

WISDOM'S WEALTHY:
THE RICH IN MT PROVERBS, LXX PROVERBS, AND SIRACH

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Statement of Thesis

Scholars who have studied the rhetoric of wealth and poverty in the traditional wisdom books of the Hebrew Proverbs (MT Proverbs), the Septuagint Proverbs (LXX Proverbs), and Sirach have regularly done so through the lens of the act-consequence nexus.¹ Since Klaus Koch first suggested the *Tun-Ergehen Zusammenhang* in his seminal article “Is There a Doctrine of Retribution in the Old Testament?” the notion has been prominently treated in almost every work on the wisdom literature of the Bible.² According to the logic of the act-consequence nexus, certain deeds almost inevitably carry with them certain consequences. Koch was concerned about not only studying the wisdom texts but Proverbs was an especially important text that he believed supported his basic thesis. He contends that “human actions have a built-in consequence” and that “the wisdom literature reflects on and articulates the close connection between the Good Action-Blessings-Construct and the Wicked Action-Disaster-Construct as this applied to individuals.”³ According to Koch, the God of the Hebrew Bible is not always identified as the one who intervenes in human affairs and punishes the wrongdoer. Rather

¹ In this dissertation, I use the term, “MT Proverbs” to indicate the book written in Hebrew and “LXX Proverbs” for the Greek book of Proverbs. When I use the term, ‘Proverbs’ without any prefix of MT or LXX, it includes both texts. I also use the title, ‘Sirach,’ to indicate the Book of Ben Sira either in its Hebrew or Greek versions, though I will regularly indicate which particular tradition I am citing. I reserve the term “Ben Sira” for the sage who is regarded as the principal author of the Hebrew tradition that was translated into Greek. In the Latin tradition, the book is called ‘Ecclesiasticus’ which means “of or belonging to the church.” See further, Patrick W. Skehan and Alexander A. Di Lella, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira: A New Translation with Notes*, The Anchor Bible 39 (New York: Doubleday, 1987), 3–4; Benjamin G. Wright, “Sirach,” in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Books of the Bible*, ed. Michael D. Coogan, vol. 2 (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 322–23.

² Klaus Koch, “Is There a Doctrine of Retribution in the Old Testament?,” in *Theodicy in the Old Testament*, ed. James L. Crenshaw, trans. T. H. Trapp, *Issues in Religion and Theology* 4 (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), 57–87; originally published as “Gibt es ein Vergeltungsdogma im Alten Testament?,” *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 52 (1955): 1–42. According to Koch, “some examples” of the act-consequence nexus in Proverbs are as follows: “1:18, 19; 4:17, 18; 5:22, 23; 10:3, 6, 16; 12:21, 26, 28; 14:32, 34; 16:31; 21:21” (p. 62).

³ *Ibid.*, 64.

human beings are primary agents for their good or bad fortune, evident by the acts that carry consequences. Wise and righteous behavior leads to good things while wicked and foolish acts produce bad consequences.⁴ Despite important critiques, Koch's basic understanding of acts and consequences in the Israelite wisdom literature remains a strong interpretive frame for many who work within wisdom studies.⁵

When the act-consequence nexus is applied to the wisdom books' description of wealth/rich and poverty/poor, it is thus regularly thought that the attainment of wisdom or righteousness leads, or at least should lead, fairly unproblematically to (among other good things) the attainment of wealth as a material reward for following wisdom's way. However, in all three wisdom books used in this dissertation, the rich, who by definition (at least in economic terms) are possessors of material wealth, are implicitly and explicitly criticized for their immorality.⁶ The sayings about the rich suggest that their wealth does not necessarily or inevitably result from good behavior and that the rich are not always superior to the poor in

⁴ According to Yosef Green, good things which wise and righteous behavior generates include "good health, wealth, a good name, a blessed memory, prosperous children, marital bliss, the respect and affection of ones peers and the favor of the Creator." Most of them are closely related to wealth and honor on which this research focuses. Yosef Green, "Prolegomena to the Book of Proverbs," *Jewish Bible Quarterly* 34 (2006): 222.

⁵ Koch's work has been criticized in several respects. Patrick D. Miller, for example, argues that the causality between act and consequence that Koch identifies "is not necessarily internal but is perceived as resting in the divine decision and not happening apart from that decision or decree." For Miller, the correspondence between act and consequence should be understood in terms of divine retribution. Patrick D. Miller, *Sin and Judgment in the Prophets: A Stylistic and Theological Analysis*, Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series 27 (Chico: Scholars Press, 1982), 134. Others have suggested that Koch's understanding of the act-consequence relationship is overly mechanistic (see discussion below). Samuel L. Adams recently provided a synthetic analysis of the act-consequence nexus in Egyptian Instructions, biblical wisdom books, and wisdom texts of the Second Temple Period, especially paying attention to "a profound shift in certain Second Temple instructions, from an earthly to an otherworldly focus." Samuel L. Adams, *Wisdom in Transition: Act and Consequence in Second Temple Instructions*, Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism 125 (Boston: Brill, 2008), 273.

⁶ In this dissertation, I use the term 'the sages' to indicate those who produced the final forms of MT Proverbs, LXX Proverbs, and Sirach as well as those who transmitted earlier forms of these wisdom traditions in the ancient Israel.

terms of their relative achievements in wisdom and virtue (e.g., Prov 28:6, 11).⁷ While wealth and the rich are ranked above poverty and the poor in economic (and, in a certain respect, in social terms), in the moral logic of the act-consequence nexus, poverty or being poor when it is accompanied by wisdom or morality is considered better than wealth (or being rich) when immorality or lack of wisdom is present with that wealth (e.g., Sir 10:30).

Many scholars thus regard the sages' critique of the rich as an inherent ambiguity of the act-consequence nexus or as constituting regular exceptions to it.⁸ James L. Crenshaw, for instance, claims that one can find "ambiguities" in the sayings about the rich because, like the prophets, the sages support the rich's wealth as their just reward but still criticize them for their immorality.⁹ Likewise Roger N. Whybray casts doubt on the "consistency" of the moral viewpoint of wealth and poverty sayings in Proverbs: "the virtuous person may be expected to 'become rich' as a reward for his virtue" but "the rich man (*'āšîr*) is always regarded with hostility..."¹⁰ Raymond C. Van Leeuwen also argues that the sages are "very aware of exceptions" to the act-consequence nexus, such as the suffering of the righteous and the prosperity of the wicked.¹¹ However, rather than postulating ambiguities and exceptions to an otherwise dominant retributive logic, the wisdom discourse about the rich can be better understood by discerning more precisely the manner in which the textual figures of the rich are

⁷ One can also find verses in which the poor are described as morally superior to the wicked or the rich, even though the sages do not directly use the term, "rich." See Prov 11:10; 16:19; 22:2; 23:4. Cf. Eccl 4:13.

⁸ James L. Crenshaw, "Poverty and Punishment in the Book of Proverbs," *Quarterly Review: A Scholarly Journal for Reflection on Ministry* 9 (1989): 30–43; Roger N. Whybray, *Wealth and Poverty in the Book of Proverbs*, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 99 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990), 63; Raymond C. Van Leeuwen, "Wealth and Poverty: System and Contradiction in Proverbs," *Hebrew Studies* 33 (1992): 25–36.

⁹ Crenshaw, "Poverty and Punishment," 41.

¹⁰ Whybray, *Wealth and Poverty*, 62–63.

¹¹ Van Leeuwen, "Wealth and Poverty," 32.

related on the one hand to a wisdom discourse of wealth and poverty, and to the act-consequence nexus on the other.

In general, discussion about the rich belongs to the discourse of wealth and poverty in the wisdom books because the rich are those who possess material riches, just as the poor are those who regularly lack such wealth.¹² The confusion about the rich in the wisdom books' act-consequence rhetoric—their ambiguous or awkward fit in a broader act-consequence framework—is a result of wrongly or uncritically eliding *the promise of material wealth* as a kind of legitimate reward for those who follow the way of wisdom, with *the rich* as possessors of material wealth. The rich are best regarded as a socio-economic class and, as such, as moral agents who can be criticized for their immoral behavior and for their failure to follow the way of wisdom. As moral agents the rich appear to be nearly functionally equivalent to other agents the wisdom books explicitly name: the wicked, the just, and so forth. Given that moral agents are regarded as those who have the ability to choose the good or the bad, however, the rich are not such simple figures who unconditionally do bad things. Rather, the rich as moral agents are regarded as those who have the ability to make positive moral choices but regularly fail in doing so, especially displaying the following features: they trust wrongly in their wealth, seek false friendship, oppress others, and show intellectual and moral hubris.

For the wisdom texts and their act-consequence rhetoric, although one might expect anyone who possesses material wealth to be wise and righteous, this is not the case. The rich, however, are not exceptions that produce an ambiguity in wisdom's act-consequence logic. They merely have a distinct status within that logic, a status that needs to be more fully reckoned with. In the act-consequence logic of the wisdom books, the role of material goods (wealth, riches) is

¹² Roger N. Whybray, "Poverty, Wealth, and Point of View in Proverbs," *The Expository Times* 100 (1989): 334.

not interchangeable with the role of the social-moral agents that the books call the rich. Indeed, the critical evaluations of the rich are consistent with the sages' broader moral visions in each book. As other scholars have hinted, I also more fully suggest that the term 'rich' in wisdom discourse not only points to the high economic and social status of some people who have wealth and social-political power, but it also is, or is in the process of becoming, a negative moral type.

All this indicates that via wealth and poverty language and especially through discourse about the rich, MT Proverbs, LXX Proverbs, and Sirach present a distinct hierarchy of values. In this hierarchy, the possession of wisdom or moral status is of greater worth than economic goods. Yet, besides material wealth, throughout the three wisdom books, the purely social values of honor and shame are also used to establish wisdom's hierarchy of values. Wisdom and morality not only are more valuable than wealth or economic status. They are more valuable than high social status (e.g., Prov 3:35; 21:21; Sir 10:19). A basic ancient Near Eastern and Mediterranean cultural principle insisted that honor was due a person with political power or economic wealth, namely the rich.¹³ The sages, however, believed that a person achieved, or should achieve, honor through advancement in wisdom. As a result, like wealth, social status can even be regarded as the reward of wisdom (e.g., Prov 22:4; 29:23; Sir 11:1). Yet, ultimately like wealth, social status is subordinated to wisdom and virtue (along with other good things). For the

¹³ The association of social status—honor—with wealth/property and political power is explicitly found in the area of Mediterranean anthropology. In his seminal paper, Julian Pitt-Rivers pays attention to the connection between honor and wealth/power: "Transactions of honour ... provide ... a nexus ..., on the social side, between the ideal order and the terrestrial order, validating the realities of power and making the sanctified order of precedence correspond to them." For him, material wealth and political power are the means of getting honor in the social system of the Mediterranean culture. Julian A. Pitt-Rivers, "Honour and Social Status," in *Honour and Shame: The Values of Mediterranean Society*, ed. John G. Peristiany, Nature of Human Society Series (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966), 38. Claudia V. Camp also emphasizes the social connection between honor and wealth/power in Sirach: "These defining attributes may be seen as socially determined signs of value and power: one's women, one's property (i.e., one's household in both personal and impersonal dimensions), one's political influence, one's body, one's reputation or name." Claudia V. Camp, "Honor and Shame in Ben Sira: Anthropological and Theological Reflections," in *The Book of Ben Sira in Modern Research: Proceedings of the First International Ben Sira Conference, 28-31 July 1996, Soesterberg, Netherlands*, ed. Pancratius C. Beentjes, Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft 255 (Berlin; New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1997), 173.

wisdom books treated here, the rich do not deserve honor because they attempt, generally speaking, to establish their social status through acquiring wealth and social power rather than wisdom. Moreover, the rich do not demonstrate virtues that are central to wisdom's moral vision, which ought to be the foundation of achieving honor.

While such a close connection between honor/social status and wisdom/righteousness in wisdom works has been noted in part by some scholars especially in relation to Sirach, this same connection has not been fully studied in MT Proverbs and LXX Proverbs.¹⁴ The focus on Sirach is because the text was written in the Hellenistic epoch when Greek cultural influence was more widespread and categories of honor and shame gained more prominence in the ancient Mediterranean world. By contrast, MT Proverbs, though perhaps reaching its final form in the Hellenistic epoch, was in large part written prior to the Greek age. Similarly although LXX Proverbs was produced in the Hellenistic epoch, it is nonetheless largely a translation of the earlier Hebrew Proverbs. As a result, scholars have generally not focused as much attention on the categories of honor and shame in these texts and hence have not been much concerned to examine the rhetoric of social status in relation to the rich in these two wisdom books. Nonetheless the rhetoric of social status in both books is perhaps more prominent than is usually recognized and more intimately (and differently) related to the rhetoric of rich than is usually thought.

¹⁴ For example, Camp, "Honor and Shame in Ben Sira"; Claudia V. Camp, "Honor, Shame, and the Hermeneutics of Ben Sira's Ms C," in *Wisdom, You Are My Sister: Studies in Honor of Roland E. Murphy, O. Carm., on the Occasion of His Eightieth Birthday*, ed. Roland E. Murphy and Michael L. Barré (Washington: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1997), 157–71; David A. deSilva, "The Wisdom of Ben Sira : Honor, Shame, and the Maintenance of the Values of a Minority Culture," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 58 (1996): 433–55.

The Scope of This Research

Although other books of wisdom literature, such as Job and Ecclesiastes, speak of the rich as well, I limit this research to an examination of the rich only in the books of MT Proverbs, LXX Proverbs, and Sirach because the three books belong to a distinct genre called “didactic Wisdom” by Michael V. Fox.¹⁵ He believes that the genre is found not only in the Israelite wisdom literature, but it is also exemplified in some ancient Near East wisdom literature, especially Egyptian and Mesopotamian sources such as *the Instruction of Amenemope* and *Ahiqar*.¹⁶ According to Fox, didactic wisdom of the Hebrew Bible consists of “some teachings as observations in the third person and others as admonitions in the second person.”¹⁷ With such a distinctive feature of form, the didactic wisdom particularly “aim[s] at inculcating right attitudes and behavior” and “focus[es] on successful and worthy behavior in mundane affairs.”¹⁸ For Fox, the didactic wisdom is mundane because its “teachings are not spoken by a god” but consist of “the words of a father to his son.”¹⁹ Yet because didactic wisdom essentially deals with affairs of everyday life, it is considered mundane *per se*. The world that the didactic wisdom engages is in fact where the moral life is carried out. In other words, the didactic wisdom books primarily attempt to instill into the reader or the listener their teachings about how to be a successful and valuable person in a community on the ethical level.

¹⁵ Michael V. Fox, *Proverbs 1-9: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, The Anchor Bible 18A (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 17.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 18. Regarding the list of Egyptian and Mesopotamian didactic wisdom sources, see Fox’s *Proverbs 1-9*, 427-28.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

In particular, the didactic wisdom's emphasis on success at the ethical level is important for this research because it challenges the general concept of success that can be thought of, and often is thought of, in terms of material success. When "success" is conceived narrowly as economic success, the rich can be said to embody success. Furthermore, it is important to realize that for didactic wisdom, wealth is or should be understood in some sense as a proper material reward for the wise who are considered to be righteous and moral—though hardly in a mechanistic way. In this respect, didactic wisdom, especially Proverbs, is typically viewed as a guide to "success" in terms of material prosperity and "exterior rewards."²⁰ However, some degree of material prosperity, to which the language of wealth points, is broadly related to the well-being that a wise person might attain. As Timothy J. Sandoval states, didactic wisdom is particularly interested in "shap[ing] the whole character of the hearer for the whole of life," including its material, physical, moral, and social aspects.²¹ Within such a nuanced view, didactic wisdom should also be regarded as promoting well-being through the attainment of wisdom.

In contrast, Fox calls another genre of biblical wisdom literature including Job and Ecclesiastes "critical (or speculative) Wisdom" because it basically casts doubt on "doctrines and values found in didactic Wisdom."²² According to Fox, the genre is an "amorphous" one because the critical wisdom books do not always take a negative attitude toward traditional principles of

²⁰ For example, Roland E. Murphy, *Proverbs*, Word Biblical Commentary 22 (Waco: Word Books, 1998), xxv; Leo G. Perdue, *Proverbs*, Interpretation, A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching (Louisville: John Knox Press, 2000), 6; Roger N. Whybray, *Proverbs: Based on the Revised Standard Version*, New Century Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1994), 4; Fox, *Proverbs 1-9*, 75.

