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Wisdom and Law in Old Testament Wisdom Literature

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[In this article the author shows how the Jewish understanding of wisdom and law changed, especially in the intertestamental period. Wisdom, under the influence of Hellenistic thought, became almost a personal mediator between God and man, although it had originally been used to describe a certain style of living. The word "law" also underwent a change from its first meaning of guidance, to a later meaning in Deuteronomy of "the revelation of Yahweh's will to Israel," to the final identification of law with wisdom as the mediator between God and His creation, including especially man.

In the final paragraph, Dr. Sauer points out how Paul presented Jesus Christ as the fulfillment of all the enigmatic statements about wisdom in the Old Testament and the intertestamental literature. "Jesus Christ," he writes, "is the wisdom of God incarnate, the ultimate revelation of God's will for man."

Dr. Sauer's analysis of this historical development is of interest not only to the scholar but also to the parish pastor, who has the final responsibility for making theology workable and useful. For example, the article underscores man's ancient need for some kind of mediatorship between himself and the holy God. Has modern man succeeded in ending this need that marked all his ancestors? Paul's use of these key Jewish concepts to serve the purpose of preaching Christ will remind the pastor of his own freedom to plunder all the riches of contemporary society and to place them in the service of kerygmatic proclamation, after dusting them carefully.

New forms, new theological phrases and concepts will be created and accepted when they clearly relate to and enhance our understanding of God's final wisdom and law, His Son, Jesus Christ. The parish pastor will find freedom to form and re-form the Word of God for his people and their needs so that he can shoot the birds that are flying around in his parish.

The study can be used as a study group discussion to illustrate the changing meaning of Biblical words and concepts, and to demonstrate how God's revelation and man's understanding relate to and affect each other. God always aims His revelation at the point where man is and not at some hypothetical point of understanding that man should be occupying.

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The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate that the two key words, wisdom and law, underwent radical changes in meaning during their use in the Old Testament especially in the area of Hebrew Wisdom Literature. As wisdom meant one thing in early Old Testament times and quite another in the later period of the Old Testament, so law meant something quite different in early Israel than it did in the postexilic period and during the rise of Judaism. It appeared to this writer that wisdom and law also went their separate ways during most of the history of the wisdom movement, but that then during

the second century B. C. and thereafter they were not only joined but even identified with one another. We therefore propose to trace the use of the wisdom concept through its ancient and more recent stages noting what changes took place. Similarly we shall examine the early and late usage of the word law and look for shifts in meaning. Finally we shall observe the joining of the two streams of wisdom and law and try to determine what led to this union and what effect it had on Israel's faith.

I. ANCIENT WISDOM

It is generally recognized that ancient Israel used the word wisdom in an abstract sense to indicate a variety of skills or abilities possessed by people.¹ Joseph and Solomon are two of the outstanding wise men in early Israel. To these we need to add such practitioners of wisdom as Jethro, Balaam, Hushai, Ahithophel, and Nathan. Two wise women are remembered for their slyness and cunning. The woman of Tekoa told David that in giving a decision the king had convicted himself (2 Sam. 14:13). Another woman of Abel-beth-Maaca, when her city was besieged by Joab, counseled the inhabitants to behead Sheba, so that the city might be spared. (2 Sam. 20:22)

There appears to be little wisdom influence in the original messages of Amos, Hosea, and Micah. But Isaiah has numerous references to counsel (1:26; 3:1-3; 9:6; 11:2; 19:3; 23:8). This prophet is critical of the wise men as a ruling class, he opposes politicians in and outside of Israel who in their dependence on human

wisdom separate themselves from God. At the same time he differs from his three eighth-century contemporaries by making use of wisdom traditions. His view of the future, for example, is wisdom-oriented.²

