



Reviews of the Enoch Seminar 2014.04.06

Bernd U. Schipper and D. Andrew Teeter, eds., *Wisdom and Torah: The Reception of 'Torah' in the Wisdom Literature of the Second Temple Period. Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism 163.* Leiden: Brill, 2013. Pp. 338. ISBN: 978-90-04-25332-2. Paper. €114 / \$148.

**Elisa Uusimäki
University of Helsinki**

The relationship between wisdom and Torah in Second Temple Judaism continues to fascinate scholars—and not surprisingly, given the centrality and vast influence of these two concepts in the intellectual culture and literatures of that period. The recent volume *Wisdom and Torah: The Reception of 'Torah' in the Wisdom Literature of the Second Temple Period* forms the most substantial collection of articles written on the topic thus far. The editors, Prof. Bernd U. Schipper from the Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin and Prof. D. Andrew Teeter from Harvard Divinity School, have put together a book with thirteen rich and detailed essays in addition to an introduction by the editors and an afterword by Schipper. The papers were originally presented in an international symposium held in Berlin in September 2011 and funded by the German Research Council as a part of the research project “Discursive Wisdom.”

The book's articles provide the reader with a fairly comprehensive analysis of wisdom and Torah in Second Temple Judaism, both within and beyond the so-called wisdom corpus. Many of the texts are familiar for those who have spent some time studying wisdom and Torah, but it is a pleasant surprise to find that some unforeseen approaches have been included as well.

The volume begins with an analysis of the evidence for the Hebrew foundations of the phenomenon; articles by Reinhard Müller and Thomas Krüger examine the Book of Deuteronomy, often regarded as the first locus of the wisdom and Torah discourse in the Hebrew Bible. The authors have chosen to study two particular passages: Müller examines Deuteronomy 16:19–20 as a test case in order to analyze wisdom and Torah in Deuteronomy, and shows how in these verses, wisdom tradition has been used but yet critically transformed and subordinated to Torah within the literary horizon of Deuteronomy. The concept of wisdom is present in the passage, but it refers to a human and self-acquired skill which is regarded as inferior to the pursuit of righteousness, including the keeping of divine commandments. Krüger, on the other hand, studies Deuteronomy 4:5–6 which is the most famous passage of Deuteronomy with respect to wisdom and Torah. He argues that even if the laws and rules are associated with ideas

that derive from wisdom instruction, this text is not “a fundamental position statement” (cf. p. 3) about the relationship between wisdom and Torah, because its actual focus is on how the other nations recognize and accept Israel’s obedience to the Mosaic Law. However, Krüger retains that this passage initiated further reasoning and interpretation about the relationship. It should also be noted that intriguing reflections on the extrabiblical (non-Israelite) horizons of Deuteronomy 4:5–6 are offered (pp. 48–51).

The next three essays concentrate on the wisdom literature of the Hebrew Bible *par excellence*: Proverbs, Job, and Qoheleth. Bernd U. Schipper argues that although the identification of wisdom and Torah is not explicit in the final form, the Book of Proverbs displays several concepts of wisdom as well as passages with biblical allusions that mirror the reception of Deuteronomy. The close reading of Proverbs indicates that the authors behind the book had different theological views about wisdom and Torah and that debate affected its redaction process, even though a reduced notion of wisdom as an everyday concept seems to prevail in the end. Markus Witte, for his part, asks whether the Book of Job and Torah have anything to do with each other; the question is worthwhile since the Hebrew term ‘Torah’ appears only once in Job (Job 22:22; *pace* Witte who writes on p. 82 that it does not appear at all). Despite the lack of explicit interest in Torah, Witte argues that the different strata of Job—the latest of which come close in date to Ben Sira and Baruch—reflect both a debate about how God can be understood and a critical engagement with the theology of Deuteronomy, a process which could also be characterized as “a critical appropriation of the Torah in the realm of wisdom” (p. 98). Third, Stuart Weeks pays attention to the last two verses of the epilogue of the Book of Qoheleth (Qoh 12:13–14) with regard to their function in the book as a whole. He argues that in principle, the Torah piety of the final verses is not incompatible with the rest of the content. However, although there is nothing with which the main author would definitely have disagreed, it is unlikely that he would have written the epilogue, since the expressions and formulation involve elements foreign to him. According to Weeks, the epilogue may have been intended to provide students with an invitation to approach the teaching critically, and to give it a perspectival frame.