²¹ Timothy J. Sandoval, *The Discourse of Wealth and Poverty in the Book of Proverbs*, Biblical Interpretation Series 77 (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2006), 47.

²² Fox, *Proverbs 1-9*, 17.

didactic wisdom books.²³ Rather, the works of critical wisdom commonly provide reflections and remarks on teachings and advice emerging from the teachings of didactic wisdom books, sometimes even refuting the conclusions of instructional wisdom (e.g., Job; Ps 49; 73; 88).²⁴ Thus, it is not only the literary form but also the aim or purpose—the pedagogical intent—of different works that distinguish the didactic wisdom books from critical wisdom works.

Although Richard J. Clifford does not mention the exact three instructional books that Fox indicates as being didactic wisdom, he recognizes that “traditional wisdom literature”—here he has in mind books like Proverbs—is different from other wisdom books, such as Ecclesiastes.²⁵ The reason that Clifford uses the term “traditional” to describe instructional books such as Proverbs and Sirach does not simply lie in the fact that they adhere to beliefs handed down from generation to generation—although this factor is important to him.²⁶ Rather, he emphasizes the importance of the act-consequence nexus as a key characteristic of “traditional wisdom,” suggesting that the sages of the traditional wisdom books “set great store by the inherent connection between people’s actions and the consequences resulting from them.”²⁷ For

²³ Ibid. Like Fox, Robert Alter pays attention to a difference between two books of critical wisdom, Job and Ecclesiastes, and didactic wisdom. According to Alter, Job and Ecclesiastes are fundamentally doubtful of “the assured wisdom of tradition and collective knowledge” articulated in Proverbs. However, while Job “frontally” challenges the assured wisdom of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes “express[es] a bleak skepticism antithetical to what one encounters in the Book of Proverbs.” Robert Alter, *The Wisdom Books: Job, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes: A Translation with Commentary* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2010), xvi–xvii.

²⁴ With regard to the book of Ecclesiastes, Fox cautiously judges that it “contains much critical or reflective material, but as a whole it presents itself as a teaching about how to live one’s life and is to be classed as didactic—which is how the epilogue describes the work of Qohelet and other sages (Qoh 12:9-14).” Fox, *Proverbs 1-9*, 17.

²⁵ Richard J. Clifford, *The Wisdom Literature*, Interpreting Biblical Texts (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998), 108.

²⁶ Ibid., 21.

²⁷ Ibid., 108.

Clifford, the act-consequence nexus functions as the fundamental principle in traditional wisdom books in general and particularly MT Proverbs.²⁸

Scholars, of course, have regularly emphasized the causal relation between act and consequence in LXX Proverbs and Sirach as well, and, hence, based upon Clifford's terms, these books too can be categorized into the same genre as MT Proverbs: didactic wisdom or traditional wisdom.²⁹ Although a scholarly focus on the act-consequence nexus, for many, produces an ambiguity or inconsistency in the instructions' teaching, about the place of the rich in the didactic wisdom's act-consequence rhetoric it is better explained by analyzing the precise place that the rich play in wisdom's discourse of wealth and poverty and in the moral logic of the act-consequence rhetoric. They are not only possessors of wealth but also social and moral agents subject to moral evaluation. Therefore, the analysis of the rich in the books of MT Proverbs, LXX Proverbs, and Sirach in a sense provides not only the key to understanding the critical descriptions of the rich in the didactic texts but also a strategy to arrive at a fuller and more subtle understanding of the act-consequence nexus.

²⁸ Regarding Proverbs, Roland E. Murphy largely agrees with Clifford by arguing that the sages of Proverbs clearly express "the traditional ideas of divine justice and retribution." However, "the inherent connection between people's actions and the consequences," which Clifford identifies as basic principle of Proverbs is different from the "divine justice and retribution" Murphy speaks of. As I stated earlier, the concept of act-consequence in which human beings function as the primary agents for their fortune stands in slight contrast to the idea of divine retribution in which God intervenes in human affairs. Roland E. Murphy, *The Tree of Life: An Exploration of Biblical Wisdom Literature*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002), 34.

²⁹ For example, Fox, *Proverbs 1-9*, 361; Skehan and Di Lella, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira*, 83–87; John J. Collins, *Jewish Wisdom in the Hellenistic Age*, The Old Testament Library (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 88; James L. Crenshaw, "The Book of Sirach: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections," in *The New Interpreter's Bible*, ed. Leander E. Keck, vol. 5 (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1997), 628; Benjamin G. 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 David A. Teeter, Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism 163 (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 170.

History of Scholarship

MT Proverbs

For the past thirty years, the rhetoric of wealth/rich and poverty/poor has been one of the most intriguing subjects in the scholarship of biblical wisdom literature, particularly the book of MT Proverbs, for several reasons. First, wealth/rich and poverty/poor are mentioned more often in the book than in other sections of the Hebrew Bible.³⁰ Second, the sages of MT Proverbs address wealth and the rich, and not only poverty and the poor as major themes. In contrast, the rhetoric of the Torah and the Prophets primarily concentrates on poverty and the poor by emphasizing charity for the poor on the level of social justice and ethics.³¹ Third, by closely relating wealth/rich and poverty/poor to righteousness/wisdom and wickedness/folly, the sages anchor these economic themes into wisdom's central ethical discourse and moral vision.

Scholars have investigated the rhetoric of wealth/rich and poverty/poor in MT Proverbs from linguistic, socio-historical, theological, and other perspectives.³² However, despite the wide

³⁰ Harold C. Washington, *Wealth and Poverty in the Instruction of Amenemope and the Hebrew Proverbs*, SBL Dissertation Series 142 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1994), 1. According to Whybray, the "total number of occurrences" of words related to "wealth, poverty and social status" is 513 in Proverbs 10:1-22:16 and 25-29. Whybray, *Wealth and Poverty*, 11-15. Whybray also suggests that "at least eighty of its individual proverbs and some longer pieces" closely pertain to the identification of "the rich, the poor, or neither." Whybray, "Poverty, Wealth, and Point of View in Proverbs," 333.

³¹ Cf. Crenshaw, "Poverty and Punishment," 30. Of course, the target of much prophetic criticism is the political elite of Israel and Judah, which was surely in large part co-terminous with the economic elite, the rich.

³² John P. Brown, "Proverb-Book, Gold-Economy, Alphabet," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 100 (1981): 169-91; John B. Burns, "'Arīts, a 'rich' Word," *The Bible Translator* 43 (1992): 124-30; Claudia V. Camp, *Wisdom and the Feminine in the Book of Proverbs*, Bible and Literature Series 11 (Decatur: Almond Press, 1985); John B. Carpenter, "Prosperity in Proverbs and Confucius: The Twain Meet," *The Asia Journal of Theology* 13 (1999): 71-93; Gordon A. Chutter, "'Riches and Poverty' in the Book of Proverbs," *Crux* 18 (1982): 23-28; Crenshaw, "Poverty and Punishment," 30-43; T. Donald, "The Semantic Field of Rich and Poor in the Wisdom Literature of Hebrew and Accadian," *Oriens Antiquus* 3 (1964): 27-41; Maurice Gilbert, "Riches et pauvres: reflexions des sages de la Bible," in *Bible et économie: servir Dieu ou l'argent*, ed. Françoise Mies and Joëlle Ferry, Livre et le rouleau 17 (Namur: Presses universitaires de Namur, 2003), 11-40; Donald E. Gowan, "Wealth and Poverty in the Old Testament: The Case of the Widow, the Orphan, and the Sojourner," *Interpretation* 41 (1987): 341-53; Norman C. Habel, "Wisdom, Wealth and Poverty Paradigms in the Book of Proverbs," *Bible Bhashyam* 14 (1988): 26-49; Walter J. Houston, "The Role of the Poor in Proverbs," in *Reading from Right to Left: Essays on the Hebrew Bible in Honour of David J. A. Clines*, ed. J. Cheryl Exum and H. G. M. Williamson (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press,

spectrum of scholarly research on the topic, as Sandoval notes, scholars have principally recognized MT Proverbs's instructions on wealth/rich and poverty/poor as "inconsistent" or "ambiguous."³³ On the one hand, the sages appear to discuss wealth and poverty as a reward and a punishment to establish the principle of causality, the act-consequence nexus.³⁴ On the other hand, the sages sometimes seem to harbor suspicion against the causal principle by criticizing the rich whose wealth might otherwise be regarded as a material reward for their wisdom while insisting on fair and just treatment of the economically marginalized and defending the poor whose poverty might be thought to constitute a material punishment for their folly. Yet, the sages do not disdain wealth *per se* but warn against the unrighteous accumulation of riches and greed for money; they also describe wealth as a desirable resource in the book. Nonetheless, scholars

2003), 229–40; Victor Hurowitz, "Two Terms for Wealth in Proverbs VIII in Light of Akkadian," *Vetus Testamentum* 50 (2000): 252–57; Brian W. Kovacs, "Is There a Class-Ethic in Proverbs?," in *Essays in Old Testament Ethics* (J. Philip Hyatt, in Memoriam), ed. James L. Crenshaw and John T. Willis (New York: Ktav Pub House, 1974), 171–89; John W. Olley, "'Righteous' and Wealthy: The Description of the Saddiq in Wisdom Literature," *Colloquium* 22 (1990): 38–45; J. David Pleins, "Poverty in the Social World of the Wise," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 37 (1987): 61–78; J. David Pleins, *The Social Visions of the Hebrew Bible: A Theological Introduction* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 452–83; Sandoval, *The Discourse*; Timothy J. Sandoval, *Money and the Way of Wisdom: Insights from the Book of Proverbs* (Woodstock: SkyLight Paths Pub., 2008); Mark R. Sneed, "The Class Culture of Proverbs: Eliminating Stereotypes," *Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament* 10 (1996): 296–308; Solfrid Storøy, "Why Does the Theme of Poverty Come into the Context of Prov 14:20?," in *Text and Theology: Studies in Honour of Professor Dr. Theol. Magne Sæbø: Presented on the Occasion of His 65th Birthday*, ed. Arvid Tångberg (Oslo: Verbum, 1994), 298–310; Van Leeuwen, "Wealth and Poverty," 25–36; Robert Wafawanaka, *Am I Still My Brother's Keeper?: Biblical Perspectives on Poverty* (Lanham: University Press of America, 2012), 132–36; Washington, *Wealth and Poverty*; Whybray, "Poverty, Wealth, and Point of View," 332–36; Whybray, *Wealth and Poverty*; Roger N. Whybray, "The Vocabulary of Wealth and Poverty in the Book of Proverbs," in *Learning from the Sages: Selected Studies on the Book of Proverbs*, ed. Roy B. Zuck (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1995), 125–36; G. H. Wittenberg, "The Lexical Context of the Terminology for 'Poor' in the Book of Proverbs," *Scriptura* 2 (1986): 40–85; G. H. Wittenberg, "The Situational Context of Statements Concerning Poverty and Wealth in the Book of Proverbs," *Scriptura* 21 (1987): 1–23.

³³ Sandoval, *The Discourse*, 31.

³⁴ Some scholars use the term 'retribution' for indicating the causal relationship between act and consequence, especially to explain rewards and punishments that good and bad actions bring. In other words, they sometimes interchange the concept of act-consequence nexus with retribution. For example, Crenshaw points out the retributive principle in Proverbs that the sages regard their wealth as "reward for the virtuous lifestyle" and poverty as the result of "lack of morality." Crenshaw, "Poverty and Punishment," 30–32. However, as Koch argues in his article, retribution is more related to the divine intervention rather than the causal relationship between act and consequence. Koch, "Is There a Doctrine of Retribution," 60.

have focused on how descriptions of wealth/rich and poverty/poor in MT Proverbs—the book’s apparently ambiguous or contradictory perspectives—can be understood or resolved, especially through the following three approaches.

Social or Historical Contexts

Several scholars have attempted to resolve the contradiction by contending that the inconsistent description of wealth/rich and poverty/poor in MT Proverbs results from the different social or distinct historical contexts of distinct authors or redactors.

For example, Whybray argues that “the sentence literature” of MT Proverbs (10:1-22:16; 25-29; 24:23-34; 5:15-23; 6:1-19) reflects a rural-agricultural folk context in which poverty was a constant danger and reality but where wealth was positively portrayed as legitimate profit, though corresponding warnings about the dangers were associated with it.³⁵ Those who are greedy for money (28:20, 22, 25) and seek too much security from their wealth (11:28) “are destined to lose it and be condemned to poverty.”³⁶ Since the concern with acquiring wealth and avoiding poverty is in many sayings of the sentence literature, Whybray believes that such proverbs were produced by “people of moderate means.”³⁷ By contrast, for Whybray, “the instructions” of MT Proverbs (1-9; 22:17-24:22; 31) suggest they were produced in an urban context in which the sages aim at giving their pupils advice on how to achieve success in terms of “getting to the top.”³⁸ According to him, chapters 1-9 written in “relatively extensive sentences (‘discourses’)” presume a literate and urban audience that consisted of “the sons of

³⁵ Whybray, *Wealth and Poverty*, 114.

³⁶ Roger N. Whybray, *The Good Life in the Old Testament* (London; New York: T & T Clark, 2002), 167.

³⁷ Whybray, *Wealth and Poverty*, 60–61.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 114.

wealthy entrepreneurs who employed labourers to work their farms.”³⁹ In these parts of MT Proverbs, as Whybray suggests, we find instructions that express urbanized worlds, especially in chapter 7 (e.g., “public squares” [7:12]). Without making explicit reference to “agricultural labour” and “the poor,” these instructions emphasize “the happiness and success” of the rich and elite pupil “as he will go through life” (1:1-7)—happiness and success being key ingredients of the attainment of wealth.⁴⁰

Thus, for Whybray, “variations” or “divergences” in the sayings about wealth/rich and poverty/poor in MT Proverbs not only “may be accounted for by changes of mood or circumstances” of particular writers but also may be more fundamentally accounted for by the distinct social contexts from which sections of the book emerged.⁴¹ However, as Whybray acknowledges, his emphasis on determining the social contexts that gave rise to “different attitudes towards wealth and poverty” is not strictly “sociological” in terms of identifying “the social status of the speakers and authors” of the book but completely dependent on “internal evidence of the texts.”⁴² Thus, Whybray’s explanation does not offer a clear answer to the question as to how various ideas about wealth and poverty in MT Proverbs might be understood together in the current form of the book.

Like Whybray, Harold C. Washington also contends that the instructions on wealth/rich and poverty/poor in MT Proverbs arose from the combination of “traditions of originally disparate origins” that included both sayings emerging from a rural context and an urban

³⁹ Ibid., 101–02.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid., 62.

⁴² Ibid., 9–10.

setting.⁴³ Washington, however, suggests more fully than Whybray that the proverbial material emerging from diverse contexts developed over time and was modified in the process of transmission.⁴⁴ In other words, while Whybray assumes a development but emphasizes distinct contexts, Washington emphasizes a bit more the historical development of the book. For example, Washington suggests that the harsh sayings about the poor (e.g., 10:15; 13:8; 14:20; 15:15; 18:23; 19:4) emerged from “folk wisdom” and the world of subsistence agriculture, a rural context that Whybray also presumes.⁴⁵ These sayings, however, were tempered by later sages in urban, administrative contexts influenced by “the international sapiential literary tradition” that emphasized the “care for the poor.”⁴⁶

James L. Crenshaw also assumes that the sages’ early negative attitude toward the poor increasingly shifted toward compassion as the sages eventually perceived “the inadequacy” of the causal logic through which the poor had been criticized for their laziness.⁴⁷ G. H. Wittenberg, too, carries forward this mode of argument. For him, the sages also reevaluated and reinterpreted the older sayings about wealth and poverty by modifying them in light of the contemporary realities in which they found themselves. Like Whybray and Washington, Wittenberg also suggests that the different and contradictory viewpoints about wealth and poverty in MT Proverbs result from the change of socio-economic contexts which the sages faced.⁴⁸ For

⁴³ Washington, *Wealth and Poverty*, 185.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 183–85.

⁴⁷ Crenshaw, “Poverty and Punishment,” 42. In particular, Crenshaw argues that “the absence in Proverbs 1-9 of the poor” arose from “an increased emphasis on individual retribution, as opposed to a social retribution” (p. 35).

⁴⁸ Wittenberg, “The Situational Context,” 1.