Jeremiah is among the first to recognize the wise men as a special class of officials in Israel. They were the ones who dispensed "wisdom in a special sense," just as the priests functioned with law, and prophets operated with the word (Jer. 18:18; cf. Ezek. 7:26). But the same prophet also warned wise men, warriors, and wealthy not to glory in what they were or had, but rather to glory in the fact that they knew the Lord as their gracious God (Jer. 9:23-24). Toward the end of the seventh century wisdom came to be not merely part of the establishment, but the activity of a broader spectrum of society. The idea of wisdom was to nurture the whole man, teaching him to be cool, not excitable; patient, not angry; self controlled, not impulsive.³

Lindblom⁴ discerned differences between prophets and wise men which accounted for some of the above tensions. The prophets preached about the God-man relationship, including such themes as sin, judgment, repentance, forgiveness, salvation. The wise men, on the other hand, taught people how to find peace and happiness in their present state. While prophetic preaching concentrated primarily on God, the teaching of the wise men tended

² J. Fichtner, "Jesaja unter den Weisen," *Th. L. Z.*, 74 (January 1949), pp. 76-77.

³ Fohrer, p. 482.

⁴ J. Lindblom, "Wisdom in the Old Testament Prophets," *Supplements to Vetus Testamentum III* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1955), pp. 196-197.

¹ Georg Fohrer, "Sophia in the Old Testament," *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1971) VII, 483.

to devote more attention to men. The prophets looked primarily to people and nation, the wise men were concerned about the individual man. As soon therefore as wisdom came into conflict with the Word of God as preached by the prophets, it was straightway rejected and condemned by them. It should be noted that there are a number of later wisdom additions which have been recognized in the prophetic books (Hos. 14:9; Is. 2:22; 3:10-11; Jer. 10:23). Attention also needs to be called to a group of sayings of the wise men from the preexilic period that were not included in the wisdom books. (1 Sam. 24:13; 1 Kings 20:11; Jer. 31:29; Ezek. 18:2)⁵

II. LATE WISDOM

In contrast to this ancient use of the word wisdom to denote an aptitude that man possessed, the teachers of postexilic Israel spoke of wisdom in a hypostatic sense, they treated wisdom as a separate entity or person that stood in an intimate relationship to God. Job 28, for example, outlines man's technical skill in the use of metallurgy and the earth's resources, but it also emphasizes wisdom's inaccessibility over against the outreach of man. Hidden from all living beings, hidden from the birds, wisdom is limited to the divine arena. As man sees it, wisdom is invisible in giving the wind its weight, immeasurable in meting out the water by measure, unfixable in making a decree for the rain, unsearchable in making a way for the lightning of the thunder (Job 28:20-27).⁶

Under God's direction wisdom is the autonomous principle vis-à-vis God that has practical control over the world and its inhabitants. Wisdom is a preexistent entity, some kind of material reality that is under God and shares in His creative work.⁷

In Prov. 8:22-31, on the other hand, wisdom is like a queen mother at the court who precedes her royal son, she is preexistent and precedes creation, as in Job 28, but she does not exist next to God, rather He needs to find her. In further contrast to Job 28 wisdom in Prov. 8 is a personal being, she is herself created by God, but does not participate in His creative task. After Yahweh has acquired wisdom, she is there to give Him counsel in His creative activity, her counsel is a source of delight to Him, she in turn takes delight in the earth and its inhabitants.

In several other wisdom traditions wisdom is described as speaking with the voice of a prophet, playing a role as revealer of the divine will. This is to be noted in Prov. 1—9 and in the Elihu cycle of Job 32—37. In both of these sequences the divine will is mediated to man in the usual prophetic pattern. The fact that Elihu possesses knowledge of God entitles him to claim veritable prophetic inspiration and illumination.⁸ Habel has shown in a recent study on Prov. 1—9 that the word "way" is the key term in these chapters. He traces wisdom's way through three zones, that of early experiential wisdom, of classic covenant faith, and of late cosmic reflection.⁹

⁵ Roland E. Murphy, "The Interpretation of Old Testament Wisdom Literature," *Interpretation*, 23 (July 1969), pp. 289—301.

