spirit is defined on its own merits and appears as something similar to God’s Spirit.

5.2.2.5. Wisdom’s Nature in Sap 1-9 and Her Role in History in Sap 10

Sapiientia 1-9 strengthens Wisdom’s profile as a transcendent power which acts in the world by incorporating the Stoic concept of the all-pervasive *pneuma* as well as by developing traditional Jewish epithets like craftsman, mother, bride and God’s consort in the characterisation of the Wisdom-spirit. Wisdom’s traditional role in the creation is extended to her role in teaching (6:17-18, 8:7etc.), guiding (chapter 9) and blessing (7:7-12) her followers in a general way. Her role as divine agent is underpinned by ontological considerations, which define her relationship to God as subordinate but participating in the divinity. Whether emanation, spirit or personification, Wisdom is a divine power which works as an agent in the historical world in a distinct way, without, however, ever appearing in a concrete anthropomorphic shape or voice.

Chapter 10 confirms the traits mentioned in the previous chapters by giving historical examples of how Wisdom acted in people’s lives. Sapiientia recognises Wisdom’s specific impact in the crises of the lives of the protagonists of Israel’s history, inspiring and empowering human agents. She not only influences wise people, who ask for wisdom, but also makes an impact on enemies and moulds

⁴⁵⁰ See also Mack, *Logos*, 64 “Um das Wesen der Weisheit in der Welt begreiflich zu machen dient dem Verfasser der Terminus πνεῦμα.” see also p.64 n.6: “Pneuma wird herangezogen, um das Wesen der Weisheit zu explizieren, nicht umgekehrt.”

physical nature to serve her goal to save Israel. Corresponding to the imagery of an oriental goddess in the previous chapters, chapter 10 employs the traditional Jewish personification of Wisdom to emphasise the personal nature of the saviour figure. The image of a goddess is further enhanced by including concrete functions of the goddess Isis such as safeguarding seafarers, steering the right course, guiding by the stars and comforting prisoners in Wisdom's domain.

5.2.3. Is Wisdom a Divine Being?

The view of Wisdom being a somewhat independent divine agent has been challenged with reference to the second part of the book (chapters 11-19), which retells the exodus story with God as the subject who saved Israel. The question is whether this second account of the exodus is meant to correct the impression that Wisdom was the agent in certain situations to the effect that God is acknowledged as the agent, who only used Wisdom as an instrument in chapter 10.

Some authors support the hypostatisation of Wisdom to a certain degree⁴⁵¹ and others don't,⁴⁵² but there is an agreement that the degree of her hypostatisation increases from older wisdom literature like Proverbs to Ben Sira or Baruch and finally Sapientia.⁴⁵³ According to the familiar definitions of the hypostases, Wisdom appears as a hypostasis: the expressions "intermediate position between personalities and abstract beings" (Oesterley⁴⁵⁴) or "mediators like angels, but

451 Winston, *Wisdom*, 34; deSilva, *Apocrypha*, 148; Boccaccini, *Hellenistic Judaism*, 66; Bennema, *Power*, 61, 66n.107; Grabbe, *Wisdom*, 78.

452 John Allen Fitzgerald Gregg, *The Wisdom of Solomon: In the Revised Version* (Cambridge: University Press, 1922), xxxv.; Neher, *Wesen*, 152, 237; Sinnott, *Personification*, 18-22, 175-176; Glicksman, *Wisdom*, 182.

453 See for example Martin, *Proverbs*, 87-89.

454 Oesterley and Box, "Religion", 195.

more abstract” (Bousset,⁴⁵⁵ in my translation), reflect precisely the difficulty in defining Wisdom’s nature between an effective property of God and a divine agent acting independently in the immanent world. Wisdom is presented as a personal counterpart in her engagement with human beings, but can often appear as the more abstract quality of wisdom rather than an angelic being. Pseudo-Solomon commits himself to Wisdom’s dual nature in his ontological statement classifying her as an emanation or reflection of God, or as divine spirit. Nonetheless, the question under debate is whether she appears as a separate person, whilst Wisdom’s origin in God is not challenged.

Another definition of hypostatisation recurs to the religious historical development. As Wisdom is participating in but also emerging from the godhead,⁴⁵⁶ she reflects the development from an attribute of God to an independent agent. Wisdom is perceived by the human observer most obviously in her function as an effective power of God,⁴⁵⁷ which becomes an independent entity not only in Sap 7:25, but also in her own characteristic domains of action especially in Sap 10. Nevertheless, the competing conceptions of Wisdom being an attribute of God and an independent agent cannot be rationalised simply as a religious historical development, because they are both present at the same time in the various ways of reading Sapientia.

The real problem we are facing, however, is not so much whether our definition of a hypostasis can be applied to Wisdom, but whether Wisdom was perceived

455 Bousset and Gressmann, *Religion*, 342, “Die ‘Hypostasen’ sind wie die Engel Mittelwesen zwischen Gott und Welt... Sie sind nur abstrakter...”.

456 See Frankenmölle, *Frühjudentum*, 174-175; Oesterley, *Religion*, “undertaking individual action”, 195; Bousset, *Religion*, 342, “gesondert gedacht”.

457 Frankenmölle, *Frühjudentum*, 146-151, Bousset, *Religion*, 342.

and presented as something like an independent divine being. Therefore, it seems more useful to evaluate the ontological conception of Wisdom and explanation of divine agency in the world offered by the author, apart from the somewhat artificial concept of a hypostasis. The varied approaches of the book to characterise Wisdom prompted scholars to suggest a variety of models.

5.2.3.1. Wisdom as Pattern or Instrument of God's Agency

One popular way to integrate Wisdom into a strictly monotheistic concept of God is to understand her as the “Divine Mind” and as “Divine Providence” (Winston),⁴⁵⁸ as a “cosmic principle” (Collins)⁴⁵⁹ or pattern that governs God’s agency in human history (Enns).⁴⁶⁰ God acts, and his wisdom is merely an attribute that stresses the rationality and dependability of his dealings with the cosmos and human history. A further development of this position is a purely functional analysis which eclipses the ontological statements and views Wisdom as an instrument of God’s working in the world through the Holy Spirit, which is effective predominantly through its impact on the human mind (Neher).⁴⁶¹

This analysis emphasises Wisdom’s proximity to the Stoic idea of the all-permeating divine spirit, particularly where Wisdom is identified as “Spirit of the Lord” (1:7) and described as a rational, holy spirit, which permeates all of the cosmos in 7:22-8:1. However, the Stoic model is modified even in this passage

458 Winston, *Wisdom*, 42. He claims that Wisdom is clearly working as the “Divine Mind” in Sap 8:4 where Wisdom is the “chooser of God’s works” (αἰρετὶς τῶν ἔργων αὐτοῦ), see p. 38. However, the meaning of the phrase is not unequivocal: αἰρετὶς is a noun appearing in a sequence of nouns denoting a person such as μύστις (8:4) and τεχνίτις (8:6), who acts like a person when she “lives with God” (8:3), she controls the order of the universe (8:1) and effects wealth (8:5). Therefore, Wisdom could equally be acclaimed as God’s co-worker here.

459 Collins, *Jewish Wisdom*, 196.

460 Enns, *Exodus Retold*, 145-146, 153-154.

461 See Neher, *Wesen*, 137, 153. Or similar Glicksman, *Wisdom*, 135, 182: He designates wisdom as an attribute of God.

about Wisdom's quality of a spirit, as Sap 7:24-25 introduces a Platonic concept that distinguishes between transcendence and immanence, subordinating Wisdom to God as his mediator.⁴⁶²

Hübner qualifies the Stoic spirit, which serves as a pattern for Wisdom in Sap 7:22-8:1, further: the author of Sapiencia adapted the pantheist concept to the Jewish experience of a personal God.⁴⁶³ However, Hübner does not extend the concept of a personal divinity to Wisdom, who is viewed as an integral part of God. It is quite instructive that his immediate impression is that God delegated ("delegiert") his omnipotence to Wisdom according to 7:23 (παντοδύναμον), while permitting her to participate ("partizipiert") in God's nature. It is his monotheistic conception of God that causes him to reject the impression that Wisdom is a counterpart of God, as many other authors do more or less explicitly, with the rhetorical question, whether it would even be *permitted* to entertain a concept of a divine being outside of God.⁴⁶⁴

In spite of monotheistic convictions, however, I think the Early Jewish texts must be allowed to speak for themselves. As we have seen above (chapter 3.2.2.), God is by no means the only supernatural agent in the Hebrew Bible, where he has angels and spirits at his service. The difficulty of perceiving Wisdom as a divine power acting in the world, without encroaching on God's status as only God, is precisely the problem Pseudo-Solomon addresses in his book. If Wisdom goes

462 Collins, *Jewish Wisdom*, 196-202. For Wisdom as mediatrix see also Hübner, *Weisheit*, 139.

463 See Hübner, *Weisheit*, 102: "existentielles Wissen um das Geborgensein in Gott," 108-109: "monotheistisch rezipiert," "de[r] personale Akzent des biblischen Erbes."

464 Hübner, *Weisheit*, 107: "Denn wenn die Weisheit wesentlich göttlich ist, *darf* sie dann überhaupt als außerhalb von Gott existierend verstanden werden?...Ist sie dann nicht er selbst als sein Weise-Sein?" (my italics). See also Neher, *Wesen*, 93 for the same reservation against his impression that Wisdom is an independent being.

out from God (Sap 7:24-25) to mediate between transcendence and immanence, then she is not the same as God. In the environment of the author, Wisdom can even be served, or worshipped (θεραπεύοντας αὐτήν in 10:9), by the new religious practice of εὐσέβεια (10:12). The ontological conception of Wisdom as an emanation, effluence or reflection of God tries to achieve a credible synthesis between the one God and the encounter of Wisdom as a divine being, which is set apart from the traditional revelation of God to Israel.

The strongest argument for the view that Wisdom is not a distinct divine person, but simply reflects God himself in a new universalistic and spiritualised way, is that Sap 11-19 retells Israel's miraculous rescue from Egypt with God as saviour, possibly indicating that God and Wisdom were the same person who effected the events. This position is strengthened by Sap 10:20, where it is God, not Wisdom, who is praised for Israel's salvation. However, this does not necessitate the conclusion that God was acting through his wisdom all the time;⁴⁶⁵ it simply means that God is the ultimate cause of Israel's salvation, and Wisdom but his assistant. Sap 10:20 and chapters 11-19 do not correct the view that Wisdom acted in history,⁴⁶⁶ but the contrast between chapters 10 and 11-19 contributes to establish the complex relationship between God and his Wisdom. Neher observes rightly that the contrast between chapters 10 and 11-19 continues a pattern used previously, where the author creates a tension by ascribing the same activity to both God and Wisdom: Both judge incorruptibly (Sap 1:1-4), both are the creator (Sap 7:22 and 9:9), and chapter 10 and 11-19 respectively describe them both as agents in history. He then concludes that the tension is solved in 1:5-7 and 7:22-26 by identi-

465 This is what Hübner, *Weisheit*, 133 claims: God works through Wisdom, "ihr Wirken ist Manifestation des Wirkens Gottes".

466 See Schwenk-Bressler, *Sapientia*, 118-119.

fying Wisdom with God's Spirit, thereby making her the revealed side of God, who works inwardly in people as if they were inspired by the Holy Spirit.⁴⁶⁷ However, there are several reasons to qualify his conclusion:

Firstly, as we have seen above, Wisdom is primarily described as the all-penetrating spirit who is 'holy' because it goes out from God. Sapientia's presentation of Wisdom is quite independent of the Holy Spirit. Moreover, Wisdom's distinctive character is reinforced by reaffirming, and even strengthening, her traditional personification through the roles of a mother (7:12), creator (7:22) and throne companion of God (9:4).

Secondly, Pseudo-Solomon created a specific role for Wisdom as an agent in history with her own function of implementing God's plans in the lives of the righteous heroes of the past, tailored to her nature as wisdom. This contribution of chapter 10 to the characterisation of Wisdom should not be neglected. Neher observes intuitively that the literary form of Sap10 creates the impression that Wisdom is the – independent – agent in Israel's history, but he endeavours to show that the first impression is wrong, and Wisdom works only by empowering the human heroes as a spirit entering their soul.⁴⁶⁸

He claims that Adam in Sap 10:1 was saved because he was prompted to repent. However, Sapiientia does not mention Adam's repentance. Thus, it is equally possible that Wisdom saved Adam by prompting God to pass a lenient sentence. After all, forgiveness requires both partners to act, one by repenting and the other

⁴⁶⁷ See Neher, *Wesen*, 93-97, 109-115, 119, 152-153.

⁴⁶⁸ Neher, *Wesen*, 137-138.

by pardoning him. That way Wisdom would appear as a transcendent companion of God at the same time as she works through the human soul. Concerning Wisdom steering Noah's ark in Sap 10:4, Neher creates a binary alternative between Wisdom appearing in person on the boat or Noah doing the steering with a nautical skill given by God. As the appearance of an actual person would stretch the imagination, he is left with understanding Wisdom as a spirit working in Noah's mind. However, that is not what Sap 10:4 expresses: in Sap 10:4 Wisdom is the acting subject, suggesting that there was a divine *presence* with Noah, which is more than a god-given *ability* ("von Gott verliehene Eigenschaft").⁴⁶⁹ Regarding the salvation of the holy people in Sap 10:15-17, Neher is right that Wisdom enters Moses' soul to work through him, but that is only one way Wisdom impacts on the event: she remains a separate agent who effects the miracles in 10:16b, because it is the divine power, not the charismatic leader who can change nature. Pseudo-Solomon guards the reader against perceiving Wisdom as an attribute of the prophet when she works in an inward psychological way, by emphasising in 7:27 that Wisdom is an integral "one" (μία δὲ οὐσα) who "while remaining in herself, renews everything" or as deSilva puts it: "Wisdom remains 'intact' as she emanates from God and enters holy souls."⁴⁷⁰ She does not appear as a heightened human ability, but she remains a separate divine person, who is rightly perceived and described as an external influence on people's lives.

If the author refrains from characterising Wisdom as a hypostasis by ascribing to her the role of one of the angels who participate in God's salvation of the fathers in Genesis,⁴⁷¹ the reason may be that Pseudo-Solomon views Wisdom as more

⁴⁶⁹ Ibid., 140.

⁴⁷⁰ DeSilva, *Apocrypha*, 149.

⁴⁷¹ Thus, Neher, *Wesen*, 141-148.

than an angel, namely a manifestation of God's own presence like the Angel of the Lord; Wisdom assumed his role in three instances in Sap 10:14 (Wisdom descended into the dungeon like God's angel in Dan 3:49LXX), 10:17 (Wisdom became the pillar of cloud), and 10:9 (Wisdom is acting as Jacob's saviour like the Angel in Gen 48:16).

Thirdly, *Sapientia* explains Wisdom's relation to God as an emanation, who belongs to God, but goes out from him. The author has specifically created the terminology of 'emanation' to describe the relationship between God and Wisdom in ontological terms. This concept must be taken very seriously, because it is not even unique to *Sapientia*: it captures in ontological terms the dual nature of God's mediator, which also occurs in previous Jewish writings like Prov 1:20-33 and Sir 24. *Sapientia*'s achievement is to create a synthesis between the one true God and the divine Wisdom, who is encountered as a separate divine power and remains part of God at the same time. Therefore, the best way to interpret the relation between God and Wisdom in chapters 10 and 11-19 is in a corresponding way: Wisdom's agency in history is identified with God's salvation, yet she is perceived as acting on her own.

Fourthly, another insight into the characterisation of Wisdom's nature as conveyed by *Sapientia* can be gained from its reception by a contemporary author. In 1 Cor 10:4, the apostle Paul reveals his analysis of Wisdom's presence during Israel's wilderness wanderings, which presumes her hypostatic nature as he transfers the divine presence in the rock to the pre-existent Christ (see above pp.105-107). Paul, as an educated Jewish exegete, can draw the conclusion about the na-

ture of Wisdom that she is not simply a sapiential face of God, but a hypostasis which can be compared to Christ.

In summary, analysing Wisdom as the all-pervading spirit who reflects God's working in the world in a spiritual way seems a good characterisation of Wisdom according to certain parts of Sapiientia like chapters 7 or 1 and explains her mediatory function well. For a reader with strong monotheistic convictions and a propensity for abstraction, it is possible to dismiss the mythological features of Wisdom that give her the character of an oriental goddess as poetical embellishments or religious-historical remnants of an archaic conception. However, this interpretation is not compelling for all readers. On the contrary, it does not do justice to Pseudo-Solomon's endeavour to reconcile the strong impression of Wisdom being an independent agent with his Jewish monotheism by his innovative concept of emanation.

5.2.3.2. *The Personification of Wisdom*

Another perspective is taken by scholars who prioritise the influence of the hellenised Egyptian goddess Isis on Sapiientia's Wisdom figure. Sapiientia endows Wisdom with new features that reflect attributes of the goddess Isis, reinvigorating the Jewish tradition of personifying Wisdom. While the personification is undoubtedly a literary device on the text surface, the question is whether it is merely used as a rhetorical embellishment, or whether it is meant to describe a transcendental reality in metaphorical language.

This is conceivable if the crisis of post-exilic Judaism in a threatening Hellenistic environment ran deep enough to genuinely seek reassurance of God's caring and

inspiring presence in a place that was remote from the country and temple, and a new encounter with God was experienced in a sapiential style of worship, where Wisdom was perceived as saving and guiding the righteous.

B.L. Mack understands the re-vitalisation of Wisdom in Sapientia with the help of mythological expressions as a genuine wrestling with the question of God's sovereignty in the hostile post-exilic world, which succeeded by understanding Wisdom as a powerful saviour: as functions of the goddess Isis like her relation to the light and her motherly care for humanity were transferred to her, Wisdom attained the powers of revelation and salvation. For him, Sapientia's response reflects an intense longing for salvation rather than the experience of it.⁴⁷² Mack's conception of Wisdom's nature ranges from a divine being ("ein echtes Gotteswesen")⁴⁷³ to a theological concept ("theologische Größe").⁴⁷⁴

The personification which happens in mythological speech serves to express a theological *truth* in an accessible image in a language that is available to the speaker.⁴⁷⁵ For him, Wisdom is not a hypostasis in the sense that the Jewish Wisdom was born as an attribute of God, which developed into an independent divine being.⁴⁷⁶ In Sapientia, Wisdom is described in philosophical language as the pattern of the cosmos, all-pervasive like the soul of the world ("Weltseele"). The term *pneuma* in Sap 1:6; 7:7, 22; 9:17 reminds of the Stoic spirit. However, Wisdom has the character of a goddess rather than a philosophical pattern, as her divine personality is moulded on the example of Isis rather than on the philosophical concept of *pneuma*. The term has attained a new dimension in Sapientia,

⁴⁷² Mack, *Logos*, 186.

⁴⁷³ Ibid., 64.

⁴⁷⁴ Ibid., 186.

⁴⁷⁵ Ibid., 20,60.

⁴⁷⁶ Ibid., 16 n.20. The term "God's wisdom" appears too late in the OT for this development!

taking on the character of a transcendent person.⁴⁷⁷

J.S. Kloppenborg likewise sees a strong religious component in the crisis that prompted Sapiientia's response. He confirms the origin of Sapiientia's mythological treatment of Wisdom as outlined by Mack: "...the borrowing of the language and *mythologoumena* of Isis constituted a truly reflective and theological enterprise: to understand Yahwism afresh in the midst of hostility, persecution and death".⁴⁷⁸ It "provided an answer to the Alexandrian Jew who, no less than any other in this age, experienced a 'cosmic paranoia'".⁴⁷⁹

Kloppenborg emphasises the "personal and mythical dimensions of Sophia"⁴⁸⁰ enhanced by features of the goddess Isis. Her personal protection was particularly important in face of the capricious power of the incalculable "fate", which dominated even Greek deities. The widespread fatalism, which contributed to the insecurity in Hellenistic culture, was countered by the Egyptian goddess who possessed powers to save life⁴⁸¹ and guarantee the cosmic order in her solar functions taken over from other deities.⁴⁸² Sapiientia harnesses the "mythic power" of the Egyptian goddess to enhance the biblical stories of divine salvation ascribed to Wisdom.⁴⁸³ Wisdom becomes a "mythical person."⁴⁸⁴ By "re-mythologizing" the Jewish Wisdom figure, Pseudo-Solomon "allowed Judaism to maintain itself as a saving religion in the face of influential cults which made similar promises."⁴⁸⁵ The "mythic patterns" used to reshape Sophia into a contemporary model of a

477 Ibid., 64.

478 Kloppenborg, "Isis," 61, referring to Mack, *Logos*, 186.

479 Kloppenborg, "Isis," 82.

480 Ibid., 66.

481 Ibid., 68-70.

482 Ibid., p.69, esp. n.49.

483 Ibid., 72-73.

484 Ibid., 65-66. Similarly, Schwenk-Bressler, *Sapiientia*, 105, speaks of a "σοφία-Göttin"; see also p. 91 "eigenständige und eigenmächtige Person."

485 Kloppenborg, "Isis," 82.

Jewish saviour strengthen the Jewish religious identity.⁴⁸⁶

A. Sinnott's comprehensive study on the personification of Wisdom defines the challenge taken up by Sapiientia as finding a way to live as a Jewish community in an alien – Hellenistic – environment.⁴⁸⁷ The author tries to persuade his readers of the superiority of their Jewish religion with an “apologetic concern”⁴⁸⁸ and exhorts his readers to live “under the guidance of God’s saving Wisdom.”⁴⁸⁹ Wisdom “shows the ‘way’ through the confusion” of the attractive Hellenistic culture,⁴⁹⁰ which had caused “unfaithfulness to the Hebrew tradition,”⁴⁹¹ giving her a “role as divine guide of history.”⁴⁹² By reformulating the Jewish identity credibly, he demonstrates Judaism’s “living heritage”⁴⁹³ and offers an “assurance that God is present with them.”⁴⁹⁴ In essence, Sinnott’s approach understands the achievement of Sapiientia as a human endeavour to actualise the Jewish tradition rather than recognising a genuine religious experience of the divine presence in the pursuit of Wisdom on the part of the Alexandrian Jews.⁴⁹⁵

In spite of noticing the author’s “personal encounter with Wisdom,”⁴⁹⁶ and acknowledging the author’s conscious choice to enhance Wisdom with features of the goddess Isis, because she could offer personal care for the concerns of her followers,⁴⁹⁷ Sinnott judges that Wisdom is conceptualised as an effective power and

486 Ibid., 84.

487 Sinnott, *Personification*, 142.

488 Ibid., 154.

489 Ibid., 161.

490 Ibid., 160.

491 Ibid., 168.

492 Ibid., 166.

493 Ibid., 169.

494 Ibid., 170.

495 Ibid., 169.

496 Ibid., 154. See also p.163 for “personal aspects” in Wisdom’s ability to respond to and to save her followers.

497 Ibid., 166-167.

presence of God, not as a distinct “transcendent being.”⁴⁹⁸ Wisdom itself becomes a mere “symbol”⁴⁹⁹ expressing God’s presence with his people,⁵⁰⁰ but cannot be understood as a distinct divine being, because that is perceived as violating biblical monotheism.⁵⁰¹

But even if a spiritualised Wisdom, who worked powerfully in the world on God’s behalf could be conceptualised successfully, Sapiaentia’s wealth of images and concepts of Wisdom should not be levelled out too quickly to achieve a harmonisation. **U. Schwenk-Bressler** emphasises Wisdom’s appearance as a divine being. He acknowledges that Wisdom is presented in a variety of different ways, as a skill, as education and as an emanation of God, but she appears in chapter 10 as a Sophia-goddess, who acts on her own like an independent person rather than as an instrument of God. Indeed, the personification of Wisdom is so powerful that she appears as a counterpart of the goddess Isis. Whether the representation as a person stems from the original influence of an oriental wisdom goddess on the Jewish tradition or from her counterpart Isis – she bears the features of a goddess.⁵⁰² Accordingly, she is presented as a person, as creator (τεχνίτις), consort (παρέδρον) and mother (γενίτις) in other parts of Sapiaentia, following the tradition of Proverbs, Ben Sira and Baruch. As he judges that this image of Wisdom is not reconcilable with the rest of Sapiaentia, he concludes that Sapiaentia uses different strands of the wisdom tradition, which are not completely harmonised.⁵⁰³

498 Ibid. 155.

499 Ibid., 175.

500 Ibid., 176, 178.

501 Ibid., 176.

502 Schwenk-Bressler, *Sapiaentia*, 105, 113.

503 See Schwenk-Bressler, *Sapiaentia*, 62-63, 105. See also Ringgren, *Word and Wisdom*, 119: The author’s somewhat contradictory portrayal places Wisdom “between personal being and principle.” The intention to present Wisdom as competition to the logos of the Greek philosophy resulted in subduing the developing mythology of Wisdom (πάρεδρος). Fitzgerald, *Wisdom*, xxxiii: He perceives Sapiaentia as lacking a definite presentation of Wisdom, the presentation possesses “little precision of thought”, and “he [the author] fails to

5.2.3.3. Wisdom's Real Impact on the Alexandrian Jewish Community in the Experience of the Sage

The studies above have suggested that the crisis of the Jewish community may have run deep, being fuelled by an inner quest for their religious identity and a lack of security in the foreign country. The author's intention in portraying Wisdom as a saviour, who had been and was still acting in Israel's history, was not merely to compete with rivalling cults, but to reassure the Jews that God was still with them in an alien country.⁵⁰⁴ Such a religious crisis could only be resolved by the religious experience of God's presence and his continued care for his people. The question now is whether the genuine quest for God's continued salvation had been resolved by a genuine experience of the desired divine care being offered by God's Wisdom in this situation.

A first step towards ascertaining that *Sapientia* sets out a new religious experience of the Jewish community is that the book is a genuinely Jewish enterprise. There is a fair consensus that themes and concepts of the surrounding culture, such as patterns of the Isis mythology, are only used to express the author's own conception of divine salvation.⁵⁰⁵ His independent vision of Wisdom is particularly evident where he creates the emanation terminology to explain Wisdom's nature in order to negotiate between Wisdom's perceived independent agency and Jewish monotheism.

produce a logically perfect synthesis." Mareike V. Blischke, "Zur Theologie der *Sapientia*" in Niebuhr, *Sapientia Salomonis*, 137-173, here p.169-170, mentions divergent conceptualisations of Wisdom as a female counterpart of God in Sap 6:22-17[sic]; 8-10, in contrast to the subordinated stoicising spirit in 7:22-8:1.

504 See also Martin Leuenberger, "Die personifizierte Weisheit als Erbin der atl. "Schechina", in *Das Geheimnis der Gegenwart Gottes*, ed. Bernd Janowski and Enno Edzard Popkes, WUNT 318 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 65-84, here pp.71-72, for the genuine struggle to redefine the divine presence in the Hellenistic times where the rising power of post-exilic monotheism necessitated a concept which assured the people of the immanent presence of their God who was increasingly conceived as resident remotely in the heavens. In this situation, Wisdom is personified as a mediator and agent.

505 See Sinnott, *Personification*, 148, 151, 167; Kloppenborg, "Isis," 58, 72; Mack, *Logos*, 60.

Furthermore, I want to suggest that Pseudo-Solomon not only offers an intellectual conceptualisation of God's presence with the diaspora community in the shape of his Wisdom: he proposes a new form of worship based on pursuing Wisdom and practicing her laws, after the Jewish community had lost some of the identity markers of their traditional religion, such as country and kingdom provided by God as a space where they could live according to God's law, and even the temple with its prescribed sacrificial cult had moved into remote distance. It is likely that he was not constructing Hellenistic Judaism on paper, but developed his ideas in dialogue with the community he addressed, and could build on some experiences with a new style of worship which had already been made, which was sufficiently established and successful to convince him that God was present with his people in the alien place in a new way. In my opinion, the strength of Pseudo-Solomon's argument rests on the fact that he can base his concept of the divine Wisdom on actual religious experience of the extraordinary gifts granted to those who devote themselves to the divine Wisdom.

The book itself displays details of a religious practice oriented towards Wisdom in two passages in an indirect way:

Firstly, Sap 6-9 uses the fictive Solomon figure to portray the ideal sage, which may even report the experience of the author himself,⁵⁰⁶ to describe a new form of Jewish worship practiced by the sages: the sage seeks Wisdom with perseverance, even though he is aware that Wisdom is not attainable by human endeavour, but must be received as a gift of God (Sap 7:7; 8:21). He is rewarded with the delights of a loving relationship as well as with the tangible gifts of knowledge,

⁵⁰⁶ See Kloppenborg, "Isis", 73; Sinnott, *Personification*, 154; Schwenk-Bressler, *Sapientia*, 62.

discipline, extraordinary abilities and success in life (Sap 7:7-12 and 8:5-18).

Secondly, the book also offers a condensed account of the new form of worship in the description of Jacob, a type of Israel, in chapter 10: the piety (εὐσέβεια in Sap 10:12) resulting from serving Wisdom (Sap 10:9) is fuelled by mystic insights (Sap 10:10),⁵⁰⁷ it offers protection from enemies (Sap 10:11-12) and promises the generation of wealth (Sap 10:10-11), all features that were relevant for the Jewish community in Alexandria. Further benefits of following Wisdom attested throughout Sap 10 are: Wisdom forgives sin, Wisdom empowers to obey God, Wisdom is a kind and caring divine presence, Wisdom directs history to a good outcome, Wisdom saves from Egyptian oppression. It is this experience that could convince the Jewish community of Wisdom's real power to save.

The existence of that kind of religious experience is also testified to by external sources: we have seen above (5.2.2.4.1.) that 1st century Judaism had developed a concept of the rational spirit, which could receive extraordinary insights by divine inspiration. The inspiration of the rational mind was distinct from the traditional inspiration of prophets, and therefore recorded a new religious experience. At the same time it was quite obvious that it was perceived by its recipients as the effect of a divine spirit rather than as a human ability, because Philo likened the phenomenon to Socrates' *daimonion*.⁵⁰⁸ Philo gives one example of such a religious experience in his autobiographic account of a mystic ascent in *Spec.* 3.1-6:

⁵⁰⁷ Schwenk-Bressler, *Sapientia*, even thinks Pseudo-Solomon suggests a comparison with the initiation to a mystery cult.

⁵⁰⁸ See Levison, *Spirit*, 185-187.

I appeared to be raised on high and born aloft by a certain inspiration of the soul, and to dwell in the regions of the sun and moon, and to associate with the whole heaven, and the whole universal world. ... I am irradiated with the light of wisdom ... I venture not only to study the sacred commands of Moses, but also with an ardent love of knowledge to investigate each separate one of them, and to endeavour to reveal and to explain to those who wish to understand them, things concerning them which are not known to the multitude.⁵⁰⁹

The phenomenon of an “inspired exegesis as the work of the spirit in conjunction with an alert intellect” is not restricted to Philo but also occurs in 4 Ezra.⁵¹⁰ Further examples of new religious experiences with mystic visions include the apocalyptic scenarios recorded in 1 Enoch.