Wittenberg, “negative experiences with Canaanite commercial practices” caused the sages, who had once thought of riches as a reward for righteous behavior, to criticize the accumulation of wealth of the rich “as a means of oppression.”⁴⁹

Although scholars like Whybray, Washington, Crenshaw, and Wittenberg make powerful social-historical arguments about how best to understand MT Proverbs’ sometimes apparently ambiguous discourse of wealth/rich and poverty/poor, one might wonder why later sages, whom they claim engaged earlier traditions from different contexts, did not fully eliminate viewpoints from these earlier and distinct contexts that contradicted their own positions.

Complicated Perspectives

Other scholars have dealt with the apparently contradictory accounts of MT Proverbs concerning wealth/rich and poverty/poor by emphasizing that the sages did not mechanically apply the act-consequence nexus to their instructions but held complicated perspectives on a range of themes. Ever since Koch suggested the notion of the act-consequence nexus in the didactic wisdom, the idea that MT Proverbs employs such a cause and effect logic has received widespread support among scholars due to many sayings that appear to undergird it (e.g., 10:2, 4, 7; 11:18; 26:27; 28:10, etc.). However, an increasing number of dissenting voices have arisen to insist that one cannot understand the sages’ instructions on economic and moral issues through the strict and simple reading of the causal system.

For example, half a century ago Gerhard von Rad pointed out that the sages of the didactic wisdom, including Proverbs, recognized the “limits of wisdom,” especially based on the

⁴⁹ Ibid., 1, 11.

causality between act and consequence.⁵⁰ According to von Rad, the sages “vacillated between two possibilities of expression: one adhered quite objectively to the causality of events, while the other was credal and spoke of Yahweh’s direct dealings with men.”⁵¹ Von Rad argued that the oscillation of the sages resulted from their “wide experience” of a complex reality in which one could not always predict an actual consequence of an act.⁵² They, thus, did not adhere to a simple, mechanistic belief in “the connection between goodness and well-being.”⁵³ John B. Carpenter also argues that the sages of MT Proverbs did not ignore the fact that the logic between act and consequence did not mechanically work.⁵⁴ According to him, despite the sayings that suggest the opposite, the sages recognized that “the world is not so simple as to equate the poor with the foolish sluggard or the rich with the diligent and wise.”⁵⁵ Van Leeuwen similarly points out that scholars’ characterization of the act-consequence connection as functioning almost mechanically for MT Proverbs is an “oversimplification.”⁵⁶ By defining proverbs essentially as “partial utterances” whereby some sayings “are qualified by other, often contradictory sayings,” Van Leeuwen illuminates the sages’ complex viewpoints on wealth/rich and poverty/poor.⁵⁷ In particular, he emphasizes the existence of exceptional sayings, “which

⁵⁰ Gerhard von Rad, *Wisdom in Israel*, trans. James D. Martin (London: SCM Press, 1972), 97–110.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 105.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 109–10.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 110.

⁵⁴ Carpenter, “Prosperity in Proverbs and Confucius,” 80.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ Van Leeuwen, “Wealth and Poverty,” 29.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.* One of the significant contributions of Van Leeuwen is his attempt to resolve the contradictions of the causal principle in MT Proverbs from a religious or eschatological viewpoint by arguing that the sages affirm the reality of “future justice” on the basis of faith, despite the fact that it is “invisible” and “intangible” in the text (p. 34).

overturn the usual evaluation of wealth as simply good and poverty as bad,” for instance, the exceptional “better-than” sayings (e.g., 15:16-17; 16:16, 19; 17:1; 28:6, etc.).⁵⁸ Maurice Gilbert’s study of MT Proverbs is consonant with Van Leeuwen’s view that the better-than sayings are clearly a kind of exception to a mechanistic view of the act-consequence logic in the book since these sayings obviously claim that poverty with a religious spirit is preferable to wealth.⁵⁹

This approach to understanding wealth/rich and poverty/poor in MT Proverbs helpfully rejects any simple, mechanistic understanding of the act-consequence nexus. These conclusions are based first of all on exegetical observations. There are verses in MT Proverbs that do not correspond to a strict act-consequence logic. However, they are also based on the scholars’ assumptions that the sages’ wisdom is based to a large extent on observations of their world. For the scholars just discussed it is difficult to imagine acute observers of natural and social reality as those who would miss the fact that sometimes the wise and righteous do not prosper and the wicked and foolish do. However, this assumption about what the sages surely would have observed, valid as it might be, restricts the sages’ role to simple observers of a complex reality and assumes unproblematically that the book’s instructions on wealth and poverty should be read quite literally. It explains the book’s ambiguity regarding wealth and poverty by implying that the instructions of individual proverbs conflict with one another because the reality sages observe is not as fixed as a strict act-consequence logic would demand.

However, Michael V. Fox clearly opposes “the scholarly consensus” about the so-called

⁵⁸ Ibid. In his article, Van Leeuwen categorizes the relationship between righteousness-wickedness and wealth-poverty into four quadrants. According to him, the causal principle of MT Proverbs is undergirded by Quadrant 1 (righteousness leads to wealth) and Quadrant 4 (wickedness leads to poverty). However, he emphasizes the existence of Quadrant 2 (righteousness can exist with poverty) and Quadrant 3 (wickedness can exist with wealth) in the book. This is unlike the presupposition of other scholars that Quadrants 2 and 3 are found in Job and Qoheleth rather than MT Proverbs.

⁵⁹ Gilbert, “Riches et pauvres,” 14.

“empiricism” of MT Proverbs: the idea that all knowledge for the sages is derived from experience from their observations of the worlds.⁶⁰ Instead, Fox argues that all sayings of the MT Proverbs can be understood through a “coherence theory of truth” that suggests “the truth of any (true) proposition consists in its coherence with some specified set of propositions.”⁶¹ According to Fox, the sages evaluated and validated sayings and knowledge by using “an ideal of harmony” in which they examined whether “the propositions of sapiential knowledge are concordant with each other and are supported by common principles.”⁶² Fox, in support of the coherence theory, says that such an ideal of harmony is achieved by “moral aesthetics” or the attainment of “moral character”—to be wise is to seek and “desire for the good” through the recognition of what the right action is—rather than by “logical testing.”⁶³ Therefore, following the work of Lennart Boström, Fox suggests that the act-consequence nexus should be modified to a “character-consequence relationship.”⁶⁴ As Boström emphasized, “consequences of one’s behavior and character as a whole,” is what the text is concerned with, not the rewards or punishments of individual acts.⁶⁵ In this regard, Fox seems to believe that one does not have to read the proverbial sayings literally in the sense that they reflect the sages’ empirical observations of reality. Yet, he does not go further to explain fully the possible figurative meanings of the

⁶⁰ Michael V. Fox, *Proverbs 10-31: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, The Anchor Yale Bible 18B (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 963.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 968; James O. Young, “The Coherence Theory of Truth,” ed. Edward N. Zalta, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Summer 2001 Edition)*, 2001, =<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2001/entries/truth-coherence>. Accessed 03/26/2016.

⁶² Fox, *Proverbs 10-31*, 968–70.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 976.

⁶⁴ Fox, *Proverbs 1-9*, 91.

⁶⁵ Lennart Boström, *The God of the Sages: The Portrayal of God in the Book of Proverbs*, Coniectanea Biblica. Old Testament Series 29 (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1990), 90.

sayings in MT Proverbs—a tact taken by others to explain the apparent ambiguity of the book’s discourse of wealth and poverty.

Figurative Dimensions

While the first two approaches to understand the rhetoric of wealth and poverty in MT Proverbs understand this rhetoric quite literally, the third approach pays more attention to the figurative dimensions of the book’s wealth and poverty discourse. For example, Sandoval basically believes that the language of wealth in MT Proverbs effectively works not only as a “rhetorical motivation” but also as an “important symbol of the desirable.”⁶⁶ According to him, “three images—riches, honor and sexual fulfillment” are closely associated with the achievement of wisdom and other virtues.⁶⁷ For Sandoval, these images “represent all that a reader or listener of the book might find desirable.”⁶⁸ Thus, Sandoval argues that the sayings about wealth and poverty point a presumed young male audience toward what is genuinely desirable—wisdom—and thus “play an integral role in the book’s construction of a moral vision.”⁶⁹

Similar to Fox, Sandoval suggests that the act-consequence nexus of MT Proverbs is not the sages’ empirical observation of reality but a kind of conceptual and rhetorical scheme for “communicating their fundamental values.”⁷⁰ Analogous to Fox who emphasizes “coherence” in the acquisition of knowledge, Sandoval focuses on “the symbolic framework” in which the sages

⁶⁶ Sandoval, *The Discourse*, 58.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 61.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ Sandoval’s argument is intimately connected to his view that MT Proverbs’ prologue (1:1-7) both serves as a hermeneutic key to understanding the book and underscores MT Proverbs’ concern with the attainment of virtue and employment of figurative language. *Ibid.*, 60–66, 205.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 66.

use wealth and poverty as important images through which to understand MT Proverbs's "rhetorical and figurative imagination."⁷¹ For Sandoval, the figurative employment of wealth and poverty language makes the book's broader, implicit claims that following wisdom's way produces "a good and flourishing human life" more persuasive.⁷² In this sense, Sandoval argues that the ambiguity of the economic sayings in MT Proverbs is not nearly as strong as it appears to some readers. Instead, Sandoval regards the sayings as more consistent than scholars have tended to believe, though he recognizes that a complex text like MT Proverbs with a complex history of transmission inevitably contains some ambiguities in its moral perspective.⁷³

The Scholarly Neglect of the Sayings about the Rich

Each of the three approaches to understanding the broader discourse of wealth/rich and poverty/poor in MT Proverbs has made important contributions to the study of Proverbs.

Regardless of their approach, scholars of MT Proverbs, however, do not usually give as much

⁷¹ Ibid., 67, 70.

⁷² Ibid. The figurative features lead Sandoval to present "three closely related, but distinct (sub)-discourses of wealth and poverty" in MT Proverbs: a "wisdom's virtues discourses," a "discourse of social justice," and a "discourse of social observation." The first "wisdom's virtues discourses" uses "the rhetoric of wealth and poverty" in order to emphasize certain values for the purpose of education. While the second "discourse of social justice" is interested in "an economic ethic" that seeks to ensure protection and care for the poor, the third "discourse of social observation" is concerned with the "observed" reality of the society. Ibid., 205–08.

⁷³ In response to Sandoval's metaphorical reading of the sayings about wealth/rich and poverty/poor in MT Proverbs, James A. Loader argues that Sandoval's "overly figurative" reading of the book is not as "convincing" as an "overly literal" reading. According to Loader, given that moral values and virtues the sages try to articulate in the book are recognized by simple and literal reading as well, the figurative reading "is possible but unnecessary." James A. Loader, "Metaphorical and Literal Readings of Aphorisms in the Book of Proverbs," *Hervormde Teologiese Studies* 62 (2006): 1177–99. Although Samuel L. Adams does not provide his opinion about Sandoval's figurative reading, he casts doubt on Sandoval's emphasis on the consistency of the sayings about wealth/rich and poverty/poor in MT Proverbs. Rather than accepting "the unity of the collection" in the stronger sense that Sandoval argues for, Adams asserts that "the contradictory nature of certain sayings" in the book is perceivable. Samuel L. Adams, *Social and Economic Life in Second Temple Judea* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2014), 188–89.

attention to the rich as they do wealth, poverty, and the poor.⁷⁴ I suggest two reasons that the sayings about the rich have not been a central concern in scholarship.

First, scholars have neglected the sayings about the rich due to the linguistic fact that the rich in MT Proverbs—referred to by the Hebrew word עשיר—appear only nine times (10:15; 14:20; 18:11, 23; 22:2, 7, 16; 28:6, 11).⁷⁵ By contrast, the sages refer to the poor some thirty-eight times with a variety of words (רש, דל, עני, אביון).⁷⁶ What's more, words for wealth (הון, עשר) are also frequent, appearing at least twenty-seven times in MT Proverbs.⁷⁷ Words for precious metals or material possessions (e.g., silver, gold, costly ornaments, etc.) are also quite common.⁷⁸

Second, it is likely that the benign neglect of the rich in the studies of MT Proverbs is related to the fact that some interpreters of wealth/rich and poverty/poor in the book are motivated by strong ethical concerns to address contemporary questions of inequality and social

⁷⁴ Donald E. Gowan also points out that there is “more interest in the poor than in the rich” in the Hebrew Bible. Gowan, “Wealth and Poverty,” 342.

⁷⁵ Although עשיר ought to be rendered as “the rich,” the concept of “a rich person” is also expressed by other terms. For example, the phrase, “the one who trusts in his riches” (בוטח באשרו, 11:28), does not literally mean ‘the rich,’ but it presupposes that they have their wealth and misunderstand its value, so that they belong to the category of the rich expressed by עשיר. See further 28:8 and below. Cf. Donald, “The Semantic Field,” 32–33; Olley, “‘Righteous’ and Wealthy,” 41.

⁷⁶ In MT Proverbs, רש occurs thirteen times (13:8; 14:20; 17:5; 18:23; 19:1, 7, 22; 22:2, 7; 28:3, 6, 27; 29:13). The word דל also occurs thirteen times (10:15; 14:31; 19:4, 17; 21:13; 22:9, 16; 28:3, 8, 11, 15; 29:7, 14). The term עני occurs eight times (15:15; 22:22; 30:14; 31:9, 20) if one includes the Ketiv-Qere עניים/עניים (3:34; 14:21; 16:19). The word אביון occurs four times (14:31; 30:14; 31:9, 20). Whybray, “Poverty, Wealth, and Point of View,” 334; Whybray, *Wealth and Poverty*, 14–15; Storøy, “Why Does the Theme of Poverty,” 298–318.

⁷⁷ In MT Proverbs, עשר appears eight times (3:16; 8:18; 11:16, 28; 13:8; 14:24; 22:4; 30:8). The word הון occurs eighteen times (1:13; 3:9; 6:31; 8:18; 10:15; 11:4; 12:27; 13:7, 11; 18:11; 19:4, 14; 24:4; 28:8, 22; 29:3; 30:15, 16). The words מותר (14:23; 21:5) and חסן (15:6; 27:24) respectively appear twice. The word אוצר occurs four times (10:2; 15:16; 21:6, 20). The word היל appears once (13:22). Whybray, “The Vocabulary of Wealth and Poverty,” 125–26.

⁷⁸ For example, כסף (silver) occurs thirteen times (2:4; 3:14; 7:20; 8:10, 19; 10:20; 16:16; 17:3; 22:1; 25:4, 11; 26:23; 27:21). The word זהב (gold) occurs seven times (11:22; 17:3; 20:15; 22:1; 25:11, 12; 27:21). Moreover, costly ornaments occur six times (a gold ring [נזם זהב]-11:22; 25:12; apples of gold in a silver setting [במשכיות כסף]-25:11; an ornament of gold [חלי כתם]-25:12; corals [פנינים]-20:15; a costly ornament [כלי יקר]-20:15). Whybray, *Wealth and Poverty*, 11–12.

justice in a modern world that is mostly populated by the poor. Many readers seek to understand how the biblical witness might speak in such a contemporary context. For example, Walter Houston clarifies his social concerns when he writes on the “role of the poor in Proverbs”: “My particular concern is that of social justice and more specifically the issue of class . . . within society . . . related to the economic structure.”⁷⁹ In addition, Robert Wafawanaka argues that there are several similarities between the poverty of ancient Israel and that of traditional and modern Africa. The poor are victims of “oppressive measures” and trapped in oppressive social and economic structures.⁸⁰ Sandoval also pays attention to “economic inequalities” in the contemporary world and, thus, is concerned “to translate the ancient wisdom of Proverbs for our own day and time.”⁸¹ In particular, Sandoval believes that many moderns in the developed world might learn about achieving well-being through the acquisition of the sort of truly valuable “wisdom” the sages of MT Proverbs seek to promote rather than through the accumulation of wealth.⁸² When one also remembers that the accusations about the oppression of the poor and the emphasis on care for them frequently appear in the Hebrew Bible, the scholarly preoccupation with the poor in MT Proverbs is neither unusual nor unexpected.

Although none of the works mentioned above focus significantly, or primarily, on the sapiential sayings about the rich MT Proverbs, several of the broader studies on wealth/rich and poverty/poor in the book offer an initial evaluation of the rich, upon which this dissertation builds. As already noted, Whybray, for instance, notes that “the rich man is always regarded with

⁷⁹ Houston, “The Role of the Poor,” 229.