⁶ P. A. H. de Boer, "The Counsellor," *Supplements to Vetus Testamentum III* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1955), p. 68.

⁷ Fohrer, p. 490.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 490.

⁹ Norman C. Habel, "The Symbolism of Wisdom in Proverbs 1—9," *Interpretation*, 26 (April 1972), pp. 131—157.

The concept of personalized wisdom is complicated in Hellenistic Judaism by the fact that here Hebrew and Greek thought patterns are brought together. Wisdom in Greek indicates a quality, whereas wisdom in Hebrew has verbal overtones, it connotes a mode of conduct or activity. Ben Sirach largely follows the canonical wisdom traditions of Job and Proverbs. The preexistence of wisdom is clearly affirmed in Sirach 24:3-7, as in Prov. 8:22-31. What is new in Sirach is the fact that wisdom is presented as a feminine being who is sought out by her student as a romantic suitor and is joined by him in the joys of a marriage bond, Sirach 14:22-27. A similar marital union with wisdom is described in Sirach 51:13-30.

The Wisdom of Solomon is second only to Fourth Maccabees in bringing Hebrew and Greek thought patterns together. Personified wisdom, for example, appears no less than 29 times in chapters 1-10, while wisdom in a less personal sense occurs only twice in chapters 11-19. The reader will note especially the 21 attributes of wisdom in 7:22b-23. The idea of a union between wisdom and her student is taken up by the Wisdom of Solomon and is carried farther than it is in Ben Sirach. Not only is this a union between personalized wisdom and her student, it is also a union between wisdom and God. When the student is united with wisdom, this repeats in a mystical way God's own union with wisdom. The idea of union is also related to the idea of revelation. Through her union with God wisdom becomes His medium of revelation. Whoever comes to know wisdom through his union with her qualifies at the same time to become a medium of divine revelation. (Wisdom 6-9)

Hellenistic Judaism not only brought the fusion of Hebraic and Greek cultures, but in such apocryphal works as Sirach and Wisdom it also raised a number of serious theological questions that need to be recognized. Sirach, for example, can affirm that the one who honors or shows kindness to his father thereby atones for his sin (Sirach 3:3, 14). In another context Sirach can advise his student that, if he will, the student can keep the commandments; acting faithfully also is a matter of the student's own choice (Sirach 15:15). Thus Biblical traditions about atonement and bondage of the will appear to be called into question. The Wisdom of Solomon deserves to be remembered for the fact that it is the first tradition to identify the serpent of Gen. 3 with the devil: "Through the devil's envy death entered the world" (2:24). Wisdom also affirms that death was not made by God, rather ungodly men summoned it by their words and deeds (1:13, 16). But such truly Biblical assertions are placed side by side with statements that lack the ring of genuine Biblical theology. Wisdom, for example, is described as being reluctant to enter a deceitful soul and will not dwell in a body that is enslaved to sin (Wisdom 1:4). Wisdom moreover is presented as "a pure emanation of the glory of the Almighty" and "in every generation she passes into holy souls and makes them friends of God" (Wisdom 7:25-27). But it should be noted that even the accepted Book of Proverbs makes the questionable observation that iniquity is atoned for by kindness and faithfulness. (Prov. 16:6)

But how did wisdom, first conceived of as some kind of abstract prowess, come to be associated with a personal being? Ran-

kin¹⁰ concluded that in the monotheist theology of the postexilic period, when the transcendence of God received a stronger and stronger emphasis, the need of a mediary was brought into ever sharper focus. Presumably it was during this period that foreign deities became angels, abstract ideas were hypostatized, and wisdom was associated with a personal being, separated from God but still dependent on Him.