The main features of the “Hellenistic Judaism”, which is represented in particular by Sapiientia, have been summarised by **G. Boccaccini** in the following way: Based on the “law of nature” with the “divine Wisdom” at its centre,⁵¹¹ the Jewish sages practiced a universal “form of natural philosophy” that was far less dependent on temple and torah than priestly Judaism, and could even be open to Gentile worshippers.⁵¹² When this movement elaborated on the older wisdom tradition of the OT, it retained Wisdom’s divine character, presenting her as a hypostasis, a divine being rather than a created angelic being.⁵¹³

This brings us back to the question whether Wisdom was conceived as a mere poetic personification or whether the Alexandrian author employed the personification to portray what he understood as a divine being. Regarding the significance attached to the metaphorical representation of a divine entity in antiquity, we

509 *The Works of Philo: Complete and Unabridged*, transl. C.D. Yonge (Hendrickson, 1993), p.594.

510 Levison, *Spirit*, 211.

511 Boccaccini, “Hellenistic Judaism,” 75.

512 Ibid., 69.

513 Ibid., 65-66.

have noted above (3.2.1.) that (1) there was a general understanding that the metaphor served to indicate a transcendent power or divine being. The religious metaphor generally served to restructure rather than merely construct reality, alerting the audience to the effects of the transcendent power in question. Our author encourages a view of Wisdom as a transcendent being as he sharpens Wisdom's profile as a goddess by including new features, which were previously attached to the goddess Isis. An author who is aware of this understanding and evokes an image of Wisdom as an independently acting divine person, consciously accepts that his audience could take Wisdom as a divine being, even if he does not say it expressly. (2) The understanding of biblical monotheism seems to be the main reason for numerous scholars to reject the idea of Wisdom being a heavenly being. However, we have established that the Hebrew Scriptures do accept angels, spirits and sons of God as inhabitants of the transcendent sphere, and it appears that before the controversy about Jesus' messianic claim arose, Judaism had been more open to imagine other heavenly beings.⁵¹⁴ There is a sufficient range of heavenly roles that Wisdom can be aligned with, and the fact that Pseudo-Solomon experiments with various categories of subordination, emanation and instrumentalisation of Wisdom shows that he was aware of the problem that his Wisdom figure was powerful enough to appear as a rival goddess, and he needed to explain her status in relation to YHWH. The presentation of Wisdom in *Sapientia* surely evoked the idea of an oriental goddess, and the author did not stop his readers from drawing that conclusion. Therefore, it seems that the author

514 See Nickelsburg, *Ancient Judaism*, 99-106. He lists a number of "transcendent divine agents and intermediaries" such as the "'sons of God', 'holy ones' and 'gods'" in Gen 6:1-4; Deut 32:8; 33:2; Judg 5:20; 1 Kgs 22:19-23; Psalm 82, the Holy Watchers in 1 Enoch, the Son of Man in Dan 7 and 1 Enoch and Wisdom. Also Hamori, *Gods*, 118. Boccaccini, "Hellenistic Judaism", 62, views the ancient Israelite Wisdom as a divine being, which was later transformed into the Messiah by the Christians and into the torah by the rabbinic Judaism, p.69-75.

could accept this view. (3) The success of the personification depended on its reception by the audience. In this case it depends on the lived experience of Wisdom and her perceived power as saviour and guide. While most of our evidence for Wisdom's powerful effects among her followers concern visions and guidance, we can assume that the thriving Jewish community in Alexandria was quite affluent, and it still lived in safety in spite of political pressures, as the book does not mention actual persecution by outsiders; the enemies of the righteous are apostate Jews (Sap 3:12).

5.2.3.4. Conclusion: The Nature of Wisdom Remains Ambiguous

Wisdom has been characterised as a divine power, which becomes manifest in space and time with her impact on the lives of God's people, even though her precise nature remains mysterious.

The synthetic nature of Sapiientia's image of Wisdom permits the reader to place the emphasis on the view that suits him: it is possible for a person with a strict understanding of monotheism to view the vivid picture of an oriental goddess as a literary personification and understand Wisdom's agency as a specific way of how God acts in the world, reducing Wisdom to an attribute or instrument of God. This view prioritises Wisdom's representation as a spirit resembling the all pervasive Stoic *pneuma* to a certain degree. Other readers' impression of Wisdom can be dominated by the vivid personification; they will emphasise the distinctiveness of Wisdom's agency and interpret the personification as a metaphor for an inaccessible, but real, heavenly power. Such a heavenly power can be concep-

tualised as a divine being, even if it is manifest not in a material or anthropomorphic shape, but only as a more subtle, and invisible, spirit.

Crucially, the personification of Wisdom must be validated by the experience of the audience if the metaphor is to be understood as mythological language describing a heavenly being. The book is apparently a response to the sometimes threatening environment of the Hellenistic diaspora, where a new form of worship, based on pursuing Wisdom, provided a fresh experience of God's presence and care to the Jewish community in a place that lacked the security and sense of identity which had formerly been provided by Israel's kingdom, and was removed even from the immediate access to the temple worship.

While it may be disappointing that it is not possible to grasp the nature of Wisdom in a precise definition, it is very instructive that Pseudo-Solomon testifies to the same ambiguity that can be observed in previous Jewish tradition: Wisdom could be a manifestation of God or God's agent. He develops that tradition by capturing this ambiguity ontologically in a philosophical term, 'emanation'.

5.3. Conclusion: Wisdom as Agent in History in Sapiientia and Matt 23:37-39 Par.

In conclusion, Sapiientia provides a tradition that presents Wisdom as agent in Israel's history, which is a suitable model for Jesus' ministry according to Matt 23:37 par. in several ways:

(1) Sapiientia 10 suggests that salvation through Wisdom continues into the

present time, and would therefore also include bringing Israel back from the exile, in a spiritual as well as physical sense. Therefore, Jesus' ministry of "gathering" can be understood as the natural continuation of Wisdom's previous, and still ongoing, efforts to save and guide Israel.

(2) Sapientia 10 identifies 'salvation' as Wisdom's foremost task. The other major domain of her ministry in Israel, 'guidance' and 'teaching' are equally suitable as a pattern for Jesus' public ministry, and so is her ability to work miracles. Sapientia also identifies the enabling of prophets as Wisdom's domain and adds, like Matt 23:37 par., other envoys (Sap 7:27), both of which were equally sent out by Jesus according to Matt 10:5; 23:34; 28:19-20.

(3) It could not be ascertained that the personification of Wisdom definitely presents her as a heavenly being, even though the text prompts the imagination accordingly. Instead, the text leaves the decision to the reader, whether he views Wisdom as an individual agent or as a contemporary form of God's engagement with the world. If Sapientia's Wisdom was understood as a heavenly being, then Jesus could be seen as her incarnation in the logion, but this interpretation is uncertain.

(4) The alternative interpretation of the allusions to Wisdom in the 'Lament' is that Jesus' ministry is explained as analogous to the previous revelation of God, Wisdom, who had likewise assumed the role of God in performing the actions that had been God's domain in the OT. That means, Jesus appears as a counter-

part of God, who participated in God's work of inspiring the prophets and gathering the people of Israel, just like Wisdom. His endeavour to call and gather the wayward children of Israel becomes visibly manifest in his earthly ministry.

(5) With her dual nature, remaining a part of God and becoming an agent in the material world, Wisdom had exhibited remarkable similarities with the Angel of the Lord, who had served as God's mediator in another era. Sapiaientia uses the same conception and also identifies Wisdom with the pillar of cloud and fire. If the sapiential tradition had set an example of how the characteristics of God's mediator, originally portrayed as the Angel of the Lord symbolised by the pillar of cloud, could be transferred to Wisdom, would it be possible that Jesus' mission was understood in an analogous way as a new manifestation of God's mediator?

(6) The exegesis of Sap 10 has established an image of Wisdom as agent in history in Jesus' Jewish environment. Wisdom's function in regulating history is a tremendous advance upon the older conception of Wisdom's responsibility for the order of God's creation. The availability of this new concept allows for the possibility that Jesus' connection with Wisdom is not merely based on rationalising his heavenly function following his resurrection, as 1Cor 8:6 might suggest; if Wisdom had been understood to be guiding and saving the children of Israel in their terrestrial lives, then an observer of Jesus' earthly ministry could have drawn the conclusion that he was doing just that in an unprecedented, exemplary and charismatic way. As the concept is based on Jewish theology, it was available to Jesus as a tool to conceptualise his messianic self-understanding as much as for

his disciples.

6. Wisdom as Manifestation of God's Presence in Sir 24

6.1. The Book of Ben Sira

6.1.1. Date, Author, Greek Translation, Manuscripts

We are in the fortunate position to possess unusually detailed information about the origin of Ben Sira's book: Ben Sira was a scribe, who also run a school for the sons of the more affluent families in Jerusalem. He wrote between 195 and 175 BCE in the prosperous period following the high priesthood of Simon II and running up to the Hellenistic crisis under Antiochus Epiphanes IV. The book was translated from Hebrew into Greek by Ben Sira's grandson some time after he moved to Egypt in 132 BCE, and it is the Greek version which has been transmitted and available to the church all along. Parts and fragments of the Hebrew version have been found in the Cairo Geniza, in Qumran and on Massada from the end of the 19th century onwards, attesting the popularity of the book. While about two thirds of the book are now available in Hebrew, the central chapter 24, which contains a beautifully composed poem on Wisdom's heavenly origin, her descent into the immanent world and her impact on day to day life in Israel, is extant only in Greek.⁵¹⁵ The book must have been available for reference in Jesus' first century environment, as both frequent allusions to Ben Sira's book in the NT in general⁵¹⁶ and specific parallels in each of the gospels,⁵¹⁷ have been observed.

⁵¹⁵ See deSilva, *Apocrypha*, 156-157; Collins, *Jewish Wisdom*, 23, 43.

⁵¹⁶ See Nestle and Ahland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*, 771-772.

⁵¹⁷ See Corley, "Tracing Wisdom," 43.

6.1.2. Contents: Themes and Wisdom Poems

The book features five poems which celebrate personified Wisdom: Sir 1:1-10, about all wisdom coming from the Lord; Sir 4:11-19, about Wisdom's relationship to her disciples; Sir 6:18-37, about the process of acquiring Wisdom; Sir 14:40-15:10, about the passionate quest for Wisdom; Sir 24:1-33 about Wisdom's place in the cosmos and in history; and Sir 51:13-28, about the author's own relationship to Wisdom. These poems occupy the strategic places at the beginning, centre and end of the book forming a framework of general considerations about the heavenly Wisdom.⁵¹⁸ About half of the book offers advice on moral conduct to the young students, concerning particularly relationships in family and public life, money matters, right speech and slander, the profession of the sage, but also on grounding their lives in traditional Jewish piety. Other passages contemplate theological questions such as death, divine justice, the origin of evil and the goodness of created order.⁵¹⁹

Even though Ben Sira is a sage who pursues universal wisdom and is open to contributions from other cultures, his wisdom is based on an attitude of the fear of the Lord and he admonishes his students to observe the commandments of the torah. This contributes to the process of joining the two separate biblical strands of teaching, wisdom and torah.⁵²⁰

The book concludes with two encomiums, the praise of the wonders of creation

518 For the themes and function of the poems see Friedrich V. Reiterer, "Das Verhältnis der חכמה zur תורה im Buch Ben Sira: Kriterien zur gegenseitigen Bestimmung" in *Studies in the Book of Ben Sira: Papers of the Third International Conference on the Deuterocanonical Books, Shime'on Centre Pápa, Hungary, 18-20 May 2006*, ed. Géza G. Zeravits and Józef Zsengellér, JSJSup 127 (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 97-134, here pp. 105, 107, 108, 111, 114, 119; Collins, *Jewish Wisdom*, 46-54.

519 See deSilva, *Apocrypha*, 153-155; Collins, *Jewish Wisdom*, 62, 78, 80, 84-93.

520 See deSilva, *Apocrypha*, 159-160; Collins, *Jewish Wisdom*, 31, 41, 46-47.

in 42:15-43:33 and the praise of the Fathers in 44:1-50:29.⁵²¹

6.2. Wisdom's Role as Divine Presence in the Temple (Sir 24:1-12)

As we have seen, two aspects which allude to a transhistorical ministry of Jesus in the "Lament over Jerusalem" could be based on Jewish traditions, which had characterised the divine Wisdom as mediator between God and man: Wisdom had been described as the one who inspired the prophets in Sap 7:27, and she was seen as the divine agent, who guarded and guided the heroes of Israel's past in critical situations in Sap 10.

One further element of the Jerusalem Word, which may recur to a domain of the divine Wisdom is the reference to the divine presence in the temple: "...your house is being left (empty). For I tell you that you will not see me (from now on) until you say: 'Blessed is the One who comes in the name of the Lord'", which threatens the people of Jerusalem, who had rejected Jesus' attempts to be collected under his wings, that God would withdraw his presence from the temple as a consequence.

As Jesus is the one who is rejected and will not be seen any more after his execution, the saying suggests that he is the Shekinah, the divine presence, which will be lost for Israel when he is killed, making the temple as the place of the divine presence obsolete. The evangelist Matthew confirms that this is how he interprets the logion by the context he chose, where Jesus leaves the temple for the last time straight after these words (Matt 24:1).

⁵²¹ See deSilva, *Apocrypha*, 156.

If the composer of the saying did not wish to convey the extremely presumptuous claim that Jesus could be identified with God, it is possible that he is again aligning Jesus with the divine Wisdom, who was known in the Jewish tradition to be resident in the temple as a manifestation of God's presence.

The classical locus for Wisdom being identified as the divine presence in the temple is Sir 24:10. It may seem to be a solitary statement within the long tradition,⁵²² but it is not just a casual remark or poetic exaggeration of her function. Rather, it is the focal point of Ben Sira's popular book: chapter 24 is not only physically located in the middle of the book, but it is also central in that it defines in mythical terms the nature of Wisdom by describing her close relationship to God in the heavens, her descent from the transcendence into the immanent world and her function in Israel. The statement in Sir 24:10 that "she served before him [God] in the holy tent and was thus established in Zion" determines the temple as the goal towards which Wisdom's journey from heaven to earth is directed and her home base from where she exercises her influence throughout the country.

In the following I offer an exegesis of Sir 24 which focuses on the aspect of Wisdom as the divine presence in the temple, which, while necessarily leaving out a number of other aspects, is guided by the following questions: in which way is Wisdom understood as the divine presence (Sir 24:1-12)? What is the nature of her service in the temple (Sir 24:13-19)? In what way is her ministry manifest throughout the country (Sir 24:19-34)? The last question involves an assessment of Wisdom's relationship to the law and consequently of the extent to which she is perceived as a hypostasis, because Sir 24:23 has frequently been interpreted as Wisdom being identified with the law; if this verse revealed the final destination

522 N.T. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, vol. 1 (London: SPCK, 2013), 106.

and true nature of Wisdom, the personification of Wisdom would appear as a literary device. If on the other hand Wisdom had been manifest in various ways in Ben Sira's contemporary world, including her manifestation in the torah among other active ways to engage the sages, she would appear more as a divine agent.

The poem can be divided into an introductory remark (vv.1-2) and six stanzas:

Vv. 3-7: Wisdom in the transcendent realm.

Vv. 8-12: Wisdom settles in Israel, more specifically the temple in Jerusalem.

Vv. 13-17: Wisdom's function in the temple.

Vv. 19-22: Wisdom's invitation to come and taste her fruit.

Vv. 23-29: Wisdom's way is identified with – or legitimised by – the torah.

Vv. 30-34: Ben Sira's school as an example of Wisdom's effect on actual people in a specific place.

The first section comprising the first two stanzas is concerned with Wisdom's descent from heaven to earth (chapter 6.2). The second section comprising the middle two stanzas deals with Wisdom's ministry in Jerusalem and Israel (chapters 6.3 and 6.4). The third section comprising the two final stanzas contain Ben Sira's commentary on Wisdom's self-praise from the perspective of the torah and teachable knowledge (chapter 6.5).

6.2.1. Survey of Scholarly Contributions to the Exegesis

Recent studies concerned with Sir 24 include Johannes Marböck's monograph

Weisheit im Wandel from 1971,⁵²³ moving the interest on from a history of religion approach⁵²⁴ to taking a view of Wisdom as a sapiential reinterpretation of Jewish tradition, it opens a new perspective on the exegesis of the Wisdom of Ben Sira. This approach is followed a little later by Gerald T. Sheppard's *Wisdom as a Hermeneutical Construct*.⁵²⁵ They both focus on the 'inheritance' topos and on Israel's election, where the torah, rather than God's indwelling in the temple, functions as goal and concrete revelation of wisdom. In contrast to this, Patrick W. Skehan/ Alexander A. Di Lella⁵²⁶ as well as Jessie Rogers⁵²⁷ predominantly use Prov 8 as a backdrop to Sir 24, emphasising Wisdom's close relationship to God, and Bernd Janowski⁵²⁸ traces the חֵכֶם tradition of the Hebrew Scriptures as the key concept of the chapter.

6.2.1.1. Marböck: Wisdom' Chooses Israel as Her Specific Domain in the Historical Sphere

Marböck, *Weisheit im Wandel*, reevaluates two prominent propositions regarding the origin of personified Wisdom: Sira's indebtedness to the Egyptian tradition manifested in the Isis hymns, and the proposition that a hypostatized Wisdom was the central figure of a reconstructed gnostic Wisdom myth. He accepts an influ-

523 Johannes Marböck, *Weisheit im Wandel. Untersuchungen zur Weisheitstheologie bei Ben Sira*. Neuaufgabe mit Nachwort und Bibliographie. BZAW 272. Berlin: De Gruyter, 1999.

524 Most notably put forward by Hans Conzelmann, "The Mother of Wisdom."

525 Gerald T. Sheppard, *Wisdom as a Hermeneutical Construct: A Study in the Sapientializing of the Old Testament*, BZAW 151 (Berlin, New York: De Gruyter, 1980).

526 Patrick W. Skehan and Alexander A. DiLella, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira*, AB 39 (New York: Doubleday, 1987).

527 Jessie Rogers, "Wisdom and Creation in Sirach 24," *JNSL* 22, no. 2 (1996): 141–56.

528 Bernd Janowski, "Ich will in eurer Mitte wohnen: Struktur und Genese der exilischen Schekhina-Theologie" in *Gottes Gegenwart in Israel: Beiträge zur Theologie des Alten Testaments 1* (Neukirchen-Vlyun: Neukirchener, 1993), 119–147; Bernd Janowski, "Gottes Weisheit in Jerusalem: Sirach 24 und die biblische Schekhina-Theologie" in *Biblical Figures in Deuterocanonical and Cognate Literature*, ed. H. Lichtenberger and U. Mittmann-Richert, YDCL 2008 (Berlin/New York: De Gruyter, 2009), 1–29.

ence of the genre of Isis aretalogies,⁵²⁹ but rejects Conzelmann's thesis that Ben Sira had simply adapted a hymn to Isis,⁵³⁰ because the dating of the Isis hymns known to us is not sufficiently certain to base a claim of literary dependance on them.⁵³¹ Wilckens' thesis of a gnostic sophia-myth⁵³² being the background of the Jewish Wisdom texts is rejected, because such an early myth can only be constructed from disparate elements, while a corresponding gnostic myth is not available until much later.⁵³³ Marböck rejects the thesis that Wisdom is presented as a hypostasis, primarily because she represents the presence of God;⁵³⁴ she becomes demythologised as she is manifest in the cult and in the law, making her a mere symbol of God's agency in history⁵³⁵ designed to mediate between God and world.⁵³⁶

Marböck investigates the concept of Ben Sira's sapiential theology by focusing on the wisdom poems in chapters 1:1-10 and 24 located in strategic places at the introduction and centre of the book. The main topic and achievement of the book is recognised as a sapiential synthesis of God's agency in creation and in history. If God himself had been acclaimed as the saviour of Israel in history and as the creator in texts like Second Isaiah and the psalms, it is now Wisdom, who

529 Marböck, *Weisheit*, 53-54.

530 The idea that Wisdom is related to Isis has been much entertained since Reitzenstein, *Zwei religionsgeschichtliche Fragen nach ungedruckten Texten der Strassburger Bibliothek*, Strassburg, 1901, pp. 104f., W.L.Knox, "The Divine Wisdom" *JTS* 38 (1937), 230ff., as quoted by H. Conzelmann, "Mother", 230. Ringgren, *Word and Wisdom*, 143-146, rejects a derivation of the early Jewish Wisdom figure in Proverbs and Job on this Egyptian counterpart, as the Isis texts must be dated later, while he thinks that Sirach may be reacting to attributes of the hellenistic Isis.

531 Marböck, *Weisheit*, 53.

532 See Wilckens, TWNT 7:508-510.

533 Marböck, *Weisheit*, 54.

534 Ibid., 62.

535 Marböck, *Weisheit*, 72.

536 Ibid., 132-133.

assumes the function of God's presence not only in the cosmic order⁵³⁷ but also in reaching out to human beings by teaching them the fear of the Lord. This theme appears as early as in the introduction, and it is reflected in the final chapters which juxtapose a hymn on creation (Sir 42-43) to the praise of the Fathers (Sir 44-50), where the transition in vv. 43:33 and 44:2-5 emphasise that it is Wisdom, who inspired the god-fearing ancestors.⁵³⁸ Marböck devotes most of his attention to Ben Sira's presentation of the wisdom figure in the central chapter 24, which unites Wisdom's role in the cosmic order and in Israel's salvation history,⁵³⁹ focusing, however, on the unification of these functions, not the figure of Wisdom which remains sketchy.⁵⁴⁰ Marböck briefly mentions Prov 8 as source for the concept of Wisdom's role in the creation and her pre-existence,⁵⁴¹ but emphasises the main distinction, which is that Wisdom's *locus* in Sir 24 is the particular history of Israel, instead of her relationship to all human beings in Prov. 8:30-31.

It is of prime importance that Ben Sira discovered his new theme of Wisdom's role in the historical world in her particular involvement with the life of Israel, which is given to Wisdom as her specific "inheritance" and sphere of influence in 24:8-12.⁵⁴² The Deuteronomic election tradition continued by prophets and psalms is reinforced by Wisdom taking up residence in the city of Jerusalem of all places in the world.⁵⁴³ Thus, Wisdom is interpreted primarily as God acting in electing Israel.⁵⁴⁴ This is a new contemporary form of divine revelation, which confirms in the language of the Hellenistic culture Israel's election as the nation

⁵³⁷ See also *ibid.* p.68.

⁵³⁸ *Ibid.*, 33.

⁵³⁹ *Ibid.*, 33, 63, 68-69.

⁵⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 68-71, 131.

⁵⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 55.

⁵⁴² *Ibid.*, 56, 67.

⁵⁴³ *Ibid.*, 66.

⁵⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 71.

where Wisdom takes up residence, and is linked to the significance of wisdom in Deut 4:6-8.⁵⁴⁵

The first stanza (Sir 24:3-7) establishes that Wisdom represents the presence of God: Wisdom's origin in the mouth of God is interpreted as analogy to the word of God, which was already seen to work in creation and history in Deutero-Isaiah, whereas the allusion to the spirit as template for the "mist which covered the earth" seems to him less felicitous⁵⁴⁶. The reference to Wisdom's throne on the cloud likely recurs to mythology of the goddess Isis, but is only meant to emphasise again Wisdom's participation in God's majesty, reminding of God's gracious presence in the pillar of cloud.⁵⁴⁷ Further parallels between God and Wisdom are obvious in the description of her journeying through the spheres, which are traditionally God's domain: Walking through the vault of the heavens and taking control of the abyss as well as the sea reveals that she exercises control over the cosmic order, just as her ruling over all the nations is an expression of her divine function, i.e. of God acting through Wisdom.⁵⁴⁸

The following stanza (vv.8-12) turns to Wisdom's entry into the historical world adding a historical function to her cosmological function. Her search for a "resting place", introduced earlier in v.7, is aimed at her goal of being finally fully revealed and communicating herself to actual historical people, a goal which is reinforced in her invitation to partake of her in vv.19-21.⁵⁴⁹ The central terms "rest" and "inheritance", adapted from the Deuteronomical theology,⁵⁵⁰ which

⁵⁴⁵ Ibid., 74.

⁵⁴⁶ Ibid., 59.

⁵⁴⁷ Ibid., 60.

⁵⁴⁸ Ibid., 61-62.

⁵⁴⁹ Ibid., 75.

⁵⁵⁰ Ibid., 62.

occur repeatedly in the following, introduce Ben Sira's main interest in Wisdom's presence in Israel: they remind of God choosing Israel as his people and granting them the privilege of enjoying the presence of God, a gift which is now renewed in Wisdom dwelling in Jerusalem.⁵⁵¹

The climax of Wisdom's movement from heaven to earth is her indwelling in the "holy tent", or equivalently the temple, in v.10, where Marböck ascribes to her a priestly function ("priesterliche Funktion").⁵⁵² From the centre in the temple, Wisdom's agency radiates into the country: she is "rooted" in the "glorified people", referring to God's presence in Israel.⁵⁵³ The following verses 13-21 elaborate on her presence throughout the country, in the daily life of the individuals.⁵⁵⁴ Thus, all of the statements about Wisdom's function in Israel should primarily be read in the context of Wisdom's dwelling in Israel, which has only later been interpreted by a redactional layer in v.23⁵⁵⁵ as her manifestation in, or even identification with, the law.

Discussion: Marböck's study is an important move to interpret Sir 24 on the background of the rich biblical tradition rather than base it on a history of religion connection with the goddess Isis or a speculative gnostic Wisdom-myth. His thesis that Wisdom functions as a new symbol for God's election of Israel seems to be part of what Ben Sira had intended, but begs the question how some other important features of the poem can be included: if Ben Sira resolves the question of lasting election by confirming God's indwelling in Israel in 24:10, the intro-

⁵⁵¹ Ibid., 63-64.

⁵⁵² Ibid., 65.

⁵⁵³ Ibid., 67.

⁵⁵⁴ Ibid., 68, 76.

⁵⁵⁵ Ibid., 64-65, 77.

duction of the *šakhan* tradition with the lexeme כָּשׁ or κατασκηνοῦν/σκήνη in Sir 24:8, 10 may offer a key to the interpretation as significant as the election vocabulary. The lively images of personified Wisdom may indicate that the joy about God's sapiential presence outweighs the focus on Israel's election. It is also debatable whether it is fair to abrogate completely Wisdom's personal nature, which shines through in both the mythical images and in her engaging active presence that is a manifestation of God's presence.

6.2.1.2. Sheppard: Wisdom's Journey Representing the Giving of the Law

Sheppard's study *Wisdom as a Hermeneutical Construct* from 1980 continues to establish how Ben Sira characterises Wisdom by alluding to poetic and narrative traditions of the Hebrew Scriptures and combining various images of God to create an "autobiography" of Wisdom.⁵⁵⁶ He demonstrates how phrases from different OT contexts, previously reserved to describe God's actions or nature are combined to constitute Ben Sira's picture of Wisdom as a divine manifestation. Thus, vv.5-6 blend several images from Job 9:8; 38:16; 22:14, depicting God walking about the circle of heaven, the abyss and the sea, and transfer them to Wisdom.⁵⁵⁷ In his concluding reflections Sheppard acknowledges the extent of Wisdom's identification with God, which is linked to the observation that Wisdom appears as a "quasi-divine figure".⁵⁵⁸ Nevertheless, he takes Wisdom's identification with the law in v.23 as the key to the interpretation of the chapter.

Sheppard challenges the view that Sir 24 designs a new approach to God's dwell-

⁵⁵⁶ Sheppard, *Construct*, 51.

⁵⁵⁷ Ibid., 36-37.

⁵⁵⁸ Ibid., 115.

ing in Israel based on the re-contextualisation of the term κατασκηνοῦν/ σκῆνη, because he says that there is no evidence that the grandson uses κατασκηνοῦν as translation for כֶּנֶךְ – even though the LXX substitutes כֶּנֶךְ with κατασκηνοῦν in 54 out of 60 cases.⁵⁵⁹ Sheppard’s interpretation of the whole chapter is based on relating the key terms καταπαύειν/ἀναπαύειν and κληρονομία, which occur repeatedly in Sir 24, to passages in the OT which use the same cluster of words, especially Deut 12:1-11.⁵⁶⁰ In Deut 12 it is the people of Israel whom God directs towards their inheritance and resting place which God will choose.⁵⁶¹ The link with Wisdom is made in Num 10:33-34 and Deut 1:33 where the pillar of cloud (which had been identified with Wisdom earlier in the poem, Sir 24:4) accompanies the people on their trek after Moses had received the torah on Mount Sinai. Thus, even the poetic images of Wisdom walking over the circle of heaven and other places depicting God’s rule over the cosmos become a part of Wisdom’s quest for a homestead, which begins with her emerging from the mouth of God and pitching her tent in v.3, with ἐξῆλθον (‘she emerged’) appearing as a parallel to Israel’s flight from Egypt.⁵⁶²

As Ben Sira approaches the concretisation of Wisdom in Israel’s life, Sheppard engages more with her relationship with the law than her role in the cult. He relates the passage about Wisdom’s priestly ministry in vv.13-17 to the torah, seeing Wisdom’s function in the cult first and foremost in the teaching of the torah, which had been given into the care of the Levites,⁵⁶³ while Wisdom’s engagement with other parts of the priests’ service such as the offering of sacrifices remain

⁵⁵⁹ Ibid., 27-28.

⁵⁶⁰ Ibid., 39-42.

⁵⁶¹ Ibid., 41-42.

⁵⁶² Ibid., 30.

⁵⁶³ Ibid., 55-56, 59.

unexplained in Sheppard's interpretation.⁵⁶⁴ For Sheppard, the paradisaal imagery of Wisdom's residence in the temple still alludes to the entrance into the land.⁵⁶⁵

V.23 identifies the torah as the key to all that has been said about Wisdom so far: "Now, if not before, the Song is plainly a recital of the history of Wisdom who resides in Israel as the Torah"⁵⁶⁶ and "the giving of the book of the torah is synonymous with the settlement and unique presence of divine Wisdom in Israel."⁵⁶⁷ The identification of law and Wisdom is further justified by the quotation of Deut 33:4 in v.23, which is another indication for Ben Sira's preference of that book and suggests that he has other statements in mind as well, such as Deut. 4:6 which views the wisdom of the law as its distinctive feature that is admired by all nations.⁵⁶⁸ Deut 30 promises Israel prosperity, much in line with Sir 24, if they obey the law which is "very near you".⁵⁶⁹

In the end, Sheppard draws the conclusion that Ben Sira re-contextualises traditions from the torah to present Wisdom as the divine presence in Israel, which consequently furnishes a proof for the legitimacy of sapiential teachings.⁵⁷⁰ The identification of Wisdom with the torah serves Ben Sira to "prove that the Torah traditions reveal the story of Wisdom or teach the benefits of the way of wisdom in the life of ancient Israel." He uses references to the torah to legitimise the relatively new sapiential teaching "interpret[ing] the Torah as a statement about wisdom and as a guide to Israel's practice of it."⁵⁷¹

⁵⁶⁴ Ibid., 60.

⁵⁶⁵ Ibid., 54.

⁵⁶⁶ Ibid., 61.

⁵⁶⁷ Ibid., 68.

⁵⁶⁸ Ibid., 63.

⁵⁶⁹ Ibid., 65-66.

⁵⁷⁰ Ibid., 115-118.

⁵⁷¹ Ibid., 118.