⁸⁰ Wafawanaka, *Am I Still My Brother's Keeper?*, 156. Declaring that poverty has been a serious problem in Africa as in the case of ancient Israel, Wafawanaka suggests that we should regard “the institution of the extended family” as “an invaluable source of support for the poor” (p. 163).

⁸¹ Sandoval, *Money and the Way of Wisdom*, vii, xix.

⁸² *Ibid.*, xix.

hostility” in MT Proverbs and is described as an “arrogant (18:23) and conceited (28:11)” person.⁸³ In a later article, Whybray provides a precise conclusion regarding his analysis of the rich in MT Proverbs: “it [עשיר] refers not simply to persons who have achieved or inherited greater prosperity than others, but to a particular kind of person who represents the exact opposite of the truly indigent, and who is regarded by the speakers with hostility.”⁸⁴ Sandoval similarly traces the sayings about the rich to the sages’ “social observation,” arguing that the sayings offer comments on the “observed” reality of society.⁸⁵ Such social observation often critically evaluates the rich (and the poor) and is especially concerned with “the social effects that can result from a person’s possession of excessive wealth or experience of lack.”⁸⁶ As a result, scholars have pointed toward the kind of analysis of the rich that I want to offer here—one that regards them as moral agents who can be ethically evaluated—but have usually done so tentatively.

Honor and Shame

The sayings about the rich in MT Proverbs can be also illuminated by the idea of honor and shame. Just as wealth serves as a material reward for encouraging the reader to follow the way of wisdom, honor likewise functions as a social reward for doing so. While commentators have not focused the same attention on the connection between honor and wisdom/morality in MT Proverbs as the relationship between wisdom and wealth, several scholars nonetheless have offered insights that are important for this dissertation.

⁸³ Whybray, “Poverty, Wealth, and Point of View,” 334.

⁸⁴ Whybray, “The Vocabulary of Wealth and Poverty,” 136.

⁸⁵ Sandoval, *The Discourse*, 188.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 188–97.

For example, Wits R. Domeris argues that the sages of MT Proverbs are quite interested in the categories of honor and shame. Through their rhetoric of social statutes Domeris believes the sages seek to preserve “the symbolic universe attendant upon such values” communicated from father to son.⁸⁷ In particular, taking notice of the “connection” among “honour, riches, and wisdom,” Domeris correctly recognizes that the sages grant priority to wisdom over wealth and honor.⁸⁸ Likewise, David A. deSilva properly points out that the sages of MT Proverbs used the rhetoric of honor and shame to authorize their instruction promoting certain virtues and behavior.⁸⁹ Like Sandoval who focuses on wealth as a motivational symbol for following wisdom’s way in MT Proverbs, deSilva also suggests that both honor and wealth function as rewards for those who have attained morality and wisdom in the sages’ instructions.⁹⁰

In a similar vein, Fox also argues that the sages value the social status of honor more than economic wealth.⁹¹ Although Fox suggests that honor is generally prioritized among competing values in MT Proverbs, he too points out the fact that like wealth honor is also “subordinated to wisdom.”⁹² Mark R. Sneed has recently made an important mark on the study of honor and shame in the biblical wisdom literature, especially MT Proverbs. Assuming that “honor is social capital worth attaining,” Sneed argues that in MT Proverbs honor “must be accompanied by

⁸⁷ Wits R. Domeris, “Shame and Honour in Proverbs: Wise Women and Foolish Men,” *Old Testament Essays* 8 (1995): 93.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 95.

⁸⁹ David A. deSilva, “Honor and Shame,” in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Wisdom, Poetry & Writings*, ed. Tremper Longman and Peter Enns (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2008), 292.

⁹⁰ For example, in verses such as: “Long life is in her right hand; in her left hand are riches and honor” (3:16), “Riches and honor are with me, enduring wealth and righteousness” (8:18), and “The reward for humility and fear of Yahweh is riches and honor and life” (22:4).

⁹¹ Fox, *Proverbs 10-31*, 605.

⁹² *Ibid.*

generosity and benevolence.”⁹³ Not only does this point illuminate the outstanding feature of the rhetoric of honor and shame the sages present in the book, it also provides the foundation of this study in that the sayings also evaluate the rich with the rhetoric of honor and shame. Regarding honor as “a core value” that is worth more than other values, Sneed suggests that honor eventually leads one to seek happiness.⁹⁴ For him, honor serves as a key component of eudemonism in MT Proverbs.

Much of recent scholarship on MT Proverbs thus makes clear that the sages use the rhetoric of honor and wealth both to encourage the reader to follow the sayings of the book—honor is one of the rewards of obedience—and to establish a hierarchical relationship of the various goods of honor, wealth, and wisdom. Honor is valuable like wealth, but not as worthy as wisdom itself.⁹⁵ What remains to be done, however, is to relate these insights more fully to the manner in which the rich are criticized in MT Proverbs. The rhetoric of honor and shame in MT Proverbs contributes to the construction of the sages’ hierarchy of values, as others have noted. Understanding well its place in this hierarchy, however, reveals further how and why the rich in the book are objects of censure. Put simply, the rich do not seek the highest good of wisdom and morality but lesser goods of wealth, social status, and authority.

Moral Agent/Agency

Several studies of biblical ethics in the Hebrew Bible provide a groundwork for my recognition

⁹³ Mark R. Sneed, *The Social World of the Sages: An Introduction to Israelite and Jewish Wisdom Literature* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015), 265.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 282–84.

⁹⁵ Although Whybray does not analyze honor and shame categories in his work, he also emphasizes that wisdom is ranked above wealth: “...the pursuit of Wisdom is said to be more important than the pursuit of wealth, but only because wealth acquired without wisdom will prove to be ephemeral, while Wisdom will herself bestow true and lasting wealth on her possessor.” Whybray, *Wealth and Poverty*, 115.

of the rich as moral agents. As I will explain later, the terms “agent” or “agency” have wide usage in philosophy and sociology. In general, to quote Markus Schlosser, “an agent is a being with the capacity to act, and ‘agency’ denotes the exercise or manifestation of this capacity.”⁹⁶

Applying the concept to ethics, especially environmental ethics, Paul Taylor defines the moral agent as follows:

A moral agent is ... any being that possesses those capacities by virtue of which it can act morally or immorally, can have duties and responsibilities, and can be held accountable for what it does. Among these capacities, the most important are the ability to form judgments about right and wrong; the ability to engage in moral deliberation, that is, to consider and weigh moral reasons for and against various courses of conduct open to choice.⁹⁷

Although the concept of agent/agency is not new, relatively few studies have been devoted to the idea in the scholarship of the Hebrew Bible. Nevertheless, the following scholars have applied the idea of agent/agency to their work, especially connecting it to the moral aspect. Indeed, their main concern is about an issue of moral capacity—that is, whether human beings or characters in the Hebrew Bible are able to choose and do the good or not.

Regarding “the nature of the moral agent” as one of the “fundamental issues” ethicists have dealt with, Douglas A. Knight decades ago presented a model of moral agency that “aim[s] to clarify all dimensions of existence which impinge upon the process of moral acting.”⁹⁸ As

⁹⁶ Markus Schlosser, “Agency,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Fall 2015 (Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, 2015), <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2015/entries/agency/>. Accessed 9/18/2017.

⁹⁷ Paul W. Taylor, *Respect for Nature: A Theory of Environmental Ethics*, Studies in Moral, Political, and Legal Philosophy (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 14.

⁹⁸ Douglas A. Knight, “Jeremiah and the Dimensions of the Moral Life,” in *The Divine Helmsman, Studies on God’s Control of Human Events, Presented to Lou H. Silberman* (New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1980), 88. Knight adds two fundamental issues ethicists have dealt with: “the nature and locus of the good” and “the function of norms and principles in moral judgment.”

Knight applies the concept to an understanding of Jeremiah and that book's vision of its morality, he characterizes the conditions of moral agents as "rationality, volition, affectivity, sociality, temporality and historicity, and moral freedom."⁹⁹ According to him, Jeremiah "acknowledges fully the people's capacity for rational and intellectual functioning," but the prophet criticizes them for the failure of "proper understanding ... due to the people's self-deception."¹⁰⁰ I will demonstrate further in the following chapters that Jeremiah's critique of the people who have the capacity for morality but choose the bad accords with the negative evaluation of the rich in Proverbs (and Sirach). Moreover, the conditions of moral agency that Knight presents furnish the basis of characterizing the rich of Proverbs (and Sirach) in terms of the diverse factors that cause them to fail in choosing the good.

Through her focus on the moral self in Ezekiel, Jacqueline E. Lapsley also offers a helpful understanding of moral agents. Although Lapsley does not use the term "moral agent/agency" in her book, she employs a similar phrase "moral selfhood," or, in other words, "the ability to choose to act one way or another while being held morally accountable by others (in the Bible usually by God) for the choice."¹⁰¹ Ezekiel challenges a predominant understanding of the human beings as one who possesses "virtuous moral selfhood" and who is supposed to have the ability to choose good things and act morally. Instead, Ezekiel presents them as beings with a "neutral moral selfhood" who are "inherently incapable of virtuous moral action."¹⁰² Yet, Lapsley pays attention to the tension between the two perspectives of moral selfhood, arguing

⁹⁹ Ibid., 89–101.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 90–91.

¹⁰¹ Jacqueline E. Lapsley, *Can These Bones Live? The Problem of the Moral Self in the Book of Ezekiel*, Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft, Bd. 301 (New York: W. de Gruyter, 2000), 8.

¹⁰² Ibid., 6.

that Ezekiel suggests a new “moral selfhood” that is able to choose and act virtuously with the divine gift “in the brave new world he imagines.”¹⁰³ Although Lapsley does not address the moral agency of Proverbs, human beings in the book basically have, if we use her term, “virtuous moral selfhood” because they are expected to have the capacity to do the good.

Pointing out that the concern of “moral philosophy” has been ignored in the scholarship of the Hebrew Bible, Carol A. Newsom has aroused many scholars’ interests in moral agency by suggesting that “the default model of moral agency in the Hebrew Bible” is “an internalized conceptualization of the self in control.”¹⁰⁴ This model is built on an ethnopsychological work of Paul Heelas and Andrew Lock who devised four categories concerning moral agency.¹⁰⁵ According to Newsom, two Hebrew words לב and רוח support the idea of moral agency in the Hebrew Bible as “the capacity of the person to make moral choices,” which is evident “in most of the biblical literature.”¹⁰⁶ Newsom cautiously but rightly describes the moral agency predominantly assumed in the Hebrew Bible, saying, “The human being is in no sense ontologically defective—the capacity for moral agency is presumed—but neither is a person innately moral.”¹⁰⁷ In particular, Newsom offers the reason that some people succeed in choosing and acting for the good but others fail in doing so. According to her, the success or the failure depends on “the interaction of the three elements and their ratios [in each person]: desire,

¹⁰³ Ibid., 8.

¹⁰⁴ Carol A. Newsom, “Models of the Moral Self: Hebrew Bible and Second Temple Judaism,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 131 (2012): 5–25.

¹⁰⁵ Paul Heelas and Andrew Lock, eds., *Indigenous Psychologies: The Anthropology of the Self* (London; New York: Academic Press, 1981). Using the two factors of location and control, Heelas and Lock offer the four models: idealist, modified idealist, modified passioness, and passioness (pp. 33, 41).

¹⁰⁶ Newsom, “Models of the Moral Self,” 11.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 13.

knowledge, and the discipline of submission to external authority.”¹⁰⁸ As I will show later, it is noteworthy that the three elements—desire, knowledge, and submission—function as valid constituting factors for explaining the moral failure of the rich in Proverbs and Sirach as well. In other words, the rich have the capacity to choose and act for the good but fail in doing so because, like other negative moral agents in the Hebrew Bible, they also are characterized by “obsessive desire,” “self-deception,” and “recalcitrance against authority.”¹⁰⁹ Newsom’s subtle evaluation of the fools of Proverbs likely holds for the rich, too: “Though it is possible that Proverbs holds that some people are simply ‘born fools,’ it is more likely that the inveterate fool is ‘made’ rather than ‘born.’”¹¹⁰ The rich of Proverbs are similar to the fool in that they are also made rather than born, but they are different from the fool because their moral status is also more obviously affected by their position in the social structure.

Responding to Newsom’s insightful study, several scholars have applied her concept of moral self to reading books of the Hebrew Bible.¹¹¹ Camp, for example, examines Newsom’s model of the moral self and applies it to an understanding of moral agency in Proverbs. Although Camp acknowledges that Newsom’s model is valid in identifying the self of Proverbs as well as the Hebrew Bible, she pays more attention to “exceptions” of the major position, with the

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 12–13.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 13.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Robert Williamson, Jr., “Taking Root in the Rubble: Trauma and Moral Subjectivity in the Book of Lamentations,” *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 40 (2015): 7–23; Claudia V. Camp, “Proverbs and the Problems of the Moral Self,” *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 40 (2015): 25–42; Davis Hankins, “The Internal Infinite: Deleuze, Subjectivity, and Moral Agency in Ecclesiastes,” *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 40 (2015): 43–59; Brent A. Strawn, “What Is It Like to Be a Psalmist?: Unintentional Sin and Moral Agency in the Psalter,” *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 40 (2015): 61–78; Danna N. Fewell, “Space for Moral Agency in the Book of Ruth,” *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 40 (2015): 79–96; Timothy K. Beal, “‘Who Filled His Heart to Do This?’: Conceptual Metaphors of the Self in the Book of Esther,” *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 40 (2015): 97–111; Brennan W. Breed, “A Divided Tongue: The Moral Taste Buds of the Book of Daniel,” *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 40 (2015): 113–30.

assumption of “the self as fragmented rather than unitary.”¹¹² Focusing specifically on the tension of Proverbs between the self in control and the self under control, especially by external authorities such as God, Camp reveals “the anxiety involved in establishing a self-in-control.”¹¹³ According to Camp, the sages of Proverbs attempt to fill the gap by implanting the internalized self in their pupil or reader, but “the difference between creator and created, and between self and external world” paradoxically and necessarily gives rise to “self-interested manipulation” by which she means that one’s moral agency works for himself/herself rather than for the moral system that cultivates virtues.¹¹⁴ It is noteworthy that Camp understands many sayings about the rich (e.g., 14:20; 18:23; 19:4, 7; 22:7) as examples of showing just such an egocentric manipulation. In this sense, Camp presents another angle of view concerning the rich’s immorality that arises from the tension between the self in control and the self under control.

In his book, *Ethics in Ancient Israel*, John Barton deals with the concept of moral agents and moral patients. According to Barton, “moral agents are those who have moral obligations, and moral patients those to whom obligations are owed.”¹¹⁵ While other scholars are more concerned about moral agents’ capacity to choose and act for the good, Barton takes more interests in moral responsibility as well as moral competence. Thus, Barton emphasizes that the predominant voice of the Hebrew Bible strengthens moral responsibility of human beings in that they are “responsible for what they do.”¹¹⁶ Such an emphasis on moral responsibility is connected to his construal of the Hebrew Bible as “optimistic about human moral capacity,”

¹¹² Camp, “Proverbs and the Problems,” 26.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 32.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 31.

¹¹⁵ John Barton, *Ethics in Ancient Israel* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 41.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 74.

based on a universalism that “all human beings are both moral agents and moral patients.”¹¹⁷ For Barton, even severe critiques of fools and sinners in Proverbs reflect the sages’ strong belief in the moral capacity of human beings. Thus, Barton suggests that the negative figures of Proverbs such as the foolish and the sinful are regarded as those who possess “culpable ignorance” or have insufficient “ethical insight” rather than those who have inherent incapacity to do the good.¹¹⁸ Barton’s viewpoint of moral agency is more obvious when he says, “certainly moral incompetence is not available as an excuse for failing to act morally, but is itself seen as culpable.”¹¹⁹ When we connect Barton’s idea to the rich of Proverbs, their failure in choosing and cultivating virtues is not excused merely as their moral incompetence but also reveals that they are deserving blame or shame, just as I argue that the framework of honor and shame should be considered in evaluating the rich of Proverbs.

Before dealing with the moral agency in the Hebrew Bible, Anne W. Stewart suggests with great lucidity that the main question concerning moral agents/agency in the scholarship is the following: “Do humans have a will capable of choosing the good, doing the good, and evaluating the good?”¹²⁰ As a response to the question, Stewart provides three models of moral agency found in the Hebrew Bible. While the first model presumes that human beings “are fundamentally flawed moral creatures” and thus are incompetent to choose and do the good, the second model thinks of them as those who possess the ability to do so.¹²¹ With the contrasting

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 71.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 158.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 70.