Where did such an idea of personified wisdom originate? Rankin looked to the Iranian deity Asha vahishta who had been venerated in Persia as the right law. Earlier Schencke had turned to Israel's own paradise account of a guardian goddess to explain wisdom's personalization.¹¹ Along with such sources in Mesopotamia and the rest of the ancient Near East Fohrer saw great possibilities in an Egyptian derivation of personalized wisdom. In Egypt *maat* was a norm for behavior, it was the "right and order" which the sages transmitted as a sort of objective truth and which one simply submitted to. At Heliopolis the goddess Maat was the daughter of the sun god who in the distant past descended to men to bring good order to all things.¹² Thus both Asha, the divine law of Persia, and Maat, the divine law of Egypt, have been resorted to, to explain how in later Jewish wisdom literature wisdom came to be identified with a personal being.

Wilckens characterized hypostatization as a process that describes how an ordinary metaphor becomes an outright per-

sonification. He recognized that in later wisdom literature wisdom is often viewed as "a divine and heavenly person," but he challenged the theory of hypostatization as the explanation of this phenomenon. Like Rankin and Fohrer he thought it more likely that Judaism came into contact with the idea of personalized wisdom in the alien myths about wisdom deities among her neighbors. Judaism did not reject these alien myths, but adapted them to her faith.¹³

In his researches on "The Counsellor" de Boer¹⁴ raised serious objections to such a mythical origin of personalized wisdom. He pointed out that the personification of wisdom in Judaism came too abruptly to be derived from the early myths of the Hebrews themselves. He argued that a borrowing from Egypt or Babylon assumed a culture's ability to absorb foreign ideas. Above all he insisted that next to the heavenly figures of wisdom there always continued to be corresponding human figures. Thus de Boer questioned whether any kind of theory of hypostatization or of personification of wisdom could be upheld. According to the available evidence abstract and impersonal wisdom belongs to the counselor, just as the word belongs to the prophet and the oracle belongs to the priest.

III. LAW IN EARLY AND LATE TRADITIONS

As the word wisdom shifted from identification with an abstract power to association with a personal being, so a radical change must also be noted in the Old Testament's use of the word law. The mean-

¹⁰ O. S. Rankin, *Israel's Wisdom Literature* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1954), pp. 222 to 224.

¹¹ Rankin, pp. 236—240; 246—254.

¹² Fohrer, pp. 478—480.

¹³ Ulrich Wilckens, "Sophia in Judaism," *T. D. N. T.* VII, pp. 507—508.

¹⁴ de Boer, pp. 42—43; 70—71.

ing of law, however, did not shift from abstraction to personality; rather it started as a general word for teaching, guidance, or instruction and then ultimately came to be used as a title for the five books of the Pentateuch.

The word law occurs some 220 times in the Old Testament and its etymology is not certain. If it is derived from the verb *yarah*, it may be associated with the throwing or casting of an oracle. Habel, however, calls attention to the other root *yarah* which means to guide. From this verb torah probably gets its original meaning of guidance on the way. Further guidance comes through the heart which is man's inner compass and from wisdom which is viewed as his companion.¹⁵

Albrecht Alt was the first to distinguish casuistic law from apodictic law in ancient Israel. Casuistic law is represented by the oldest of the law codes, the Book of the Covenant in Exodus 20:22—23:19. It is characterized by the "if . . . then" style. It was associated with the trials or case hearings at the village gate and has its parallels in other cultures of the Near East. Apodictic law is represented by the Decalogue in Ex. 20 and Deut. 5. It is characterized by the unconditional demand on the person "thou shalt (not)." It was associated with the sacral assemblies at which God revealed His will to the people directly. It appears to have been found only in the ancient traditions of Israel.¹⁶

The oldest narrative strand in the Old Testament, the Yahwist, does not use the word law and it is used only rarely in the

Elohistic tradition. From its use in the messages of the eighth-century prophets it may be concluded that law was associated with the idea of divine direction. In such a context the word law without the article probably meant the individual direction which a priest gave in connection with an oracle. The most significant factor in the law concept was the authority of Yahweh that lay behind it.