Discussion: While Sheppard demonstrates brilliantly how actions and statements about God are transferred to Wisdom, presenting her as a manifestation of the divine presence, his pervasive identification of Wisdom with the migrating Israel, aimed at identifying Wisdom with the torah travelling *incognito* with the people, is at times not conclusive.

Firstly, Sheppard's argument is built on the fact that we do not have access to the Hebrew text of Sir 24. He reconstructs the Hebrew original of the crucial verb κατασκηνοῦν as having been נטה אהל rather than שכן, claiming that we cannot establish that κατασκηνοῦν was the translation of שכן in Ben Sira following the LXX. This is not really convincing. We cannot establish a "usual" Hebrew original of the grandson's Greek κατασκηνοῦν, because it does not occur more than two times outside of chapter 24, and where it does occur in 4:15 and 28:16, it is used in a different context, namely people living securely rather than God's presence dwelling in a place. Therefore, we have to be content to interpret the Greek version, which is available to us.

Secondly, the allegory of Wisdom's flight from heaven and her search for a homestead carries several problems: if Wisdom escaped from the heavens, from the mouth of God, to commence her journey through the world like the Israelites escaped from Egypt, she would have been oppressed and held captive by God, which is a very negative image of God that is not suggested by Ben Sira at all. On the contrary, Wisdom never detaches herself completely from God, but allusions to her glorious identification with the Lord abound. Sheppard's interpretation of

vv.5-6 presuppose a similarly awkward metaphoric comparison: if the verses where Wisdom walks about the vault of heaven like God in Job 22:14 referred to her restless search of a homestead, then the image would suggest that God was similarly without a place to rest in heaven and without orientation. Therefore, it is better to distinguish between the two stanzas, with the first elaborating on Wisdom's heavenly dwelling in reference to Prov. 8, which suggests with many images her divine identity and near-identification with God. The second stanza then turns to Wisdom's appearance in the historical world, where she is established in a particular place, Israel, with her primary *locus* in the temple.

Thirdly, the evidence for the torah coming from heaven and being near Israel as a parallel for Wisdom is not very strong: of the two places quoted, Deut 4:6 does not actually say that God is near to Israel in the torah, but he is near in prayer, which leaves only Deut 30:12-14, and this passage does not commend itself as a *Vorlage*, because there are no lexical agreements with Sir 24. Thus, the whole argument of interpreting chapter 24 on the background of Deuteronomy is not entirely convincing. The statement in v.23 remains isolated; it is not organically integrated in the poem and is not the climax of the movement to which the most obvious allusions contribute. If the manifestation of Wisdom in the book of the torah had been Ben Sira's intended statement, he could have been expected to include an allusion to the Sinai event. By relating the metaphor of the pillar of cloud exclusively to the wilderness traditions, Sheppard reduces the cloud to a symbol of the search for a homestead.⁵⁷² We have to ask whether he doesn't neglect the significance of the pillar of cloud as a manifestation of the presence of the Lord, which comes to settle on the tabernacle in Exod 40:34-38, and similarly in

⁵⁷² Ibid., 101.

Sir 24:10.

Fourthly, Sheppard reduces the complex allusions to Wisdom's function in the cult in the third stanza (vv.13-17) to the priests' responsibility to teach the torah, or Wisdom's special domain of explaining God's law. We will have to explore how Wisdom's function in the cult is elaborated as her symbols from vv.13-17 are transferred to the priesthood in chapter 50, and see how her mediation between heaven and earth is concretised by the officiating high priest, raising the question whether this part of her ministry isn't as important as her concrete manifestation in the book of the torah. If so, then Ben Sira may propose that God's presence in his Wisdom reaches its goal in both the cult and in the torah, instead of aiming unilaterally at an identification with the law.

We will also have to reconsider whether v.23 really functions as the climax of the poem, or whether it merely serves to legitimise Ben Sira's sapiential concept as being rooted in the torah and as legitimate interpretation of the torah.

6.2.1.3. Skehan/ Di Lella: Focus on Prov 8 and Rogers: Wisdom as a Spirit or Angelic Being

The commentary of Skehan and Di Lella from 1987 interprets Sir 24 as primarily based on Prov 8. Parallels include the structure of 5 or 6 bicola per stanza, the emphatic "I" introducing Wisdom as speaker, her personification albeit she remains a creature, her being "poured out" on all of creation, the reference to the abyss and the vault of heaven and her dominion over all the world. Wisdom, in analogy to her being "poured forth" in Prov 8:23a, is presented as a "spirit", com-

ing forth from God's mouth and covering the earth like a mist.⁵⁷³ In the cult she serves as an intermediary,⁵⁷⁴ and she can be identified with the law, which likewise appears as a spirit flowing out like a river. She also represents the law in her main function to teach the fear of the Lord; thus, Ben Sira teaches the torah in his school in v.32a,⁵⁷⁵ and in "stipulating the religious and liturgical rules" of the cult (p.333).⁵⁷⁶

Rogers likewise emphasises the influence of Proverbs and Job on Sir 24, contributing to an understanding of Wisdom's nature as "closely identifying her with her source, the almighty God of Israel" as God exercises his rule over the cosmos through Wisdom.⁵⁷⁷

She introduces a new facet into the discussion of Wisdom's nature in her study "Wisdom – Woman or Angel in Sir 24?", claiming that she is described by the metaphor of an angel in this chapter. Rogers observes firstly that in Sir 24, Wisdom is characterised ontologically in her relationship to God rather than presented her in her function to attract the attention of young men whom Ben Sira teaches to pursue wisdom as part of their education and lifestyle, because Wisdom does not appear in the "metaphor" of a woman in chapter 24.⁵⁷⁸

Secondly, she establishes that Ben Sira is familiar with the Jewish views about angels in the Second-Temple period, which can at times introduce angelic beings as agents into biblical stories.⁵⁷⁹ In Sir 24, she discovers several references to Wisdom's place among the angels: she speaks among the heavenly host. She is

⁵⁷³ Skehan and DiLella, *Ben Sira*, 332.

⁵⁷⁴ Ibid., 335.

⁵⁷⁵ Ibid., 336-337.

⁵⁷⁶ Ibid., 333.

⁵⁷⁷ Rogers, "Creation," 153.

⁵⁷⁸ Jessie Rogers, "Wisdom – Woman or Angel in Sirach 24?," *JNSL* 27, no.1 (2201): 71-80, here p. 71.

⁵⁷⁹ Ibid., 72-74.

presented as a spirit (proceeding from the mouth of God), which is a term used for angels in Second-Temple Judaism.⁵⁸⁰ And the images which describe Wisdom are recontextualised from biblical images of both God and Israel;⁵⁸¹ this ambiguity can be explained if the “metaphor here is seen to be the angel of the Lord,”⁵⁸² who accompanied Israel on the exodus journey in the pillar of cloud, and is associated with the tabernacle. This metaphor is also associated with the כבוד by Ben Sira as well as the reports of Exodus and Numeri.⁵⁸³

Thus, “Wisdom is personified not as a woman but as an angelic being” in Sir 24.⁵⁸⁴

Discussion: The emphasis on Proverbs and Job ensures that the perspective on Wisdom’s nature, which dominates the first section of the hymn, is not lost in allusions to her appearance in history. It is the combination of both, the divine origin and the manifestation in history which gives Wisdom her character as mediator between God and man. Rogers explained this duality brilliantly as a metaphorical equivalent of the Angel of the Lord.

6.2.1.4. Janowski: Wisdom as *inhabitatio dei*

Janowski pursues an alternative approach to interpreting Sir 24. Instead of basing the interpretation on the deuteronomical concept of the inheritance and rest, he views Sir 24:8 with the central verb κατασκηνοῦν as the climax of the poem and interprets the wisdom hymn as a new presentation of the *inhabitatio dei*

⁵⁸⁰ Ibid., 75-76.

⁵⁸¹ Ibid., 76.

⁵⁸² Ibid., 77.

⁵⁸³ Ibid., 77-78.

⁵⁸⁴ Ibid., 79.

concept⁵⁸⁵ of the pre-exilic Zion theology⁵⁸⁶ and the priestly *shekinah* tradition. This theme is particularly applicable to Ben Sira's hymn for three reasons: firstly, the verb κατασκηνοῦν used in 24:8 is the key term to denote God's presence in Israel. Secondly, the rich tradition of the *inhabitatio* with the dual concept of God dwelling in the temple and being present among his people is reflected by Wisdom's movement down from heaven to earth and then out from the temple to the people. Thirdly, the *Priesterschrift* (P) views God's presence in the temple as fulfilment of the divine presence in the sabbath rest, linking the temple with the theme of creation.

Regarding the first point, the tradition history of the *Shekinah* theology, he summarises in "Gottes Weisheit in Jerusalem", pp.5-9,⁵⁸⁷ that the pre-exilic Zion theology had defined the location of God's dwelling as the temple, the place where the heavenly and earthly world meet, including the complex symbolism of the cult relating to the whole cosmos. This concept involves the idea of the cosmic mountain Zion as the residence of God, who is king of the world. In Isa 6:1-5; 8:16-18, the vertical dimension betrays the concept of God descending into the temple and is linked to the verb שָׁכַן in Isa 8:18.

Regarding the second point, after the confidence in God's powerful protection of his city had been lost after the destruction of the temple, the concept of God's presence was restored by the prophet Ezekiel's affirmation that God dwelled

585 Janowski, "Weisheit,, 10,13, 18.

586 See Gese, "Gestaltwerdung", 6-8 for the term "Zionstheologie" referring to the pre-exilic temple theology including the *inhabitatio dei* concept developed in Jerusalem. It combines the Canaanite tradition of the cosmic mountain with the Israelite tradition of the ark that arrived in Jerusalem as the goal of Israel's search for inheritance and rest and combines the exodus tradition with the fulfillment of God's rule in Jerusalem.

587 For a more detailed analysis of the tradition history see also Janowski, "Mitte".

among his people by establishing a relationship with Israel as their God (Ezek 43:7-9). This view is reinforced by P (“priesterliche Grundschrift”) in the central text Exod 29:45-49.⁵⁸⁸ However, God was no longer perceived as resident in the temple. He dwelt in heaven according to the deuteronomistic account of the dedication of the temple in 1Kgs 8:14-66, with his name taking his place in the temple, and God being near his people wherever they turn towards him in prayer.⁵⁸⁹ Thus, the significance of the exilic *Shekinah* theology is that the presence of God was no longer exclusively tied to the temple during the exile, but was extended to his presence among his people.⁵⁹⁰ In the Persian time after the construction of the Second Temple, the old theology of God dwelling in (returning to) the temple was revived, but at the same time the exilic concept of God dwelling among his people remained valid (see Zech 2:14f.; 8:3). The perception of God’s presence is again transformed in Hellenistic times when wisdom theology began to play a role in mediating God’s presence: according to Sir 24, it is Wisdom who resides in Israel as divine *Shekinah*.

Regarding the third point, the priestly tradition is not only linked to Sir 24 by the *šakhan* statement in Exod 29:45-46 but also by the connection which the *Priesterschrift* establishes between God’s presence in the temple and the creation.⁵⁹¹ This correlation between creation and tabernacle is achieved by copying words, terms and the pattern of the seven days in the central passage of the Sinai-narrative of Exod 19:1-40:35 from Gen 1:1-2:4.⁵⁹²

588 See Janowski, “Mitte”, 125-127, 138-140.

589 So for example the late deuteronomistic redactor in 1 Kgs 8: 52-53, 59-60 who refers to the praying people. The view of God being near the people in their prayer is reaffirmed by Deut 4:7 (Janowski, “Mitte”, 131-134).

590 Janowski, “Mitte”, 127, 142.

591 Janowski, “Weisheit”, 20.

592 Bernd Janowski, “Tempel und Schöpfung: Schöpfungstheologische Aspekte der priesterschriftlichen Heiligtumskonzeption” in *Gottes Gegenwart in Israel* (Neukirchen-

The Sinai narrative develops in three parts the origin and goal of God's presence in the temple: at the beginning of the narrative (Exod 24:15-18), God meets Moses on top of the mountain where he dwells in the cloud and then passes his plans of the tabernacle to Moses on the seventh day. The place of the encounter is moved to the completed tabernacle at the end of the narrative in Exod 40:34-35, where the glory of God is again hidden by the cloud. The central part of the narrative, Exod 29:43-46, explains that the function of the holy place is not only to provide a dwelling place for God, but to enable Israel to encounter God and celebrate their relationship with their saviour. An additional link to the cosmological significance of the tabernacle is made through the time of completion, which is exactly one year after the Exodus (Exod 40:17), just as the flood (the waters of chaos) had dried up on the first day of the year following the beginning of the flood (Gen 8:13 and 7:6).⁵⁹³ **Peter Weimar** adds further links between the *Urgeschichte* and the establishment of the tabernacle in the *Priesterschrift*: Moses acknowledging that the tabernacle is well made and blessing it (Exod 39:43a, 42b) reminds of Gen 1:31a and 2:3, and the completion of the tabernacle on the New Year's date, recalling the end of Noah's journey in the ark and the recreation of the world after the flood, is reinforced by the cubical shape of the tabernacle, which reminds of the shape of the ark.⁵⁹⁴

The *Priesterschrift's* creation narrative ends with God resting from his work on the seventh day, which is sanctified and blessed as the Sabbath, creating the space

Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1990), 214-246, here p.223-224.

⁵⁹³ Ibid., 228-232.

⁵⁹⁴ Peter Weimar, "Sinai und Schöpfung: Komposition und Theologie der priesterschriftlichen Sinaigeschichte", RB 85 (1988), 337-385, here p. 352-353, 365-367, 369-371.

for God to engage with his people in the historical world. The structural correlation between the creation and Sinai narratives indicates that the rest on the seventh day only reaches its goal when its mystery is disclosed on the seventh day Moses spends on Mount Sinai, in his vision of the tabernacle. Israel can now experience the fellowship with God which he had intended for his creation.⁵⁹⁵

Discussion: Janowski's approach appeals because of the multiple connection points between Sir 24 and the priestly concept of God's dwelling place. It explains the descent of Wisdom – as a divine manifestation – from heaven to earth in the first part of the hymn. It provides a background for the dual location of Wisdom in the temple and all over the country of Israel in the last part of the hymn. And finally, it may provide a framework for the mysterious priestly function of Wisdom in the central section of the hymn by opening a perspective on the integration of the cosmic order in the temple cult, which is continuously re-established in the worship. If the link between creation and temple was a pervasive element of the temple theology, which was rooted in the Zion theology and the Priesterschrift, then Wisdom, who was traditionally conceived as the cosmic order, was particularly suited to be perceived as the manifestation of the divine presence in the temple. A closer inspection of Wisdom's relevance to the cult, which is described in Sir 24:13-17 using the symbolism which is linked to the office of the high priest in ch.50, may give insights into how Ben Sira employs temple theology to elaborate Wisdom's function as manifestation of the divine presence.

595 Janowski, "Tempel", 236-239. See also Leo L. Perdue, *Wisdom and Creation: The Theology of Wisdom Literature* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994), 270. He relates the invigorating, renewing power of the Sabbath received by the priestly theology to the practice of sapiential discipline in Ben Sira's time. "Wisdom's 'resting' among the Israelites suggests ... the creation and renewal of the earth through Sabbath rest and worship, and the invigorating renewal of life that comes through sapiential discipline (piety and study: *mûsār*)."

6.2.2. Exegesis of Sir 24:1-12

Our reading of Sir 24 is primarily interested in establishing Wisdom's function in the temple, as a reference to Jesus' remark that when the people of Jerusalem reject him, their "house will be left empty", connecting Jesus' death with the removal of God's presence from the temple. If he, or the composer of the logion, does not want to identify himself outright with God, he may well be using the figure of Wisdom as an identification point. The question we need to answer then is: can Wisdom be a substitute for God's presence in the temple in the Jewish context of the gospel tradition and specifically here in Ben Sira? And further: are there any specific details of Wisdom's role in the temple that make her particularly suited as a template for Jesus' ministry?

The first part of Sir 24, which deals with the heavenly Wisdom identified to a high degree with God and sent to settle in the temple as God's presence, deals with the first question. The second and third part of the poem give more information about Wisdom's function in the temple cult as well as the educational system throughout the country.

6.2.2.1. *Sir 24:1-2*

The Greek version is the basis for my translation of Sir 24, which is extant only in the grandson's translation.

- 1 Wisdom praises herself
 and boasts among her people:
- 2 She opens her mouth in the assembly of the Highest
 and boasts before his forces.

The **introductory remark** in vv.1-2 identifies personified Wisdom, who praises herself, as the speaker of the hymn. The speech is given before the heavenly assembly.⁵⁹⁶ However, Ben Sira may have a double audience in mind, because the location of the speech in v.1b and 2a, ἐν μέσῳ λαοῦ αὐτῆς and ἐν ἐκκλησίᾳ ὑψίστου, could also refer to the people of Israel.⁵⁹⁷ After all, Ben Sira as a member of the people of Israel is obviously informed about Wisdom's introduction of herself.

The fact that she reveals herself to the community of Israel as well as speaking to the heavenly assembly reflects the traditional two perspectives on Wisdom, namely the heavenly Wisdom who is known only to God and the gift of wisdom to human beings which teaches them about the divine order of the world.

These verses make a first ontological statement about Wisdom's nature: she is a heavenly being who belongs to the members of the heavenly host.⁵⁹⁸ This impression is supported throughout the poem by the style which borrows elements from Prov 8 like the personification of Wisdom, beginning paragraphs with the emphatic pronoun "I", locating her activity in places mentioned in Prov 8, moving from her residence in heaven on to her function to teach mankind, and her inviting approach to humans. Skehan/Di Lella emphasise the effect of the personification by conceiving Wisdom as a spirit,⁵⁹⁹ and as such she could be conceived as an angelic member of the heavenly assembly, just as the spirit in 1 Kgs 22:21.

596 ἔναντι δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ in v.2b clearly refers to the heavenly host as in Pss LXX 23:10; 32:6; 45:8; 47:9; 148:2. See also Perdue, "Wisdom," 267.

597 So Marböck, *Weisheit*, 58; Skehan and Di Lella, *Ben Sira*, 331-332; Collins, *Jewish Wisdom*, 50; Jeremy Corley, *Sirach*, New Collegeville Bible Commentary: Old Testament 21 (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2013), 68.

598 Rogers, "Angel", 75; Collins, *Jewish Wisdom*, 50.

599 Skehan and DiLella, *Ben Sira*, 332-333, 335.

6.2.2.2. Sir 24:3-7

- 3 I went out from the mouth of the Highest
and covered the earth like a mist:
4 I dwelt in the heights,
and my throne is in a pillar of cloud:
5 I went around the circle of heaven alone
and walked about in the depth of the abyss:
6 in the waves of the sea and in all the earth
and in every people and nation I gained possessions.
7 With all of these I sought rest
and in whose inheritance will I be lodging?

The **first stanza** elaborates further on the nature of the heavenly Wisdom construing her as a very genuine expression of God himself. She praises herself as the member of the heavenly council who is the most intimately connected with God, reasoning from two different perspectives. Firstly, the allusion to Gen 1:2 in v.3 “I came out of the mouth of the Highest and covered the earth like a mist”, which identifies her both with the word of creation coming from God’s mouth and with his breath or spirit which hovered over the waters like a mist, presents her as the one who assisted or accompanied God when he created the world.⁶⁰⁰ Secondly, verses 4-6 transfer four different images to Wisdom, which the Hebrew Scriptures had used to describe God’s power and presence: (1) According to v.4 “I dwelt in the heights and my throne was in a pillar of cloud”, she occupies a throne in the high heavens. This location not only confirms her transcendent nature but also claims a place as her seat which was traditionally reserved for God. The heavenly throne is reminiscent of the image of the Wisdom-child seated

⁶⁰⁰ Marböck, *Weisheit*, 59, sees a link to God’s creative word, while Snaith, *Ecclesiasticus*, 121, and Sheppard, *Construct*, 22-26, also include Gen 2:6 as a reference to Wisdom’s role in creation linked to her description as ὁμίχλη (a dark, gloomy cloud) in 24:3. W.O.E. Oesterley, *The Wisdom of Jesus the Son of Sirach, Or Ecclesiasticus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1912), 157 sees a reference to the role of God’s Spirit in Gen 1:2. Skehan and Di Lella, *Ben Sira*, 332, ascribe Wisdom’s role in the creation to her being poured out over creation (Prov. 8:23a) like a spirit.

on God's lap in Prov 8:30.⁶⁰¹ Sap 9:4 confirms later that the image of the consort on God's throne can be readily applied to Wisdom.

(2) This seat of power is precisely located ἐν στύλῳ νεφέλης; as the preposition “in” is awkwardly chosen for the placement of the throne which should more appropriately sit “on top of” the cloud, it must be understood as a reference to the pillar of cloud in Exod 14:24, where the same awkward phrase (“the Lord looked down from in the pillar of cloud” ἐπέβλεψεν κύριος ἐπὶ τὴν παρεμβολὴν τῶν Αἰγυπτίων ἐν στύλῳ πυρὸς καὶ νεφέλης) spells out that God is acting but his presence is veiled by the cloud. Long before Ben Sira wrote, Exod 14:19 and Exod 23:20 had explained the manifestation of God in the cloud as the visible appearance of a mediator, the Angel of the Lord, and thus facilitate the transfer of the perception of God's presence in the cloud to another mediator, Wisdom. Again, the Wisdom of Solomon confirms the role of Wisdom which is only suggested by Ben Sira, when Sap 10:17 explicitly identifies Wisdom with the sheltering cloud of the exodus. It has also been recognised that the protecting pillar of cloud becomes a symbol for Wisdom in Philo *Her.* 204.⁶⁰² The pillar of cloud will later become the visible sign of God's presence in the tabernacle, just as Wisdom comes to dwell in the Holy Tent in Sir 24:10.⁶⁰³

(3) Wisdom leaves her heavenly seat in v.5 to perambulate the whole cosmos

601 This is if *'mn* is translated as pass. participle “being held on the lap”, following Hartmut Gese, “Der Johannesprolog” in *Zur biblischen Theologie* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1989), 152-201, here p.177. See also Martin, *Proverbs*, 86, “confidant”.

602 See Sheppard, *Construct*, 32; Skehan/DiLella, *Ben Sira*, 332; N.T. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*. Vol. 1. (London: SPCK, 2013), 1:106.

603 Exod 33:7–11; Num 11:24–31; Deut 31:14–15 are given as reference to explain Wisdom's ministry in the tabernacle in Sir 24:10 by Georg Sauer, *Unterweisung in lehrhafter Form: Jesus Sirach (Ben Sira)*, ed. Werner Georg Kümmel, Vol. 3, Lieferung 5, JSRZ (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1981), 564 n.10 a. We might add Exod 40:34–35 as further evidence for the cloud which settles on the tabernacle signifying God's presence.

including heaven and the abyss “I went around (or: encompassed) the circle of heaven (γῦρον οὐρανοῦ) alone (μόνη) and walked around in the depth of the abyss (ἐν βάθει ἀβύσσων περιπάτησα)”. There are three expressions referring to Wisdom in this short verse that remind of descriptions of God as ruler of the universe taking possession of the world in the book of Job: μόνη (nearly the same expression in Job 9:8) must identify Wisdom with God, because, while it is conceivable that a heavenly being joins God on his journey, the only one who can be praised as the sole master of the universe is God himself. Γῦρον οὐρανοῦ is a rare expression used in Job 22:14 to describe God’s dominion, and ἐν βάθει ἀβύσσων περιπάτησα combined with ἐν κύμασιν θαλάσσης (in the following verse) is likewise very close to Job 38:16b as Sheppard has shown.⁶⁰⁴

(4) According to v.6 (“In the waves of the sea and in all of the earth and in every people and nation I gained possessions (ἐκτησάμην)”) Wisdom acquires possessions in two crucial domains of the Lord, in the waves of the sea reminding of the forces of chaos (cf. Pss 33:7; 65:7; 74:13; 89:9; 93:4; 135:6) which had been subdued by God, and in all nations, reminding of God’s dominion over all the nations (Pss 22:28; 47:8; 72:11). κτάομαι means “to gain possession, to obtain” and in this sense goes beyond Wisdom’s function in Sir 1:9 “he poured her out over all of his works” which means that Wisdom permeates the cosmos as God’s wise order. In 24:6, in contrast, she gains active control over the cosmic order (sea and land) as well as over events in history (every people and nation).⁶⁰⁵

604 Sheppard, *Construct*, 35-37. See also Reiterer, “Verhältnis,” 114, for other references to God’s sphere of influence including the underworld (Deut 33:22, 1Sam 2:6, Ps 139:8ff.), which is here transferred to Wisdom.

605 Skehan and Di Lella, *Ben Sira*, 332, and Corley, *Sirach*, 69, translate that Wisdom “held sway” over the sea. Sauer, *Sirach*, 564, translates “herrschte”. Janowski, “Weisheit”, 16 translates “herrschte”. Marböck, *Weisheit*, 61-62, ascribes to her an almost divine government in the creation “gottähnliche Herrschaft” and says, p.68, that while Wisdom is manifest in the cosmic order according to 15:26-28; 39:16-33; 42:18-25, she works in all of the creation “in

Thus, divine Wisdom has been identified with God as divine attribute (as his word and, more independently, his spirit). But Wisdom's traditional role in the creation and supervision of the cosmic order is also affirmed, and as mystical metaphors for God's dominion over the world are transferred to her, the personification of Wisdom is strengthened as she takes on personal features of God. At the same time, Ben Sira begins to indicate Wisdom's role in history by appropriating a narrative metaphor for God's presence – the pillar of cloud – as Wisdom's heavenly throne.

The first stanza concludes in v.7 by raising the question of Wisdom's place in space and time, which will be the theme of the next stanza.

6.2.2.3. Sir 24:8-12

The second stanza turns to Wisdom's appearance in the historical world, and specifically Israel's salvation history. Even if Wisdom had always been conceived as a mediator, who reached out to teach human beings the fear of the Lord,⁶⁰⁶ Ben Sira's new contribution is to recognise her specific relationship with Israel in the historical world.⁶⁰⁷ As in the first stanza, Ben Sira again employs well known biblical *theologoumena*, this time regarding God's relationship to Israel, and recontextualises the key terms to continue Wisdom's "autobiography".⁶⁰⁸ As a result, Wisdom is characterised as a manifestation of God's presence in Israel's historical space.

der ganzen Schöpfung waltet" according to 24:6. Sheppard, *Construct*, 33, translates slightly differently "I took possession".

606 This can be observed as early as Prov 8:30–31 and Job 28:28.

607 See Marböck, *Weisheit*, 56, 63.

608 Sheppard, *Construct*, 51, see above ch. 6.2.1.2. p.212.

- 8 Then the creator of everything commanded me
 and the one who made me put my tent to rest
 and said ‘dwell in Jacob
 and receive an inheritance in Israel.’
 9 He created me in the beginning before the age
 and I will not fail in eternity.
 10 I ministered before him in the holy tent
 and was thus established in Zion.
 11 Likewise he gave me rest in a beloved city,
 and my authority is in Jerusalem:
 12 and I took root in a glorified people,
 in the portion of the Lord, his inheritance.

As the divine Wisdom is about to enter into a very concrete relationship with Israel, where she will be the focus of their cultic practices and devotion in many ways, Ben Sira is careful to spell out once more in v.8ab that she was installed in this position by God (ἐνετείλατο: God commanded her) and, having been created by God, she is clearly subordinated to him (ὁ κτίσας με: God created her).

In three solemn steps, which give proper weight to the pivotal point of the poem, she is ordered to rest in, to dwell in and to receive her inheritance in Israel. After a short flashback to her transcendent nature in v.9, Ben Sira elaborates on the key concepts of dwelling, rest and inheritance in vv.10-12.

He first turns towards Wisdom’s indwelling in the temple as the divine *Shekinah*, which is the goal of her journey from heaven, the centre of her activity, and the base from where she takes influence in all of Israel in vv.10b-12 and 13-17, 18-21, 23-34.

6.2.2.3.1. Wisdom’s dwelling in the temple

The accomplishment of Wisdom’s movement from heaven to earth is denoted by the term κατασκηνοῦν (v.8) and the corresponding noun σκηνή (vv.8 and 10), which is the regular translation of the Hebrew root שכן and its derivatives in the

LXX. It is a technical term for God's dwelling in the tabernacle, or amidst his people, and thus characterises Wisdom's presence in the temple as a form of God's indwelling, as *inhabitatio dei*. The related noun *Shekinah* was subsequently used by the rabbinic literature to denote the visible appearance or palpable divine presence in the immanent cosmos. As in Ben Sira's hymn, the *Shekinah* was primarily located in the sanctuary, but was then also experienced as God's engaging presence with the praying congregation and with the individuals studying the scriptures,⁶⁰⁹ or God's being and activity.⁶¹⁰ We have seen above (ch. 6.2.1.4.) that the verb שָׁכַן can denote God's dwelling in the temple and from the exile onwards his dwelling in the heavens and among his people. One particularly influential text which presents God's dwelling amongst the Israelites as climax of God's history with Israel within a complex system of allusions, is the priestly Sinai narrative with Exod 29:43-46 at its centre.⁶¹¹ All of these concepts of God's dwelling place are recontextualised in amazing detail by Ben Sira's determination of Wisdom's dwelling place:

The term κατασκηνοῦν / σκηνή marks the *loci* of Wisdom, which reflect the places of God's dwelling: Wisdom is resident in the heavens (v.4), among the people of Israel (v.8) and in the tabernacle (v.10a), where Wisdom's migrating tent (σκηνή) from v.8 is absorbed by God's holy tent (σκηνή). In v.10a: "I ministered before him in the holy tent", Wisdom reaches her destination. We will have to come back to her function in the cult to which Ben Sira alludes repeatedly. The brief notice here has prompted many explanations of the nature of

609 Arnold M. Goldberg, *Untersuchungen über die Vorstellung von der Schekhinah in der frühen rabbinischen Literatur: Talmud und Midrasch*, SJ 5 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1969), 533-538.

610 Clemens Thoma, "Gott III: Judentum" TRE 13: 626-645, here p.637.

611 Janowski, "Weisheit," 5-9, 18-19. See also E. Otto, "שִׁינָה Sîyôn," TDOT 12:333-365, here pp. 340-362.

Wisdom's service. They either identify her service in a general manner as a priestly or mediatory function,⁶¹² or they explain specifically two further references to Wisdom's role in the cult in Sir 24:15 and 24:13-17 together with the related chapter 50. At this point in the poem however (24:10), she will be associated with the cloud which signified – and veiled – God's presence in the tabernacle (see Exod 40:34-35), because Ben Sira has already established Wisdom's association with the pillar of cloud in v.4. As the cloud which indicates God's presence in the tabernacle in a mysterious way, she would have been transferred to Zion when David brought the ark to Jerusalem, and then to the temple where the thick cloud again signified God's presence at the opening ceremony according to 1 Kgs 8:10-11. Accordingly, v.10b records as the next step "and was thus established in Zion." Just as the perception of God's presence had been moved from his dwelling in the temple to his dwelling among the people during the exile, and the prophet Zechariah had combined both by locating God's presence in Jerusalem,⁶¹³ Sir 24:11-12 includes the city and the people of God in Wisdom's sphere of influence.