¹²⁰ Anne W. Stewart, “Moral Agency in the Hebrew Bible,” *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Religion*, November 22, 2016, 1, <http://religion.oxfordre.com/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780199340378.001.0001/acrefore-9780199340378-e-92>. Accessed 05/03/2017.

¹²¹ Ibid.

models, Stewart introduces a third model of “educated moral selfhood” that is evident in Proverbs: “while most, though not all, humans are inherently capable of choosing the good, their capacity for moral agency requires cultivation by external forces.”¹²² According to her, the first model ascribes the failure in choosing and doing the good to “a corrupted will” and the second model to “an inherent inability.” However, the third model assigns moral failures to “a misalignment between one’s perceptions of the good and the reality of wisdom,” a situation that thereby requires “discipline.”¹²³ Viewed in this light, Stewart’s main concern about the moral self of Proverbs centers on how it can be shaped and developed by discipline with the possibility of improvement of the moral self.¹²⁴ Specifically, Stewart analyzes several figures of Proverbs, such as the simpleton, the fool, and the wise, with regard to the formation of character. Among them, Stewart’s explanation of the fool is worth noticing because they deceive themselves due to “lack of wisdom” and “walk according to flawed perception,” which is similar to the rich of Proverbs (28:6, 11).¹²⁵ Nevertheless, the rich do not fail in choosing and acting for the good simply due to lack of knowledge but also due to multifaceted interactions of desire for wealth, control over others, and lust of power.

LXX Proverbs

The complicated relationship between MT Proverbs and LXX Proverbs is one that will be discussed more fully in chapter 3. It has, however, been typical for scholars studying LXX

¹²² Ibid., 1, 4.

¹²³ Ibid., 3.

¹²⁴ In her other work, Anne W. Stewart approaches the moral agency of Proverbs by interweaving a concern with character ethics with the educational function of poetic form. Anne W. Stewart, *Poetic Ethics in Proverbs: Wisdom Literature and the Shaping of the Moral Self* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

¹²⁵ Stewart, “Moral Agency,” 12.

Proverbs to understand the differences between MT Proverbs and LXX Proverbs in terms of the impact of Hellenistic Greek culture on the Greek text's rendering of its *Vorlage*.¹²⁶ This is true also for the few who have studied wealth/rich and poor/poverty in LXX Proverbs. Scholars have in fact engaged in a dispute over whether the differences between LXX Proverbs and MT Proverbs resulted from the influence of Hellenistic Greek culture or not. What is typical of essentially all studies of the LXX is the view that the discourse of wealth and poverty in MT Proverbs reflects a fairly mechanical act-consequence logic and this logic is adopted and evident in LXX Proverbs as well. As a result, as in the studies of MT Proverbs, scholars have regarded the translator's critique of the rich in LXX Proverbs as an ambiguity in the act-consequence nexus or as exceptions to it.

Gillis Gerleman and the Influence of Hellenistic Culture

Prior to the publication of Gillis Gerleman's work, scholars had typically attributed variants from MT Proverbs in LXX Proverbs to the translator's personal tastes, reflections, or concerns. Hence J. Freudenthal argued that one could find few traces of classical Greek philosophy in LXX Proverbs.¹²⁷ Freudenthal's emphasis on "the nondependence of the LXX on classical philosophy" was later supported by Louis H. Feldman, who believed that "there is no systematic pattern of Hellenizing" in LXX Proverbs and thus the alternations should be regarded as "superficial and decorative."¹²⁸ Gerleman, by contrast, contended that many of the differences

¹²⁶ Ronald L. Giese, "Qualifying Wealth in the Septuagint of Proverbs," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 111 (1992): 409.

¹²⁷ J. Freudenthal, "Are There Trace Elements of Greek Philosophy in the Septuagint?," *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 2 (1890): 205–22.

¹²⁸ Louis H. Feldman, "The Orthodoxy of the Jews in Hellenistic Egypt," *Jewish Social Studies* 22 (1960): 217.

between MT Proverbs and LXX Proverbs could be ascribed to the influence of the Hellenistic Greek culture on LXX Proverbs.¹²⁹ Therefore, Gerleman suggested that the Hellenistic Greek culture gave rise to a moralizing translation of MT Proverbs into Greek through an emphasis on the contrast between the righteous and the wicked. According to him, 10:26 is an example of the “harsh religious and moralizing interpretations” of MT Proverbs by LXX Proverbs.¹³⁰ This verse reads:¹³¹

כחמץ לשנים וכעשן לעינים	ὥσπερ ὄμοφαξ ὀδοῦσι βλαβερὸν καὶ καπνὸς ὄμμασιν,
כן העצל לשלחיו	οὕτως παρανομία τοῖς χρωμένοις αὐτήν.
Like vinegar to the teeth,	As unripe grapes are harmful to the teeth,
and smoke to the eyes,	and smoke is to the eyes,
so are the lazy to their employers.	so <i>transgression</i> is to those that practice it.

In this verse, the translator of LXX Proverbs does not use a Greek word that corresponds precisely to עצל (“the lazy”) of MT Proverbs but παρανομία, which means “transgression” and carries a negative moral connotation. While the MT’s עצל expresses one’s slow movement or response, the LXX’s παρανομία focuses on an “attitude given to transgressing the (divine) law.”¹³² For Gerleman, the translator’s choice of words does not result from his personal idiosyncrasy but from the moralizing influence of Hellenistic Greek culture.

Gerleman discerned Hellenistic influence in LXX Proverbs’s discourse of wealth and

¹²⁹ Gillis Gerleman, *Studies in the Septuagint: III. Proverbs*, Lunds Universitets Årsskrift, N.F. 52,3 (Lund: Gleerup, 1956).

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 40.

¹³¹ For the comparison between MT Proverbs and LXX Proverbs, I generally refer to the *New Revised Standard Version* (1989) for the former and Johann Cook, “Proverbs,” in *A New English Translation of the Septuagint: And the Other Greek Translations Traditionally Included under That Title*, ed. Albert Pietersma and Benjamin G. Wright (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 621–47, for the latter. Hereupon, I use the abbreviations of both, NRSV and NETS, for convenience. When I use other translations including my own translation, I specify this. Moreover, I use the italic style in NETS for emphasizing LXX Proverbs’s difference from MT Proverbs.

¹³² T. Muraoka, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the Septuagint*, Rev. (Louvain; Walpole: Peeters, 2009), 530.

poverty as well. According to Gerleman, the translator accepted the notion that wealth was highly valued and an appropriate reward for right conduct in MT Proverbs, but he, acquainted with the Greek language and literary tradition, produced a text in which “the glorification of wealth” thought to be typical of MT Proverbs “has sometimes disappeared in the translation.”¹³³ This was, he thought, because of the influence of the Stoic philosophy which devalued the material.¹³⁴ In other words, he believed that the translator of LXX Proverbs did not consider wealth as desirable as did the sages of MT Proverbs.

Ever since Gerleman’s suggestions about the influence of the Hellenistic Greek culture on LXX Proverbs, many scholars have followed or supported his argument.¹³⁵ John W. Olley, for example, also underscores “that the LXX translator of Proverbs (1st century B.C.) was influenced by Greek ethical thought, especially Stoic” and the translator consequently gave rise to many modifications of the extant proverbs and “additions.”¹³⁶ In particular, Olley asserts that such modifications and additions of LXX Proverbs were made “in the area of wealth and being righteous.” He, for example, calls attention to Proverbs 19:22:¹³⁷

תאות אדם חסדו
טוב-רש מאיש כזב

What is desirable in a person is loyalty,
and it is better to be poor than a liar.

καρπὸς ἀνδρὶ ἐλεημοσύνη,
κρείσσων δὲ πτωχὸς δίκαιος ἢ πλούσιος ψεύστης.
Compassion is a profit for a man,
and a poor *righteous* person is better than a *rich* liar.

¹³³ Gerleman, *Proverbs*, 56.

¹³⁴ According to Miriam Griffin, the Stoics “devalued material things, regarding them merely as ‘indifferents’ (some positive, some negative, and some purely indifferent).” Miriam Griffin, “Dignity in Roman and Stoic Thought,” in *Dignity: A History*, ed. Remy Debes, Oxford Philosophical Concepts (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 58.

¹³⁵ Martin Hengel, *Judentum und Hellenismus; Studien zu ihrer Begegnung unter besonderer Berücksichtigung Palästinas bis zur Mitte des 2. Jhs. v. Chr.*, (Tübingen: Mohr, 1973), 281; Karl-Gustav Sandelin, *Wisdom as Nourisher: A Study of an Old Testament Theme, Its Development within Early Judaism, and Its Impact on Early Christianity* (Åbo: Åbo Akademi, 1986), 76, quoted from Cook, *The Septuagint of Proverbs*, 37.

¹³⁶ Olley, “‘Righteous’ and Wealthy,” 41.

¹³⁷ In chapter 3, I will deal with Proverbs 19:22 in detail.

While MT 19:22b offers a somewhat imperfect comparison between a poor person and a liar, LXX 19:22b provides a perfect antithesis between a poor righteous person and a rich liar by adding moral qualities to the poor person and economic qualities to the liar.¹³⁸ LXX Proverbs gives a negative impression of the rich by linking the rich with explicitly immoral characters—liars—and thus appears to devalue high economic status.

Critiques of Gerleman's Argument

Some scholars have been critical of Gerleman's argument and instead suggested that the influence of Greek philosophy on the translation of LXX Proverbs is neither strong nor convincing. We already noted that Feldman, for instance, has emphasized that there is no trace of Hellenizing in LXX Proverbs.¹³⁹ John G. Gammie has also argued that "Stoic influence" on LXX Proverbs is "not always one of positive acceptance."¹⁴⁰ He believes that at least one saying, Proverbs 14:23, expresses "anti-Stoic and anti-Cynic" thought:

<p>בכל־עצב יהיה מותר ודבר־שפתים אך־למחסור In all toil there is profit, but mere talk leads only to poverty.</p>	<p>ἐν παντὶ μεριμνῶντι ἔνεστιν περισσόν, ὁ δὲ ἡδὺς καὶ ἀνάλγητος ἐν ἐνδείᾳ ἔσται. There is an abundance for everyone encumbered with care, but the one who is pleasant [literally, sweet] and free from pain will be in want (Gammie's translation).¹⁴¹</p>
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Since the word ἀνάλγητος lexically denotes a status of being "indisposed towards toil and

¹³⁸ Olley, "'Righteous' and Wealthy," 41. cf. 13:9, 11.

¹³⁹ Feldman, "The Orthodoxy of the Jews."

¹⁴⁰ John G. Gammie, "The Septuagint of Job: Its Poetic Style and Relationship to the Septuagint of Proverbs," *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 49 (1987): 30.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

hardship,”¹⁴² LXX Proverbs 14:23 can be regarded as evidence of the Stoic influence on the book because Stoics sought a life free from pain.¹⁴³ However, Gammie argues that the verse does not support “the Stoic subtleties with respect to pain” because one who pursues pleasure and is free from pain would nonetheless rather suffer poverty as a result—something that does not obviously conform to Stoic teaching.¹⁴⁴ In other words, for Gammie, LXX Proverbs 14:23 cannot be harmonized with the Stoic teaching that emphasizes the freedom of suffering, that is, ἀπάθεια (“not being subject to suffering”).¹⁴⁵

Michael B. Dick also rejects Gerleman’s argument for the Hellenistic influence on LXX Proverbs on the linguistic and comparative levels by showing that the translator does not use much of the jargon of “Stoic ethics.”¹⁴⁶ According to Dick, Gerleman’s emphasis on “the Aristotelian distinction between σοφία (wisdom in a wide sense) and φρόνησις (practical prudence) in 1:2; 3:13, 19; 7:4; 8:1; 10:23; and 16:16” is not valid because the two words make only “a poetic parallelism.”¹⁴⁷ Although Dick does not accept Gerleman’s suggestion about the influence of Hellenistic philosophy on LXX Proverbs, he acknowledges the tendency of the book

¹⁴² J. Lust, E. Eynikel, and K. Hauspie, *Greek-English Lexicon of the Septuagint*, Rev. ed (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2003), 40; Muraoka, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 42.

¹⁴³ See the detailed discussion about Stoicism of John M. Rist, *Stoic Philosophy* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 37–53, quoted from Gammie, “The Septuagint of Job,” 30.

¹⁴⁴ Gammie, “The Septuagint of Job,” 30.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.; William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker, and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 95. According to Dirk Baltzly, the term, ἀπάθεια for the Stoics refers to the status of one who is not “psychologically subject to anything—manipulated and moved by it.” He thus defines ἀπάθεια as “a kind of complete self-sufficiency.” Dirk Baltzly, “Stoicism,” ed. Edward N. Zalta, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2014, <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2014/entries/stoicism/>. Accessed 01/27/2016.

¹⁴⁶ Michael B. Dick, “The Ethics of the Old Greek Book of Proverbs,” in *The Studia Philonica Annual: Studies in Hellenistic Judaism*, ed. David T. Runia, vol. II, Brown Judaic Studies (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990), 46.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

to moralize. For example, Dick calls attention to the usages of the Greek word κακός (“bad”), which in “eighteen cases of the ninety-five times” it appears in LXX Proverbs (19:6, 27; 21:26; 22:8, 14; 24:34ff.; 27:21; 28:20) is employed “with no correspondence” in MT Proverbs.¹⁴⁸ For Dick, the moralizing tendency of LXX Proverbs arises from the translator’s concern to construct “a polar antithesis” (e.g., “evil” vs. “just”) rather than from Greek philosophy.¹⁴⁹ Likewise, Johann Cook criticizes Gerleman’s thesis by arguing that the influence of the Hellenistic culture should be restricted to the “use of Hellenistic literary devices,” such as “harmonized structure” and vocabularies.¹⁵⁰ Accordingly, Cook concludes that LXX Proverbs has few traces of the Hellenistic philosophy and rather reflects “an initial position in the whole development of Hellenistic-Jewish theological points of view.”¹⁵¹

The work of Ronald L. Giese, however, is perhaps most important for this dissertation. Giese does not merely question the existence of Hellenistic philosophical (especially Stoic) influence on LXX Proverbs, but addresses, in particular, the manner in which the book speaks of wealth and poverty. Giese believes Gerleman did not merely overstate his case regarding a Stoic devaluation of wealth in LXX Proverbs. According to Giese, the translator of LXX Proverbs basically supports the causal logic of MT Proverbs that the attainment of wisdom gives rise to the achievement of wealth.¹⁵² The LXX Proverbs’s variants on the sayings about wealth are thus a means of “making explicit a morality that is already in the verse implicitly and introducing into

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 22.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 49.

¹⁵⁰ Johann Cook, “Hellenistic Influence in the Septuagint Book of Proverbs,” in *VII Congress of the International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies, Leuven, 1989*, ed. Claude E. Cox, Septuagint and Cognate Studies Series 31 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1991), 343.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 351.

¹⁵² Giese, “Qualifying Wealth,” 412.

a verse an element of morality that was previously nonexistent.”¹⁵³ For Giese, wealth works as a material “reward” for following wisdom’s way in LXX Proverbs,” just as in MT Proverbs, something which is a far cry from a Stoic devaluation of wealth.¹⁵⁴

Yet neither does Giese see in LXX Proverbs a complete valorization of wealth. Like most scholars of MT Proverbs who recognize that wealth unjustly gained is not to be valued,¹⁵⁵ he also argues that the translator of LXX Proverbs devaluated material wealth “when [it was] achieved without regard to wisdom.”¹⁵⁶ Unlike Gerleman who emphasized the influence of Hellenistic philosophy on the translation of LXX Proverbs, Giese attributes the book’s cautious attitude about wealth to the translator’s conviction that the possession of wealth ought to result only from the possession of wisdom.¹⁵⁷ Giese thus concludes that LXX Proverbs faithfully follows its predecessor, MT Proverbs, by establishing a causal relation between wisdom/righteousness and wealth but is “declaring, more often and more consistently” than MT Proverbs does, the actual workings of this causal nexus.¹⁵⁸ In essence, Giese is pointing to the hierarchy of values in the didactic wisdom of LXX Proverbs that I will more fully address.