The decisive change in the meaning of the word law came with the Deuteronomistic tradition. There the entire Book of Deuteronomy was included in the term law. In Deuteronomy and in the Deuteronomistic History the word law enjoyed currency in what may be called its later meaning, the unified revelation of Yahweh's will to Israel. The earliest source that refers to the law as the entire Pentateuch is the prologue to Ben Sirach ca. 132 B.C. Both the Priestly Tradition and the Chronicler used the word law in this later sense, meaning the entire Pentateuch, the record of how ancient Israel came into existence.¹⁷

In this connection Fohrer points out the significant phenomenon that the three classic wisdom books of the Old Testament, Proverbs, Job, and Ecclesiastes, do not refer to "the law in the strict sense."¹⁸ Koheleth in 300 B.C. does not include the word law in his vocabulary at all. In the Joban dialogue, which probably stems from the sixth century between Jeremiah and Second Isaiah, there is only a single reference to the word law: Eliphaz counsels Job

¹⁵ Habel, pp. 137—143.

¹⁶ Albrecht Alt, "The Origins of Israelite Law," *Essays on Old Testament History and Religion* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1968), pp. 101—171.

¹⁷ W. Gutbrod, "The Law in the Old Testament," *T. D. N. T.* IV, pp. 1045—1046; Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology* (New York: Harper and Row, 1963) I, pp. 221 to 222.

¹⁸ Fohrer, p. 486.

to receive instructions from God's mouth (Job 22:22). In Proverbs, which more and more scholars are assigning at least in part to preexilic times, there are a round dozen references to law.¹⁹ All 12 of these passages leave out the definite article, indicating that the word law is being used in its early meaning of instruction, guidance, or direction. For the most part law in these texts means advice not to reject or forget or forsake the instruction of a father, a mother, or a wise man. It is therefore extraordinary that, while Sanders²⁰ speaks of law as the Old Testament "gospel," as Yahweh's ongoing revelation to His people, the three main Old Testament wisdom books are hardly aware of this concept, and surely do not give it a central place in their theology.

Davies is of the opinion that also for first-century Judaism the law was a gift of God's grace and that submission to it brought joy to the people of God. As a medium of redemption it summoned man to repentance. While it prescribed sacrificial rites as media of atonement, it stipulated that without a turning of the heart no sacrifice could avail. Early Judaism was so devoted to the law that the rabbis associated it with some kind of personal being. And extraordinary features were associated with such personalized law: It was more ancient than the world itself, it was associated with the work of creation, it sup-

ported the universe like a pillar, it was binding on God Himself, it was eternal and perfect.²¹

IV. UNION OF WISDOM AND LAW

As we turn to our final point, the joining of the wisdom and law concepts, we must take up one aspect of personalized wisdom that has not yet been dealt with, that is, her descending to earth and her ascending to heaven. Enoch 42:1-2 describes heavenly wisdom as coming to earth and searching in vain for a residence among men. Finding no earthly abode, wisdom submissively goes back up to heaven. This has come to be known as wisdom's "futile descent" and her "resigned ascent."²² In a similar tradition Prov. 1:20-33 presents wisdom as crying in the streets, chiding people for preferring folly to wisdom, for refusing to listen to her call. Because they refuse her call, she will not be there when they seek her, she will not respond when they call. As Habel sees her, personified wisdom in Prov. 1 is a counseling mother in Israel who much like a prophet aggressively stops travelers on their way.²³

Sirach 24 also introduces wisdom as being preexistent with God (1-6), then seeking out an earthly resting place (7), finally being directed by the creator to make her earthly home in Israel (8-12). At this point the reader may well ask, why there is no "resigned ascent" in Sirach 24. The answer may well be, because the author is identifying wisdom with the law and the

¹⁹ There is in Habel's view a distinct reinterpretation of ancient experiential traditions within Prov. 1—9. Yahweh becomes the chief authority; He replaces the wisdom teacher as companion, He is the one who imparts wisdom, covenant faith becomes central (Habel, pp. 143 to 149).