Sheppard had claimed that the three verbs κατασκηνοῦν, ἀναπαύεσθαι and κληρονομεῖν taken from Deut 12 identify Wisdom from this point onwards with Israel rather than with God, and he subsequently concludes that as Wisdom's history reflects that of the wandering Israel she "becomes the Torah in the possession of Israel."⁶¹⁴ The accumulation of the three terms is certainly striking

612 See Marböck, *Weisheit*, 65, 74; Helge Stadelmann, *Ben Sira als Schriftgelehrter: Eine Untersuchung zum Berufsbild des Vor-Makkabäischen Söfēr unter Berücksichtigung seines Verhältnisses zu Priester-, Propheten- und Weisheitslehrertum*, WUNT 2/6 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1980), 52; Skehan and Di Lella, *Ben Sira*, 335; József Zsengellér, "Does Wisdom Come from the Temple? Ben Sira's Attitude to the Temple of Jerusalem." in Zeravits and Zsengellér, *Studies in the Book of Ben Sira*, 135-150, here p.139.

613 See Zech 2:8-9, 14-15; 8:3, as quoted by Janowski, "Weisheit", 9.

614 Sheppard, *Construct*, 61.

and an allusion to Israel's wilderness wanderings possibly forms part of Ben Sira's multi-faceted picture. After all, the pillar of cloud accompanied the people on their way to the promised land. However, the notion of God's presence denoted by the term κατασκηνοῦν/ σκηνή is equally prominent, and the deuteronomic metaphors, which were at first directed towards Israel, contribute in later tradition to the notion of God's presence in the temple: the term κληρονομία refers to God's inheritance rather than Israel's inheritance in Deut 32:9 as well as in Sir 24:12, and the term κατάπαυσις also refers to God's resting place in Ps LXX 131:13-15, where he blesses the country from Zion. Therefore, Ben Sira still uses these key words to identify Wisdom with God's presence.

The theme of Wisdom's near identification with God seems to be of special importance to Ben Sira as it recurs throughout the book. References in other Wisdom poems also employ phrases which had traditionally referred to God for a characterisation of Wisdom. Thus, Sir 6:26 imitates the *shema* from Deut. 6:5, when it exhorts the student to be committed to Wisdom with πάσα ψυχῇ σου and ὅλη δυνάμει σου.

Later in that poem, in Sir 6:28-29, the term σκέπη is included in a list of several benefits which a student will get from Wisdom that had formerly been gifts of God: ἀνάπαυσις, σκέπη and δόξα. A secure place to lodge (σκέπη) is also offered by God in Ps LXX 90:1 and again by Wisdom in Sir 14:26.

Strikingly, the term σκέπη can also be an attribute of the pillar of cloud (see Sap 10:17; Ps LXX 104:39 διεπέτασεν νεφέλην εἰς σκέπην), which Ben Sira had claimed as Wisdom's dwelling place. This shifts the perception of Wisdom

assuming God's role to her taking the role of the mediator, the Angel of the Lord. In the psalms the term σκέπη is transferred to more situations where God provides protection "under his wings" (ἐν σκέπῃ τῶν πτερύγων σου, see Pss LXX 35:8; 60:5; 62:8), reminding of the wings of the eagle which had carried, or supported, Israel on their wilderness wanderings according to Deut 32:11. Apparently, there was a cluster of terms including the cloud, the shelter and the wings, which all referred to God's tangible protective presence which could be mediated through both the Angel of the Lord or the divine Wisdom. Matt 23:37 par. may have taken up this terminology by referring to the protection offered by the hen collecting her chicks under her wings. If so, Jesus would be aligned with the previous mediators, God's Angel and his Wisdom.

6.2.2.3.2. Wisdom coming to rest in Jerusalem

The second term to define Wisdom's place on earth is "rest": she sought a resting place (ἀνάπαυσις) in v.7, and was given it (κατέπαυσεν) in Jerusalem in vv. 8, 11. Again, it is not necessary to view Wisdom as participating in Israel's rest, which was promised and provided by God. Rather she participates in God's rest, as God himself rests in Zion according to Ps 132:14.⁶¹⁵ As Janowski has shown, the term 'rest' has its origin and goal in God's sabbath rest according to the *Priesterschrift* (Gen 2:2, 3), which correlates the Sinai-narrative with that of creation. The sabbath rest is the first movement of God who comes into his world on the sanctified seventh day, which is blessed for all future seventh days. This movement is complemented and fulfilled by the construction of the tabernacle as God's dwelling place, where Israel can meet God in a special way.⁶¹⁶ Therefore, God is at the

⁶¹⁵ See Perdue, "Wisdom", 269.

⁶¹⁶ Janowski, "Tempel," 235-239. See also Weimar, Peter, "Sinai und Schöpfung," 365-368 for the relationship between temple and creation in P.

centre of the creation's rest, and Israel participates in it through their worship, as God's presence is established in the tabernacle.

A further element of the creation story which is taken up by the Sinai narrative is that of the blessing: the blessing given in Exod 39:32b, 43 to the finished work of the tabernacle echoes the blessing of the Sabbath in Gen 2:3a;⁶¹⁷ Correspondingly, the effect of God resting in Zion in Ps 132:13-15 is his blessing of the country,⁶¹⁸ and accordingly Wisdom's residence in the temple results in blessing according to Sir 24:13-17.⁶¹⁹ This passage does not repeat the term εὐλογέω/בָּרַךְ, but paints a vivid picture of the strong trees which symbolise Wisdom's presence throughout the country, representing plant growth as well as the glory, fame and wealth she produces.

The link between temple and cosmic order is much older than P, as the symbolism of ancient oriental temples (architecture, imagery, and also written explanations/hymns) visualises the union of the heavenly world with the cosmos as we know from Mesopotamian and Egyptian examples. Israel's Zion-tradition takes up this conception from its environment and celebrates Mount Zion as the mountain of creation where the temple symbolises the presence of God, which keeps up the cosmic order.⁶²⁰

The cosmological, life-giving significance of the tabernacle opens an intriguing view on Wisdom's function in the temple, where she not only enables an

617 See Weimar, "Sinai und Schöpfung," 364–368; Janowski, "Tempel," 235–238.

618 See also Pss 128:5; 134:3.

619 A further aspect of the complex of ideas in the psalm, which feeds into the NT reception, is the concept of God being enthroned on Mount Zion like the ruling descendant of David, see Frank-Lothar Hossfeld and Erich Zenger, *Psalms 3: A Commentary on Psalms 101–150*, trans. Linda M. Maloney, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), pp. 465–466.

620 "welterhaltende(n) Präsenz," Janowski, "Tempel," 221, see also pp. 217–220.

encounter with the divine, but also dispenses blessings and re-creation. If the *Priesterschrift* with its focus on God's indwelling in Israel is taken as the primary reference of Ben Sira's poem, it provides the background for the temple cult being established as the most important centre of Wisdom's activity in v.10a, but also for the link between temple and creation, which reflects one important way in which Wisdom serves in the temple. In her original role as the order of creation she is particularly well suited as a representative of the vital divine energy in the temple, from where the luscious plant growth, symbolising prosperity and spiritual blessings, emerges. This topic is the theme of the following stanza and will be investigated in more detail in the next section about Wisdom's function in the temple cult.

6.2.2.3.3. Wisdom taking up her inheritance

The third term which elaborates Wisdom's dwelling in Israel is κληρονομία. The promise that she would receive Israel as an inheritance in v.8 is fulfilled when she takes root in God's "inheritance" (v.12). She not only resides in the temple but exercises power over Jerusalem and radiates into the whole country. If the land as the inheritance of Israel was their possession in Deut 12:1-11, it becomes the inheritance of God in Deut 32:9 and is referred to as that way in Sir 24:12, as the resemblance between Deut 32:9 and Sir 24:12 is very striking:

Deut 32:9

καὶ ἐγενήθη
μερὶς κυρίου
λαὸς αὐτοῦ Ἰακωβ,
σχοίνισμα κληρονομίας αὐτοῦ
Ἰσραηλ.

Sir 24:12

καὶ ἐρρίζωσα
ἐν λαῷ δεδοξασμένῳ,
ἐν μερίδι κυρίου,
κληρονομίας αὐτοῦ

Ben Sira imitates the synthetic parallelism of Deuteronomy by doubling the similar terms μέρις and κληρονομία, and employs the identical attributes for both nouns, κυρίου and αὐτοῦ. Another link between the two verses is the resemblance between λαὸς αὐτοῦ Ιακωβ and λαῶν δεδοξασμένων, because the people is clearly “glorified” because they belong to the Lord, who is frequently manifested by his glory.

When Wisdom now takes possession of the inheritance, this includes her power to shape the life in it (ἐν Ἱερουσαλὲμ ἡ ἐξουσία μου, v.11); her directive function will be elaborated more in Sir 24:22-27 where Wisdom commands obedience through her appeal to the sages and her manifestation in the law. The inheritance theme also reinforces the perception of Wisdom’s angelic nature. The ἐξουσία given to Wisdom may be reminiscent of the power of the angel princes who were believed to be the transcendent rulers of each nation in Ben Sira’s Jewish environment.⁶²¹ The verse before the one just quoted, Deut 32:8 LXX, refers to these angels:

When the Highest divided the nations as he scattered the sons of Adam, he set the borders of the nations according to the number of the angels of God, and his people Jacob became the portion of the Lord....⁶²²

Given the close vicinity to Deut 32:9, this must thus have been in Ben Sira’s

⁶²¹ See Rudolf Meyer, “Die Bedeutung von Deuteronomium 32:8f.43 (4D,) für die Auslegung des Moseliedes.” in *Verbannung und Heimkehr*, ed. Arnulf Kuschke (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1961), 197-209, here p.202-203: this concept, which is based on Deut. 32:8-9, likely goes back to the Persian times where the political order provided the analogy of the divine king and his Satrap rulers. It does not occur in Jewish texts until relatively late, but is referred to by Sir 17:17.

⁶²² This version of Deut 32:8-9, 43 may very well have been the one available to Ben Sira, not only because it is the variant of the LXX translation, but also because the LXX version, which includes the reference to the angelic rulers of the nations, reflects the original Hebrew text as Meyer, *Deuteronomium 32:8f.*, 198-201, has shown by a comparison between the MT and a Qumran fragment.

mind,⁶²³ especially since Deut 32:8-9 is also alluded to in Sir 17:17;⁶²⁴ there is no reason why Sir 17:17 should not refer to the angel princes, being modelled on the contrast between the nations and Israel in Deut 32:8-9, but this interpretation is not certain. But even if Ben Sira does not think of angel princes in chapter 17, he uses the structure of Deut 32:8-9 which demonstrates that he was familiar with the idea.

Nevertheless, Wisdom is not conceived as an angelic ruler in Sir 24:12. Even if she functions *like* an angelic ruler, she is not counted among those angels, but identified with the Lord who took possession of Israel. She is not given Israel as her portion, but she takes root in the portion which continues to belong to the Lord. Therefore, she may exercise the power of the angelic rulers, but she is different because she remains a manifestation of God himself. At the same time our perception of Wisdom's nature is moved towards that of an angel, an independent heavenly being with a certain function in the spiritual realm.⁶²⁵ Therefore, the best comparison for Wisdom is *the* Angel of the Lord, not one of the angelic rulers.

6.2.2.3.4. The Angel of the Lord in Ben Sira

Regarding the relationship between Wisdom and the Angel of the Lord, we have observed that two of the three terms which characterise Wisdom's journey,

623 Wesley Carr, *Angels and Principalities: The Background, Meaning and Development of the Pauline Phrase "Hai Archai Kai Hai Exousiai."*, SNTSMS 42 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 30-35, does not accept that the idea of the angelic rulers of the nations had been pervasive in Jewish thought. However, his argument is not convincing, because two very different deuteronomic and prophetic traditions, do clearly contain the concept: Deut 32:8-9 explains that each nation is assigned to an angel, and Dan 10:13-21, presuming this concept, relates a vision where the archangel Michael fights with the Persian and Greek angelic princes in the heavenly sphere.

624 Against Carr, *Angels*, 31.

625 A similar conclusion is drawn by Jessie Rogers, "Wisdom," 76-77. She suggests that ben Sira presents Wisdom like an angel in chapter 24, and considering the oscillation between recontextualised images of God and Israel, the metaphor that Ben Sira used to characterise Wisdom is that of the angel of the Lord, who accompanied Israel on the journey through the wilderness.

κατασκηνοῦν/σκήνη and κληρονομία, have a certain way of associating Wisdom with an angel as well as identifying her with God. The link with the Angel of the Lord is particularly appropriate, because Ben Sira goes out of his way to associate Wisdom in v.4 with the pillar of cloud in a slightly strained image, alluding to the form of appearance of the Angel of the Lord in Exod 14:19/24 and 23:20/Num 9:15-23. This image is carried over to Wisdom's residence in the temple where God's presence had likewise been signified by the pillar of cloud.⁶²⁶

Moreover, Ben Sira not only transfers the symbolism of the pillar of cloud to Wisdom in 24:4, but also the dual nature of the Angel of the Lord: in v.10, where Wisdom takes up her ministry in the immanent world, the identification of Wisdom with God is interrupted. At the moment where she becomes manifest in the cult (or otherwise enters time and space) she appears as a *servant* of God (ἐλειτουργησα) who is commissioned to mediate between God and man. Thus, Wisdom appears as both, virtually identified with God and as a servant of God, exhibiting the ambiguous nature of the Angel of the Lord in the Hebrew Scriptures, or it is perhaps better to understand her as a new manifestation of the mediator who had previously appeared as the Angel of the Lord.

A further link to the Angel of the Lord is Wisdom's lively personification in Ben Sira's book, which transfers God's personal appeal to people to Wisdom, particularly obviously in Sir 4:11-19, which deals with her relationship to her students, revealing her as an attentive counterpart of her followers: she cares for her children and is the initiator of a loving relationship. The description of this proactive

⁶²⁶ See also Gottfried Schimanowski, *Weisheit und Messias*, WUNT 2/17 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1985), 53-54. He understands Wisdom's residence in the temple as an appearance of the divine כבוד.

engagement with human beings has prompted the observation that Wisdom here assumes God's role,⁶²⁷ but this tangible perception of Wisdom also has a counterpart in the immediacy of the anthropomorphic appearances of the Angel of the Lord (Gen 16:7-13; 21:17; Josh 5:13-15; Judg 6:11-24; 13).

These observations raise the question how Ben Sira treats the traditional figure of the Angel of the Lord, and whether it might be justified to move Wisdom anywhere near the Angel. After all, the concept of the Angel of the Lord with his dual nature has been observed before as offering an explanation for Wisdom's role in Prov 1, where Wisdom has the subordinate role of going out to reproach and call Israel like a prophet, but speaks with divine authority when she calls the people to herself and demands loyalty to herself rather than to God. And in Sap 10:17 Wisdom becomes the pillar of cloud, who protects and guides the people during the exodus, in lieu of the Angel of the Lord mentioned in Exod 14:19 and 23:20.

It becomes immediately clear that, while Ben Sira is familiar with the tradition of God's Angel, he only mentions him twice in passing, making it obvious that this figure does not play a prominent role in his sapiential understanding of the world. However, the two references indicate a surprising breadth of Ben Sira's concept. In 48:21, he mentions the slaying of the Assyrian army which besieged Jerusalem at the time of Isaiah (see Isa 37:36), where the Angel of the Lord has the function of executing a conspicuous divine intervention in history. This demonstrates that Ben Sira can conceptualise the Angel of the Lord as an agent in history, even if he remains as invisible as Wisdom.

⁶²⁷ See Reiterer, "Verhältnis", 108, 120.

On the other hand, Ben Sira ascribes a function in establishing the cosmic order to “his [God’s] Angel” in a poem on creation in Sir 42:15-43:33. In chapter 43, he first details God’s wonderfully designed works of creation, including his ongoing power to produce and control extreme weather conditions:

- 13 By his [God’s] command he hastens the snow...
- 16 The mountain is shaken by his appearance...
- 17 his voice of thunder reproaches the earth...
- 22 Thick mist (ὁμίχλη) is the speedy healing of everything
and falling dew refreshes from the burning heat.
- 23 By his reasoning (λογισμῶ) he stills the abyss
and plants islands in it.

Then he summarises the effects as:

- 26 Through him, his angel succeeds
and in his word the whole universe is composed.

The statement about God’s angel is difficult to interpret, but in the context of a hymn on creation, which repeatedly points to God’s wisdom as establishing the cosmic order,⁶²⁸ “his angel” has been understood as “each element of creation serv[ing] as the messenger of God”⁶²⁹ by delivering God’s intentions to judge, to reveal himself, to irrigate, and to create order through natural phenomena. In this, the angel performs a task similar to that of God’s word,⁶³⁰ and it extends the range of actions that the Angel of the Lord performed in history (such as inflicting a

628 See Perdue, *Wisdom*, 283.

629 Ibid.; similar Skehan/DiLella, *Ben Sira*, 495. Cf. also Corley, *Sirach*, 121, understanding “each created being” as a “messenger” who does God’s will. In contrast, Sauer, *Jesus Sirach*, 296, translates ἄγγελος αὐτοῦ in v.26 as “um seines willen”, and does not comment on it.

630 See Núria Calduch-Benages, “God, Creator of All (Sir 43:27–33)” in *Ben Sira’s God: Proceedings of the International Ben Sira Conference Durham-Ushaw College 2001*, ed. Renate Egger-Wenzel, BZAW 321 (Berlin/New York: De Gruyter, 2002), 79–100, here p.86: She remains undecided whether to follow Perdue in his interpretation of God’s angel in 43:26 or to adopt the usual interpretation of the angel as a personification of the “word”.

plague on the Assyrian army) towards Wisdom's domain of controlling the cosmic order including the weather and the wild sea. It is difficult to decide whether ὁ ἄγγελος αὐτοῦ in 43:26 is a summarising term for various messengers or serviceable spirits, or one who works in ever different ways. In favour of understanding "his angel" as the one Angel of the Lord is the fact that he is referred to in singular and set in parallel to God's word. Moreover, the only parallel, identical phrase "his angel" in Sir 48:21 certainly envisages God's Angel acting in history. In the role of sustaining and ruling over nature, God's angel is closely related to Wisdom, because she not only permeates the cosmos (1:9) but rules over every part of it (24:5-6), including the abyss mentioned in 43:23,⁶³¹ and was characterised as the primeval mist (ὁμίχλη) which enabled life on earth in 24:3. Would it be justified to think, then, that in Sir 43:26 development of the tradition history is reversed, and here it is the Angel of the Lord who assumes Wisdom's original role of controlling the cosmic order, testifying to a further step of amalgamating the two divine mediators?

6.2.3. Conclusions: Wisdom's Role as Divine Presence

The exegesis of the first section of ben Sira's Wisdom hymn has established the following results:

1) Ben Sira indeed presents Wisdom as God's presence in the temple. Wisdom's self-praise in chapter 24 delivers an autobiographical story that tells about her journey from her heavenly throne to her dwelling place in the temple in Jerusalem. Verse 10, "I served before him in the holy tent, and was thus established in

⁶³¹ See Marböck, *Weisheit*, 32-33, 61; Perdue, *Weisheit*, 249, 265, 268.

Zion” is the climax of this account and indicates the destination of her journey that will be the earthly base for her subsequent ministry.

2) Wisdom is ontologically closely related with God in the first stanza as the mist emerging from his mouth, which may signify either God’s word or his spirit. Wisdom is further identified with God by recontextualisations of God’s actions in the heavenly realm: she occupies a throne which is located in the pillar of cloud, she walks over the vault of heaven, she can deal with the dangers of the abyss, and she extends her influence to every nation on earth.

3) Equally she is identified with God in her relationship with Israel in the second stanza as she becomes the divine presence in the tabernacle and the mistress who exercises the authority in God’s inheritance, Israel.

4) The centre of Wisdom’s ministry is based in the temple, where she serves in the cult according to v.10. However, just as the *Shekinah*-theology, which had been focused on the temple as place of God’s dwelling before the exile, was extended to signify God’s presence with his people everywhere during the exile, Wisdom’s power also extends into the whole country. The key term καταπαύω which characterises both God’s coming into the world in the *Priesterschrift* in Gen 2:2, 3 and God’s dwelling in Zion in Ps 132:13 is linked with the blessing, which Wisdom will likewise cause in Israel according to Sir 24:13-17.

5) Sir 24 can be read as a new development of the *Shekinah* theology, where Wisdom now represents the divine presence in the temple, and a related concept of

the *Priesterschrift*, the connection between temple and creation, can be drawn on to explain why Wisdom resident in the temple, with her traditional role as supervisor of the cosmic order, impacts on the fertility and prosperity of the country.

6) Thus, Wisdom's area of activity is extended from her heavenly function as cosmic order to her involvement in the history of Israel. The following stanzas are dedicated to elaborate on Wisdom's ministry in the human realm: in the sacrificial cult of the temple, by stimulating growth and dispensing grace throughout the country, in encountering the individual, and in the instruction delivered by the torah and the sage.

7) One important observation is that as soon as Wisdom enters the historical realm, her identification with God is transformed into a role of a servant of God, whose function is to mediate between God and man in her ministry in the tabernacle. In this dual nature, Ben Sira's Wisdom-figure reflects the function of God's Angel. The notion of Wisdom assuming the role of the Angel of the Lord is further enhanced by associating Wisdom with three themes involving roles of angels, or the Angel of the Lord: (a) Wisdom's seat is in the pillar of cloud, which had functioned as the Angel of the Lord in Exod 14:19 and 23:20-23. (b) The inheritance of the Lord, Israel, which becomes Wisdom's domain in 24:12, was traditionally contrasted with the nations ruled by angel princes in Deut 32:8-9. (c) And finally, the term "his [God's] Angel" is used in Sir 43:26 in a rather abstract way as an equivalent of both God's wisdom and his word, denoting the power which supervises the cosmic order.

6.3. The Nature of Wisdom's Ministry in the Temple (Sir 24:13-19)

6.3.1. General Comments on Wisdom's Role in the Temple Cult

It is widely agreed that Wisdom's role in the temple according to v. 10: "I served before him in the holy tent" is that of an intermediary with a priestly function,⁶³² or more abstract, in general terms, she is the essence of the priestly ministry.⁶³³

One interpretative option is to view wisdom's function in the temple as implementing the cultic laws of the torah,⁶³⁴ if Sir 24:23 is chosen as key to the passage. Sheppard presses especially the notion that the priestly service consists not only in executing cultic observances. For him, the commission to teach the torah is the main part of Wisdom's priestly office.⁶³⁵ This approach, however, needs to be considered carefully, because the passage about Wisdom's service in the temple does not hint at implementing the cultic law and famously, Ben Sira's book lacks instruction detailing the ritual law altogether. The next section, verses 13-17 elaborates on Wisdom's priestly ministry, but like stanza one and two, the third stanza does not refer to the torah. Biblical images are used in all three stanzas to transfer first God's role and then the priestly ministry to Wisdom. Only

632 Marböck, *Weisheit*, 65, 74; Stadelmann, *Schriftgelehrter*, 52 n.1; Skehan and DiLella, *Ben Sira*, 335; Zsengellér, "Attitude," 139, Perdue, *Wisdom*, 269.

633 Sheppard, *Construct*, 48.

634 Marböck, *Weisheit*, 65; Stadelmann, *Schriftgelehrter*, 53 n.1; Skehan and DiLella, *Ben Sira*, 333; Zsengellér, "Attitude," 144: the law is fulfilled by offering the prescribed sacrifices. And according to Ringgren, *Word and Wisdom*, 110, Wisdom as ritual law regulates the cult in the temple.

635 Sheppard, *Construct*, 59.

from verse 23 onwards does the poem turn to the torah which flows out of the temple to carry wisdom into the whole country. Therefore, it is well possible that Sira ascribes two separate ministries to Wisdom, a cultic office in the temple referred to in 24:13-17 and an educational office in the schools of the sages referred to in 24:23-34, both of which serve to reconcile the human to God.

This separate cultic function is recognised, if not explored in detail, when Sheppard concedes that the symbolism of incense in v.15 reminds us that approaching God in a form of worship which is mediated by Wisdom remains mysterious,⁶³⁶ and Marböck describes the cult as being veiled in an atmosphere of holiness.⁶³⁷ There is more to Wisdom's intermediary function than teaching the law.

Thus, Wisdom's function in the cult has been described as attracting people in an enigmatic way through the symbolism of luscious growth and fruitfulness; Marböck sees allusions to the love of God for Israel in the promise of plant growth and attractive fruit extended by Wisdom's inviting manner both in vv. 13-16 and 19-20 in reference to Hos 14:6-8 and Cant 4:12-16.⁶³⁸ Zsengellér characterises Wisdom's ministry as effecting "God's conciliation and man's well being."⁶³⁹ He also suggested that a significant part of Wisdom's ministry consists in increasing the understanding of the cultic practices, which leads to the spiritualisation of the worship, more personal engagement of the worshippers and consequently to an impact on their lifestyle.⁶⁴⁰ Perdue identifies "study and devotion of the sage" with wisdom's priestly service designed to reinvigorate life, but Wisdom's ministry in Jerusalem also comprises the traditional cosmic significance of defeating

⁶³⁶ Ibid., 60.

⁶³⁷ Marböck, *Weisheit*, 74.

⁶³⁸ Ibid., 75.

⁶³⁹ Zsengellér, "Attitude," 139.

⁶⁴⁰ Ibid., 144.

the powers of chaos and the priestly understanding of God's sabbath rest which renews the earth.⁶⁴¹

A closer analysis of the third stanza of Ben Sira's poem reveals further details about the manner of wisdom's office and the way in which she mediates between God and man:

- 13 I became tall like a cedar in the Lebanon
and like a cypress on Mount Hermon,
- 14 I was celebrated like a palm tree in En-Gedi
and like a rose plant in Jericho,
like a beautiful olive tree on the plain
and I became strong like a plane tree.
- 15 I gave a pleasant smell of spices like cinnamon and camel's thorn
and I distributed a fragrant aroma like chosen myrrh,
like galbanum and onyx and myrrh oil
and like a smoke of frankincense in the tabernacle.
- 16 I stretched out my branches like a terebinth tree
and my branches were branches of glory and grace.
- 17 I sprouted grace like a vine
and my blossoms were a fruit of glory and wealth.

These verses depict Wisdom's residence in the temple with rich metaphors of lush plant growth, fruit and spices. Verse 15 anchors the symbolism of Wisdom's luxurious growth in the temple (ἐν σκηνῇ), where she is described as giving off the sacred fragrances of anointing oil and incense by listing the ingredients that were used for the preparation of these according to Exod 30:23, 34. In verses 13-14, Wisdom resident in the temple is characterised by thriving trees that are typical for each part of the country, symbolising her blessing of all parts of the country. Verses 16-17 return to the plant imagery, praising Wisdom's benefits and protection.

Occurrences of the same symbolism in other parts of the book will reveal more

⁶⁴¹ Perdue, *Wisdom and Creation*, 270.

about Wisdom's functions, as her office in the temple is linked to that of the priests in chapter 50 and to that of the sages in 39:14.

6.3.2. Wisdom's Ministry as Anointing Oil and Incense (Sir 24:15)

The anointing oil was used according to Exod 30:29-30 to sanctify the priests and temple utensils, thus investing them almost materially with God's holiness. When Ben Sira presents Wisdom as the pleasant smell of the anointing oil which makes the priests holy, this role can be seen as a continuation of Wisdom's function to represent the divine presence, which had been ascribed to her in the beginning of the poem; in the cult, the holy divine presence then becomes perceptible.⁶⁴²

Wisdom also takes over the role of the incense which is burnt in the temple. It is obvious that this represents a sacrifice in Ben Sira's view as Sir 45:16 mentions the offering of incense as a routine ceremony performed by the high priest Aaron. In Sir 45:16 the term for the offering is θυμίαμα (incense) whereas Sir 24:15 lists the four ingredients of incense according to Exod 30:34-35 στακατή, ὄνυξ, χαλβάνη, λίβανος (frankincense) to allude to the offering of incense. Later in the book the author contents himself with a *pars pro toto* reference to frankincense (λίβανος) to allude to the same offering. In that way Wisdom's priestly role of offering sacrifice is reinforced. The statement that she is "like galbanum and onyx and myrrh, and like the smoke of frankincense in the tabernacle" may even indicate that Wisdom offers herself as sacrifice. In that way, Wisdom's intermediary ministry not only imparts God's grace and presence to humanity, but also

⁶⁴² See Sheppard, *Construct*, 59.

works in the opposite direction by serving as a sacrifice.

Remarkably, the nature of Wisdom's offering can be twofold in Ben Sira's understanding: it is not only performed by the priests in the temple but also by the sages throughout the country.⁶⁴³ In 39:14 the students of Wisdom are ordered to "exhale a fragrance of frankincense (λίβανος)" in their praise of God as the creator and Lord of creation, which is specified in vv. 15d-16b as: "Say in thanksgiving that all the works of the Lord are very good, and every command of his will be carried out in its season." The contents of the praise of the creator in 39:14d-35 characterises the students' relationship to God as thoroughly sapiential in their interest in observing nature and history with the goal of understanding God's ways: they praise God for his works of creation (vv.14d, 16a) and his power, which is administered as blessing (vv.18b, 22) or judgement (v.23) by the forces of nature (the water obeys him in v.17cd to effect salvation, while winds, fire, hail and famine etc. are created for vengeance in vv.28-29).⁶⁴⁴

The students' dependence on Wisdom for their inspiration is further emphasised by including two more of Wisdom's symbolic plants, the rose and the lily, in the description of their role in 39:13-14. Interestingly, only the rose and frankincense are mentioned in 24:14-15 as a direct reference to Wisdom, whereas Sir 50:9 lists all three fragrances, which characterise the student of Wisdom, that of the rose, the frankincense and the lily, in the description of the high priest. It seems there-

643 See Robert Hayward, "Sacrifice and World Order" in *Sacrifice and Redemption. Durham Essays in Theology*, ed. S.W. Sykes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 22-34, here p.25, 27. He offers an in-depth analysis of the parallels between the priest and the sage, observing that both of them offer wisdom as incense and both of them display the splendour of Adam (49:16b—50:1 and 6:31 in the Hebrew text).

644 See Skehan/Di Lella, *Ben Sira*, 461. Perdue, *Wisdom and Creation*, 275-278. Their focus is however on the question of theodicee, which is touched in the passage.

fore that the high priest is the primary representative of Wisdom in the human realm (see also below ch. 6.3.3.1.), whereas the praise of the sage is a secondary reflection of the priest's cultic function. Accordingly, Sir 4:14 affirms that "to serve her is to minister to the sanctuary", referring to the efforts of Wisdom's disciples.⁶⁴⁵ Hayward concludes that "[a]cquisition of Wisdom-Torah and priestly service are, by this comparison [with the incense], placed on the same level."⁶⁴⁶

645 See Marböck, *Weisheit*, 65. Skehan and Di Lella, *Ben Sira*, 171 understands the service of the wisdom-disciples as rendered to God himself (λειτουργήσουσιν ἁγίῳ), but that still means that the devotion of the sage is counted as worship.

646 Hayward, "Sacrifice," 25. This is because both ritual and moral commands derive from the "divine order of the universe," p.31. See also Marböck, *Weisheit*, 73: "Sirach hat... in der Weisheit Gottes Nähe, wie sie im Kult und in der Torah gegeben war, zusammengefaßt."