Karin Finsterbusch and Anja Klein study two wisdom- and Torah-related psalms known from the Hebrew Bible (see more below on D. Andrew Teeter who addresses psalms from the Dead Sea Scrolls). Finsterbusch analyzes selected stanzas of Psalm 119 and shows how the first person perspective, which she calls the “praying I,” has an integrative function in the psalm: it is a means to give a voice for multiple “persons” that address aspects of Torah in different situations and circumstances, but all point to the centrality of Torah in life. This literary technique unites the numerous possibilities of understanding the concept of Torah in Hellenistic Judaism. Klein, for her part, examines Psalm 19 in the light of innerbiblical exegesis. The association of wisdom and Torah is similar to that found in Psalm 119, which Klein regards—against many other scholars—as “a literary predecessor for the Torah conception of Psalm 19” (p. 143). Psalm 19 initiates the discussion about creation and its relationship to Torah as well. Klein argues, therefore, that the self-praise of wisdom in Proverbs 8 affected the observable exegesis of Psalm 119 in Psalm 19. Her other main point is that Ben Sira, who explicitly brings the themes of creation and Torah together, should be seen as a later heir of ideas that were presented in Psalm 19.

The two essays on Ben Sira and Baruch, written by Benjamin G. Wright and Sebastian Grätz, respectively, focus on texts that are of primary importance for the present topic since the engagement with wisdom and Torah is explicit in both. Because several studies have been written on Ben Sira 24 with its well-known identification of wisdom with Torah, Wright acknowledges that hardly anything new can be said on this section anymore. He wisely chooses a different approach and discusses the questions of Torah and sapiential pedagogy more broadly. Wright asks what Torah and Torah piety mean in the context of Ben Sira and considers the author's pedagogy in relation to Torah. The end result is an informative article with incisive observations on Ben Sira's rather extensive approach to Torah; the author clearly associates the Hebrew concept of Torah with Mosaic Torah, but its exact meaning remains malleable, and Torah represents no more than one of many sources for wisdom pedagogy. In his essay on the Book of Baruch, Grätz similarly asks a wider set of questions; his discussion is not limited to Baruch, but takes into consideration the broader context. Grätz examines Baruch's deliberate reception of ideas that originate from Deuteronomy and shows the text's exclusivist idea of Torah as the only source of wisdom for Israel; the wise person is portrayed as a scribe learned in Torah. In the latter part of the article, Grätz compares this programmatic statement to ideas presented earlier in Ezra-Nehemiah as well as to those found in roughly contemporary Alexandrian literature (Aristobulus and the *Letter of Aristeas*).

The three following essays deal with aspects of the Dead Sea Scrolls. William A. Tooman takes a look at the wisdom texts from Qumran and focuses on selected parts of two fragmentary manuscripts, *4Q Sapiential Work* (4Q185) and *4Q Beatitudes* (4Q525). Of all the Scrolls, the relationship between wisdom and Torah is most apparent in these compositions (esp. 4Q185 frgs. 1–2 i–ii; 4Q525 frgs. 2 ii+3) that are still fairly unknown among the wider community of biblical scholars. The outline is thus justifiable, although some other finds could have shed light on the question too. Second, D. Andrew Teeter offers a worthwhile perspective on the overall research question as he compares two formally diverse texts, *Jubilees* and *11QPsalms^a* (11Q5), both of which are relevant in regard to wisdom and Torah but rarely receive attention from this point of view. Teeter integrates the question of rewritten scripture and demonstrates how these two texts go beyond coordinating wisdom and Torah; the concepts become fused when the authors read Torah against a wisdom-influenced interpretative lens and apply the past tradition to contemporary interests. Third, Reinhard Kratz explores the phenomenon of rewriting as well in his comparison of two sets of legal texts: the Covenant Code (Exod 20–23) and Deuteronomy on the one hand, and the *Community Rule* (S) and the *Damascus Document* (D) on the other. Kratz observes a strong continuity between rewriting which takes place in the “biblical” and “extra-biblical” corpora, and suggests that in the self-understanding of the growing tradition, which makes a claim for continuity and authority, “rewriting within and outside the Bible is meant to be Torah” (p. 289). Particularly, the rule documents from Qumran attest to the influence of wisdom traditions in their Torah piety.

The last essay on *nomos/nomoi* in the Wisdom of Solomon, written by Joachim Schaper, is the only one dedicated solely to a Greek Jewish text. Schaper rejects the idea of an amalgamation of wisdom and Torah in the Wisdom of Solomon, but demonstrates how the text still merges concepts from different biblical strata into its wisdom framework. Wisdom and Torah are also correlated as the addressee is encouraged to both search for wisdom and keep Torah.