Scholarly Disregard of the Rich

Yet, despite Giese’s contribution to understanding wisdom and wealth in LXX Proverbs, like the studies of Gerleman and others, his examination of these themes is also quite limited. As in the

¹⁵³ Ibid., 411.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 419.

¹⁵⁵ For example, Whybray, *Wealth and Poverty*, 39.

¹⁵⁶ Giese, “Qualifying Wealth,” 413–18.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 418.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 425.

cases of other scholars mentioned above, none of the lines in LXX Proverbs that Giese treats speaks of the rich. He does not acknowledge or address the reason that LXX Proverbs reproduces the earlier criticism of the rich who might be thought to possess a material reward for their wisdom, following the act-consequence logic of MT Proverbs that he seems to accept. Indeed, as in MT Proverbs, the causal link between act and consequence in LXX Proverbs cannot be regarded as consistent. It is not as uniformly evident as Giese and others have thought. As in MT Proverbs, the sayings about the rich create ambiguity or contradiction in relation to a strict act-consequence logic since these possessors of wealth should also in some sense be possessors of wisdom. Yet, as in MT Proverbs, the rich are regularly criticized in LXX Proverbs. They are also not always considered morally superior to the poor who can sometimes be described as moral or wise (28:6, 11), as in MT Proverbs. The hierarchy of values of LXX Proverbs—the valuing of wisdom and morality over wealth—was thus essentially taken from MT Proverbs. But, as with MT Proverbs, in order to fully understand the sages’ critiques of the rich in LXX Proverbs, one needs also to understand the act-consequence logic of the text more fully. One should differentiate ‘the rich,’ as a socio-economic class of moral agents who can be criticized for their immorality and lack of wisdom, from ‘wealth,’ which may be a reward for wisdom. A rich person’s possession of wealth does not inevitably mean that this person is one who follows wisdom’s way.

Although none of the studies of LXX Proverbs noted above explicitly address the question, the social values of honor and shame are also used as significant factors in the construction of a hierarchy of values in the book. Just as wisdom and morality are ranked above wealth in LXX Proverbs, social status is also subordinated to wisdom in the book. As will become clear, the translator of LXX Proverbs adopted, and perhaps strengthened, earlier sages’

hierarchical relations among competing values by connecting honor to wisdom and morality rather than to economic power and political authority. When one recognizes, as in MT Proverbs, that the rich are moral agents and wisdom is ranked above both wealth and social status in a hierarchy of values, LXX Proverbs' critiques of the rich for foolish and immoral behavior also become easily and are reasonably understood in the Greek text.

Sirach

Just as the sages of MT and LXX Proverbs do, since Ben Sira takes a profound interest in economic issues and a number of studies about wealth and poverty in Sirach have been produced.¹⁵⁹ Indeed, scholars have discovered many similarities between Sirach's and Proverbs' use of wealth and poverty language, especially as this economic discourse is thought to relate to the act-consequence nexus.¹⁶⁰ For example, Benjamin G. Wright suggests—implicitly or explicitly—that Sirach's attitude toward wealth and poverty is similar to that of Proverbs.¹⁶¹ Moreover, Bradley C. Gregory argues that both Sirach and Proverbs handle wealth and poverty

¹⁵⁹ Adams, *Social and Economic Life*, 192–94; Victor M. Asensio, “Poverty and Wealth: Ben Sira’s View of Possessions,” in *Der Einzelne Und Seine Gemeinschaft Bei Ben Sira*, ed. Renate Egger-Wenzel and Ingrid Krammer, Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft 270 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1998), 151–78; Bradley C. Gregory, *Like an Everlasting Signet Ring: Generosity in the Book of Sirach*, Deuterocanonical and Cognate Literature Studies 2 (New York: De Gruyter, 2010); Victor Tcherikover, *Hellenistic Civilization and the Jews*, trans. Shimon Applebaum (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1999); Benjamin G. Wright, “The Discourse of Riches and Poverty in the Book of Ben Sira,” *Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers* 37 (1998): 559–78; Benjamin G. Wright and Claudia V. Camp, “‘Who Has Been Tested by Gold and Found Perfect?’: Ben Sira’s Discourse of Riches and Poverty,” in *Praise Israel for Wisdom and Instruction: Essays on Ben Sira and Wisdom, the Letter of Aristeas and the Septuagint*, ed. Benjamin G. Wright, Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism 131 (Boston: Brill, 2008), 71–96.

According to Skehan and Di Lella, the sayings about wealth/rich and poverty/poor appear mainly in the so-called “recipe wisdom” where “pretheoretical or practical” proverbs are stated. Skehan and Di Lella, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira*, 32.

¹⁶⁰ For example, as in MT Proverbs, the Hebrew word, עשיר, is “almost exclusively” used to refer to the rich in the Hebrew texts of Sirach, while various terms such as עני, דל, and אביון designate the poor. Asensio, “Poverty and Wealth,” 154–55; Wright and Camp, “Ben Sira’s Discourse,” 73.

¹⁶¹ Wright, “The Discourse of Riches and Poverty,” 568.

in a somewhat “neutral” way.¹⁶² On the one hand, wealth is usually regarded as a literal reward for the wise while poverty the wages of the foolish and wicked. On the other hand, wealth’s potential danger may arise from excessive possession of riches or greed for money while the rich can be sharply criticized.¹⁶³ Not surprisingly, then, as in Proverbs, the discourse of wealth and poverty, and especially the descriptions of the rich in Sirach, can be regarded as contradictory or ambiguous. As the cases with MT Proverbs and LXX Proverbs, scholars who have produced the important studies of wealth and poverty in Sirach misunderstand the function of wealth and the status of the rich as moral agents in the book’s act-consequence logic. Nevertheless, several scholars have offered foundational remarks on Ben Sira’s critical descriptions of the rich upon which this dissertation builds.

Victor M. Asensio

Unlike others who assume that Ben Sira faithfully follows his predecessors—such as the sages of Proverbs—especially in relation to act-consequence logic, Victor M. Asensio asserts that Ben Sira seriously casts doubt on that logic. According to Asensio, Ben Sira’s perception of “the ambiguity in the human and social reality”—including wealth and poverty—resulted in a skeptical attitude toward the act-consequence logic he inherited from the wisdom tradition.¹⁶⁴ Although Asensio does not completely renounce the causal relationship between act and consequence in Sirach, he emphasizes that the sage, because of his “societal experience,” is more conscious of the fact that one’s wealth does not always result from one’s “own intrinsic moral

¹⁶² Gregory, *Like an Everlasting Signet Ring*, 50.

¹⁶³ Asensio, “Poverty and Wealth,” 167; Matthew J. Goff, *The Worldly and Heavenly Wisdom of 4QInstruction*, Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah 50 (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2003), 138; Adams, *Social and Economic Life*, 192.

¹⁶⁴ Asensio, “Poverty and Wealth,” 176.

values” than the sages of Proverbs were.¹⁶⁵ Thus, Asensio rightly suggests that Ben Sira communicates his ideas and thoughts about the act-consequence nexus in part by ranking “wisdom and fear of the Lord” over wealth and authority (e.g., 10:24; 40:25f.).¹⁶⁶ Asensio concludes that Ben Sira by means of his articulation of a hierarchy of values leads the reader to think of the ultimate purpose of his teachings as the attainment of wisdom rather than acquisition of money.¹⁶⁷ Despite Asensio’s helpful clarification of Ben Sira’s understanding of the act-consequence nexus in relation to MT Proverbs (and LXX Proverbs) and the way the text constructs a hierarchy of values, he does not analyze the role of social values, honor, and shame in Sirach’s establishing a hierarchy of values. He also oversimplifies the cause and effect logic of wisdom instructions. For Asensio, the act-consequence nexus is a kind of mechanistic principle. This enables him to contrast sharply Ben Sira’s teaching regarding wealth/rich and poverty/poor with what Proverbs says. Yet, as it will become clear, Proverbs is not as mechanistic as he seems to think; nor is Ben Sira’s understanding of the role of wealth in such a cause and effect logic terribly distinct from Proverbs.

Benjamin G. Wright

In 1998, the same year in which Asensio published his article, Wright produced another important paper concerning wealth/rich and poverty/poor in Sirach.¹⁶⁸ In that paper, Wright evaluates Ben Sira’s instructions on wealth as ambiguous because he believes that while Ben Sira regards wealth as “a good thing,” a reward for following wisdom’s way, the sage also has a

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 177.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 173.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Wright, “The Discourse of Riches and Poverty,” 559–78.

“cautionary and critical” attitude toward riches.¹⁶⁹ For Ben Sira, wealth is a material reward for one’s righteous behavior (40:26) but if wrongly pursued or wielded it also might cause one’s ruin (8:2). For this reason, Wright points out that Ben Sira encourages the reader to take “two attitudes” toward wealth: one should accumulate wealth by moral standards but also use wealth properly through “almsgiving.”¹⁷⁰ Wright also takes a nuanced position in evaluating Ben Sira’s attitude toward the rich. Despite passages such as chapters 13 and 14 that sharply critique the rich, Wright instead focuses on texts (8:1-2; 31:12-18; 32:1-13) that counsel a cautious stance in the presence of the powerful rich. Wright ascribes this cautious attitude toward the rich to Ben Sira’s “two competing functions” as both a “guardian of the Israelite religious tradition” and a “retainer of aristocratic patrons.”¹⁷¹ For Wright, the sayings about the rich are products of Ben Sira’s ambiguous situation in which he is sandwiched between the rich and the poor. Wright argues that Ben Sira is no longer a “social critic” like the biblical prophets because unlike them the sage “is not engaging in the kind of social critique” that they offered.¹⁷²

Wright goes still further and pays attention to how Ben Sira employs honor and shame rhetoric in which the rich are shamed out of their “improper acquisition and use of possessions” and the poor are honored for their “keeping of the commandments.”¹⁷³ According to Wright, Ben Sira encourages the reader to seek not economic advantage that may result in high social status, but “true honor,” that is, “knowledge and wisdom rather than possessions.”¹⁷⁴ This emphasis on

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 562.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 564–65.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 570–71.

¹⁷² Ibid., 568.

¹⁷³ Ibid., 569.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

the idea of honor and shame is the point where Wright differs from Asensio, even though both believe Ben Sira is aware of the fact that the causality between act and consequence in the sayings about wealth/rich and poverty/poor does not always work in reality. However, like Asensio, Wright does not further examine the point that the rich have a distinct status within the act-consequence logic as moral agents whose own way can be morally evaluated. Moreover, Wright does not really account for the honor and shame sayings but just shifts attention away from them.

Wright and Claudia V. Camp

Wright developed and elaborated this analysis of Ben Sira's "ambivalent" attitude toward wealth/rich and poverty/poor in a 2008 article in collaboration with Camp. In their article, Wright and Camp attribute Ben Sira's ambiguous attitude toward the rich to the sage's social position, that is, his "betwixt-and-betweenness."¹⁷⁵ They suggest that Ben Sira takes a cautious attitude toward the rich in order to secure his own "insecure social position" as "a kind of mediator between his rich and powerful patrons and ordinary Jews."¹⁷⁶ Wright and Camp thus believe that Ben Sira did not belong to the rich and the powerful—the "ruling classes"—but rather served them.¹⁷⁷ This identification of the rich who are associated with social-political leaders is helpful in understanding why Ben Sira describes the rich's exercise of power to social outsiders such as the poor and the lowly. Wright and Camp also point out the close connection in Sirach between wisdom, honor, and, to an extent, wealth. Nonetheless, Wright and Camp focus

¹⁷⁵ Wright and Camp, "Ben Sira's Discourse," 83.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 86, 95.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 84.

primarily on the sage's ideological efforts to ensure his (and his class's) own social status as a retainer of the economic and political elite. This focus on Ben Sira's social location does not fully address the question of why he criticizes the rich for their immoral behavior. Thus, Camp maybe allude back to Wright's earlier stepping. In other words, Wright and Camp do not examine further how the rich as moral agents can be criticized by the sage for their immoral behavior in a way that is consistent with an act-consequence logic. And Wright and Camp also do not understand that the rich are not identical with those who possess wealth as a material reward in the act-consequence nexus.

Bradley C. Gregory

Like Wright and Camp, Gregory regards Ben Sira's sayings about wealth and the rich as "somewhat ambiguous" because he believes the act-consequence nexus is "operative in Ben Sira's understanding of retributive justice as a whole."¹⁷⁸ According to Gregory, the rich who have material wealth should be paragons of virtue, not objects of scathing attack, or associated with the wicked—as they sometimes are (11:22; 51:30).¹⁷⁹ Although for Gregory "the [traditional] doctrine of retributive justice" in Sirach is challenged by "social injustice" (e.g., the prosperity of the wicked and suffering of the righteous), he argues that Ben Sira does not relinquish the doctrine. Instead, Gregory suggests that Ben Sira complements the doctrine of retribution by "reducing the force of the counterevidence" through two means: developing a notion of "deferred justice" and through "the idea of honor and shame."¹⁸⁰ On the one hand, Ben

¹⁷⁸ Gregory, *Like an Everlasting Signet Ring*, 55.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 42–43.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 89.

Sira reassures the reader that although delayed, appropriate rewards and punishments are coming. On the other hand, like Wright and Camp, Gregory assumes that honor serves as a recompense for those who are righteous and wise but do not receive the expected material rewards. If the wise and righteous are not rewarded with wealth as they ought to be, and as the wicked ‘rich’ often seem to be, they can or should at least gain some social status.

Gregory is surely right about the important roles honor and shame play as appropriate rewards for the wise and righteous (or punishment for the wicked and foolish) in Sirach. He rightly claims that such status properly belongs to the wise, by virtue of their wisdom, not to the rich and powerful by virtue of their riches and power. However, like the argument of Wright and Camp, this sort of social recompense does not fully explain Ben Sira’s criticism of the rich within the broader framework of Sirach’s act-consequence logic, nor does it precisely capture the hierarchy of goods that the sage articulates, a hierarchy that is essentially the same as what is found in MT Proverbs and LXX Proverbs. Like Wright and Camp, Gregory somewhat misunderstands that the logical status of the rich in Ben Sira’s understanding of the act-consequence discourse is not the same as the logical place of wealth in that discourse. Indeed, Ben Sira imagines material wealth (and status) as the right reward for the wise, rather than, say, for the wicked. This, however, does not mean that the rich, who surely possess wealth, are logically to be understood to be wise. “Wealth” is no metonymy for “the rich” in Sirach or in any of the three didactic wisdom texts. The rich, rather, are moral agents that are functionally equivalent to other moral agents in the didactic wisdom, which can be evaluated by wisdom’s moral standards. What the criticism of the rich in Ben Sira makes clear, perhaps more than in MT Proverbs or LXX Proverbs, is that neither the social status nor the wealth of the rich is a product of their virtue. It is rather a function of other things, such as their social-political power

and their often vicious characters—e.g., the rich in Sirach can amass a fortune by exercising their social power in untoward ways (13:3-8). What’s more, for Ben Sira, like the sages of didactic wisdom before him, status is not a mere recompense for deserved wealth. Rather, as in MT and LXX Proverbs, both status and wealth ought to be the rewards for a life of wisdom. Yet, both status and wealth are lower on the didactic wisdom’s hierarchy of values than virtue. Both fall below wisdom.

Samuel L. Adams

Finally, Samuel L. Adams basically evaluates Ben Sira’s attitude toward commerce and tradesmen as censorious because he believes the sage “lashes out against the dangers of mercantile activities.”¹⁸¹ Regarding Ben Sira’s critique of economic activities, Adams suggests that it results from the sage’s “preference for the life of the scribe over the harsh realities of the marketplace.”¹⁸² In addition, Adams observes that Ben Sira expresses his negative idea of economics by revealing “unbridled commercial activities under the Ptolemies and Seleucids.”¹⁸³ Interestingly, Adams also connects Ben Sira’s criticism of business affairs to his social location “as a member of the retainer class.” This connection has already been seen in Wright and Camp’s argument, but Adams subtly takes a different position by evaluating the sage’s negative description of wealth and the rich as his attempt to resolve the “tension” between “elite circles”

¹⁸¹ Adams, *Social and Economic Life*, 192. According to Adams, Ben Sira’s critical stance on commerce is similar to that of Qoheleth: both underscore “the inherent advantages of the wealthy (Ecc 5:8 [7]; Sir 13:2-22), “the potential for rapid gain/loss” of wealth (Ecc 5:13-14 [12-13]; 10:5-7; Sir 18:25-26), and “the inevitable anxiety that accompanies financial holdings” (Ecc 4:7-9; Sir 31:1-17).