6.3.3. Wisdom's Ministry Symbolised by Luscious Tree Growth

Wisdom's priestly office is further characterised by the metaphor of luscious tree growth in Sir 24:13-14, 16-17. The symbolism of growth, which has been interpreted as an allusion to the tree of life,⁶⁴⁷ speaks of wisdom's decentralised ministry effecting fertility, prosperity, education and spiritual blessings from Lebanon in the North to En-gedi in the South of the country.⁶⁴⁸ The fruit mentioned in vv.16-17, namely grace, honour and wealth, transcends the image of agricultural fertility and refers specifically to the results promised to those who obtain an education as Wisdom's disciples.⁶⁴⁹ The impression of Wisdom's influence on all of the country is reinforced by the image of the paradisaal rivers which emerge from the temple in the fourth stanza (24:24-29), symbolising the instruction administered by the torah, which in turn overflows with wisdom, and which is effectively undertaken by educational institutions like that of Ben Sira (24:30-34). From this perspective, Wisdom blesses the whole country with grace, wealth and understanding.

Conversely, the plants that symbolise Wisdom each represent one particular part of the country in the sanctuary, where she represents the people before God in a priestly role.

647 Perdue, *Wisdom and Creation*, 270-271. See Silvia Schroer, *In Israel gab es Bilder: Nachrichten von darstellender Kunst im Alten Testament*, OBO 74 (Freiburg Schweiz: Vandenhoeck&Ruprecht, 1987), 5,1 for the tree of life motif in the temple.

648 See Marböck, *Weisheit*, 74.

649 Schnabel, *Law*, 25-26, lists similar benefits of Wisdom's effects on the country: peace, good health and length of days (Sir 1:18-20), rest and joy, protection and honour (6:28-29). These gifts reflect God's gifts in Israel's history.

6.3.3.1. *Wisdom Manifested in the Priesthood*

In the final chapter of Ben Sira's praise of the fathers, he describes his contemporary high priest Simon II⁶⁵⁰ officiating in the temple worship. His clothing and cultic acts carry a symbolical meaning, which emphasises the universal significance of the cult, suggesting a function to maintain the cosmic order. Moreover, additional imagery is employed to characterise the high priest as a representative of the divine Wisdom: If Wisdom's strength and vitality had been symbolised in the images of the cedar, the cypress, the palm-tree, the rose plant, the olive tree, the plane-tree, fragrances of the anointing oil and frankincense in 24:13-15, Simon is invested with the same symbolism as he emerges from the "house of the veil" (Sir 50:5) and proceeds to offer the sacrifice: according to Sir 50:8-10, he is

8	like a flower of roses in the new days, like lilies besides the water,	(cf. 24:14 "rose plant")
9	like a shoot of cedar in summer days, like fire and frankincense on the censer ...	(cf. 24:13 "cedar") (cf. 24:15 "cinnamon and camel's thorn... galbanum and onyx and myrrh oil... frankincense")
10	like olive trees sprouting new fruit and like a cypress exalted to the clouds.	(cf. 24:14 "beautiful olive tree") (cf. 24:13 "cypress")

The correlation between Wisdom and priesthood extends not only to the high priest, but also to other priests who assist in the ceremony, whom Ben Sira likewise compares to "sprouts of cedars in Lebanon...and trunks of palm trees" (v.12). The inclusion of the lower ranks of the priesthood in the tree symbolism indicates that Wisdom is manifested in the priestly ministry in general rather than in the one particular high priest.

⁶⁵⁰ See for example deSilva, *Apocrypha*, 157, 186: Simon II is characterised by the fortifications he built.

6.3.3.2. Day of Atonement or Tamid Offering in Sir 50?

The worship service described in Sir 50 can perhaps give more insight into the specific cultic function ascribed to Wisdom. It has been identified alternatively as the ceremony of the Day of Atonement or as the twice daily offering of the *tamid*. There are two main reasons to understand the ceremony as that of the Day of Atonement, namely that Sir 50:5 has the high priest come out of the “house of the veil”,⁶⁵¹ and that the name of God is pronounced in the priestly blessing 50:20. However, F. Ó Fearghail presents a good argument demonstrating that the sequence of events in Sir 50:11-21 matches that of the daily offering described in the Mishnaic tractate *tamid* in impressive detail.⁶⁵² There is no evidence that the priestly blessing differed from the pronouncement of God’s name on the Day of Atonement to any other day.⁶⁵³ And the phrase in 50:5 “he emerged from the ‘house of the veil’” is not necessarily a reference to the holy of holies, because the phrase can also be used for the temple in general, and the high priest may be leaving the Holy Place, which was separated from the outer court by another veil.⁶⁵⁴ In this case, Simon is emerging from the Holy Place in 50:5, where he had just offered the incense in the morning offering and he then proceeds to offer the lamb.⁶⁵⁵

651 See Oesterley and Box, *Ecclesiasticus*, 338. Daniel M. Gurtner last affirmed in, “The ‘House of the Veil’ in Sirach 50” *JSP* 14 (2005), 187-200, that the Hebrew idiom in Ben Sira’s original version always refers to the Day of Atonement by the phrase “[from] inside the veil” (194-196), but he concedes that the Greek translation means that Simon emerged from the whole of the temple complex (196, 199).

652 F. Ó Fearghail, “Sir 50:5-21: Yom Kippur or The Daily Whole-Offering.” *BTB* 59 (1978): 301-16, here p. 301-305. See also Emil Schürer and Géza Vermes, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ (175 B.C.-A.D. 135)*, vol. 2, ed. and rev. Géza Vermes, Fergus Millar, Matthew Black (Edinburgh: Clark, 1979), 299-304.

653 Ó Fearghail, “Sir 50:5-21”, 306.

654 *Ibid.*, 310-313.

655 *Ibid.*, 313. The view of the sacrifice in Sir 50 being the *tamid*, and thus indicating the cosmic significance of the worship offered, is now also adopted by Johannes Marböck, “Der Hohepriester Simon in Sir 50: Ein Beitrag zur Bedeutung von Priestertum und Kult im Sirachbuch” in *Treasures of Wisdom: Studies in Ben Sira and the Book of Wisdom*, ed. J. Vermeylen, N. Calduch-Benages (Leuven University Press, 1999), 215-29, here p. 221-223. Skehan and Di Lella, 550-552, favour Ó Fearghail’s reading by repeating his argument in

6.3.3.2.1. The function of the perpetual offering in maintaining the cosmic order

A close reading of the elements that constitute the priestly service carried out by Simon and his assistants inform about the significance of the cultic ministry performed by the embodied Wisdom. **C.T.R. Hayward** demonstrated in great detail how Ben Sira succeeds to present the service of the high priest as ensuring the continuance of a stable world order, “build[ing] up a picture of the Service as uniting the earth with heaven in some mysterious way” because he “represents, even embodies Wisdom as he carries out his sacrificial duties in the Temple; and this Wisdom, whom Ben Sira personifies as a grand lady, is none other than the principle on which the universe is founded and which continues to order it.”⁶⁵⁶

Descriptions of the high priest and the sacrificial office he carries out, that link the temple cult to the cosmic order maintained by Wisdom include allusions to sun, moon and stars, the rainbow, to Adam’s beauty, to the paradisaal vegetation, to the offering of incense, to the completion of the order achieved by the sacrifice, and the name of God which is invoked as the universal king *él’elyôn*, or *the Most High*.

6.3.3.2.1.1. The high priest compared to the heavenly luminaries

The comparison with the sun, moon and stars puts the ministry of the high priest immediately on a cosmic scale:

affirming detail, but without actually drawing the conclusion that Simon’s sacrifice was a *tamid* rather than that of the Atonement Day.

656 C.T.R. Hayward, *The Jewish Temple a Non-Biblical Sourcebook* (London; New York: Routledge, 1996), 7, 78.

5 He was glorified in the procession of the people,
 in the departure from the house of the veil,
 6 like a star...and the moon...
 7 and the sun...

This comparison alludes to all the luminaries of heaven whose task is, according to Ps 148:1-3, to join the angels and hosts of heaven in glorifying the Lord.⁶⁵⁷

It is perhaps worth noticing that the second half of the psalm turns to the earthly sphere, nature and humankind, who are also included in the heavenly worship. If Simon primarily represents Israel, just as Wisdom does in the images of the trees which were emblems of different parts of the country from Lebanon and Mount Hermon in the North to En-Gedi to Jericho in the South in 24:13-17, he joins the ranks of other cosmic powers in his office of worship. Thus, the embodied Wisdom is placed among the heavenly powers, who take up their appropriate place in praising the Lord, while she leads the worship of Israel and the material world.

6.3.3.2.1.2. The high priest compared to the rainbow

The rainbow as a symbol of the high priest (v.7b) recalls God's covenant with Noah and all living creatures in Gen 9:8-17. The covenant with Noah more than any other covenant ensures the stability of the world order. It is granted after the waters of chaos have been dried up and life on earth has been recreated with man ruling over the animals in Gen 9:1-3, just as God had commanded mankind to do in Gen 1:28. Another indication of the cosmic dimension of the covenant are its recipients, which are not only Noah and his descendants, but "every living

⁶⁵⁷ Ibid., 51. Hayward points out that the imagery of sun, moon and stars can on rare occasions be employed in the Bible to describe the Davidic kingship, and may here serve to transfer the royal authority to the Zadokite priesthood. But the allusion to Ps 148 also reminds of the powers that uphold the order of the created world in due praise of the creator.

creature”, and the promise is that “never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of a flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth.”(Gen 9:11, NRSV). In this way, the officiating high priest, who shines like a rainbow, becomes a symbol for the stability of the world order.

6.3.3.2.1.3. The high priest related to Adam

The cosmic dimension of Simon’s office is also apparent in the extant Hebrew text by predicating him with Adam’s *tip’eret*, because Adam’s “beauty” in 49:16 is directly transferred to Simon in the following verse:

49:16 ...above every living thing is the beauty of Adam.
50:1 Greatest of his brothers and the beauty of his people was Simeon...⁶⁵⁸

Therefore, Simon represents not only Israel, but the whole human race and the order he is responsible for is linked to the primeval order of creation. The word *tip’eret* does not appear in the translation of the grandson, and accordingly the allusion to Adam’s universal significance is lost in the Greek version.⁶⁵⁹

6.3.3.2.1.4. The cosmic dimension indicated by the names of God

However, the Greek version reinforces the cosmic relevance of the cult in the Jerusalem temple in other ways: the name of God, which had been *ēl’elyōn* in the Hebrew version, the ‘Most High’ (the king over all nations resident on the cosmic mountain according to the Zion theology), is rendered as ὁψίστος in 50:14, 16, 17, a title which signified the divine ruler of the world for a Hellenistic audience, because the title was also used for Zeus by pagan authors.⁶⁶⁰ Ben Sira’s grandson

658 Translation by Hayward, *Jewish Temple*, 41.

659 See Hayward, *Jewish Temple*, 44-45, 77; Hayward, “Sacrifice,” 27, 30.

660 See Liddell, Scott and Jones 2:1910 for examples.

emphasises God’s universal rulership by adding the title ὑψίστος in vv.7, 19 and 21 to the Hebrew original; to dispel all doubts about the universality of the God evoked in the cult, “the Most High” is explicitly entitled as παμβασιλεύς, the King of all, in v.15.⁶⁶¹

6.3.3.2.1.5. Completion of the cosmos in the sacrificial service

Finally, the grandson alludes to the ever repeated completion of the cosmic order in the sacrifice by introducing the term *kosmos* in v.14:

καὶ συντέλειαν λειτουργῶν ἐπὶ βωμῶν
κοσμήσαι προσφορὰν ὑψίστου παντοκράτορος

and in completion (συντέλειαν) of his service (λειτουργῶν)⁶⁶² at the altar
he adorned (or: set in order, Greek: κοσμήσαι) the offering of the Most High, the ruler over all...

The combination of the terms συντέλεια and κοσμέω remind of the completion of the creation and all it’s *kosmos* according to Gen 2:1 LXX (Καὶ συντελέσθησαν ὁ οὐρανὸς καὶ ἡ γῆ καὶ πᾶς ὁ κόσμος αὐτῶν) and they are repeated in Sir 50:19 (ἕως συντελεθῇ κόσμος κυρίου, καὶ λειτουργίαν αὐτοῦ ἐτελείωσαν) summarising the service as a completion of the *kosmos*, which could in this verse be both the order of service or the order of the cosmos.⁶⁶³

6.3.3.2.2. The atonement theme in Sir 50

Considering Ben Sira’s numerous allusions to the primeval order of creation and the cosmic order, it is likely that the service described in Sir 50 is the sacrifice of the *tamid*, symbolising the appropriate response of thanksgiving and dedication

⁶⁶¹ See Hayward, *Jewish Temple*, 75-76.

⁶⁶² The term λειτουργῶν takes up Wisdom’s role in 24:10 and links her again with the high priest’s ministry.

⁶⁶³ See Hayward, *Jewish Temple*, 7-8, 79-80.

of the cosmos to God, rather than the ceremony of the Day of Atonement. Nevertheless, it cannot be excluded that the phrase “he came out of the veil” is meant to include the idea of atonement in the sacrifice offered,⁶⁶⁴ considering Ben Sira’s technique observed multiple times in chapter 24 to bring a well known scriptural theme to mind by mentioning a few key words, purposely blending different traditions to achieve a new synthesis in his own concept. As the reader’s first association with these words would indeed be that of the priest emerging from the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement,⁶⁶⁵ it is well possible that Ben Sira meant to include the aspect of atonement in the character of the service which describes Wisdom’s priestly ministry.

This is the more likely, because both the atonement and the *tamid* are established as prime tasks of the high priest in Sir 45:16, 23 and 45:14. In addition, the anointing oil and the fragrance of incense (which had been recognised as an expression of Wisdom in 24:15) play a role in sanctifying Aaron to perform his duty to atone for the people according to Sir 45:15-16.

It may also be instructive that the book of Jubilees, a work which was composed at roughly the same time as that of Ben Sira, includes atonement among the functions of the twice daily offering in Jub. 50:11,⁶⁶⁶ allowing for the assumption that Ben Sira’s contemporaries would have made the connection easily when prompted to do so.

664 Also Schürer and Vermes, *History*, 2:276 n.4. see allusions to both the Day of Atonement and the *tamid*. They observe that on feast-days, the *tamid* was offered in addition to other prescribed sacrifices. (p.307).

665 Gurtner, “Veil”, 194-196.

666 Hayward, *Jewish Temple*, 88-89.

Another indication for the intention of securing God's mercy through the priestly ministry is the view that the worship serves to bring a "memorial" of Israel before God. In 50:16 this is achieved by sounding the trumpets, while chapter 45 mentions three different memorials of Israel in the temple: the ringing of the bells on the high priest's vestments (v.9), the precious stones engraved with the names of the tribes on his breastplate (v.11) and the offering of the incense (v.16) all serve as a memorial of Israel before God.

6.3.3.2.3. Conclusion: The character of the worship service in Sir 50

Therefore, we may be led to think that Sir 50 does not describe any particular worship service at all, but instead gives a summarising account of the priestly ministry by combining allusions to several different services. The proposition that Sir 50 represents a general view of Israel's worship is strengthened by the ending, Sir 50:19-21, which mirrors Aaron's blessing, the joy and the prostration of the people which are described in Lev 9:22-24 in the report of the first worship service in the completed tabernacle, which resulted in the *kābōd YHWH* descending onto the sanctuary.⁶⁶⁷ As Lev 9 must be establishing an archetypal pattern⁶⁶⁸ of every subsequent service, Ben Sira reminds of this pattern, including the allusion to God's presence in the cult, and the atonement sacrifice which had to be completed before the glory of God appeared.

6.3.4. Summary: Wisdom's Function in the Cult in Ben Sira

Sir 24:13-17 suggest two ways in which Wisdom effects her mediatory service in

⁶⁶⁷ Bernd Janowski, *Sühne als Heilsgeschehen: Studien zur Sühneteologie der Priesterschrift und zur Wurzel KPR im Alten Orient und im Alten Testament*, WMANT 55 (Neukirchenvluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1982), 315-316.

⁶⁶⁸ See Lev 9:24b as "Urbild gottesdienstlichen Handelns" in Janowski, *Sühne*, 315.

the cult, symbolised by the fragrance of incense and the luscious plant growth, which are echoed by the acts of human executives in other parts of the book. Ben Sira locates this office both in the cultic rituals in the temple and in the school of the sage outside the temple:

According to Sir 50:8-12, Wisdom's symbolic plants characterise the office of the high priest: the elements that symbolise the priestly service in the temple according to chapter 50 – the comparison to the heavenly luminaries, the reminder of God's covenant by the rainbow, Simon taking up the role of the first man as he reflects Adam's beauty, God's universal kingship, the completion of the creation in the offering of the sacrifice – indicate that the human realm is gloriously integrated in the cosmic order as the order of creation is re-established in the performance of the sacrifice. Thus, Wisdom, who had long been recognised as responsible for the cosmic order from the beginning of the creation, exercises her power in the temple cult, embodied in the priesthood, to achieve that order in the moment of worship. Given the function of the perpetual maintenance of the cosmic order, the service on which Ben Sira's description is based, is most likely that of the *tamid*, although some elements remind of the atoning function of the sacrifice.

At the same time, the worship inspired by Wisdom occurs decentralised in the school of the sage, where the students of wisdom offer a fragrance of frankincense as they seek understanding of God and praise him in their personal devotion (Sir 39:14). A part of this devotion is the discipline that these students are encouraged to maintain. If the third stanza of Sir 24 hints at Wisdom's effect on

the prosperity of the whole country in terms of spiritual blessings, the final three stanzas will turn to the effect of Wisdom's instruction, in conjunction with the law, which keeps her disciples blameless (24:22).

Both, Wisdom's service in the temple and her service throughout the country, are a true intermediary ministry, which works in both directions: on one hand, Wisdom imparts God's grace to humanity by sanctifying the priests and cultic utensils in the temple with the anointing oil and by inspiring worship, education and fear of the Lord into the students of wisdom throughout the country. The tree of life symbolism also carries connotations of fertility and blessings. On the other hand, Wisdom serves in a priestly ministry by offering back to God the sacrifice of incense in the temple as well as sacrifices of praise offered by God-fearing minds of individuals throughout the country.

6.3.5. Wisdom's Role in the Temple Cult in the Wider Jewish Community

If Ben Sira paints a singularly comprehensive and lively image of Wisdom's role in the cult, a range of other, previous and subsequent, Jewish traditions regarding the temple cult document that Ben Sira's sapiential theology was not an isolated concept, even though Wisdom is usually not presented as explicitly personified as it is in Ben Sira's hymn. Nevertheless, her stabilising, mediating and transforming powers are celebrated.

These traditions concern firstly and most prominently the expression of the cosmic order which has always been closely interrelated with wisdom from the time

she was pictured as God's associate in creating the world, whether as delighted observer (Prov 8:27-30), as responsible for the measurable physical order (Job 28:25-27), as the entity that knows God's design and can consequently teach it to human sages (Sap 7:21-22, 9:9-10), or as the power which maintains the order (Sap 8:1). As such, wisdom played a role in temple theology, as responsibility for keeping up the cosmic order was attributed to the temple. Secondly, Ben Sira's concept of Wisdom as a representative of the cosmos in the service conducted by Simon II in Sir 50 is particularly suited to assert that Wisdom maintains a harmonious world order, and the motif of the universal significance of the high priest and temple worship is likewise echoed by subsequent literature. Thirdly, the motif of Wisdom functioning as an intermediary between man and God in private worship as well as in the cult, motivating discipline, prayer and the search for the knowledge of God, continues to inspire Jewish piety in the Second Temple period.

6.3.5.1. Wisdom as the Temple of the Mind in the Work of Philo of Alexandria

Philo's treatment of Wisdom's role in the temple stands out among the Jewish traditions, because he, like Ben Sira, names wisdom explicitly as an intermediary. Several elements known from Ben Sira's sapiential theology also feature in Philo's allegorical interpretation, whether they are based on a common tradition, on Ben Sira's book, or whether they reflect a parallel development. These elements contribute to a complex view of a rational worship, where wisdom offers an approach to God that can be placed on an equal footing with the temple cult. Before we explore his ideas on wisdom's role in mediating an approach to God,

however, we should take notice of the wide range of Philo's thoughts on worship, which include his endorsement of the actual physical temple cult, the importance of the prayer of thanksgiving, and the role of the *logos* in the universal significance of the Jewish cult.

6.3.5.1.1. Various forms of worship and cult in Philo's work

Much interest has been taken in Philo's comments on the role of the temple in his, and Jewish, life at his time, including the historical events triggered by Caligula's intention to erect his own statue in the temple in Jerusalem, testifying to Philo's endorsement of the temple cult ⁶⁶⁹ which he appreciates as a place of worship for people who are caught up in their natural physical frame (see *Spec.* 1:67). J. Leonhardt emphasises the necessity of the real temple in Philo's system of thinking, which is not content with a merely spiritual worship of the "extreme allegorists", ⁶⁷⁰ whereas R. Williamson emphasises Philo's spiritualised approach to worship. ⁶⁷¹

Thus, Philo writes about the universe as a temple with the *logos* as its mediator, and its earthly manifestation in the Jerusalem temple with the high priest as the representative of the *logos*, who presides over a cult that offers the thanksgiving due to the creator on behalf of all the nations, even the whole creation (*Mos.* 2:117, 133, *Spec.* 1:66-67 and 1:95-97). ⁶⁷²

⁶⁶⁹ See Ronald Williamson, "Jews in the Hellenistic World: Philo" *Cambridge Commentaries on the Jewish and Christian World, 200 BC to AD 200* 1ii (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 3-4, 11-14. See also the brief remarks of Samuel Sandmel, "Philo of Alexandria: An Introduction" (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 4, 34, 44.

⁶⁷⁰ Jutta Leonhardt-Balzer, "Jewish Worship and Universal Identity in Philo of Alexandria" in *Jewish Identity in the Greco-Roman World*, ed. J. Frey, S. Gripentrog, and D.R. Schwartz (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 29-53, here p. 40.

⁶⁷¹ Williamson, *Philo*, 1ii: 4, 13.

⁶⁷² *Ibid.*, 4; Jutta Leonhardt-Balzer, "Priests and Priesthood in Philo" in: *Was 70 CE a Watershed in Jewish History? On Jews and Judaism Before and After the Destruction of the Second*

Philo also suggested other forms of veneration which could substitute for bloody sacrifices, such as prayer⁶⁷³ and the dedication of a rational and pure mind.⁶⁷⁴ In the diaspora synagogue, the worship was based on philosophical study and virtue, the hellenised version of torah study and observation;⁶⁷⁵ if the torah was the indispensable, and widely accessible, form of the law for the Jews, Philo's esteem for the understanding of a philosophically educated mind is such that a philosopher could "arrive at an understanding of God through his creation...without the aid of his revelation to Moses."⁶⁷⁶ Leonhardt mentions further examples where Philo speaks of a spiritualised worship: thus, an allegorical status of priesthood could be ascribed to laypeople, wise persons, who strive for virtue and purity motivated by torah observance.⁶⁷⁷

6.3.5.1.2. Wisdom's role in the worship of the rational mind

One element of the above described wider view of worship which transcends the limits of the cult in the physical temple in Jerusalem is the worship of the rational mind, which takes place in the allegorical temple of wisdom.

Temple, ed. D.R. Schwartz, Z. Weiss and R.A. Clements, AJEC 78 (Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 2011), 121-147, here pp.142-143. The relationship between the universe as a temple and the physical temple building in Philo's work has prompted more interest in scholarship. See i.e. Hayward, *Jewish Temple*, 109-116; Cana Wermann, "God's House: Temple and Universe" in: *Philo und das Neue Testament: Wechselseitige Wahrnehmungen*, ed. Roland Deines and Karl-Wilhelm Niebur, WUNT 172 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), 309-320.

673 Harry Austryn Wolfson, *Philo: Foundations in Religious Philosophy in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*, vol. 2 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1962), 241-246, observes that a right attitude is what matters to make a sacrifice acceptable according to Philo. His analysis of a worship that dispenses with animal sacrifices substitutes the sacrifices with prayer and righteous conduct. So also Williamson, *Philo*, 1ii:4.

674 See Hayward, *Jewish Temple*, 123. See also Leonhardt, "Priests", 142-143 writing about *Somn. 1:214-215* that the "prayers and sacrifices conducted by the earthly high priest symbolize human worship, the rational soul's veneration of the one true God."

675 See Williamson, *Philo*, 1ii:4. He quotes Philo on the practice of Jews studying "the philosophy of their fathers" on the Sabbath.

676 See Leonhardt, "Worship," 45-46, 50.

677 Leonhardt, "Priests," 149, 150.

Philo speaks plainly about wisdom as the temple in *Leg.* 3:46, *Her.* 112 and *Congr.* 116. In *Leg.* 3:46-47 he identifies wisdom allegorically with the tabernacle and offers some thoughts on wisdom's mediating function in providing the mind with a way to approach to God. In a brief interpretation of Exod 33:7 about Moses setting up the tabernacle outside the camp of the Israelites, he presents wisdom as the allegorical temple of the mind:

Don't you see that also when he received the tabernacle from God, this being wisdom, in which the wise man settles and dwells, he fastened and confirmed and established [it] firmly not in the body but outside of it. For he fashions this after an encampment, after a military camp full of wars and evils that a war effects, which have no partnership with peace. "And it is called the tent of testimony" because wisdom is testified to by God. For it is also beautifully [said] "Everyone who sought the Lord went out." For when you seek God, O my mind, seek by going out of yourself. But when you remain in the bodily impediments or the opinions of the mind, you keep the divine things uninvestigated and only pretend that you are seeking...

In this passage, the tabernacle is identified with wisdom as the place where the mind seeks God. According to Philo, the pure intellect of the sage can approach God by first detaching itself from bodily passions and mundane thinking represented by the turmoil in the military encampment which is the camp of all of the people of Israel. Then the mind can enter the tabernacle of wisdom, which is established and approved by God as a place to investigate "divine things". In this way, Philo ascribes to wisdom a mediatory role in aiding the sage to approach God,⁶⁷⁸ which is a spiritualised substitute for the temple cult.

Her. 112-113 ascribes a further function to Wisdom in this service of the mind, which happens in the symbolical holy tent: it purges the sage's life of impurities, aiming at a transformation which would result in a virtuous lifestyle:

⁶⁷⁸ See also *Deus* 142-143 which asserts precisely that mediatory function of wisdom as the way to obtain knowledge of God.

... and [God], being moved by his pity for our race to send the image of his divine virtue down from heaven unto the earth in order that we would not suffer the loss of the better portion, constructs symbolically the holy tent and the things in it as a representation and copy of Wisdom (συμβολικῶς τὴν ἱερὰν σκηνὴν καὶ τὰ ἐν αὐτῇ κατασκευάζει, σοφίας ἀπεικόνισμα καὶ μίμημα). For he says that the tent is established as an oracle amidst our impurity so we would have something in which we would be cleaned by purging and washing off that which defiles us, our miserable life full of bad reputation.⁶⁷⁹

If wisdom had only been the allegorical meaning imposed on the real worship in the temple in *Leg* 3:46-47, Philo here treats Wisdom as the transcendent reality of which the temple is but an image, while Wisdom is the heavenly original. If the temple cult, which is a representation of Wisdom, serves to purify people, Wisdom itself has the same function in Philo's mind: Wisdom is not only a guide to knowledge of God, it effects a virtuous lifestyle, which is hinted at in our passage by the alternative title of the heavenly original, which is also called "the image of his divine virtue." Philo repeatedly identifies virtue with wisdom⁶⁸⁰ or comments on virtue resulting from wisdom.⁶⁸¹

Where worship is offered by the individual mind by seeking God through contemplation and virtue, Philo adopts a view that had previously been promoted by Ben Sira, namely that the sages can offer the frankincense of thanksgiving, study and discipline outside the temple just as the priests do in the temple cult.

6.3.5.1.3. Incense as sacrifice of the rational mind

Another aspect that recalls Ben Sira's views of Wisdom's differentiated function

679 See also *Spec.* 1:269 for wisdom's function to cleanse the soul in preparation for cultic worship.

680 See *Leg.* 1:45, *Migr.* 28 and *Virt.* 79.

681 According to *Virt.* 8, Wisdom furnishes a wealth of rational doctrines and meditation to receptive souls, which lead to virtue. In *Ebr.* 112 and similarly *Post.* 125-127, Wisdom is a well which gives forth a sweet stream to souls who thirst for virtue. In *Mut.* 259-260 Wisdom is the nourishment of the souls that produce virtue.

in the cult concerns the sacrifice of the incense. As Ben Sira had counted the sages' praise as an equivalent of the frankincense offered in the temple (Sir 39:14), Philo presents the sacrifice of incense in the temple as symbolic of the offering made by the rational mind.⁶⁸² In *Spec.* 1:273-277 he establishes the superiority of a pure mind of the worshipper as the feature that distinguishes the offering of incense from the whole burnt offering. He gives three reasons why the offering of incense is more worthy than the sacrifice of animals, namely that the altar for the incense is made of gold rather than stone, it is placed nearer the holy of holies, and it is offered first thing in the morning before any other sacrifice. Then he concludes that

this is a symbol of nothing else than the fact that not the number of sacrifices is precious before God, but the purest rational spirit of the person who sacrifices,

making the incense a symbol of the real offering, which is presented by the pure and rational spirit, meaning the virtuous and studious mind of the worshipper.

In keeping with the various functions of Wisdom elaborated by Ben Sira, the offering of incense is not only a symbol for the rational mind, which reflects the studious children of the sage in Ben Sira, but Wisdom can also represent the sacrifice that is offered on the altar. Thus, according to *Post.* 122-123, the wisdom of the soul, producing virtue, can be equated symbolically with the fat that is being offered as whole burnt-offering:

...but those who nourish their virtue-loving souls by wisdom, hold a firm and unshaken power, the pattern of which is the fat offered as whole burnt-offering

⁶⁸² See Hayward, *Jewish Temple*, 123: "the incense may also signify the intellect and the moral sense in their giving of thanks", following earlier Jewish writers like Ben Sira who had associated the incense with the "study of the Torah, and with Wisdom itself."

of every sacrificed animal. For Moses says: 'All the fat belongs to the Lord according to eternal law' like the fat correlated to the mind which is offered up to God and suitable for him...

The sacrifice of incense itself is presented by the divine Wisdom in *Her.* 196-199.

The incense represents the whole world in its four elements, which is presented to God in thanksgiving. After listing the four ingredients of incense, Philo goes on in the following:

and I suppose that those four of which the incense is composed are symbols of the elements of which the entire world is made,

concluding in *Her.* 199 that when the incense is offered, it symbolises the world prepared by Wisdom as an offering. Even if he does not identify the incense directly with Wisdom, she is acknowledged as the creator of the four elements that are presented as offering and thus participates in the offering by presenting her mysteriously wrought handiwork as sacrifice. Importantly, this passage shows that in Philo's concept, Wisdom is not only given as an instrument to enhance a person's spirituality – she shapes the world as an active subject:

As it happened that this harmonious composition and mixture was in truth his most ancient and most perfect work, namely the world, which he supposes must give thanks to the one who created it under the symbol of incense, so that nominally a composition prepared by the skill of the perfumer is offered as incense, but in fact the whole world fabricated by the divine Wisdom is raised up in the morning and in the evening as a whole burnt offering.