In his reflections of the epilogue, Schipper draws together various perspectives presented over the course of the book. In particular, he reviews Moshe Weinfeld's famous thesis about Deuteronomy's connection to the wisdom tradition as well as its scholarly reception. Schipper concludes that despite the problems related to Weinfeld's argument, he "pointed in the right direction and broke the ground for a paradigm shift" (p. 317). In addition to the wisdom influence found in Deuteronomy, Schipper addresses the impact of Deuteronomy on the later textual production, to the extent that in Hellenistic Judaism it became "a standard of theological reference" (p. 315). He reiterates how the cases studies of this volume indeed offer evidence for how the Deuteronomic/Deuteronomistic theology continued to influence the theology of Second Temple wisdom texts in complex and numerous ways.

Overall, *Wisdom and Torah* consists of carefully written, close readings of ancient Jewish texts, as well as a few articles that address some broader phenomena related to Second Temple Judaism and its literature, such as rewriting (Teeter and Kratz) or the character of Torah-oriented wisdom teaching (Wright). The conscious and commendable aim of the editors has been to deconstruct still existing but unnecessary and unhelpful disciplinary and canonical boundaries such as those between biblical studies and Qumran studies, because such boundaries "tend to obscure the profound continuities that exist between the formation of scriptural compositions and the thought forms, interests, concerns, and orientations represented in other literature of the period" (p. 1; see also p. 307). This outlook has borne fruit: the arrangement of essays is considerate and justifiable insofar as the table of contents does not contain anachronistic subtitles that would reflect later canonical boundaries. Rather it begins with the earliest Jewish evidence for the phenomenon, found in Deuteronomy and elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible, and then moves on to the later material.

Even if the way of presentation is deliberate, it is true that the majority of essays nevertheless concern texts known from the Hebrew Bible or the Septuagint, with the exceptions of three essays on the Dead Sea Scrolls. Perhaps a bit more could have been said, therefore, about the selection of material: why was a specific text included in or excluded from the analysis? Against the subtitle of the book, the articles do not focus merely on the so-called wisdom literature. The editors separately acknowledge the integration of Deuteronomy (p. 2), but grounds could also have been given for the inclusion of other non-wisdom texts (psalms, *Jubilees*, and legal texts). The reader is left to wonder about the exact criteria for choosing the corpus, especially since there would have been other early Jewish texts that did not end up in the Jewish and Christian canons but take part in the wisdom and Torah discourse (see, e.g., the works addressed in Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Law and Wisdom from Ben Sira to Paul*. WUNT II/16. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1985). Another feature that reflects (probably unintentionally) later canonical boundaries is the occasional employment of terms such as "postbiblical" that are highly problematic in the context of Second Temple Judaism and should be used only with critical remarks if at all.

A general remark can be made on the treatment of the central concepts of the book, wisdom and Torah, which also appear in its title. The complex and multifaceted character of wisdom in Second Temple Judaism is highlighted in a meritorious way many times. It is consequently easy for the reader to grasp the real oxymoron of giving any simple and all-encompassing definition for this concept, phenomenon, and tradition which covers diverse intellectual currents and

flourished for centuries in ancient Judaism. However, there is less critical reflection on the other central concept of the book, that is, Torah. Many authors even identify Torah with Law without hesitation, although such a reductive interpretation is far from unambiguous in terms of Second Temple writings composed in Hebrew. There are welcome exceptions of course: especially the essay of Finsterbusch sets out the difficulty of defining ‘Torah’ and treats it in a creditable way with regard to Psalm 119, while Wright does the same for Ben Sira and Schipper addresses more generally essential questions related to Torah in his epilogue (note also Teeter’s substantial footnote on p. 233). Even so, the exact meaning(s) of the concept—ignored by many authors—deserved to be discussed critically and in more detail in the book as a whole, since the treatment of the major concepts, wisdom and Torah, now remains somewhat unbalanced.

All the authors who have examined some aspect of the relationship between wisdom and Torah must be commended for their meticulous work which supplements the previous scholarship and frequently provides new points of view. The intentional integration of the Dead Sea Scrolls to a study which mostly concerns the evidence of the Hebrew Bible and the Septuagint is also significant, since there is no single reason to exclude them from the study of early Judaism. In the future, this rich volume will hopefully inspire scholars to continue the exploration of the wisdom and Torah discourse in ancient Judaism, for example, by extending the analysis to the Jewish corpora other than the Hebrew Bible, the Septuagint, and the Dead Sea Scrolls, or by paying closer attention to what is meant by the concept of Torah in the Second Temple period.