²⁰ James A. Sanders, *Torah and Canon* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1972), back cover.

²¹ W. D. Davies, "Law in First-Century Judaism," *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1962) III, pp. 93—94.

²² Wilkens, p. 508.

²³ Habel, p. 149.

law *did* find a resting place in Israel. (Cf. Sirach 24:23) ²⁴

At what point then were wisdom and law united or identified? Following Albright²⁵ and Fichtner in placing much of the Book of Proverbs in the preexilic period, we observe that at this point wisdom is not yet identified with law. It should be noted, however, that Habel finds at least some connection between wisdom and law in his first zone, that of ancient experiential wisdom.²⁶ It must also be granted that one Proverbs text (13:14) appears to combine wisdom and law: "The law of the wise is a fountain of life." But it should be noted that "law" in this text is still used in its original meaning of instruction or teaching and has no connection with "the" law as the first five books of the Old Testament. At the much later other end of the wisdom spectrum in Baruch 4:1 it is stated specifically: "Wisdom is the law that endures for ever." On the basis of this assertion the editors of the Oxford Annotated Apocrypha captioned the material in Baruch 3:9—4:4: "Wisdom, found by God, was given to Israel and is the law."²⁷ We must therefore ask: How and when did wisdom and law, originally separated, come to be identified? It will be recalled that in the first part of this study the Persian goddess Asha vahishta was identified with the right law. Also in Egypt the divine Maat was looked upon as

the principle of law and order. These early references then provide a point of departure for explaining how in later Jewish wisdom literature wisdom came to be identified with law.

In early Israel wisdom and law were apparently kept quite distinct from one another. As late as Jer. 18:18 wisdom and law are still associated with two different officials, the wise men and the priests, suggesting a distinction of the two concepts. A noteworthy step in the identification of wisdom and law is taken in the Book of Ezra where the word "wisdom" is used, but the word "law" is meant: King Artaxerxes directed Ezra to appoint judges and magistrates and prefaced his order with the words "And you, Ezra, according to the wisdom of your God which is in your hand." The "wisdom" that was in Ezra's hand at this point is quite clearly the "law" in the sense of the entire Pentateuch.

At the beginning of the second century B.C. Ben Sirach gave further impetus to the joining of wisdom and law. Wisdom, he said, would be obtained by him who held to the law, wisdom would come to meet him like a mother, she would welcome him like the wife of his youth (Sirach 15:1-2). Even though law is used without the article in Sirach 19:20, the late Pentateuchal association underlies the statement that there is doing or fulfilling of law in all wisdom.

It is chiefly in Sirach 24 that the identification of wisdom and law is made explicit. Wisdom is about to deliver an address in the heavenly council. She will say that she came forth from the mouth of the Most High. She sought a resting place among all nations, but finally her creator said that she was to dwell in Jacob. So she

²⁴ Wilckens, p. 509.

²⁵ W. F. Albright, "Some Canaanite-Phoenician Sources of Hebrew Wisdom," *Supplements to Vetus Testamentum III* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1955), pp. 6—13.

²⁶ Habel, p. 137.

²⁷ Bruce M. Metzger, *The Oxford Annotated Apocrypha* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), p. 201.

took up her residence in Zion-Jerusalem. Reviewing this sequence in v. 23, Sirach says, "All this is the book of the covenant of the Most High God, the law which Moses commanded us as an inheritance for the congregations of Jacob." This verse is generally recognized to be the first specific identification of wisdom and law. But two additional texts toward the end of Sirach also join wisdom and law. Sirach 33:3 may be using law in both the ancient and the more modern sense: a sensible person trusts in law (no article); he finds the law as trustworthy as the Urim oracle. As the potter, plowman, and smith have their implements, so the man who devotes himself to studying the Most High's law needs to explore all of man's past wisdom. (Sirach 39:1)