Even though Philo does not identify Wisdom with either the officiating priest, or with the sacrifice of incense, his reference to Wisdom reminds of both these functions which had been ascribed to her by Ben Sira, that of representing the whole cosmos and that of an intermediary who stabilises the cosmic order,⁶⁸³ when she

⁶⁸³ See also Hayward, *Jewish Temple*, 111-112, for the similarity between the function of the high priest in Philo and that of the Wisdom embodied in the high priest in Ben Sira.

arranges the cosmos as an offering to God.

6.3.5.2. Wisdom as the Cosmic Order in Israel's Cult

Unlike Philo, most Jewish traditions avoid direct references to the role of Wisdom in the cult, but a range of other Jewish traditions regarding the temple cult refer implicitly to Wisdom as an expression of the cosmic order, often referred to as primeval or paradisaal order. Examples of the temple cult being an expression or guardian of the cosmic order, include the following:

6.3.5.2.1. Cosmic elements in the theology of the first temple

The temple theology developed in the pre-exilic Jerusalem celebrated God's victory over the powers of chaos and the establishment of a life sustaining order by integrating the Canaanite idea of the cosmic mountain⁶⁸⁴ and the chaos battle.⁶⁸⁵ Arguably, the first temple was already built upon the "foundation stone."⁶⁸⁶ Temple architecture, iconography⁶⁸⁷ and festivals⁶⁸⁸ attest the temple's role in

684 S. Talmon, "הַר har", TDOT 3:427-447, here p.441-445; Jon D. Levenson, "The Temple and the World," *JR* 64, no. 3 (1984): 275-98, here p. 282-283.

685 See Otto, TDOT 12:354; Gese, "Gestaltwerdung," 6.

686 Janowski, "Tempel," 222, and Michael Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 369, include the image in the discussion of the temple's cosmic significance, whereas Volkmar Fritz, "Der Tempel Salomos im Licht der neueren Forschung" *MAOG* 112 (1980): 53-68, here pp. 53-54, rejects the possibility on architectural grounds. Levenson, "Temple," 283-284 traces the term *omphalos* on which the cosmogonic speculations about the foundation stone in rabbinic literature are based back to Ezek 38:12 in connection with Ezek 5:5, claiming that the idea had already been part of the biblical worldview and Terrien, "The Omphalos Myth," 315-317, takes the motifs of the foundation stone and tree of life in temple symbolism as a point of departure to investigate possible allusions to a mother earth worship in Jerusalem (p.320, 325, 328). In contrast, Talmon, "har," TDOT 3:438, and Tilly, *Jerusalem-Nabel der Welt: Überlieferung und Funktionen von Heiligtumstraditionen im antiken Judentum* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2002), here pp. 127, 153-154, 240-241, 250-251, demonstrate that the term *omphalos* referring to Jerusalem and alluding to the cosmogenic centre of the world cannot be traced to the Hebrew Scriptures. It does not appear until the translation of Ezek. 38:12 by the LXX [τὸν ὀμφαλὸν τῆς γῆς], and the Hebrew term חֲבוּר הָאָרֶץ may simply have referred to a relatively secure place.

687 See Schroer, "Bilder", 46-66; Janowski, "Tempel", 215, 221-222; Otto, "Sîyôn", TDOT 12:353.

688 R.E. Clements, *God and Temple* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1965), 71-72 mentions particularly the

guaranteeing fertility and life cycles.⁶⁸⁹ The motif of the fountains of water streaming from Zion found in the psalms is a further indication of the fertility theme,⁶⁹⁰ which alludes to the paradisaal rivers and thus to the primordial cosmic order represented by the temple. The prophet Ezekiel (Ezek 47:1-12) moved the motif of the paradisaal river emerging from the temple to a central place of his vision,⁶⁹¹ and Sir 24 clearly employed the image of paradisaal vegetation and the rivers of Eden, which transport blessings to all parts of the country, to characterise the Wisdom resident in the temple. Ben Sira's theme reoccurs in 1 Enoch 49:1 where "Wisdom flows like water" before the Son of Man standing in God's presence⁶⁹² and Philo similarly identifies Wisdom with Eden from where streams of virtue and the *logos* flow out (*Somn.* 2:241-246 and *Leg* 1:163-165). Jub. 8:19 expressly correlates the temple on Mount Zion with an Edenic sanctuary suggesting it to be a place that reestablishes the primeval cosmic order where man relates to God in the appropriate way, and uses the term *omphalos* as a description of the location of the temple in the centre of the world.⁶⁹³ The image of the navel of the world could attract further meanings from myths of the Hellenistic environment and develop an imaginative metaphoric which culminated in the rabbinic treat-

autumn festival.

689 Palm trees as symbols of the tree of life and lotus blossoms as symbols for fertility are mentioned by Schroer, "Bilder", 51, 55-57, and images of pomegranates and palm trees in Clements, *Temple*, 65. An allusion to the cycle of life may have been made by the pillars of the temple that frame the place of the daily sunrise, see Levenson, "Temple", 285. Thus, Otto, TDOT 12:353 speaks of "universal life sustenance"; Clements, *Temple*, 67 summarises "[s]uch features were designed to stress the divine power over the created order, and to establish the temple as a source of blessing for the land and people of Israel"; Janowski, "Tempel", 215 claims "Die Tempelsymbolik war eng mit dem agrarischen Lebenszyklus verbunden...".

690 esp. Pss 46:5; 48:2-4, 12-14, see Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation*, 369; Clements, *Temple*, 71-72, 75.

691 See Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation*, 370-371. He adds Joel 2:3; 4:18, 20-21; Zech 14:8-11 as further developments of the theme.

692 Margaret Barker, *The Gate of Heaven: The History and Symbolism of the Temple in Jerusalem* (London: SPCK / Fortress Press, 1991), 88-89.

693 Hayward, *Jewish Temple*, 88-90; C.T.R. Hayward, "Sirach and Wisdom's Dwelling Place" in *Where Shall Wisdom Be Found?*, ed. Stephen C. Barton (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999), 31-46, here pp. 40-41.

ment of the subject that ascribes a cosmogenic function including the nurture transferred through the umbilical cord to the *omphalos*.⁶⁹⁴ A further symbol of the Edenic imagery, which may be alluded to by the tree symbolism in Sir 24:13-17, is that of the cosmic tree, which serves as an *axis mundis*, or the tree of life.⁶⁹⁵

6.3.5.2.2. Creation theology in the cultic concept of P

If most of the above treatments of the theme rely on iconographic or symbolic reference to the maintenance of the cosmic order, the *Priesterschrift* correlated the order of creation with the cult in an elaborate literary form, as the institution of the cult in Exod 24-40 takes up a number of references from the creation story, such as (1) the pattern of six plus one days where Moses waits for the vision of the heavenly tabernacle (Exod 24:15-18), (2) Moses acknowledging that the tabernacle is well made and blessing it (Exod 39:43a, 42b), as well as (3) its completion on the New Year's date and (4) the cubical shape of the sanctuary, which recall Noah's ark and the recreation of the world after the flood.⁶⁹⁶ Thus, the significance of the seventh day of creation, namely God's desire to engage with the human beings, is revealed in God's presence in the cult permitting Israel to enjoy a fellowship with God.⁶⁹⁷ The dedication of the tabernacle finishes with the blessing that recalls God's rest on the sabbath after he had created the world. It seems

694 See Levenson, "Temple," 283, quoting the Mishna tractate *Yoma* 54b and *Tanhuma Keshoshim* 10.

695 Martha Himmelfarb, "The Temple and the Garden Eden in Ezekiel, the Book of the Watchers, and the Wisdom of Ben Sira," in *Between Temple and Torah. Essays on Priests, Scribes, and Visionaries in the Second Temple Period and Beyond*, Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 11-25. She extends the paradisaal imagery from the rivers to the cosmic tree, both of which are traced from Ezekiel to the Book of the Watchers and to Sir 24 (p.13-14, 19, 23-25). See also Hayward, "Dwelling Place," 40-41, and Marböck, *Weisheit*, 74 for the motif of the tree of life in Sir 24.

696 See Janowski, "Tempel," 231-240, and see Weimar, "Sinai und Schöpfung," 352-353, 369-371 particularly about the cuboid form of the tabernacle.

697 Janowski, "Tempel", 238-239, 245, see also Levenson, "Temple", 287-288, for the correlation of sabbath and temple in P.

particularly relevant to the function of Wisdom in the cult that the blessing in P always includes the idea of fertility and growth, enabling new life, as the words פרה (bear fruit) and רבה (multiply), which appear stereotypically as a combined term in P and are often coupled with the verb ברך (bless) as in Gen 1:22 and 28, indicate that the function of the blessing is to bestow fertility.⁶⁹⁸ Westermann interprets the fertility which is suggested by the use of the word “blessed” in Gen 2:3 according to its meaning in the previous verses as a more abstract form of fertility, “the power to stimulate, animate, enrich and give fulness of life”,⁶⁹⁹ a theme which is also taken up by Sir 24:16-17 with the blessings of glory, grace and riches. Even if the *Priesterschrift* did not expressly link the temple cult’s function of celebrating God’s continual creation and blessing with Wisdom’s responsibility for the cosmic order, they are acknowledged as parts of the cult, and Ben Sira documents how the element of blessing the creation could be joined with that of God’s presence in the figure of God’s Wisdom in the theology of the second century.

6.3.5.2.3. Wisdom’s bifold function in the book of Slavonic Enoch

Another approach to the role of wisdom in the cult is developed by the apocalyptic book of Slavonic Enoch, which can probably be dated before the destruction of the Second Temple.⁷⁰⁰ The hidden wisdom which is revealed to the vision-

698 Peter, Weimar “Sinai und Schöpfung,” 367–369; Peter Weimar, *Untersuchungen zur priesterschriftlichen Exodusgeschichte*, fzb (Würzburg: Echter Verlag, 1973), 26-27.

699 Claus Westermann, *Genesis 1-11: A Commentary*, trans. John Scullion, vol.1 (London: SPCK, 1984), 172.

700 C. Böttrich, “Frühjüdische Weisheitstraditionen im slavischen Henochbuch und in Qumran” in *The Wisdom Texts from Qumran and the Development of Sapiential Thought*, ed. C. Hempel, A. Lange and H. Lichtenberger: Leuven, Paris, Sterling (Leuven University Press, 2002), 297-321, here p. 300. But this date is uncertain. F.I. Anderson, “2(Slavonic)Apocalypse Of Enoch: A New Translation and Introduction by F.I. Andersen” in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol.1, ed. James H. Charlesworth (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1983), 91-221, here pp.95-97, summarises that any date from pre-Christian origins to a Greek version being written around 1000AD are possible, even though all of the

ary not only impacts on the lifestyle of his followers ethically, but it also results in the establishment of a primordial cult, with chapters 68-73 creating the primeval figure of Melchisedek as an archetype of all earthly priesthood.⁷⁰¹ The bifold effect of wisdom of encouraging a god-pleasing lifestyle and of instituting the cult reflects the double function of Wisdom resident in the temple according to Sir 24:10,13-17 (serving in the cult) and 24:23-30 (dispensing a river of torah learning throughout the country).

6.3.5.2.4. The muted influence of the cosmic concept on Israel's worship

The power of the *hieros topos* is a conception of Near Eastern religion which helps to maintain the stability of the world order by ensuring the cycle of life. It was received by Israel from the surrounding cultures, but had to be adapted thoroughly in Israel's own temple theology, because of their prominent tradition of God acting in history rather than mythology.⁷⁰² In contrast to the mythical view of Egyptian temple theology which reenacts a perfect creation, the YHWH religion is based on encounters with God in history, which re-create a corrupted world, which create new life opportunities for God's people, which may happen at any location independent of the temple, and which are open to an eschatological transformation.⁷⁰³ Thus, we find adaptations of the oriental temple theology in Israel's temple theology and iconography, and it seems that popular cultic prac-

groups he explores for possible authorship are located in ancient times, and the title, p.91, gives a date in the late first century AD.

701 See Böttrich, "Weisheitstraditionen," 303, 307.

702 See Janowski, "Tempel," 241-243, Talmon, TDOT 3:436, 444. Otto, TDOT 12:354 presents an example of the transformation of a mythical motif (the battle of chaos) into Israel's salvation history; see also Clements, *Temple*, 69-70. Tilly, *Jerusalem*, 153, 161, 165 remarks in reference to several post-exilic traditions that it is not the holy place of the temple which affords blessings, but YHWH's presence.

703 So Janowski, "Tempel," 241-243.

tices continued with a Canaanite style of worship throughout the time of Israel's kings, so that the idea of the *hieros topos* could readily be revived in the Second Temple period.⁷⁰⁴ Nevertheless, Israel's prophets and the deuteronomic movement polemicised against these practices,⁷⁰⁵ and they have been marginalised in the Hebrew Scriptures. Even for Jub. 8:19, which links the temple with an Edenic sanctuary, the main significance of that primeval sanctuary is the presence of God rather than the maintenance of the cosmic order.

The general antagonism between the mythical view of the temple's power to guarantee the maintenance of the cosmic order and the historical encounters with God in the Hebrew tradition may explain two things: firstly, why wisdom played such a subordinate role in the theology of the Jerusalem temple, and secondly why a sapiential theology took on features of a personal encounter with a Wisdom figure who represented the God of Israel, when it rose to a prominent position in the post-exilic period.

6.3.6. Conclusions: Wisdom's Function in the Cult

1) The third stanza of Ben Sira's Wisdom hymn describes how Wisdom performs her ministry as a servant of God (ἐνώπιον αὐτοῦ ἐλειτουργῆσα, 24:10) in her work as a mediator between God and man. Ben Sira is unique in reflecting in depth on the role of Wisdom in the temple and integrating a range of functions associated with the cosmic order into the varied ministry of his multi-faceted personified Wisdom figure. He ascribes a priestly function to Wisdom in addition to her function of being the contemporary manifestation of God's presence in the

704 Samuel Terrien, "The Omphalos Myth and Hebrew Religion," *VT* 20 (1970): 332-334.

705 Talmon, *TDOT* 3:444.

temple. Wisdom acts both in the temple cult and throughout the country as an intermediary. Embodied in the priesthood and representing all parts of the country, she is responsible for the performance of the daily sacrifice that keeps up the cosmic order, in which atonement may also play a role. According to Sir 24:15 she may also be seen as offering herself as the incense that is burnt in the temple, even though this is one role that Ben Sira does not elaborate on. Conversely, Wisdom reaches out into the country from her location in the temple, blessing it with prosperity, growth, grace and honour. In addition to this cultic function based in the temple, Wisdom's "authority is in Jerusalem" and she reaches out to all of the "glorified people" (Sir 24:11-12); in this office, she inspires the sages to research God's ways in the sapiential schools throughout the country and to return praise to the creator; related to this ministry is Wisdom's link with the torah that forms a major part of the curriculum for the students of wisdom.

2) The theme of wisdom's function in the cult, as an expression of the order of creation, is by no means singular in the Jewish tradition; it can be detected in various Jewish sources of different times and genres. Most of these are based on the idea of maintaining the cosmic order without naming wisdom as its representative. Besides Ben Sira, it is only Philo who refers to wisdom by name when he presents wisdom on one hand as the temple of the mind, and on the other hand as the creator of the four elements of the world that are presented as sacrifice of incense.

3) One crucial reason why Ben Sira can attribute to Wisdom such a powerful and overt agency that reaches out into the historical realm is that he avoids suspicion

of offering worship to a rivalling divinity by identifying Wisdom as the contemporary manifestation of God in the sanctuary (Sir 24:1-12). As a manifestation of God himself, Wisdom can be adored by the sage, whom she engages with her personalised divine presence (see especially below 6.4.), and she can be idolised as the teacher of God's ordinances. But Wisdom not only appears as a teacher in the immanent world. She also conducts a priestly service of mediating between God and cosmos, which culminates in Wisdom's embodiment in the priesthood. Ben Sira succeeds to explain this side of Wisdom's ministry by interpreting the divine manifestation in terms of the biblical Angel of the Lord, who had always exhibited the ambiguous nature of being a visible (or at least perceptible) servant of God and a manifestation of God at the same time. By joining the perception of Wisdom as a manifestation of God (in Sir 24:1-12) with that of a servant of God, Ben Sira implements the conception of the Angel of the Lord in his Wisdom figure.

4) The whole complex of features ascribed to Wisdom is mirrored by Jesus' ministry as described by the gospels: he clearly taught all who would listen throughout the country to fear God and to respect the law in his new interpretation. Apart from Matt 23:38, which claims that the presence of God will be removed from the temple with Jesus' death, Jesus also indicated his cultic function in the cryptic prediction that he would destroy and rebuild the temple in three days, referring to his resurrection (Mark 14:58par.; John 2:19-22).⁷⁰⁶ His intention to "give his life as a ransom" recorded in Mark 10:45 par. and to "spill his blood for the many" (Mark 14:24) indicate his awareness of the sacrifice he was about to make. Nascent Christianity took up the theme by elaborating on Jesus' function to replace

⁷⁰⁶ Gese, "Weisheit", 237-238.

the temple, when they presented him as an atonement (Rom 3:25),⁷⁰⁷ as heavenly high priest (Heb 8:1-5; 9:23-26),⁷⁰⁸ and as the temple established in the Christian community, which is the body of Christ (Eph 2:21-22). Therefore, Ben Sira's model of Wisdom, who not only represents God's presence in the temple, but also served in a priestly role as mediator and as sacrifice, works as a model for Jesus' ministry in several different aspects.

6.4. Wisdom's Personal Address to her Followers

6.4.1. Sir 24:19-22

Elaborating further on the authority Wisdom exercises in and from Jerusalem according to vv.11-12, Sir 24:19-22 takes up another traditional theme of sapiential theology:

- 19 Come to me, those who desire me,
 and be filled with my products.
- 20 For my remembrance surpasses sweet honey,
 and my inheritance surpasses the honeycomb.
- 21 Those who eat me will be hungry for more,
 and those who drink me will thirst for more.
- 22 The one who obeys me will not be ashamed,
 and those who work in me will not sin.

Exegeses of the fourth stanza have commented on the invitation of Wisdom, which is modelled on Prov 8:4-10, 32-36; 9:4-6, 11 as well as Sir 6:18-38.⁷⁰⁹

There are similarities between Wisdom's invitation and Jesus' invitation to take

707 For Paul transferring Wisdom's role in the cult to the sacrifice of Christ see Richard H. Bell: "Sacrifice and Christology in Paul", *JTS* (53) 2002, 1-27, here p.24.

708 Andrew Chester, "Hebrews: The Final Sacrifice" in Sykes, *Sacrifice and Redemption*, 57-72, here pp. 63-64.

709 Skehan and DiLella, *Ben Sira*, 335-336; Perdue, *Wisdom*, 271.

up his yoke in Matt 11:28-30,⁷¹⁰ which however differs from Sir 24:19-22 in that Wisdom's food will leave the disciple longing for more.⁷¹¹ The reference to obedience and doing works in Wisdom in v.22 has been interpreted from two different perspectives: Skehan/DiLella explain verse 22 from a sapiential background, which sets off Wisdom's gift from the shame incurred by the fool. They draw this conclusion from a parallel in Prov 8:36, where the consequences of missing Wisdom are not directly branded as sin (that is when the Hebrew *ḥt'* is presupposed to have been used in the Hebrew text of Sir 24:22). Sauer, on the other hand, infers from the theme taken up in the following passage that Wisdom's fruit consists in the ability to keep God's law.⁷¹²

As the law is not mentioned in the fourth stanza, it is probably preferable to interpret v.22 in the sapiential context it is set in. There is perhaps also an element of transition to the theme of the torah, which is addressed in the following stanza, as the notions of obedience and working are introduced in v.22. However, in v.22 the student obeys Wisdom rather than the law, and he avoids sin by working in *her*, following Prov 1:24, where Wisdom is likewise in a position to command obedience. The general term ἐργάζεσθαι means any practical work, demonstrating that wisdom-instruction leads to a certain lifestyle. Verse 22 affirms that this sort of conduct avoids sin without referring to the law.

It does not make immediate sense that the curriculum of wisdom, which is based on observing the cosmos, on understanding the order and encouraging the 'fear of the Lord' in general terms, can be *obeyed*. If no reference is made to objective

710 See Deutsch, *Hidden Wisdom*, 131.

711 Sauer, *Unterweisung*, 184; Skehan and DiLella, *Ben Sira*, 335-336; Perdue, *Wisdom*, 271.

712 Sauer, *Unterweisung*, 184.

commandments that must be obeyed (as e.g. in Dan 3:29 the *nomos*, or in Deut 26:14, 17; 30:2, where the voice of the Lord is linked to the laws proclaimed by Moses), the term must denote the subjective attitude of respect towards Wisdom (see Sir 4:12-15) including a willingness to be educated in her way and to practice the recommended discipline (see Sir 6:23-26), which leads to joy and glory (Sir 6:28-31).

Significantly, the fourth stanza, offering Wisdom's invitation to come and taste her fruit, engages the persuasive appeal of personified Wisdom. She addresses potential followers in direct speech and appears in the multi-faceted role of Lady Wisdom. The image of a nurturing mother, taken up from Sir 15:2-3 where she offers understanding and wisdom, is here blended with that of the hostess from Prov 9:5. Sir 1:16-17 further elaborates on the theme of the banquet by describing the satisfying fruit of Wisdom as intoxicating (μεθύσκει);⁷¹³ this fruit is designated as ἐμπλήσει... ἀπὸ τῶν γενημάτων αὐτῆς, which very much resembles the phrasing of 24:19b (ἀπὸ τῶν γενημάτων μου ἐμπλήσθητε). Thus, the brief line v.19 calls up several themes that establish Wisdom's delightful effects, which doubtlessly reflects the sages' exciting experience of opening their minds and hearts to her truths: (1) She approaches human beings with her invitation to follow her in order to become wise. (2) She speaks to them, and (3) she is imagined as a woman, who appears here as a hostess as well as a mother. Other poems such as Sir 4:11-19 and 14:20-15:10 elaborate on the soothing nurture and care offered by a mother and in addition view Wisdom in the role of a lover who inspires passionate feelings in the student.

⁷¹³ The theme of intoxication, and thus probably the perception of Wisdom's delightful impact on her followers, is still employed by Philo *Prob.* 13-14.

Regarding (1), **F. Reiterer** has observed that Wisdom is nearly identified with God by Ben Sira,⁷¹⁴ and as God acts through her, she, like God, has a personal appeal to her disciples, when she initiates the relationship with them and engages them, as seen especially in Sir 4:11-19.⁷¹⁵ Regarding (2), Wisdom's ability to act by speaking, he observed that multiple verbs portray Wisdom acting in ways that are usually reserved for God or human beings:⁷¹⁶ She teaches (Sir 4:11 למדה) or lifts up (Sir 4:11 Greek: ἀνύψωσεν), she turns to her disciple, elects him, tests him, shares her secrets with him (Sir 4:17-18). She speaks, and in Sir 4:17a Hebrew, she addresses her disciple in the first person (אלך עמו). Further activities of the personified Wisdom in chapter 24 are speaking, praising herself, being present in the council (24:2), perambulating and ruling over the entire world including the mythical abyss and the immanent world of all the nations (vv.5-6), searching for a resting place (v.7), ministering like a priest in a cultic setting (v.10) and inviting everybody interested to approach her (v.19).⁷¹⁷ Another prominent example of Wisdom's domain is her opening the mouth of her disciple in Sir 15:5, a theme which is repeated in Sap 10:21. Regarding (3) a young student needs to pursue Wisdom with a sincere commitment and begins by learning from the example of the old sages (Sir 6:18-37), while the maturer student seeks Wisdom by himself with the passion of a lover and by applying the rules⁷¹⁸ set by his teacher. Subsequently, Wisdom again acts in response to his endeavours, when she nurtures him like a mother or a young wife with prudence and insightfulness.

714 Reiterer, "Verhältnis," 114.

715 Ibid., 107-108. See also p.120: "Die Weisheit, in ihr wird ja Gott selbst aktiv bzw. in ihr wirkt er direkt, bemüht sich um ihre Anhänger (4:11-19)."

716 Ibid., 105.

717 Ibid., 107, 114-115.

718 Ibid., 111-113, interprets the תורה in Sir 15:1 as the sage's instructions to conform to this context rather than the torah of Moses.

(Sir 14:20-15:10).⁷¹⁹

Ben Sira confirms in chapter 51 autobiographically that the metaphors used earlier in the book to describe Wisdom's relationship to her disciples are based on his own experience: she aroused a passion like a desirable woman in him (vv.19, 21). She approached him (v.14) and nurtured him like a mother (v.17), while he responded by seeking her zealously and in moral and cultic purity (v.20). In return, Wisdom blessed him with success in setting up his own school, giving him rest, peace, wealth and honour (vv.13-30).⁷²⁰

6.4.2. Is Wisdom a Hypostasis?

Sir 24:19-22 takes up a range of themes connected with personified Wisdom in former tradition and her vivid portrayal reflects the sages' experience of Wisdom's tangible influence on their lives, begging the question whether Wisdom can be understood as a hypostasis in this context. Three different arguments have been put forward by Marböck, Neher and Argall to assert that Ben Sira does not intend to present her as a hypostasis.

The main reason for **Marböck** to reject the thesis that Wisdom is presented as a hypostasis is that she represents the presence of God,⁷²¹ which is manifest in many different functions. He thinks that these predications, which include her function in the cult, and her character as mother and as bride, are incompatible in

⁷¹⁹ Ibid., 111-113.

⁷²⁰ Ibid., 118-120.

⁷²¹ Marböck, *Weisheit*, 62.

one person.⁷²² Another reason is that the revelation of Wisdom in Israel's cult and law demythologises the wisdom figure and makes her a mere symbol of God's agency in history.⁷²³ Instead, he thinks of Wisdom as the created cosmic order ("die geschaffene Ordnung der Schöpfung".)⁷²⁴

Discussion: There is no question that Wisdom in Ben Sira represents the presence of God in Israel; the question is how that representation is conceived. As the term 'hypostasis' has been defined with different accents not only in antiquity, but also among modern theologians, it may be best to avoid the complex term.⁷²⁵ What is really at stake in the discussion about Wisdom's hypostatisation is whether the biblical and Jewish sages imagined Wisdom as an independent quasi-divine being, or whether the representation of Lady Wisdom is a poetic personification, while her activity in the world is but a colourful description of God's agency.

There is no reason why the many roles played by Wisdom as mother, bride, teacher, even her manifestation in the cult and the torah should preclude a personal conception of Wisdom. After all, God himself is likewise experienced by the human counterpart in different roles: he can appear as shepherd, king and husband of Israel, and can even be manifest in the fire of the burning bush. Therefore, Wisdom's many different ways to engage with human beings do not rule out that these are manifestations of one mysterious transcendent being. On the other hand, Wisdom cannot be taken simply as a new manifestation of the divine presence, because when she is resident in the temple and becomes manifest in the cult, or more precisely in the priesthood and the incense, she is established there as a counterpart of God, as a minister who serves to mediate between

722 Ibid., 65-66, 75, 129-130.

723 Ibid., 72.

724 Ibid., 64.

725 See above 3.2.1. p.70.

God and man, or represent Israel before God. Therefore, the figure of the Angel of the Lord, who encompasses both, a manifestation of God himself and a servant of God, is a better model for the divine Wisdom.

Another important argument, which denies that Wisdom is conceived as a heavenly being has been pursued by R.A. **Argall**. Based on the identification of Wisdom with the book of the law, he decodes the whole story of personified Wisdom as a description of the activity in Ben Sira's school.⁷²⁶ He argues that the presupposition of Wisdom's personification and her descent described in Sir 24 function to enable the narrative of the *Liebesgeschichte* which, crucially, provides the imagery for the process of education.⁷²⁷ Sir 51:13-30 is the poem that reveals the theme of seeking Wisdom as a lover to be an allegory of the quest of wisdom in Ben Sira's school, particularly by using verbs with a double meaning for both his pursuit of a lover and his quest for wisdom.⁷²⁸ For example the verb דרש (explore), which has an erotic overtone in v.14, refers to the school house in v. 23 where it means "to research".⁷²⁹

Other aspects of the love story include the discipline that is required of students who study the torah (Sir 4:11-18), and when they persevere, they will penetrate to the delightful secrets of wisdom.⁷³⁰ The next poem which uses imagery of the love story, drawing on vocabulary from Sir 51 and Canticles, is Sir 6:18-37. In this poem, Ben Sira uses a whole stanza to "decode" the love story as an image for acquiring an education.⁷³¹ The following poem Sir 14:21-15:10 uses the

726 Argall, *1 Enoch and Sirach*, 55-56, 72-73.

727 Ibid., 57.

728 Ibid., 66-72.

729 Ibid., 69.

730 Ibid., 57-59.

731 Ibid., 62-63.

imagery of the love song, but does not include a stanza to decode it as a metaphor for the school.⁷³²

Discussion: Argall's intriguing study elaborates one of Wisdom's manifestations, namely that in the school of the sage in conjunction with her manifestation in the torah. This approach clearly takes the human viewpoint of wisdom, which takes its point of departure in Ben Sira's schoolhouse, and it is further dependent on the presupposition that Wisdom's identification with the torah in 24:23 is the key to explain the nature of wisdom. His argument that the love story, which describes the pursuit of Wisdom, is an allegory for a disciplined approach to education, works best in chapter 51, where Ben Sira describes his own autobiographical journey with wisdom, and therefore obviously speaks about the wisdom in the human realm.

This setting cannot be transferred quite so easily to the other wisdom poems (Sir 4:11-19; 6:18-37; 14:20-15:10), and Wisdom's identification with the torah is even less clear in these poems than it is in Sir 51. Even in Sir 6:18-37, where Ben Sira allegedly uses a whole stanza to "decode" the love story as an image for acquiring an education (p.63), it is mostly sapiential methods that are listed as elements of the teaching such as the acquisition of wisdom (vv.32b, 37); "oral wisdom instruction" is presupposed as the student needs to 'incline his ear' (v.33); and he seeks the wisdom of the elders taught by discourse, parable and insight (vv.34-35), whereas the 'commandments' are not mentioned until the last line like an afterthought (v.37).

⁷³² Ibid., 63.

The next poem (Sir 14:21-15:10) elaborates on the pleasures and benefits of a dedicated pursuit of Wisdom: the ardent student is blessed (14:20); his labours are motivated by passion (14:22-27) and met by a wisdom who responds like a young bride in (15:2); he is nurtured and cared for as by a mother according to 15:2-4; she gives honour and joy in 15:5-6. The love story is not transferred to the schoolhouse and even though the *vóμος* is mentioned once in 15:1, it only forms a small part of what Wisdom has to offer and may well refer to the instructions of the sage rather than the torah.⁷³³ Thus, there is very little evidence that this poem relates the suggestion of a passionate relationship to the pursuit of an education or even obedience to the torah.