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 193.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*

and “the social-justice expectations of his tradition.”¹⁸⁴ Therefore, for Adams, wealth functions “as a reward for [the] virtuous behavior” of officials or elites, whom Ben Sira served, especially to encourage them to give alms to economically and socially marginalized people.¹⁸⁵ However, like other scholars, Adams also misses the distinctive status of the rich in the act-consequence nexus by evaluating Ben Sira’s critiques of the rich as ambiguous. Again, such an evaluation arises from his confusion of the logical place of wealth as the material reward in the act-consequence nexus and the rich as those who are criticized for their immorality.

Hermeneutical Perspective and Methodology

An Exegetical Approach

This dissertation is primarily an exegetical examination of the rich in MT Proverbs, LXX Proverbs, and Sirach that draws upon historical critical approaches and modes of reading.¹⁸⁶ Such an exegetical work basically seeks a systematic understanding of the texts by offering a linguistic analysis of key texts, including translations and syntactical examination.

This dissertation also focuses on the final form of the three books to be examined as the locus of the exegetical work. As Martti Nissinen properly points out, the notion of “the ideal of historical objectivity” for which ‘traditional’ historical critical approaches had searched is regarded as “unreachable” by much of current biblical scholarship.¹⁸⁷ The idea of the biblical

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., 194.

¹⁸⁶ On recent developments of the historical critical methods I use in this dissertation, see Joel M. LeMon and Kent H. Richards, eds., *Method Matters: Essays on the Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible in Honor of David L. Petersen*, Society of Biblical Literature Resources for Biblical Study 56 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2009).

¹⁸⁷ Martti Nissinen, “Reflections on the ‘Historical-Critical’ Method: Historical Criticism and Critical Historicism,” in *Method Matters: Essays on the Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible in Honor of David L. Petersen*,

text as a single writer's authentic autograph is no longer regarded as valid among scholars. Even textual critics, such as Emanuel Tov, acknowledge attaining original readings of reconstructed oral texts is "beyond our evidence."¹⁸⁸ Hence, I do not attempt to reconstruct the original text and keep track of oral traditions but to treat the final form of the books.

A Linguistic Analysis

This exegetical approach is necessarily related to the linguistic analysis of the terms 'rich' and 'wealth' in MT Proverbs, LXX Proverbs and Sirach as well as in other books of the Bible in order to offer a comprehensive understanding of the rich in the didactic wisdom tradition. However, my linguistic research of the sayings about the rich does not remain in a purely philological analysis. Pure philological analysis or the traditional biblical linguistics tends to explore the meaning of the roots of words in the Bible and the meaning of similar terms in other ancient Semitic languages. But, as James Barr properly pointed out long ago, such an etymological linguistics concentrates only on a single word, so that it does not enable one to grasp the meaning of the word in a literary larger context nor in light of other words to which it is very closely related.¹⁸⁹

Rather, my linguistic analysis is informed generally by linguistic anthropology and sociolinguistics. First, I use a concept of agency developed by linguistic anthropology to understand the rich as agents. As I stated above, while the scholarship of the Hebrew Bible has focused on the moral capacity or the moral responsibility of agents, many scholars in the field of

ed. Joel M. LeMon and Kent H. Richards, *Society of Biblical Literature Resources for Biblical Study 56* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2009), 479.

¹⁸⁸ Emanuel Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*, 3rd ed., rev. and expanded (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012), 165.

¹⁸⁹ James Barr, *The Semantics of Biblical Language* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961).

linguistic anthropology pay more attention to the social function of the agent in literature. In particular, the definition of agency proposed by Alessandro Duranti serves as an important foundation for the identification of the rich of Proverbs and Sirach as agents. According to him, “agency is understood as the property of those entities (i) that have some degree of control over their own behavior, (ii) whose actions in the world affect other entities’ (and sometimes their own), and (iii) whose actions are the object of evaluation (e.g. in terms of their responsibility for a given outcome).”¹⁹⁰ As I will demonstrate later, the rich of Proverbs and Sirach are to be construed less as negative literary characters as and more as moral agents who can partially control their behavior. In Proverbs and Sirach, the descriptions of the rich as agents are not neutral but are frequently implicitly, and sometimes explicitly, negative because their immoral behavior is wrong in light of the value system of the wisdom tradition. More importantly, as Duranti notes, the actions of agents “have consequences for themselves or others.”¹⁹¹ Hence, the rich in Proverbs and Sirach also affect themselves and others who are related to their social position, especially the poor. Such an influence is an important feature of an agent who is distinguished from actor. According to Ivan Karp, “an actor refers to a person whose action is rule-governed or rule-oriented, whereas an agent refers to a person engaged in the exercise of power in the sense of the ability to bring about effects and to (re)constitute the world.”¹⁹² Thus, the rich as agents are depicted as those who exercise their power to affect others.

In addition to drawing upon social anthropology’s views of agency, my study borrows on an insight from sociolinguistics—a field that is especially concerned with the relation between

¹⁹⁰ Alessandro Duranti, “Agency in Language,” in *A Companion to Linguistic Anthropology*, ed. Alessandro Duranti, Blackwell Companions to Anthropology 1 (Malden: Blackwell Pub, 2004), 453.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 454.

¹⁹² Ivan Karp, “Agency and Social Theory: A Review of Anthony Giddens,” *American Ethnologist* 13, no. 1 (1986): 137; Laura M. Ahearn, “Language and Agency,” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 30 (2001): 113.

language and society—to understand sayings about the rich as the sages’ representation of their social world.¹⁹³ Sociolinguist Suzanne Romaine offers an important insight in this regard:

It is often said that the vocabulary of a language is an inventory of the items a culture talks about and has categorized in order to make sense of the world. However, language is not simply a reflection of some external ‘objective’ reality which gets carved up in different ways in different languages. Language helps us to make sense of the world. By classifying things, we impose a structure on the social world, and language helps us to construct a model of it.¹⁹⁴

As Romaine notes, language basically represents a specific social reality, and, at the same time, it produces a social world. If we apply this insight to the wisdom books and the sages, we recognize that their works represent their social reality and also present their own social world through their works. Based on this understanding of language and society, sayings about the rich are viewed as constituting the sages’ reflection of social reality and their presentation of their social world. Although, as Clifford suggests, Proverbs and Sirach are essentially defined as “an anthology” and so lack “a persistent logical thread,” such a definition does not mean that the sages of the books were merely paremiologists who collected various proverbs.¹⁹⁵ Rather, as Fox points out, those who compiled individual proverbs and produced the current books were “the

¹⁹³ In fact, some have attempted to distinguish sociolinguistics or micro-sociolinguistics from the sociology of language or macro-sociolinguistics. According to Ronald Wardhaugh, sociolinguistics deals with the relation between language and society to understand “the structure of language and of how languages function in communication,” but the sociology of language pays more attention to “how social structure can be better understood through the study of language.” Ronald Wardhaugh, *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics*, 4th ed., Blackwell Textbooks in Linguistics 4 (Malden: Blackwell Publishers, 2002), 12–13. Despite the subtle difference, many scholars do not tend to distinguish the two because, as Coulmas points out, “any rigid micro-macro compartmentalization seems quite contrived and unnecessary in the present state of knowledge about the complex interrelationships between linguistic and social structure.” Florian Coulmas, “Introduction,” in *The Handbook of Sociolinguistics*, ed. Florian Coulmas, Blackwell Handbooks in Linguistics 4 (Oxford; Malden: Blackwell Publishers, 1998), 3. Likewise, I do not distinguish the two in this dissertation but designate them only as ‘sociolinguistics.’

¹⁹⁴ Suzanne Romaine, *Language in Society: An Introduction to Sociolinguistics*, 2nd ed. (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 26.

¹⁹⁵ Clifford, *The Wisdom Literature*, 115.

redactors” who “were closer to authors or collage artists, and preserved proverbs that served their purposes.”¹⁹⁶ Fox is on the mark when he says, “The lovely background picture the folk school derives from the proverbs—the gentle, egalitarian, village society based on finely tuned human relations—is to a degree accurate, not as a depiction but as an ideal. This is the ideal that the author-redactors of Proverbs—the king’s men—want us to derive. It is a deliberate and programmatic construal of reality.”¹⁹⁷ Based on this recognition of the books, this dissertation is concerned with the descriptions of the rich in the ‘foreground’ that the sages as author-redactors want or attempt to show. In this dissertation, Proverbs and Sirach are thus regarded as more than anthologies of individual proverbs, instructional poems or a reflection upon the sages’ belief or vision. They are rather to be regarded in a fashion that is similar to Brian W. Kovacs’s concept of “class ethics,” which “is the ethos of a specific social group—a system of values and a corresponding perspective on the world founded in that group and common to it.”¹⁹⁸ In other words, the sayings about the rich reflect the social reality in which the sages were located and, at the same time, establish the social world they were attempting to shape.

Cultural Anthropology

This dissertation is also necessarily methodologically informed by cultural anthropology, especially its understanding of the categories of honor and shame, because cultural anthropology is concerned with the social meaning of human behavior and value. According to deSilva, honor indicates “the experience of being esteemed by one’s group or other social entities,” with

¹⁹⁶ Michael V. Fox, “The Social Location of the Book of Proverbs,” in *Texts, Temples, and Traditions: A Tribute to Menahem Haran*, ed. Michael V. Fox et al. (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1996), 237.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 238.

¹⁹⁸ Kovacs, “Is There a Class-Ethic in Proverbs?,” 176.

reference to “what is deemed desirable, virtuous, and socially productive,” whereas shame means “the opposite experience of being devalued and belittled,” in relation to loss of one’s honor.¹⁹⁹ In short, honor and shame basically refer to one’s gain and loss of reputation in society. As John J. Pilch argues, therefore, honor and shame are regarded as “external controls on human behavior” because the two hinge on the evaluation of others.²⁰⁰ Since the 1960s, the idea of honor and shame has developed in the area of Mediterranean anthropology as a subfield of cultural anthropology. Honor and shame as the principle means of controlling human personality characterized the ancient Mediterranean cultures, even though there were differences between persons, societies, and cultures. The ancient Mediterranean world, as Dionigi Albera describes it, was thus a unified culture area where “social values,” especially the idea of honor and shame, played an important part in controlling human behavior.²⁰¹

Julian A. Pitt-Rivers pays particular attention to the social functions of honor, stating that “titles and property, the honorific and effective forms of hereditary power, endow the social system with continuity,” especially in a hierarchical community such as “medieval society.”²⁰² In other words, honor works as a social value because it is closely connected with one’s social status. Pitt-Rivers suggests that “wealth” is a more important means of gaining honor than “titles” in today’s society because society rewards a person’s “expressions of magnanimity,”

¹⁹⁹ DeSilva, “Honor and Shame,” 287.

²⁰⁰ John J. Pilch, “Honor and Shame,” *Oxford Bibliographies in Biblical Studies*, 2012, <http://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780195393361/obo-9780195393361-0077.xml>. Accessed 11/01/2017.

²⁰¹ Dionigi Albera, “Anthropology of the Mediterranean: Between Crisis and Renewal,” *History and Anthropology* 17 (2006): 111.

²⁰² Julian A. Pitt-Rivers, “Honor,” in *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, ed. David L. Sills, 2nd ed., vol. 6 (New York: Macmillan, 1968), 503.

such as making monetary donations to the poor.²⁰³ For this reason, Pitt-Rivers contends that wealth leads to “competition” for honor in societies where social and economic inequalities exist, but that this competition is promoted “within a framework of moral values that public opinion upholds.”²⁰⁴ Jon P. Mitchell also notices the social functions of honor and shame in the Mediterranean society. Given that honor pertains both to the “individual” status of a person, especially a man, and to the “standing of the social groups” to which he belongs, Mitchell emphasizes the role of honor in “the Mediterranean’s predominantly patrilineal kinship unit, the household.”²⁰⁵

As Victor H. Matthews and Don C. Benjamin indicate, this scholarly concern about honor and shame provoked by cultural anthropology has continued in biblical studies because the Mediterranean world was the place “where ancient Israel and early Christianity took root.”²⁰⁶ The two cultures came to be infused with biblical emphases of honor and shame. According to Pilch, several studies of honor and shame appeared in the biblical scholarship in the 1800s, but it was not until the twentieth century that biblical scholars investigated the codes of “honor and shame in the Bible” by applying “social-scientific” approaches to it.²⁰⁷ As Matthews, Benjamin, and Philip F. Esler acknowledge, such scholarly investigations of honor and shame in the Bible have typically included aspects of Mediterranean anthropology due to the cultural and

²⁰³ Ibid., 507.

²⁰⁴ Ibid., 508.

²⁰⁵ Jon P. Mitchell, “Honour and Shame,” in *Encyclopedia of Social and Cultural Anthropology*, ed. Alan Barnard and Jonathan Spencer (London: Routledge, 1998), 280.

²⁰⁶ Victor H. Matthews and Don C. Benjamin, “Social Sciences and Biblical Studies,” *Semeia* 68 (1994): 7.

²⁰⁷ Pilch, “Honor and Shame.”

geographical proximity between the two areas.²⁰⁸

There have been significant studies of honor and shame in ancient Israel and the Hebrew Bible.²⁰⁹ However, more synthetic and comprehensive research on the theme has been undertaken in the scholarship of the New Testament.²¹⁰ Bruce J. Malina in particular has

²⁰⁸ Matthews and Benjamin, "Social Sciences and Biblical Studies," 7–21; Philip F. Esler, "Social-Scientific Models in Biblical Interpretation," in *Ancient Israel: The Old Testament in Its Social Context*, ed. Philip F. Esler (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006), 3–14.

²⁰⁹ Domeris, "Shame and Honour in Proverbs"; T. Raymond Hobbs, "Reflections on Honor, Shame, and Covenant Relations," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 116, no. 3 (1997): 501–3; Lillian R. Klein, "Honor and Shame in Esther," in *A Feminist Companion to Esther, Judith and Susanna*, ed. Athalya Brenner, *Feminist Companion to the Bible* 7 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 149–75; Timothy S. Laniak, *Shame and Honor in the Book of Esther*, Dissertation Series / Society of Biblical Literature 165 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998); Victor H. Matthews, "Hospitality and Hostility in Genesis 19 and Judges 19," *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 21 (1991): 13–21; Victor H. Matthews, "Hospitality and Hostility in Genesis 19 and Judges 19," *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 22 (1992): 3–11; Victor H. Matthews, "Honor and Shame in Gender-Related Legal Situations in the Hebrew Bible," in *Gender and Law in the Hebrew Bible and the Ancient Near East*, ed. Victor H. Matthews, Bernard M. Levinson, and Tikvah Frymer-Kensky, JSOTSup 262 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 97–112; Margaret S. Odell, "An Exploratory Study of Shame and Dependence in the Bible and Selected Near Eastern Parallels," in *Biblical Canon in Comparative Perspectives: Scripture in Context IV*, ed. K. Lawson Younger Jr., William W. Hallo, and Bernard F. Batto (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen, 1991), 217–33; Margaret S. Odell, "The Inversion of Shame and Forgiveness in Ezekiel 16.59-63," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 56 (1992): 101–12; Saul M. Olyan, "Honor, Shame, and Covenant Relations in Ancient Israel and Its Environment," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 115 (1996): 201–18; Renata Rabichev, "The Mediterranean Concepts of Honour and Shame as Seen in the Depiction of Biblical Women," *Religion & Theology* 3 (1996): 51–63; John J. Pilch, *Introducing the Cultural Context of the Old Testament*, *Hear the Word!* 1 (New York: Paulist Press, 1991); Ronald A. Simkins, "'Return to Yahweh': Honor and Shame in Joel," *Semeia* 68 (1994): 41–54; Ronald A. Simkins, "Honor and Shame in Genesis 34 and 1 Samuel 25," in *Teaching the Bible: Practical Strategies for Classroom Instruction*, ed. Mark Roncace and Patrick Gray, *Resources for Biblical Study* 49 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005), 104–6; Gary Stansell, "Honor and Shame in the David Narratives," in *Was ist der Mensch...?: Beiträge zur Anthropologie des Alten Testaments: Hans Walter Wolff zum 80. Geburtstag*, ed. Hans Walter Wolff et al. (München: Christian Kaiser, 1992), 94–114; Johanna Stiebert, *The Construction of Shame in the Hebrew Bible: The Prophetic Contribution*, *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament. Supplement Series* 346 (London; New York: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002); Ken Stone, "Gender and Homosexuality in Judges 19: Subject-Honor, Object-Shame?," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 67 (1995): 87–107; Ken Stone, *Sex, Honor and Power in the Deuteronomistic History*, *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament. Supplement Series* 234 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1996).

