

Mark J. Boda, Russell L. Meek, and William R. Osborne, eds., *Riddles and Revelations: Explorations into the Relationship between Wisdom and Prophecy in the Hebrew Bible*, London: T&T Clark, 2018. ISBN: 978-0-5676-7164-6. Pp. 306. €95.00/\$130.00.

- [1] This book is intended to provide new insights about the relationship between wisdom and prophecy by clarifying the methodology of the research, expanding the research to the literature of the entire Near East, and indicating further areas to be investigated. The volume consists of three main parts (methodology, influence of wisdom on prophecy, and influence of prophecy on wisdom), responses, and indices, as well as a bibliography covering twenty-two pages (269–90). In a short review, of course, I will not be able to do justice to all interesting contributions included in the volume, so I have chosen only a few examples to give a reader a sense of what is going on.
- [2] The first part of the book concerns methodology. It consists of five contributions. In these contributions, the problem of defining the category of “wisdom” comes to the fore. In particular, contributors argue that too wide and too narrow of definitions are both to be avoided because these would deem the whole investigation futile. If we take too narrow a definition, too many texts are excluded from a “wisdom category”; if it is too broad a definition, the influence of wisdom can be equated to the broad aphorism that “someone is not a fool” (12). Will Kynes doubts the usefulness of wisdom as a category at all, stating that the threefold categorization of wisdom as (1) literature; (2) tradition and movement; and (3) approach to reality (introduced by Crenshaw and followed by Meek in this volume) is “completely impractical” (20). Kynes also poses two quite intriguing questions: (1) Is the category of wisdom more of a hindrance than a help? and (2) Is form criticism the best starting place? He argues that the category of wisdom is a modern construct¹ and that the results of form-criticism can no longer be considered solid. By stating these, Kynes attempts to take the wind out of the sails of scholars who attempt to define a wisdom genre. Kynes then suggests reversing the method; that is, start with the textual allusions and end with the questions about genre, as the latter is “the most subjective step” (28).
- [3] The second part of the volume, also consisting of five contributions, scrutinizes the possible influence of wisdom on the prophets. I will briefly discuss the contributions of Leslie C. Allen (concerning the book of Jeremiah) and Daniel C. Timmer (concerning the Book of the Twelve). Allen looks at the words “wisdom” (חכמה) and “wise” (חכם) as they appear in Jeremiah. The main block that includes these terms in Jeremiah are chapters 7–10, but there are also five instances where the topic is both first anticipated and then reiterated (Jer 4:22; 18:18; 49:7; 50:35; 51:57). Allen explores the possible relationship of these terms to the main theme of the block, exile. He also comments on the links between wisdom and the notion of “falsehood” (שקר). At the end of the essay, Allen points out the possible echoes of this Jeremiah’s text in 1 Cor 1:31 and 2 Cor 10:17.
- [4] Timmer, in turn, is interested in establishing the level of correspondence between wisdom literature and the Book of the Twelve. He uses a semantic analysis that goes beyond

¹ Kynes puts it strongly (12), alluding to Mark Sneed’s comparison of wisdom to pornography. He says that speaking of the modern category of wisdom and its influence on the prophets “is like developing a methodology for determining the influence of pornographic literature on the prophets and starting with modern Western intuitive ideas of what might make up the pornographic literature” (24).

the “surface features” (151). Timmer, like Allen, leaves aside questions about the historical settings of the texts. As his first text case, Timmer takes up the theme of human behavior, human well-being, and God’s justice in Job and Habakkuk and then moves on to Nahum. Timmer observes that the lament of Hab 1:2 closely resembles that of Job 19 and also that both books appear to have a similar structure, finishing with a theophany. He argues that the similarities between these two books are not based on “isolated wisdom elements” but are integral to all the parts of the books, and he thinks that this “semantic or conceptual intertextuality” (158) is much more important. As far as the book of Nahum is concerned, Timmer observes that its structure is the reversal of Job and Habakkuk, but this book deals with the same problem. All of these books focus on the full realization of God’s justice in the future, of which they are informed through revelation, although the present aspect also occurs in the three books (especially in Job).