Sir 4:11-19 does not mention the torah or the schoolhouse at all. Conversely, 4:11-19 addresses other themes that deal with the nature of Wisdom, namely her near identification with God rather than her identification with the law that is taught in the school. Thus, 4:14a says that “those who serve her, serve the Holy One, and those who love her are loved by the Lord.” This theme is reinforced by the commandment to “draw near to her with all you soul and preserve her ways with all your strength” in Sir 6:26, which is clearly modelled on the *Shema* in Deut 6:5.⁷³⁴ She is the divine presence not only in the formal way of delivering God’s commandments, but in engaging her disciple with a personal touch like a parent (4:11 she addresses her students as “sons”), lover (4:12 she inspired “love”, 4:15, she admits her followers to her “inner chambers”) or teacher (4:11 “teaches”; 4:18 “reveal my secrets”). As her relationship with the disciple becomes more intimate, she is transformed from an object to be discussed in the

⁷³³ Thus Reiterer, “Verhältnis”, 112.

⁷³⁴ See also Argall, *Enoch and Sirach*, 62 and Skehan and DiLella, *Ben Sira*, 194.

third person to a subject who speaks in the first person in 4:17-19 (in the Hebrew text). Her engagement with the disciple even involves a didactic strategy: “For in disguise I will walk with him, and at first I will test him with trials” (4:17a, Argall’s translation). As Argall⁷³⁵ has observed in a side-thought, the scheme of engaging with the human in disguise to begin with is an angelophanic pattern. As has been noticed before, Ben Sira uses allusions to the ministry of angels to characterise Wisdom in other contexts, and therefore the theme of “disguise” here may well indicate that he is again making a connection with a heavenly messenger.

Thus, much of Argall’s analysis of the revealed wisdom that he is interested in sets aside the mystic figure of Wisdom by focusing on the more accessible school of the sage.⁷³⁶ The human approach to wisdom and its acquisition form an important part of Ben Sira’s instructions. It is from the human perspective that Argall perceives the Wisdom who invites the disciple like a lover as a mere personification of the wisdom taught by the human teacher. In the end, the excitement of the sage is about the investigation of the torah (p.95).⁷³⁷ This is, of course, one way to interpret Ben Sira’s wisdom poems. This interpretation relies to a fair extent on the view that Wisdom is ultimately manifested in the torah according to Sir 24:23, but the question is whether this verse is really the hermeneutical key to chapter 24, and consequently whether she is exclusively accessible for the sage in the law.

In this context, it is important to remember that the Jewish Wisdom tradition

⁷³⁵ Argall, *1Enoch and Sirach*, 59.

⁷³⁶ Ibid., 72-73, 95.

⁷³⁷ Ibid., 95.

always makes a distinction between two perspectives on Wisdom: the creative Wisdom of God and the reflective wisdom of man. The pre-existent divine Wisdom, which is involved with the creation and responsible for the cosmic order, is removed from the human grasp, but man can observe the order of the creation and learn from it to worship the creator and live according to his rules. The human wisdom that consists in this cognitive ability and due response can be controlled by human beings to a certain extent and can be taught in the school. Argall's argument that Ben Sira focuses on the human side of attaining wisdom is strengthened by the fact that Ben Sira rejects investigations of things that are too high for him (see Sir 3:21-24), and visions in particular (34:7), that remind of the apocalyptic wisdom of 1Enoch.⁷³⁸ In this way, further speculations about the heavenly Wisdom are excluded, and the attention of the reader is directed towards the manifestation of Wisdom in the setting of the school.

But the fact that Wisdom becomes manifest in the human sphere and is more easily grasped when apprehended from the human perspective, does not disprove the existence of a heavenly Wisdom. Ben Sira admires the mysterious heavenly Wisdom and describes her as far as he can grasp her.

M. Neher includes Ben Sira's book in his comprehensive study concerned with the question of the hypostatisation of Wisdom in literature leading up to the Wisdom of Solomon.⁷³⁹ He goes so far as to claim that wisdom is wholly identified with the law in Ben Sira, that all of wisdom is completely incorporated in the law, that wisdom is an ability, which can be acquired by studying the torah and leads

⁷³⁸ Ibid., 73, 250.

⁷³⁹ Neher, *Wesen*, 7.

to a godly life. Thus, Ben Sira's wisdom would be limited to a guideline to an ethical lifestyle, and it emerges that this interpretation is motivated by the goal to show that Wisdom is but an abstract ability or written law rather than an independent heavenly being.⁷⁴⁰ His argument is based on a decision to interpret the beginning of Ben Sira's wisdom hymn, Sir 24:3, as indicating a poetic personification: if Wisdom emerges from the mouth of God and covers the earth like a mist, both of these images cannot refer to an actual event, as firstly the metaphor of the "mouth of God" cannot be understood literally, and secondly, the reference is not to the creation narrated in Gen 1 and 2, but to the creative word of God of Second Isaiah.⁷⁴¹

Discussion: This analysis is not convincing. If Ben Sira uses a poetic personification to characterise his Wisdom-figure, this language is the only one available to describe a mythical reality and leaves the conclusion whether Wisdom is a heavenly being or an abstract term with the reader. After all, the same is true for metaphorical speech about God: the fact that scripture uses anthropomorphic terms, like the "word of God" or the "arm of God" to denote God's orders or powerful action does not allow the conclusion that God is not a person just because the anthropomorphic terms are used as metaphors. They simply describe a transcendent reality which cannot be grasped in a factual way, but can be conceptualised in analogy to a physical entity. Thus, the picture of Wisdom emerging from God's mouth like a mist makes her a real entity in the mystical world, who is intimately connected with God and plays a role in the creation of the world, either as fertilising moisture, or as spirit hovering over the waters⁷⁴² or as the divine word. Allu-

⁷⁴⁰ Ibid., 86-88.

⁷⁴¹ Ibid., 83.

⁷⁴² So Skehan and DiLella, *Ben Sira*, 332.

sions to both the divine word,⁷⁴³ and to the mist in Gen 2:6 are possible,⁷⁴⁴ especially since Sir 24:13-17 reinforces Wisdom's role to ensure paradisaical fertility and growth. In contrast, the text provides no further hints which relate the lengthy description of Wisdom's journey from heaven to earth to a supposed characterisation of the torah before the fifth stanza speaks about Wisdom's manifestation in the law.

The decision whether Wisdom is conceived as a transcendental being depends first of all on the perspective. When the human wisdom that is related to the written law and taught in the schoolhouse is taken as the point of departure, wisdom appears as a cognitive faculty given by God that is employed for ethical goals and for devising directives to advise in political issues. This perspective is part of Ben Sira's program and permeates his theology. From this perspective any images of the heavenly Wisdom can be interpreted as a poetical personification. However, this viewpoint covers only a part of Ben Sira's sapiential theology. His meditations on the divine origin and nature of Wisdom, her relationship to God and the human world, which constitute a major part of the wisdom poems in contrast to the passages concerned with applying wisdom to day to day life situations,⁷⁴⁵ paint her as a transcendent being in such a vivid, and varied, way, that Conzelmann speaks of a person. He claims that "[t]he denial of any mythical derivation...leaves entirely too many statements unexplained." His reading of wisdom poems like Prov 8:22ff. and Sir 24:3ff. recognises a range of meanings, including the one that Wisdom appears as a person: "Wisdom not only appears as a hypo-

743 See Marböck, *Weisheit*, 59.

744 See Sheppard, *Construct*, 22-26.

745 See Reiterer, "Verhältnis", 104-105, see also below, 6.5.1 p.293-294.

stasis but also as a Person.”⁷⁴⁶ Even if Ben Sira uses metaphorical images rather than a crisp philosophical definition to create the image of his Wisdom-figure, Conzelmann is not the only reader who gets the impression of a god-like person.

As we have seen above, a hypostasis can be defined in a range of different ways. Ben Sira’s hymn meets various requirements of these definitions, such as Frankemölle’s characterisation of the hypostases as independently acting powers of God (“eigenständige[n] Wirkungskraft Gottes”).⁷⁴⁷ Thus, Wisdom is consistently characterised as participating in the nature of God, while she appears as a separate entity, when she serves as an effective power of God where she enters the immanent human world as the divine presence in the cult, in the torah and in the personal engagement with her disciple; and her domain has a definite sapiential flavour.

Whether the term hypostasis is appropriate for Sir 24 or not is perhaps difficult to decide due to the variations in the definition. Therefore, it may be better to describe the personification of Wisdom as an anthropomorphic metaphor for a mythical person, whose precise nature eludes human grasp, and who can be manifest in the immanent world in various, more or less abstract, ways. The open question whether the portrayal of personified Wisdom rightfully reflects a transcendent being or whether it has been developed as a literary device to glorify a human ability will likely be answered by each reader according to the intensity of his own experience of Wisdom’s effective agency.

⁷⁴⁶ Conzelmann, “Mother”, 232; see also Frankemölle, *Frühjudentum*, 150-151, 181-182.

⁷⁴⁷ Frankemölle, *Frühjudentum*, 151. See also pp. 181-182 for his judgement that Wisdom can be characterised as hypostasis in Prov. 8:21-31 and Sir 24 and Sap 7:22-8:1.

6.5. *Wisdom and the Law (Sir 24:23-30)*

The theme of the hymn changes in 24:23. The autobiographical speech of Wisdom is finished, and Ben Sira begins to appraise Wisdom from the perspective of the sage in a third person discourse. It is in these last two stanzas that Wisdom is set in relation to the torah, beginning with the much quoted verse Sir 24:23:

All of this [is] the book of the covenant of God the Most High,
the law which Moses commanded us,
an inheritance for the assemblies of Jacob.

This statement has been widely understood as a straight forward identification of Wisdom with the law,⁷⁴⁸ a notion which is in competition with an appraisal of Wisdom as a dynamic entity with a personal appeal, often called a hypostasis. However, the verse sits uneasily in the centre of the poem, and it is doubtful whether it presents the climax of Ben Sira's argument. It interrupts the flow of the hymnic praise of Wisdom. In addition, verse 23 is the only tristichous verse in the hymn, which has prompted suggestions that one part may have been a later gloss adapted from Bar 4:1.⁷⁴⁹ The unspecific connection ταῦτα πάντα, which lacks even a copula, raises the question in which way Wisdom is related to the law of Moses in Sir 24.⁷⁵⁰

⁷⁴⁸ See Snaith, *Ecclesiasticus or the Wisdom of Jesus Son of Sirach* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974), 124; Skehan and DiLella, *Ben Sira*, 336, Schnabel, *Law*, 89, Otto Kaiser, *Vom offenbaren und verborgenen Gott: Studien zur spätbiblischen Weisheit und Hermeneutik*, BZAW 392 (Berlin/New York: De Gruyter, 2008), 24-25.

⁷⁴⁹ Otto Rickenbacher, *Weisheitsperikopen Bei Ben Sira*, OBO 1 (Freiburg: Universitätsverlag Freiburg, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1973), 127; see also Johannes Marböck, "Gesetz und Weisheit: Zum Verständnis des Gesetzes bei Ben Sira," *BZ* 20 (1976): 1-21, here p.8; Wilfred L. Knox, *St. Paul and the Church of the Gentiles* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1939), 60 even suggested "the whole passage" may be a "late interpolation" owing to its different understanding of wisdom.

⁷⁵⁰ See also Benjamin G. III Wright, "Torah and Sapiential Pedagogy in the Book of Ben Sira" in *Wisdom and Torah: The Reception of 'Torah' in the Wisdom Literature of the Second Temple Period*, ed. Bernd U. Schipper and D. Andrew Teeter, JSJSup 163 (Leiden/Boston: Brill,

The smallest unit of context, the fifth stanza, plainly unites Wisdom with the torah, which emerges from Wisdom's residence, the temple, like the rivers of paradise and carries life-giving wisdom in all directions. In the final, sixth stanza, the stream of wisdom reaches the school of the sage, where education is dispensed to the next generation. Many studies have been devoted to determine Ben Sira's contribution to the amalgamation of wisdom and law in Early Judaism.⁷⁵¹ For the present study, however, it is sufficient to notice that Wisdom can be manifest in the torah and in the school of the sage as well as in the cult.

6.5.1. Is Sir 24:23 the Hermeneutical Key to Ben Sira's Wisdom Hymn?

It is questionable, however, whether a general identification of Wisdom and torah is justified when the theology of the whole book is taken into consideration.⁷⁵² E. Schnabel makes a case for a complete identification in his book *Law and Wisdom* by showing formal parallelisms in the treatment of both in a universalistic, particularistic, theological, ethical and didactic realm.⁷⁵³ However, he has to admit that

2013), 157-186, here pp.163, 169. He reminds us that the verse only correlates wisdom with the torah rather than identify them, because the copula is missing. Thus, Ben Sira recurs to two distinct but compatible sources of wisdom, the sapiential tradition and the torah, in his teaching.

751 See Bernd Schipper, in Schipper and Teeter, *Wisdom and Torah*, 307-319, here, pp. 307, 315-316. See also Anja Klein: "Half Way between Ps 119 and Ben Sira: Wisdom and Torah in Ps 19" in Schipper and Teeter, *Wisdom and Torah*, 137-155; and Thomas Krüger, "Law and Wisdom according to Deut: 4:5-8," in Schipper and Teeter, *Wisdom and Torah*, 35-54, esp. p.46).

752 In favor of a general identification are Kaiser, *Gott*, 24-25, and Neher, *Wesen*, 75, 78, 86-87. Contrarily, Reiterer, "Verhältnis," 133 denies an identification. To a fair extent the discussion concerns the question whether Wisdom is wholly subsumed under the torah or whether Wisdom's universal law has priority in Ben Sira's conception. In favor of the latter see for example Marböck, "Gesetz und Weisheit" in 1976, 6, 10; Collins, *Jewish Wisdom*, 55-56, 58, 61-62; Jack T. Sanders, "When Sacred Canopies Collide: The Reception of the Torah of Moses in the Wisdom Literature of the Second Temple-Period," *JSJ* 32 (2001): 121-136, here pp. 122-124; Gerhard von Rad, *Weisheit in Israel* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1992), 316-317.

753 Schnabel, *Law*, 69-73, 79-83, 89.

one crucial trait of Wisdom, the universalistic dimension, is not an innate function of the law.⁷⁵⁴ Ben Sira only encourages a transfer of Wisdom's universalist functions to the law later on.

Further investigation shows that Ben Sira's treatment of Wisdom is based on the traditional dichotomy between God's creative Wisdom and man's reflective wisdom, which can be observed in Jewish literature from Proverbs to Philo. F. Reiterer demonstrated in his study "Das Verhältnis zwischen חכמה und תורה" that Ben Sira consistently distinguishes between two approaches to Wisdom, which he calls: "Grundlagenweisheit" (general considerations about Wisdom's origin and her relationship to God, human and cosmos) and "angewandte Weisheit" (the application of wisdom to the lived life of the sage).⁷⁵⁵

The general considerations are treated mostly in the five wisdom poems, which take the heavenly, personified Wisdom in view as God's first creation, who permeates the universe (1:1-10), and who assumes God's role of an engaging counterpart of the sages she disciples (4:11-19, 6:18-37, 14:20-15:10). She is nearly identified with God, but orientated towards the cosmos and especially Israel (24:1-22). Sir 51:13-30 confirms the author's autobiographical experience of this Wisdom throughout his career. These passages present Wisdom as pre-existent, dynamic and engaging, often in the form of a female figure.⁷⁵⁶ They are kept separate from the "applied wisdom", which is concerned with humans attaining wisdom in order to determine the right way to live. It is only in this second category that wisdom is correlated with the torah, as both Wisdom and the law play a role

⁷⁵⁴ Ibid., 80, 88, 90-91.

⁷⁵⁵ Reiterer, "Verhältnis," 104-105.

⁷⁵⁶ Ibid., 106-120.

in teaching and guiding the student in their ethical choices.⁷⁵⁷ This observation complements our conclusion that the law does not share in Wisdom's universalism or her heavenly role, and it reinforces the two different sections of Sir 24, which takes the perspective of the divine Wisdom in verses 2-22, while verses 23-33 add the sage's reflexions. Accordingly, Reiterer categorises Sir 24:2-22 as a poem concerning the "Grundlagenweisheit", while the following verses 23-33 belong to the "angewandte Weisheit".⁷⁵⁸

The other issue which is in need of further clarification is the function of v.23 in the context of Ben Sira's hymn. The unspecific connection ταῦτα πάντα βιβλος διαθήκης allows at least two ways of relating Wisdom to the law of Moses in Sir 24: if the identification of Wisdom and law in v.23 was the pivotal statement and hermeneutical key to the whole chapter,⁷⁵⁹ then all of Wisdom could be subsumed under the torah. If on the other hand, the pivotal statement is that Wisdom descended from heaven to reside as the divine presence in the temple (vv.8 and 10),⁷⁶⁰ from where she exercises her power in Israel, then v.23 only heads up the fifth stanza and Wisdom's manifestation in the torah is but one of four different expressions of Wisdom, which are described in stanzas 3-6: Wisdom works through the cult, Wisdom engages with the sages, Wisdom is manifest in the torah, and Wisdom shapes a new generation through the teachers in the schools.

Sheppard claims that the ταῦτα πάντα relates everything that has been said so far in the poem about Wisdom to the torah, in analogy to the μετὰ τούτων in v.7,

757 Reiterer, "Verhältnis," 105, 133.

758 Ibid., 106.

759 So Sheppard, *Construct*, 61.

760 So Janowski, "Weisheit," 13, 20-21.

which links the second stanza to the first, interpreting the verses about Wisdom travelling over the orbit of heaven retrospectively as her search for a homestead, and transforming her journey from heaven to earth into an allegory of a veiled torah, which accompanied Israel on their wilderness wanderings until they settled in Jerusalem.⁷⁶¹

I have argued above that the first stanza of the hymn can hardly be read as Wisdom searching for a homestead; instead, the thrust of the stanza is to identify her as closely as possible with God as she walks over the circle of heaven and through the depths of the abyss. The connective demonstrative μετὰ τούτων only connects the two stanzas loosely, as the journey progresses from Wisdom obtaining possessions in all parts of the earth to choosing her particular residence in Israel. When Wisdom descends into the immanent world, her appearance is associated with the pillar of cloud rather than with the giving of the law on Mount Sinai. This image serves to identify Wisdom with God, whose place was “in the pillar of cloud” in Exod 14:24, and the theophanic significance of the pillar of cloud is confirmed in Sir 24:10, where Wisdom, like the cloud, takes her place in the tabernacle. Therefore, she represents the divine presence rather than the law.

The imagery of tree growth in the third stanza may have multiple meanings including that of depicting the conquest of the land,⁷⁶² but it cannot be overlooked that this stanza is primarily concerned with Wisdom’s function in the temple cult – this becomes evident through the reference to the anointing oil and the incense being burnt in the tent in v.15, and also the reoccurrence of the same imagery in

⁷⁶¹ Sheppard, *Construct*, 38, 61.

⁷⁶² Ibid., 54.

the description of the ministering priesthood in chapter 50. We have also seen (chapter 6.3.) that Wisdom's priestly ministry encompasses far more than stipulating the regulation of the cult.

The fourth stanza, which introduces the theme of Wisdom's engaging involvement with the sages, is based on the sapiential images of Wisdom inviting to her feast (see Prov. 9), and the sweetness of her food. The concern with avoidance of sin and obedience only emerges at the end of the stanza in the transition to the following stanza whose theme is, finally, the torah.

Thus, the poem consists of loosely connected stanzas with individual themes, rather than the whole poem contributing to the identification of Wisdom and law. The overarching theme of Sir 24 is the journey of Wisdom from heaven to earth and into the remotest parts of Israel. The first two stanzas emphasise how closely Wisdom is identified with God, whereas after the climax in verse 10, where Wisdom becomes manifest in the historical world, she appears as God's servant mediating between God and man in different functions: first in the cult and in inspiring the sages, then, even more physically tangible in the torah, and in the figure of the teacher.⁷⁶³ Wisdom's identification with the torah is one way she becomes manifest in the world, but this is only one aspect of a far greater subject.

6.5.2. The Meaning of the ταῦτα πάντα in V.23

What is the meaning of the ταῦτα πάντα in v.23 then? The reference to the law

⁷⁶³ Wright, "Sapiential Pedagogy", 183. For the effective presence of God in the wisdom of the teacher, see also Reiterer, "Verhältnis", 124.

serves to legitimise Ben Sira's concept of Wisdom by assuring the reader that Wisdom's journey from heaven to earth is in accordance with the torah as Wisdom is taking the place of a representative of God. Ben Sira does not state that Wisdom is identified with the law, but he refers to Wisdom's descent into the immanent world with the summarising demonstrative ταῦτα πάντα in 24:23. What is likened to the covenant in Moses' book is the *inhabitatio dei*, which Ben Sira recognises in God's presence on earth among his people in the shape of his Wisdom. God's promise in Exod 29:45, at the heart of the covenant, to be Israel's God and to be with them,⁷⁶⁴ is fulfilled in Ben Sira's time by the presence of Wisdom in Jerusalem in multiple ways: Wisdom reveals God to the people, Wisdom is the divine presence that engages with the people, Wisdom keeps up the cosmic order and ensures blessings for Israel, and Wisdom also demands obedience to God's law, which she teaches in a new and convincing way by explaining the validity and benefit of God's rules, whether they appear in the shape of the cosmic order or biblical commandments.

In addition, Ben Sira shows by his choice of themes and re-contextualised phrases that his whole conception of Wisdom's history has been born out of a deep love and knowledge of the Scriptures. Ben Sira is not proposing a Hellenistic concept of philosophy, but he bases his wisdom on the Jewish torah, for the images of the divine presence at the creation (ὁμίχλη) and in the whole cosmos (γῦρον οὐρανοῦ, βάθει ἀβύσσος, πάση τῇ γῇ) suggest that the idea of God's universal cosmic presence is inherent in the Jewish Scriptures.

Thus, Sir 24:23 has three functions: it claims that God is still faithful to his cov-

⁷⁶⁴ See Janowski, "Weisheit," 19-20, for the significance of God dwelling among the Israelites according to Exod 29:45f. as central statement of the *Priesterschrift* about the significance of the sanctuary.

enant promise to be among his people. It asserts that Sira's sapiential theology, which actualises the Jewish law in the time of Hellenistic enlightenment, is a legitimate exegesis of the torah. And it forms a transition from the self-praise of the heavenly Wisdom to the human perspective of acquiring wisdom.

The key statement of the hymn is 24:10, not 24:23, because the main object of the poem is to celebrate that God is manifest in the temple and in Israel in the shape of his Wisdom, while the identification of Wisdom and law is restricted to the domain of the school house, where wisdom and law are amalgamated as the divinely inspired teaching material. Ben Sira's Wisdom, however, has another totally different dimension, being the divine presence in Israel, which takes on the personal features of God in the encounter with his people.

6.6. Conclusions: Ben Sira

The investigation of Sir 24 in the present study was motivated by the question whether the speaker of the logion Matt 23:38-39 par. (“See, your house is left to you desolate. For you will not see me from now on...”) could be resorting to a Jewish tradition that his contemporary audience as well as he himself were aware of, which identified the divine Wisdom with the divine presence in the temple. If so, the details of Wisdom’s role in the temple would be of interest for comparison with Jesus’ ministry. As a result, seven aspects of Wisdom’s presence in the temple have been established.

(1) The first two stanzas of Ben Sira’s hymn very nearly identify Wisdom with God by recontextualising images of God’s rule in the heavenly realm and his actions in Israel’s history, particularly the search for a dwelling place, to Wisdom. The prominent image which links the transcendental and immanent realm is that of the pillar of cloud. Wisdom is identified with God as the one who is enthroned in the pillar of cloud in 24:4, referring to Exod 14:24. This image is carried through to v.10, where Wisdom is installed as the resident of the “holy tent”. In conjunction with the tabernacle, the presence of the cloud as a manifestation of God’s presence in the temple (according to Exod 40:34-38 and 1 Kgs 8:10-11) is inferred by the reader. The key semantic field κατασκηνώω, σκηνή (Hebrew *יִשְׁכֵּן*), denoting God’s dwelling in the sanctuary in the Hebrew Scriptures and applied here to Wisdom, acknowledges her as the divine presence in the temple.

(2) However, as soon as the divine presence becomes manifest in the world, when

Wisdom is established in the temple, she is transformed into a servant of God, who ministers in the cult (ἐλειτουργῆσα) in a priestly role as a mediator between God and man. Her dual nature (being a manifestation of God and servant of God at the same time) resembles that of the Angel of the Lord in the Hebrew Scriptures and indeed gives her the same function of a mediator figure, appearing as a tangible immanent manifestation of God. The idea that Wisdom may be counted among the angels is strengthened by several references to the roles of angels in the Scriptures.

(3) Wisdom's priestly role in the cult is that of a true mediator, because she not only represents God to the people, but also represents the people before God. In her embodiment in the priesthood she coordinates the worship of all parts of the country, or even the world and thus contributes to maintain the proper cosmic order with the due praise of the creator in the incessant sacrifice of the *tamid* offering. However, the phrase "he [the high priest] came out from beneath the veil" in Sir 50:5 alludes to the Day of Atonement, and thus suggests that the aspect of atonement is included in the permanent priestly ministry. Correspondingly, Wisdom can be seen as offering herself up in the fragrance of burning incense in Sir 24:15.

(4) Equally, Wisdom is active throughout the country by teaching the disciples of the sages and inspiring their praise and fear of God. Wisdom uses three different ways to reach out to the students: the invisible Wisdom establishes a bond with the student through her mysterious personal appeal that is likened to the relationship with a mother, bride and hostess. Wisdom becomes manifest in the torah,

which streams out of the temple, carrying wisdom to the remotest parts of the country. And her personal appeal becomes concrete in the sage who teaches his students. The result of her dominion over the country are plentiful fruit of grace, honour and wealth.

(5) The much disputed statement in Sir 24:23 could not be understood as a straight forward identification of Wisdom with the Mosaic torah. It is important to notice that an identification can only be considered in the domain of the earthly wisdom that is available to the sage to understand God's ways and act accordingly, whereas the pre-existent personified divine Wisdom, who represents God in various ways, must be treated separately. It is also obvious that Wisdom is not solely manifest in the torah, where she enters the human world; she is equally active in the cult, and may also be thought of as embodied in the person of the teacher. Even where the earthly wisdom, taught in the school of the sage, is concerned, it cannot be simply subsumed under the torah. Wisdom and torah have a mutual impact on each other in an era where a process of amalgamation is under way, which eventually led to the rabbinic view of a pre-existent torah that assumed the traditional role of Wisdom in the creation.⁷⁶⁵ Equally, the amalgamation of wisdom and torah led to a sapientialisation of the law, transforming it from a legal corpus to a "sapiential teaching of life", designed to impact on the character formation of the student.⁷⁶⁶

(6) Some final thoughts should be given to the dispute about the personification

⁷⁶⁵ See Pirké Aboth: *The Tractate "Fathers", from the Mishna, Commonly Called "Sayings of the Fathers,"* ed. R. Travers Herford (New York: The Jewish Institute of Religion Press: Bloch Publishing Company, 1930), 87, 163.

⁷⁶⁶ See Krüger, "Law and Wisdom," in Schipper and Teeter, *Wisdom and Torah*, 35-54, here p.42-43; Stuart Weeks, "'Fear God and Keep His Commandments': Could Kohelet Have Said This?" in Schipper and Teeter, *Wisdom and Torah*, 110-118, here p.113.

of Wisdom. On one hand, it is clearly possible for many exegetes to understand Ben Sira's personification of Wisdom as a mere literary device. The same interpretative option would have been available to an ancient reader. On the other hand, Ben Sira describes Wisdom's tangible effects on the world, contributing to the notion of an agent in history: (a) She engages with her disciples as lively as if they were encountering God himself. However, she is perceived in different roles than those of God, namely that of a mother, a bride, a teacher and a hostess. (b) Her actions are characterised by many verbs that are usually restricted to human (or divine) activity. (c) Her impact on the immanent world is evident in the fruit of grace and prosperity that arise from her rule in Jerusalem. (d) She is effective in the human realm through her mediating function in the cult, through her manifestation in the law, and through the educational work of the sage.

(7) All of these functions can be seen as preparing how Jesus could understand his own role or how he could be seen by others. Indeed, Ben Sira's method of recontextualising various biblical statements about God to describe his Wisdom as divine presence in the temple could well have been reapplied by the speaker of the 'Lament over Jerusalem' to the well established Jewish Wisdom: he assembles a number of topics pertaining to the heavenly Wisdom by alluding to each by a brief phrase to transfer the role of the divine Wisdom to the speaker.

The whole complex of features ascribed by Ben Sira to Wisdom resident in the temple is mirrored by Jesus' ministry: he clearly taught all who would listen throughout the country to fear God and to respect the law in his new interpretation. He implies that he represents the divine presence in the temple in Matt 23:38 par., but his cultic function also extends to the priestly role assumed by Wisdom.

As Wisdom represents all of Israel, and is offered as a fragrance of incense in the daily sacrifice, so Jesus sacrifices himself as an atonement for all. Wisdom's dual role of representing the presence of God and serving in a priestly function, reflects that of the mediator of the Hebrew Scriptures, the Angel of the Lord. It may be far easier, and less offensive, for Jesus to adopt the role of the mediator who can embody the invisible divine presence, than to claim directly an identification with God himself, if the themes alluded to in *Logion* are read to refer to God rather than to his Wisdom (these themes are that of the sender of the prophets, the one who gathered Israel, the caring mother bird and the resident in the temple). In conclusion, Ben Sira's model of Wisdom, who not only represents God's presence in the temple, but also served in a priestly role as mediator and as sacrifice, works as a model for Jesus' ministry from several different aspects.

7. Wisdom Withdrawing from the Earth and United with the Heavenly Son of Man in the *Similitudes* of Enoch (1En 37-71)

This brief overview over wisdom traditions presented by the *Similitudes* of 1Enoch cannot be comprehensive or do justice to the many facets of the apocalyptic book. Nevertheless, some consideration must be given to the role of wisdom in this book, which was written at roughly the same time as the gospel traditions arose, and makes us aware of a contemporary concept of Wisdom that may have contributed to the composition of the “Lament over Jerusalem”.

7.1. Date and Possible Influence on the NT

The material which may be considered as a background for the JW is found in the *Similitudes* (1En 37-71), which can be interpreted to a certain extent separately from the other four parts of the book known as the Early Enoch literature that date back to the late third to mid second century BCE.⁷⁶⁷

The *Similitudes* are roughly contemporary to the emergence of the NT, either at the beginning⁷⁶⁸ or, less favoured, the end of the 1st century CE.⁷⁶⁹ While there is

⁷⁶⁷ So Knibb, “Research,” 18, Collins, *Apocalyptic Imagination*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1998), 44, 62-63, 67.

⁷⁶⁸ Nickelsburg and VanderKam, *1Enoch 1: A New Translation based on the Hermeneia Commentary*, 6 and Charlesworth, “The Parables of Enoch and the Apocalypse of John” in *The Pseudepigrapha and Christian Origins: Essays from the Studiorum Novi Testamenti Societas*, ed. Gerbern S. Oegema and James H. Charlesworth (ebook: T & T Clark, 2008), 193–242, here p.226. Matthew Black, *The Book of Enoch or 1 Enoch: A New English Edition with Commentary and Textual Notes* (Leiden: Brill, 1985), p. 187, 188-189 and Collins, *Imagination*, 178, 187-191 propose a date between 40 BC and AD 70.