Possibly within the same century as Sirach the third and fourth chapters of Baruch mark another step in the wisdom-law sequence. In Baruch's view wisdom is not available to great princes, to enlightened youths, to foreign sages, but Israel can have her (3:15-36). She appeared personally on the earth and dwelt among its inhabitants. Wisdom according to Baruch is to be identified with the book of God's commandments, with the eternally abiding law. Those who hold fast to her will live, but death awaits those who forsake her. (Baruch 3:37—4:1)²⁸

Josephus represents in a rather typical way the religious viewpoint of Palestinian Judaism that wisdom and the content of the law coincide. In Ant. 4:319 the manner in which he speaks of God's bringing forth the laws and giving them to Israel suggests that he derived the verb "bring forth" from Prov. 8:25, that he thus re-

ferred the origin of wisdom in this well known text to the origin of law. Similarly in Ant. 18:82 Josephus regards as the true wise men the scribes who have mastered the law and can explain it.²⁹

Rabbinic Judaism also regards the official scribe, that is, the rabbi, as the true wise man.³⁰ How closely Rabbinic theology associates wisdom with law can be seen from the fact that Judaism regards the great founder of the faith, Moses, as the "Father of Wisdom." Like Josephus in the preceding paragraph, Rabbinic theologians appropriate for the law what Prov. 8 said about wisdom: It is preexistent (v. 22); it is God's "omen," that is, master builder (v. 30). The law is spoken of as God's tool which He used in creating the world. Similarly the seven pillars of wisdom of Prov. 9:1 are associated by the Rabbis with law: "The words of Torah are marble pillars because they are the pillars of the world."³⁰ In bSota, 49b it is affirmed, "With the death of R. Akiba the arms of the teaching of the Law (*torah*) disappeared and the sources of wisdom (*chokhmah*) were stopped."³⁰ That is a fine summary of the fusion of Torah and Chokhmah in Rabbinic literature! If Habel is right in the concluding part of his article, wisdom and way are also to be joined after the above pattern of wisdom and law. Way is as much a part of God's being as is wisdom. Thus wisdom and way tend to coincide and to be identified with each other.³¹

The foregoing study suggests that originally heavenly personalized wisdom may have been part of an alien ideology. Is-

²⁹ Ibid., p. 502.

³⁰ Ibid., pp. 505—507.

³¹ Habel, p. 155.

²⁸ Wilckens, p. 509.

rael's faith probably encountered great difficulties in confronting the wisdom idea. But by ultimately associating wisdom with law she was able to adapt the wisdom imagery and adjust it to her faith. After the Exile, law was brought into closer relationship with wisdom. During that period wisdom teachers were particularly concerned with the law. Earlier in this paper we saw that wisdom shifted in meaning from an abstraction to a hypostatization. Undoubtedly such a shift prepared the way for a similar development in the law concept. During the intertestamental period wisdom and law were actually identified, especially in *Sirach*, *Wisdom*, and *Baruch*. Thus wisdom-law came to be a systematic way of life in early Judaism. It was integrated into the Jewish community and subordinated wisdom's international features

to the faith of Yahweh. Both wisdom and law were conceived of as having some sort of heavenly and eternal existence before they came to Israel through Solomon and Moses. Finally law and wisdom, virtually one in their role as divine entities, were recognized as essential mediators between God and man.³²

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³² The New Testament modified considerably what the Old Testament and Judaism had to say about law and wisdom. Paul recognized no Gospel whatever in Torah-Nomos: he rejected any attempt to attain salvation through the law. On the other hand, the New Testament stated unequivocally that all of the enigmatic statements about wisdom in Old Testament and Intertestamental literature found their fulfillment in Christ. In his letter to the Colossians, Paul affirms that in the ultimate sense, Jesus Christ is the wisdom of God incarnate, the ultimate revelation of God's will for man.