- [5] The third part of the volume discusses the influence of prophecy on wisdom literature, which is probably less explored by scholars than its reverse (wisdom → prophecy). It includes four contributions. An interesting example is Richard Schulz’s attempt to reevaluate the possible influence of Isaiah on the Ecclesiastes. Schultz assesses the two following scholarly suggestions regarding this relationship: (1) that Eccl 12:1–8 neutralizes the eschatological language of Isaiah by mixing a cosmic perspective with an individual one (2) and that Eccl 1:3–11 alludes to crucial aspects of the apocalyptic vision in Isaiah and reorganizes it. Schultz mentions that, if we locate Ecclesiastes in Jerusalem, the thematic overlap with Isaiah is understandable. Both texts use terminology related to last judgment (משפט), “evil day” (יום רעה), “meaninglessness” (הבל), and “woe oracles” or present the injustice in Israel as the result of a guild of incompetent leaders, described pejoratively as boys (נער). Moreover, Schultz states that prophetic books, in general, are probably the most likely source for such terms (201). However, Ecclesiastes recasts the view in a more individual perspective, while Isaiah presents a cosmic one. It is worth noticing that, while discussing terminology, Schultz also presents the reasoning why the more probable vector is the influence of Isaiah on Ecclesiastes and not the reverse. The matter is very complex and readers should have a look at the passages themselves. After that, the author opines critically on several interpretations regarding the possible reorganization of material in Ecclesiastes—proposals about deconstruction, reconstruction, ambiguation (by Jerome Daglas, Thomas Krüger, Leo Perdue, Gregor Reichenbach). At the end, Schultz states that the influence exerted is probably less extensive than scholars wish to admit.
- [6] The fourth part consists of three short but interesting responses that stimulate a reader to reflect further on the issues raised in the volume.
- [7] Overall, *Riddles and Revelations* is a thought-provoking volume and indispensable reading for all interested in the subject. It can also be of wider use, especially for scholars working on the mutual relationships/influence/allusions between any ancient texts. By showing how difficult and complex the relationship between wisdom and prophecy is, the book fulfills its goal. After reading this volume, I feel more aware of the problems involved in the subject; hopefully, the book will encourage others to more careful and methodologically clearer analyses in the future. In this light, minor identifiable mistakes (such as several wrong page numbers in the table of contents and inconsistency in providing Hebrew words sometimes with and sometimes without vocalization) do not diminish the merits of this piece of scholarship.

List of Contributions

Methodology

1. Russell L. Meek, "Prophet and Sage in Dialogue: History and Methodology," pp. 3–18.
2. Will Kynes, "Wisdom" as Mask and Mirror: Methodological Questions for 'Wisdom's' Dialogue with the Canon," pp. 19–29.
3. Mark Sneed, "Methods, Muddles, and Modes of Literature: The Question of Influence between Wisdom and Prophecy," pp. 30–44.
4. Stuart Weeks, "Overlap? Influence? Allusion? The Importance of Asking the Right Questions," pp. 45–54.
5. John W. Hilber, "The Relationship of Prophecy and Wisdom in the Ancient Near East," pp. 55–72.

Wisdom among the Prophets

6. Eric Ortlund, "Spiritual Blindness and Wisdom Tradition in the Book of Isaiah," pp. 75–94.
7. Leslie C. Allen, "The Structural Role of Wisdom in Jeremiah," pp. 95–108.
8. William R. Osborne, "Wisdom Gets 'Tyred' in the Book of Ezekiel," pp. 109–123.
9. Andrew E. Steinmann, "Daniel as Wisdom in Action," pp. 124–46.
10. Daniel C. Timmer, "Where Shall Wisdom be Found (in the Book of the Twelve)?," pp. 147–63.

Prophecy among the Sages

11. Ryan O'Dowd, "A Prophet in the Sage's House? Origins of the Feminine Metaphors in Proverbs," pp. 167–81.
12. Martin A. Shields, "You Can't Get a Sage to Do a Prophet's Job: Overcoming Wisdom's Deficiency in the Book of Job," pp. 182–98.
13. Richard Schulz, "Was Qohelet an Eschatological or an Anti-Apocalyptic Sage? Hebel, the Evil Day, and Divine Judgement," pp. 199–214.
14. Timothy Johnson, "From Where Should Apocalyptic be Found? The Book of Job as Key to von Rad's Theory," pp. 215–32.

Responses

- Katharine J. Dell, "Response on Methodological Matters Regarding Wisdom Influence and on the Relationship between Wisdom and Prophecy," pp. 235–47.
- Mark J. Boda, "Wisdom in Prophecy: A Response," pp. 248–58.
- Tremper Longman III, "Prophecy and Wisdom: Connections, Influences, Relationships," pp. 259–68.

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