⁷⁶⁹ Knibb, “Research,” 19. Milik’s older proposition that the exalted view of the Son of Man in the *Similitudes* was dependent on the presentation of the Son of Man in the gospels and was written by a Christian in the third century, has been widely rejected (see i.e. Knibb, “Research,” 23).

possibly a reference to 1En 61-62 in Matt 25:31, the Jewish book is not dependant on the gospels.⁷⁷⁰ Most likely, the *Similitudes* developed parallel to the NT. If they cannot be assumed to offer a *Vorlage* for the Son of Man concept in the gospels, they do demonstrate that it was possible for contemporary Jews to envision and accept such a figure of a heavenly Son of Man, who combined features of the Messiah and Wisdom.⁷⁷¹

The structure of the *Similitudes* is simple, comprising an introduction, three parables, and a double conclusion. The introduction in chapter 37 links the *Similitudes* with the *Book of Watchers* as the “second vision” of Enoch and characterises it as a “vision of wisdom”.⁷⁷² The book takes up themes that are known from the Early Enoch Literature such as the *Book of the Watchers*, but there are also references to biblical prophecy. Thus, the figure of the Son of Man, who appears together with the “Head of Days”, clearly elaborates on the scene in Dan 7.⁷⁷³

Regarding the relationship to the NT, there is no evidence of a literary dependency of the *Similitudes* on the gospels, and even if the *Similitudes* were written during the Herodian period, the image of the Son of Man in the gospels is probably not dependent on the *Similitudes*.⁷⁷⁴ Instead, the most likely scenario is that of a parallel development of the Son of Man figure from Dan 7 in the Jewish tradition and the gospels.⁷⁷⁵

⁷⁷⁰ See e.g. Collins, *Imagination*, 192.

⁷⁷¹ See Gese, “Weisheit,” 233-234; Collins, *Imagination*, 192-193.

⁷⁷² See Knibb, “Structure”, 124, 129.

⁷⁷³ Ibid., 124-126, 132-136 and Nickelsburg and VanderKam, *Translation based on the Commentary*, 3-5. Black, *Enoch*, 192; Collins, *Imagination*, 184.

⁷⁷⁴ Only Nickelsburg and VanderKam, *Translation based on the Commentary*, 6, think that the description of the Son of Man from 1Enoch is presumed by the gospel traditions.

⁷⁷⁵ See Collins, *Imagination*, 192.

7.2. *Wisdom in 1 Enoch*

Wisdom plays an important role in the apocalyptic vision. Although apocalyptic literature is regarded as an independent genre, which may even be expressive of an Enochic, or apocalyptic, movement, it incorporates sapiential themes in its own way of thinking.⁷⁷⁶ The title in 37:1 identifies the book as “the vision Enoch saw the second time – the vision of wisdom...” Wisdom appears mostly as an abstract concept, the cosmic order, which is revealed in the heavenly secrets shown to and the knowledge given to Enoch according to 37:4; 41:1, which determines the right functioning of heavenly luminaries, meteorological phenomena, the calendar, and also ordains the destiny of righteous and the sinners in the final judgment. However, in contrast to the conception of the sapiential literature, this wisdom is not accessible by the understanding of the sages. Instead, the heavenly mysteries are only revealed to the visionary, who is commissioned to proclaim the message. In that way, the revelation of the secrets warns humans of the imminent judgment, encourages the righteous, who suffer in the current political environment, and enables those who receive the teaching to persevere. The view of the inaccessible Wisdom is expressed in the short wisdom poem in 1En 42, which reverses Ben Sira’s delightful hymn about Wisdom’s presence in Jerusalem.⁷⁷⁷

⁷⁷⁶ See Knibb, “Research,” 25-29 for further comments on the sapiential character of 1 Enoch. He classifies the book as “revealed wisdom” (p.29) in contrast to the classic sapiential literature where wisdom is acquired by observation and instruction.

Concerning the existence of a separate Enochic movement, there are different opinions. Knibb (ibid., 29-35) thinks it is exaggerated to construct an influential group which opposed the Zadokite priesthood and later became the Essenes (as suggested by Boccaccini). Rather, the book of Enoch should be regarded as one voice among the Judaism of the 2nd cent. which consisted of a number of “overlapping approaches”(p.35). Charlesworth, “Parables,” 225 thinks that apocalyptic thought permeated most Jewish sects.

⁷⁷⁷ See Collins, *Imagination*, 179-183 and Knibb “Research,” 29.

According to 1En 42:2, Wisdom descended to earth to do exactly what she did in Sir 24, namely to dwell among humans, but she was rejected and returned to heaven to take her seat among the angels:

Then Wisdom went out to dwell with the children of the people,
but she found no dwelling place.
(So) Wisdom returned to her place
and she settled permanently among the angels.” (translation by E. Isaac)⁷⁷⁸

This chapter has often been seen as a quotation of an independent wisdom hymn inserted into the text of the parable, not only because of its style, which differs from the rest of the book, but also because the chapter interrupts the continuous flow of the argument.⁷⁷⁹ Wisdom is generally not personified in 1 Enoch, but chapter 42 clearly continues the tradition of many wisdom books to include the topic of Wisdom’s personification in a specific poem, where she not only takes action, but she is presented as a being which is ranked with and comparable to the angels.

Another role of Wisdom which is particularly instructive, is her intimate relationship with the Son of Man: Wisdom dwells in the Chosen One as in the Messiah in Isa 11:2 (1 En 49:3),⁷⁸⁰ and accordingly, the Chosen One can be designated as Messiah in 48:10. The Chosen One knows all secrets necessary to carry out just judgement as Wisdom does in Sap 1 (49:3-4; 51:3; 38:3), indeed, wisdom is plentifully available when the Chosen One appears before God’s throne (49:1).⁷⁸¹ And

⁷⁷⁸ In *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha: Vol. 1 Apocalyptic Literature and Testament*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1983), 33.

⁷⁷⁹ Knibb, “Structure”, 131: It is “widely regarded as misplaced”. Also Black, *Enoch*, 203.

⁷⁸⁰ See Schimanowski, *Weisheit*, 102-104. See p. 193-194: It is in particular the transfer of the pre-existence of Wisdom to the Son of Man, which is responsible for his exalted status.

⁷⁸¹ Daniel C. Olson, *Enoch: A New Translation* (North Richland Hill, Texas: Biblical Press, 2004), 84 connects the reference to Wisdom in 48:1 and 49:1 with 42:1-2 suggesting that personified Wisdom will return in the messianic age: “In the Messianic future, Wisdom will return, poured out like water for the thirsty.” Black, *Enoch*, 212, thinks that “Wisdom flows like water before him” in 49:1 could refer to the Anointed One as well as to God. Collins, *Imagination*, 180 also relates the wisdom poured out to the Son of Man.

the Son of Man assumes Wisdom's role of God's pre-existent companion from Prov 8, putting him in the position to reveal God's hidden wisdom (48:3, 6-7); he is even worshipped together with God (48:2-7), and like Wisdom in Sap 9:4, he sits on God's throne (51:3).

7.3. Significance for the Gospels and the "Lament over Jerusalem"

The wisdom poem in 1En 42 may be able to provide a template for Jesus' rejection. 1Enoch 42 captures the apocalyptic view of the hidden Wisdom, reversing Ben Sira's view that Wisdom dwelt as a manifestation of God's presence in the temple. This proves that there was an awareness in the first century CE Jewish society (even if this awareness was limited to a small part of the population) that Wisdom could leave her earthly dwelling place to return to heaven because humans rejected her.⁷⁸²

If the prophetic tradition had previously threatened Israel that God would reject them if they rejected him (see e.g. Jer 7:13, 24-29; Isa 66:3-4; Zech 7:13-14), and Ezekiel had actually envisioned the departure of God's glory from the temple (Ezek 10), we now know that exactly the same could be said of Wisdom: in Prov 1:24-28 she threatened to reject those who reject her, and 1 En. 42 speaks of her departure from her earthly dwelling. Thus, it is possible to interpret Matt 23:38 "your house is being left empty" as recurring to a tradition about the heavenly Wisdom.

⁷⁸² See Schimanowski, *Weisheit*, 314: He judges that the wisdom tradition which is received in the NT is generally based on the hidden Wisdom of the apocalyptic, which proclaims the judgement on those who do not receive wisdom (see Luke 11:49-51, Luke 10:21 par. Matt 11:25; Luke 7:31-3 par. Matt 11:16-19; Matt 23:37-39 par. Luke 13:34-35).

If the poem in 1 En 42 had been used by the composer of the JW, its influence may go even further than to supply another wisdom tradition, which another element of the logion may be alluding to: the structure of the whole composition resembles the way of Wisdom described in 1En 42, the descent of the heavenly Wisdom, her rejection and subsequent ascent, with Matt 23:37-38 par. applying the way of Wisdom to Jesus: in Matt 23:37-38 the notion of the heavenly Wisdom, who directed the prophets and endeavoured to gather Israel, is blended with Jesus' "I", referring at the same time to his earthly ministry of gathering God's people and representing God's presence among them. He was rejected and is now ready to depart to a place where he can no longer be seen. The last step in Wisdom's career, the final revelation of the hidden Wisdom, is implicated as Wisdom is connected with the Chosen One in 1En 48:7: she can be expected to return with the Messiah at his eschatological advent,⁷⁸³ as Jesus is expected to return as the "One coming in the name of the Lord" in Matt 23:39.

As 1En. 42 seems to be an independent tradition, which was incorporated in the parable, it is possible that both the *Similitudes* and the gospel refer to the same popular tradition of the wisdom hymn quoted in 1En 42, even if the *Similitudes* had not been known to the composer of the logion. The existence of such a popular tradition of Wisdom being rejected by man is even more plausible because such a presupposition would explain Mark's analysis of Jesus' rejection in Nazareth in Mark 6:1-6: the people are amazed at the extraordinary, powerful wisdom of Jesus ("What is the wisdom given to him?") and reject him ("... and they took offence.") Similarly, Luke 9:58 par. Matt 8:20 observes that Jesus did not find a place to dwell on earth ("The son of man does not have a place where

⁷⁸³ See Schimanowski, *Weisheit*, 313.

to lay down his head.”) This statement preserved in Q, which is formulated like the riddle of a sage, may allude to the rejection of Wisdom, if a tradition like the one quoted in 1En 42 was common knowledge, demonstrating that Wisdom was merged with the Son of Man in the gospel traditions in a parallel development to 1En 46-51.

Without being able to go into detail in this complex matter, we may notice some of the parallels between the *Similitudes* and the gospel in the treatment of the Son of Man. In both cases, the term Son of Man first of all describes the appearance of a human being (see 1En 46:1), and the impression that this term is not yet a technical term for a specific role is supported by the fact that it can be replaced by other descriptive names such as the “Chosen One” or the “Righteous One”. The Son of Man can also be identified with the Messiah in 1En 48:10.⁷⁸⁴ Matt 23:39 likewise replaces the title of the coming Son of Man by the phrase “the One coming in the name of the Lord”.

In spite of being characterised as having a human appearance at a first glance, the Son of Man is much more than a human being in the *Similitudes*. Chapters 46-51 establish the transcendent nature of the Son of Man, particularly by applying functions of Wisdom to him like her pre-existence,⁷⁸⁵ her knowledge of the cosmic secrets, her sharing God’s throne and her role in the judgement (see above).⁷⁸⁶ There are of course more aspects to the nature of the Son of Man in 1Enoch than only his link to Wisdom. Thus, M. Black observes that the Son of

⁷⁸⁴ See Collins, *Imagination*, 183-184, 192. See Gese, “Weisheit”, 232-233 for further aspects of the messianic role of the Son of Man.

⁷⁸⁵ Schimanowski, *Weisheit*, 307.

⁷⁸⁶ See Gese, “Weisheit”, 232-234 for the unification of the Son of Man figure with Wisdom.

Man assumes the role of the Servant of the Lord and the Davidic Messiah.⁷⁸⁷ Nickelsburg and VanderKam relate the Son of Man to the nearly divine (“depicted with an imagery that the early chapters of 1 Enoch ascribe to God”) or angelic being in Dan 7 (angels in Dan 8:15, 9:21, 10:5, 12:6 can be described as having the appearance of a man), to the Servant of the Lord of Isa 42 and 49, to the pre-existent Wisdom of Prov 8 and to the Davidic Messiah.⁷⁸⁸ Collins observes that figures with human features in apocalyptic visions are often angels rather than a human; he thinks that the best analogy is that of an oriental patron deity, similar to the “angelic princes” in Dan 10, which belongs to a particular location with its people, because the Son of Man, who is the heavenly counterpart of the righteous (the “*Doppelgänger*”), belongs into the transcendence throughout the Enochic visions.⁷⁸⁹

H. Gese’s study of the tradition history of the two conceptions of the Messiah and of Wisdom offers a good explanation of how the development of the Jewish conceptions of the Messiah and of Wisdom saw the two figures converge over the centuries and was destined to result in the merging of the two.⁷⁹⁰ The development of the Enochic Son of Man figure seems to take place independently of the NT without serving as a *Vorlage* for the Christology. However, at the very least, the parallel development attests the possibility that such a theology could be conceived in a Jewish environment.⁷⁹¹ If the role of the Son of Man was not yet

787 Black, *Enoch*, 189.

788 Nickelsburg and VanderKam, *Translation based on the Commentary*, 4-5. See also Collins, *Imagination*, 184 for the reference to the Son of Man in Dan 7.

789 Thus Collins, *Imagination*, 184-187.

790 Gese, “Weisheit,” 233-234.

791 See Collins, *Imagination*, 192-193. Gese, “Weisheit,” 233-234 remains undecided whether the concept of the Enochic Son of Man had been available before the rise of the synoptic tradition, but establishes how the idea of the exalted Son of Man may have been derived from OT traditions without 1 Enoch, while Nickelsburg and VanderKam, *Translation based on the Commentary*, 6 presume that the description of the son of man is presumed by the synoptic traditions.

clearly defined when the term was applied to Jesus, then the gospel texts allow us to witness how this notion accumulated meanings through links to other Jewish traditions such as that of the Messiah, Wisdom and the Servant of the Lord, parallel to the same process happening in the *Similitudes*. The Jerusalem Word, as well as Matt 11:27 par., in particular bear witness to the process of amalgamating Messiah and Wisdom themes.⁷⁹²

Three results emerge from these observations: firstly, the poem quoted in 1En 42 could well have been available to the composer of the Jerusalem Word as a pattern for Wisdom's, or Jesus', rejection and withdrawal. Secondly, the parallel development in the Jewish *Similitudes* testifies to the possibility that a Jewish composer and audience could envision and accept the merging of an exalted Son of Man with the pre-existent Wisdom. Thirdly, in conjunction with the merging of the Son of Man figure with wisdom in the *Similitudes*, the journey of the heavenly Wisdom from heaven to earth and back to her taking up residence among the angels, permits the expectation of her, or in Matt 23:39 par. Jesus', return, which allows for the inclusion of the last phrase in the logion.

⁷⁹² Gese, "Weisheit," 237.

Results: Jesus' Exalted Role in the Jerusalem Word

8. Conclusions

Having studied the rich Jewish tradition which furnishes the themes and imagery of divine representation used in the Jerusalem Word, which a Jewish composer and audience could have referred to, we can now return to the exegesis of the JW. I will suggest an answer to some of the open questions regarding the form and the dating of the logion, and particularly the identity of the divine agent who Jesus is being related to. After outlining once more the contrasting exegetical options which view Jesus either as a human envoy of God or as a divine agent, I will explain how the conflict between these contrasting aspects can be resolved in a synthesis which is based on the understanding of the divine mediator as whom we have learned to see the divine Wisdom in the Jewish tradition.

8.1. Jesus' Ministry Related to a Divine Agency in the Jerusalem Word

The JW can be read on a literal level, on which the saying can refer to Jesus' earthly ministry: On this level, Jesus is speaking as a prophet and reminding of his ministry to call Israel back to God as the last envoy. Due to Jesus being rejected God's presence is about to abandon the temple. Jesus' death, which is to remove him from the view of his contemporaries, is understood as withdrawal. He hoped to be vindicated by God at the time when the eschatological kingdom

would arrive with the Messiah-Son of Man. Understood in this way, the claim to be speaking on God's behalf could have been made by Jesus himself without stretching the imagination of his audience too much.

Multiple allusions to a divine agency, however, invite the reader to interpret Jesus' ministry as representing God's dealings with his people Israel: firstly, Jesus' mission to "gather" the children of Jerusalem under his wings is compared to the divine protection Israel received during the wilderness wanderings (Deut 32:11) and subsequently (Pss LXX 16:8; 35:8; 60:5, 62:8). Secondly, the withdrawal of the divine presence from the temple appears not only as a consequence of Jesus' rejection, but also in temporal agreement with Jesus being withdrawn from view by his death, suggesting that Jesus represents the Shekinah, God's presence in the temple. Thirdly, Jesus' ministry of gathering includes the sending of prophets and envoys to previous generations. This implication is made (a) by juxtaposing the two related activities; (b) by establishing that Jesus participates in the divine actions as he spreads out his "wings", and as he represents the divine presence. And (c), the perception that Jesus can be understood as a sender of prophets is confirmed by Matthew's editorial movement to make Jesus the sender of prophets in the present and future in Matt 23:34, in the pericope just before the JW. These envoys sent by Jesus have the same status as the previous prophets in Israel's history according to 23:29-36.⁷⁹³ Fourthly, the arrival of the "Coming One" can easily be read as a prediction of Jesus returning as the eschatological Son of Man.

Each of the four activities then allows two different interpretations, which either

⁷⁹³ See Gathercole, *Pre-existent Son*, 216-218.

portray Jesus as God's envoy or identify him as a divine agent who assumes the role of the One sending prophets, gathering Israel under his wings and representing the divine presence in the temple. For a reader of the Hebrew Scriptures the subject who sends prophets, gathers Israel and is resident in the temple is clearly God. However, those familiar with Second Temple literature would recognise that the same functions are also attributed to the divine Wisdom as a representative of God. Both options have their merits, but also their difficulties. If Jesus is to be seen in the JW as a representation of Israel's God, the question to be asked is how this representation is characterised by the saying.

8.2. Is the Divine Agent Jesus is related to in the Jerusalem Word Wisdom or God?

Beginning with the option that the composer of the Jerusalem Word had the divine Wisdom in mind as the agent Jesus is related to, we have seen three good reasons why a Jewish audience in the 1st century could have identified the divine agent as Wisdom: firstly, functions of the heavenly Wisdom were transferred to Jesus elsewhere in the NT (Matt 11:19; 23:34; 11:25-27 par.; 11:28-30 and 1Cor 8:6; Col 1:15-20). If a transfer of various functions of Wisdom to Jesus happened in the earliest church, the people who developed the concept, and those who validated it, must have possessed a knowledge of these Jewish traditions, allowing them also to recognise allusions to Wisdom's functions in the JW (see chapter 1.1. and 2.3).

Secondly, the actions of the divine agent in the Jerusalem Word concur with Wisdom's functions in Jewish traditions, where Wisdom's domain had been extended from her responsibility for the cosmic order to her involvement with life

in the historical world. I have shown that Wisdom can be perceived as inspiring prophets (Sap 7:27, see chapter 4.2.), and particularly other envoys such as the sages (Prov 1:20-33 in conjunction with Sir 24:33, see chapter 4.1.). Ben Sira had identified Wisdom as the contemporary form of God's presence in the temple and country (Sir 24:10-12, see chapter 6.2.), recording Wisdom's responsibility in the cult as well as her proactive engagement with the sages by calling, encouraging, teaching, safeguarding, inspiring and blessing her students (see chapters 6.3.-6.5.). In Sap 10, Wisdom had been characterised as the agent who carried out God's plans to save and guide the protagonists of Israel's history in the immanent world, thus participating in God's mission to gather his people by saving, guiding, teaching, blessing and inspiring them (see chapter 5.). While it has been shown that gathering the people of Israel is part of Wisdom's range of action, it can be disputed whether the image of collecting them under her wings had ever been applied to Wisdom. The nesting image only occurs once in Sir 1:15 in a reference to Wisdom,⁷⁹⁴ whereas God is explicitly presented as the eagle who carried its chicks on the wings (Deut 32:11 and Ex 19:4) and who shelters the people under his wings in Pss LXX 35:8; 60:5; 62:8. However, it can be argued that a common practice of attributing actions of God to Wisdom in sapiential theology was continued here and the image of the wings could easily have been transferred to Wisdom like other divine functions which had been appropriated to her successively. One indication of Wisdom sharing in God's activity of sheltering his people is the fact that the image of the sheltering wings is related to the shelter of the pillar of cloud, which is termed σκέπη in Ps LXX 104:39 (διεπέτασεν νεφέλην εἰς σκέπην). This term σκέπη also describes Wisdom's agency as pillar

⁷⁹⁴ See Hengel, "Beginnings of Christology," 84-85, for more related images transferred to Wisdom in Sir 14:26 and Prov. LXX 16:16.

of cloud in Sap 10:17, and is at the same time linked to the shelter of the wings in Pss LXX 35:8; 60:5; 62:8 (σκέπη τῶν πτερύγων σου). Correspondingly, the image of God carrying Israel on eagles' wings is clearly connected in Exod 19:4 with the exodus and thus with the protection and guidance offered by the pillar of cloud and fire. Therefore, the step of attributing to Wisdom the image of sheltering Israel under her wings is not big.

Finally, Wisdom was merged with the figure of the Son of Man, who was expected to appear as the eschatological ruler and judge (1En 48-49, see chapter 7.). Therefore, the divine agent in the JW could well be understood as Wisdom carrying out God's work.

Thirdly, since Wisdom was understood as an agent in history in the Second Temple era, she could serve as a model for Jesus' earthly ministry, not only as a model for his heavenly function as she does in 1 Cor 8:6. In fact, Jesus' identification with Wisdom may have been motivated by an observation of how he carried out his ministry, because Wisdom's functions listed in Matt 23:37-39 par. (casting her as a representation of God) are in close agreement with Jesus' actual ministry: Jesus had sent envoys to the villages of Galilee during his lifetime and was then perceived as sending prophets and apostles after his resurrection. Jesus acted as a teacher of wisdom, endeavouring to bring the Israelites back to God; but his ministry exceeded that of a mere teacher, because he was able to work miracles like the divine Wisdom in Sap 10:15-20, and he called people to himself rather than to God (this is especially clear in Matt 11:28-30). In addition to his educational work, his activity of "gathering" included the aspect of saving the people, just like Wisdom's task in Sap 10. Jesus' mission to save his people included his will-

ingness to sacrifice his own life by going up to Jerusalem, even though he anticipated the rejection he would suffer; this corresponds to Wisdom's priestly function in Sir 24:10, designed to maintain the relationship between God and his people by offering sacrifice. We have seen that Wisdom could take the mediatory role of the priesthood (elaborated in Sir 50:5-12, where the priests are invested with Wisdom's plant symbolism from Sir 24:13-14), as well as that of the incense burnt in the temple (Sir 24:15). According to Sir 24:10-12, Wisdom was seen as a manifestation of God's presence in the temple, but also in the wider country where she inspired the sages (Sir 24:12, 18-33; 39:13-14). Correspondingly, Matt 23:38 par. associates Jesus with God's presence in the temple, whilst he was mostly active by teaching the lay people who came to him from all over the country.

Thus, the claim that the Jerusalem Word refers to Wisdom's agency is not based on a quotation of an assumed wisdom tradition, which had personified Wisdom deliver a prophetic doom oracle. The reference to Wisdom is owed to the four allusions to wisdom motifs which constitute the saying, and to the fact that the audience was predisposed to accept an identification of Jesus with Wisdom. In the Palestinian environment, the view that Jesus had assumed Wisdom's role as agent in Israel's history may have been based on the observation of Jesus' actual performance of his ministry, which resembled Wisdom's functions in many ways. It therefore does not create a difficulty that the saying lacks an introductory formula which marks the words as a quotation, and it is no problem that we cannot ascertain whether the JW had originally followed the doom oracle of Q 11:49-51 in the source of the synoptics.

These considerations also help with the dating of the JW. Thus, the JW bears witness to a pre-synoptic tradition which represents a parallel development to the pre-Pauline tradition in 1 Cor 8:6, which had transferred Wisdom's *Schöpfungsmittlerschaft* to Jesus. The transfer of Wisdom's roles seems to have happened independently in the Pauline and synoptic tradition, because they apply very different roles of Wisdom to Jesus, and both may be based on a common notion that had already related Jesus' messianic role to the divine Wisdom. We have no access to the origin of that conception, but it must have been well established before Paul wrote to the Corinthians. As the Jerusalem Word is based solely on Jewish traditions and the culmination of Jesus' earthly ministry in Jerusalem, it could have been composed at any time between Jesus and the gospel source Q.

There are good reasons, then, to understand the divine agent in the JW, to whom Jesus is being related, as Wisdom. However, there are also reasons why the divine agent whose role Jesus takes cannot simply be equated with Wisdom: (a) Jesus is not expressly identified with Wisdom, either in the 'Lament' or elsewhere in the NT. (b) Jesus cannot be conceptualised as an incarnation of Wisdom because we cannot be confident that Wisdom was understood as a divine being in the Jewish tradition: while certain passages in Second Temple literature make Wisdom appear like a heavenly being that can be separated from God himself, the conception stays rather vague and fleeting: sapiential texts allow readings, which perceive Wisdom either as a divine being, albeit always invisible, or as a new way, or instrument, of God to engage with the world. It is therefore better to work with a concept of Wisdom, which is more clearly endorsed by the Jewish literature:

Wisdom is a manifestation of God in the immanent world, which is perceived as a tangible power acting in its own way.

If the trans-historical agent in the JW cannot be directly identified as Wisdom, he can neither be simply identified with God, because that would raise the claim that Jesus was a manifestation of God himself. However, both Matthew's gospel and his source view him as a representative: Matthew primarily designates Jesus as the Son of God, while the final clause of the pre-Matthean logion identifies him as the "One Coming *in the name of the Lord*".

Therefore, the Jerusalem Word is best understood as combining a reference to both, God and Wisdom: Jesus is a representative of God *like* Wisdom. In that way, Jesus appears as a representative of God rather than of Wisdom, but he is only a representation rather than being identified with God.

8.3. Wisdom as a Representative of God Like the Angel of the Lord

It has become clear that the reason why both God and his Wisdom can be seen as the divine agent in the Jerusalem Word is that Wisdom's functions overlap with God's actions in the Jewish tradition. It is far more important, however, *why* Wisdom appears to be interchangeable with God, and that is because Wisdom is conceptualised as a representative of God, who carries out God's work in the immanent world. She is virtually identified with God when God's attributes and actions are transferred to her in Prov 1:20-33; Sir 24:3-12; Sap 7:21-25; Sap 10. But at the same time, Wisdom is an envoy or servant of God, who must be seen as a separate, subordinate agent. Thus, Sir 24:10 speaks of Wisdom serving

before God in the holy tent, and Sap 7:25 designates Wisdom as an emanation from God. In her dual nature Wisdom is characterised exactly like the previously known mediator who made God's presence tangible or visible in the immanent world, namely the Angel of the Lord. When Sir 24:4, 10 and Sap 10:17 associate and identify Wisdom with the pillar of cloud – the visible appearance of the Angel of the Lord during the wilderness wanderings – the two are identified as different shapes of the divine agent who represents God's presence tangibly in the world. This is the representative of God Jesus is identified with in Matt 23:37-39 par., and in the two layers of meaning of the logion, Jesus, like Wisdom and the Angel of the Lord, can be nearly identified with God, and at the same time appear as an envoy in his earthly ministry.

8.4. *Jesus as the Divine Mediator*

Therefore, Jesus is not conceived as an incarnation of Wisdom, not as a human representative of YHWH and not as an epiphany of God. Rather, he is presented as a manifestation of the divine presence in analogy to Wisdom. Jesus, as the final appearance of Israel's divine mediator, is the "Emmanuel", the God with us, as whom he is recognised in Matt 1:23.

This analysis is supported by the form of the saying. It does not really conform to the pattern of a prophetic doom oracle, because it lacks an introductory formula. Instead, the form of the Jerusalem Word resembles the composition of the Wisdom poems in Sir 24 and Sap 10 very closely. Just as Ben Sira and Pseudo-Solomon had composed a 'biography' of Wisdom⁷⁹⁵ by recontextualising phrases and themes that had originally pertained to God, so Matt 23:37-39 par. transfers

⁷⁹⁵ Similarly, Sheppard, *Construct*, 51, speaks of Wisdom's "autobiography" in Sir 24.

divine activities to Jesus. Just as Sir 24 and Sap 10 had identified Wisdom as God's agent, so Matt 23:37-39 par. presents Jesus as the mediator. Just as Sir 24 and Sap 10 had characterised Wisdom as the divine mediator, who had previously appeared as the "Angel of the Lord", by investing Wisdom with the symbolism of the pillar of cloud, so Matt 23:37-39 par. presents Jesus as the mediator by employing phrases that not only identify him with God, but also invest him with functions of Wisdom and, more subtly, with the divine wings that may represent the shelter offered by the pillar of cloud.

The identification of Jesus with the previous divine representatives of God, Wisdom and the Angel of the Lord, underpins a proposition like that of A.T. Hanson, which asserted that in the view of NT authors, Jesus had already been present at events in the OT history, claiming that Jesus' ministry was a trans-historical ministry, which not only took effect in his involvement with the sending of prophets as in Matt 23:37 par., but especially in supporting Israel in form of the protective cloud or the rock during the exodus.⁷⁹⁶ Tracing the tradition history of the divine manifestations which appeared in form of the Angel of the Lord in the pillar of cloud and in form of the divine Wisdom explains the reasoning of the earliest Christian theologians who realized that Jesus could be understood as the latest manifestation of the ever new revelations of this divine mediator.

Seeing that the 'divine mediator', who represented God on earth, could be manifest in different shapes throughout the ages, sometimes as the elusive, rather abstract Wisdom, but sometimes as the visible, even anthropomorphic Angel, facilitates the conception that Jesus appeared as a new manifestation of this divine figure, because it helps to address two of the reservations against identi-

⁷⁹⁶ See Hanson, *Jesus Christ*, 7, 12, 172.

fying Jesus with Wisdom: one of these reservations concerns the feminine character of personified Wisdom, which is difficult to reconcile with her appearance in the person of Jesus. This issue is overcome when Jesus is related to the divine mediator, whose gender cannot be determined, if he/she even possesses gender, as the mediator can evidently be encountered in the human apprehension either as Wisdom, who tends to be conceptualised as the feminine figure of 'Lady Wisdom', or as the Angel of the Lord, who had appeared at times in a masculine role. The other reservation had been that despite Jesus being portrayed in Wisdom's role, he is never explicitly identified with her in the NT. However, if the divine Wisdom is primarily a functional appearance of the divine mediator in the texts we examined, we understand why she could recede into the background in the NT before the overwhelming insight that Jesus, who was experienced as the final, decisive appearance of the divine mediator, had been with God from the beginning. This means that the divine Wisdom who was understood as assisting God with the creation as well as with sending prophets and safeguarding Israel throughout their history, could be understood as one way the pre-incarnate Son of God had ministered to God's people in this world.

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