²¹⁰ David A. deSilva, *The Hope of Glory: Honor Discourse and New Testament Interpretation* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1999); Louise J. Lawrence, *An Ethnography of the Gospel of Matthew: A Critical Assessment of the Use of the Honour and Shame Model in New Testament Studies*, *Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen Zum Neuen Testament. 2. Reihe* 165 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003); Bruce J. Malina and Richard L. Rohrbaugh, *Social Science Commentary on the Synoptic Gospels*, 2nd ed., *Social-Science Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003); Jerome H. Neyrey, *Honor and Shame in the Gospel of Matthew* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998); Richard L. Rohrbaugh, *The New Testament in Cross-Cultural Perspective*, *Matrix-the Bible in Mediterranean Context* (Eugene: Cascade, 2007); David F. Watson, *Honor among Christians: The Cultural Key to the Messianic Secret* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010); Alicia Batten, "Neither Gold nor Braided Hair (1 Timothy 2.9; 1 Peter 3.3): Adornment, Gender and Honour in Antiquity," *New Testament Studies* 55 (2009): 484–501; Barth L. Campbell, "Honor, Hospitality and Haughtiness: The Contention for Leadership in 3 John," *The Evangelical Quarterly* 77 (2005): 321–41; John H. Elliott, *Conflict, Community, and Honor: 1 Peter in*

influenced and contributed to the social-scientific analysis of honor and shame in the Bible, his work building on Pitt-Rivers's work on honor and shame in Mediterranean culture.²¹¹ In his seminal book, *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology*, Malina defines the concept of honor as “socially proper attitudes and behavior in the area where the three lines of authority, gender status, and respect intersect.”²¹² To quote Malina, “honor, like wealth, can be ascribed or acquired”: while “ascribed honor” is one which a person can get from his/her birth, “acquired honor” is one which a person can acquire through competitions with others, that is, “challenge and response.”²¹³ In particular, the work of Malina and his colleagues in the Context Group that “emerged from earlier associations in the Society of Biblical Literature and the Catholic Biblical Association,”²¹⁴ has contributed to the recognition of the first-century Mediterranean world as “agonistic, honor-and-shame-based societies,” as deSilva describes

Social-Scientific Perspective, Cascade Companions (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2007); Mark T. Finney, “Honor, Rhetoric, and Factionalism in the Ancient World: 1 Corinthians 1–4 in Its Social Context,” *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 40 (2010): 27–36; Joseph Hellerman, “Brothers and Friends in Philippi: Family Honor in the Roman World and in Paul’s Letter to the Philippians,” *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 39 (2009): 15–25; Robert Jewett, “Paul, Shame, and Honor,” in *Paul in the Greco-Roman World: A Handbook*, ed. J. Paul Sampley (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 2003), 551–74; Bruce J. Malina and John J. Pilch, *Social-Science Commentary on the Letters of Paul*, Social-Science Commentary (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006); Bruce J. Malina and John J. Pilch, *Social-Science Commentary on the Deutero-Pauline Letters*, Social-Science Commentary (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2013).

²¹¹ Pitt-Rivers, “Honour and Social Status,” 35–36. As John K. Chance points out, the influence of Pitt-Rivers on studies of honor and shame in the Bible is not just limited to Malina; other scholars such as Jerome H. Neyrey, have also been impacted by his work. See, for example, Bruce J. Malina and Jerome H. Neyrey, “Honor and Shame in Luke-Acts: Pivotal Values of the Mediterranean World,” in *The Social World of Luke-Acts: Models for Interpretation*, ed. Jerome H. Neyrey (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1991), 25–66; Neyrey, *Honor and Shame in the Gospel of Matthew*; John K. Chance, “The Anthropology of Honor and Shame: Culture, Values, and Practice,” *Semeia* 68 (1994): 142. Chance summarizes three features of “basic model” of biblical scholars founded on Pitt-Rivers’s essay: (1) “Honor and shame form a value system rooted in gender distinctions in Mediterranean culture”; (2) “Honor, most closely associated with males, refers to one’s claimed social status and also to public recognition of it”; (3) “Mediterranean societies are agonistic, or competitive.”

²¹² Bruce J. Malina, *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology*, 3rd ed., rev. and expanded (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 30.

²¹³ *Ibid.*, 32–33.

²¹⁴ “The Context Group: A Project on the Bible in Its Socio-Cultural Context,” 2015, <http://www.contextgroup.org>. Accessed 04/13/2016.

them.²¹⁵

The application of aspects of honor and shame from Mediterranean anthropology to the three wisdom texts supports my argument that the sages who produced the texts consequently constructed a hierarchy of values and ranked competing goods. One of Matthews and Benjamin's observations makes this very point: "In some cases, the words 'honor' and 'shame' actually appear in the Bible itself. But codes of honor and shame also govern the use of comparable terms like 'wise' and 'foolish' in the books of Proverbs."²¹⁶ In other words, the social values of honor and shame should be understood under the primary rubrics of wisdom and righteousness in the wisdom books. Moreover, if Albera is right that the ideas of honor and shame essentially presuppose "a hierarchical nature," then all values are not ranked on the same level but hierarchically according to their priority in the wisdom texts.²¹⁷

More importantly, the three wisdom books considered in this dissertation bolster their critique of the rich by articulating how one might gain honor: the one who seeks wisdom gains or should gain honor, but the other who pursues folly receives or should receive shame. As noted before, wealth and social power function as an important means of acquiring honor in ancient Mediterranean culture. Yet, this does not mean that those who possess wealth and social power are guaranteed honor. Malina shows the way in which one can gain honor in the first-century Mediterranean world by using one's wealth: "honor is acquired through beneficence, not through the fact of possession and/or the keeping of what one has acquired. Thus money, goods, and any

²¹⁵ Malina, *The New Testament World*, 53; David A. deSilva, *Despising Shame: Honor Discourse and Community Maintenance in the Epistle to the Hebrews*, Dissertation Series / Society of Biblical Literature 152 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995), 14.

²¹⁶ Matthews and Benjamin, "Social Sciences and Biblical Studies," 11.

²¹⁷ Albera, "Anthropology of the Mediterranean," 116.

sort of wealth are really means to honor, and any other use of wealth is considered foolish.”²¹⁸

As in ancient Mediterranean culture, in the wisdom books wealth is not equated with honor *per se* but serves as a resource or avenue through which to gain honor. However, there is a crucial difference between the two. In the ancient Mediterranean world, as Malina points out, wealth and social power enable their possessors including the rich to gain honor easily in a system of “challenge and response” by “disposing of what one has acquired among equals or socially useful lower-status clients.”²¹⁹ Though wealth and social power are not equated with honor in ancient Mediterranean culture, the two still function as crucial factors for gaining honor.

Virtuous behaviors, such as beneficence, still work as ways of acquiring honor in the culture, but wealth and power serve as shorthand ways of gaining honor, even if one does not use the two appropriately. As we shall see, in contrast, the sages of the wisdom books do not support the rich’s easy acquisition of honor through wealth and social power. In the wisdom books, the possession of wealth and social power does not guarantee the attainment of honor. For the sages, it is the one who seeks and desires wisdom who is eligible to attain honor. Thus, the sages are much more interested in people gaining honor through the right use of wealth, such as helping the poor, because such a use of wealth is virtuous and fulfills wisdom’s way. Based on this logic, the rich do not deserve to gain honor because they neither seek nor desire wisdom. Furthermore, the way the rich use their wealth and power proves that they are not really qualified to be given honor because they do not cultivate virtue but instead strive to protect themselves and lord it over others through their possessions.

²¹⁸ Malina, *The New Testament World*, 37–38.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 37.

The Contribution

This research on the rich in MT Proverbs, LXX Proverbs, and Sirach contributes to the scholarship of each book and biblical wisdom literature in three interrelated ways. First, this research clarifies the role of the rich in the didactic wisdom traditions of wealth and poverty discourse and, more importantly, in the wisdom act-consequence nexus. Though ‘wealth’ may be a legitimate material reward for those who follow wisdom’s way, ‘the rich’ are not a mere substitute for ‘wealth’ in wisdom’s act-consequence logic. The persistent negative evaluation of the rich suggests that for wisdom instructions these textual figures are not merely possessors of material wealth. They also are moral agents whose way of life can be morally evaluated by the moral standards the instructions themselves articulate elsewhere.

Second, this research on the rich, more than other works, fully explains how categories of honor and shame contribute to and help organize the hierarchy of values promoted by wisdom instructions, especially in MT and LXX Proverbs. As Zoltán S. Schwáb points out, honor and riches are “benefits of wisdom”; material wealth and honor are important and legitimate rewards of the wise.²²⁰ In the hierarchy of values, however, honor and wealth as secondary goods are subordinated to wisdom, so that the sages suggest that the two should be pursued and acquired through the attainment of wisdom. Yet, given that wealth is also subordinated to honor in the instructions’ hierarchy of values, one who is poor but righteous is rewarded (or ought to be) with honor. Thus, understanding this hierarchy of values in wisdom instructions serves to clarify the role of the rich in wisdom teaching.

Finally, this research as a whole serves as a kind of history of particularly important textual figures in biblical wisdom instructions—the rich. To this historical end, the concluding

²²⁰ Zoltán S. Schwáb, *Toward an Interpretation of the Book of Proverbs: Selfishness and Secularity Reconsidered*, *Journal of Theological Interpretation Supplements* 7 (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2013), 115.

chapter also includes some suggestions as to how this research might impact understandings of the rich in subsequent texts that belong, broadly speaking, to the wisdom tradition, e.g., 1 Enoch, the Wisdom of Solomon, and the New Testament.

CHAPTER 2: THE RICH IN MT PROVERBS

Introduction

The rich in MT Proverbs are usually thought of as money and property owners. However, such an identification does not mean that the rich are the same as those who receive wealth as a material reward for cultivating virtues in an act-consequence nexus. Although the sages of MT Proverbs suggest that wealth itself is a good thing and one should use rightly his/her wealth by showing generosity, the rich—a person or a group who possesses the wealth—typically does not understand this. In MT Proverbs, the rich use, acquire, and accumulate wealth at all costs instead of using it to enhance their social virtue. The sages of MT Proverbs thus regard the rich as moral agents, criticizing them for their immoral behavior. The sages clarify and sharpen these critical descriptions of the rich through a hierarchy of values that is discernible in the text: the possession of wisdom or moral status is of greater worth than economic goods and any social status that may be achieved through possessing wealth. Yet, MT Proverbs's characterization of the rich as moral agents has not been clearly or fully recognized because of the still strong tendency to understand the sayings about the rich in light of an act-consequence nexus, whereby wealth or riches is understood to be regarded as a reward of the wise. Again, the main issue for understanding the rich is that they are not identical to those who possess wealth as a material reward for following wisdom's way in the act-consequence nexus.

In this chapter, I concentrate my attention on how the sages of MT Proverbs characterize the rich as moral agents. Before investigating the sayings about the rich in the book, however, I first analyze the depiction of the rich in the Hebrew Bible through both a philological and a contextual study of the word, עשיר (*ʿāšîr*), and of other terms related to it. This linguistic analysis of עשיר shows that in MT Proverbs the word refers to those who have not only wealth but also

social and political authority. It is an economic-political term. Furthermore, expressing an implicit or explicit critique of the rich, the sages also identify the עשיר as moral agents who trust too fully in their wealth, show intellectual and moral hubris, seek false friendship, and oppress the poor. Finally, the sages evaluate the rich based on the idea of honor and shame, implying that the rich attempt to establish their social status through acquiring wealth rather than seeking wisdom.

The Rich in the Hebrew Bible

A Philological Analysis of עשיר

The rich, עשיר (*‘āšîr*), frequently appear in wisdom literature, nine times in MT Proverbs alone. The verbal form עשׂר (*‘āšar*) and nominal form עשׂר (*‘ōšer*) occur respectively six and nine times in the book. Thus, the three words function as important linguistic touchstones of the sapiential instructions on wealth and the rich in the book. Throughout the Hebrew Bible, the word עשיר (*‘āšîr*) generally refers to the rich as those who have wealth. According to M. Sæbø, the root of this word, ע-ש-ר, appears in “Southwest Semitic (e.g., Arab. *‘ašara*, ‘be abundant’) and above all in Northwest Semitic,” especially “Aramaic (*‘tr/‘tyr*) and Syriac (*‘tr*, with several derivatives).”²²¹ In the Samaritan Pentateuch, עשיר is attested as forms of oral tradition, “*‘aššār*” and “[*he*] *‘āššār*” with a definite article.²²² Although עשיר as an adjective basically means “wealthy” or “rich,” it is mainly used as a collective noun to indicate “the rich” or “the rich man

²²¹ M. Sæbø, “עשׂר *‘āšar*,” in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, vol. 11 (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2001), 418.

²²² Ludwig Köhler and Walter Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, trans. M. E. J. Richardson (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 896.

(as a type).²²³ When referring to a rich person, the term occurs twenty-three times in the Hebrew Bible (Exod 30:15; 2 Sam 12:1, 2, 4; Isa 53:9; Jer 9:22; Mic 6:12; Ps 45:13; 49:3; Prov 10:15; 14:20; 18:11, 23; 22:2, 7, 16; 28:6, 11; Job 27:19; Ruth 3:10; Eccl 5:11; 10:6, 20)²²⁴; it appears in parallel with גדול (literally “great one[s],” e.g., Jer 5:5),²²⁵ שרע (literally “noble,” e.g., Job 34:19), and גבור (literally “mighty,” e.g., 2 Kgs 15:20). Although these terms are not purely economic terms but denote social-political status, they also refer to possessors of wealth in their own contexts. Thus, as we will see more fully below, while the rich are fundamentally regarded as those who possess wealth, in the Hebrew Bible they are sometimes also identified with and as those who have political authority or possess high social status and power.

The verbal form עָשַׁר (‘*āšar*) means “to become rich” or “to make rich.”²²⁶ Verbal forms of עָשַׁר occur seventeen times in the Hebrew Bible (*qal*: Hos 12:9; Job 15:29; *hiphil*: Gen 14:23; 1 Sam 2:7; 17:25; Jer 5:27; Ezek 27:33; Zech 11:5; Ps 49:17; 65:10; Prov 10:4, 22; 21:17; 23:4; 28:20; Dan 11:2; *hithpael*: Prov 13:7). The nominal form of the root ע-ש-ר is עֶשֶׂר (‘*ōšer*), which means “wealth” and appears thirty-seven times in the Hebrew Bible (Gen 31:16; 1 Sam 17:25; 1 Kgs 3:11, 13; 10:23; Jer 9:22; 17:11; Ps 49:7; 52:9; 112:3; Prov 3:16; 8:18; 11:16, 28; 13:8; 14:24; 22:1, 4; 30:8; Eccl 4:8; 5:12, 13, 18; 6:2; 9:11; Esth 1:4; 5:11; Dan 11:2[×2]; 1 Chr 29:12, 28; 2 Chr 1:11, 12; 9:22; 17:5; 18:1; 32:27).²²⁷

²²³ Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *The New Brown, Driver, Briggs, Gesenius Hebrew and English Lexicon: With an Appendix Containing the Biblical Aramaic* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1979), 799; Köhler and Baumgartner, *HALOT*, 896.

²²⁴ Sæbø, “עָשַׁר ‘*āšar*,” 418.

²²⁵ In particular, the word גדול sometimes means “the rich” who have political or social authority (e.g., 2 Sam 19:33; 2 Kgs 4:8).

²²⁶ Köhler and Baumgartner, *HALOT*, 897.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*, 898.

As Sæbø observes, the verbal form עָשָׂר (‘*āšar*) and the nominal form עֲשֵׂר (‘*ōšer*) have a variety of parallels in the Hebrew Bible.²²⁸ In many contexts where the verbal form appears, the rich are associated with oppression or the amassing of wealth in an immoral way.²²⁹ For example, the word אָוֶן generally indicates “generative power” or “physical power.”²³⁰ Yet, as a parallel of the *qal* stem of עָשָׂר, the phrase מִצָּא אָוֶן (“gain wealth”) is used in contexts of oppression for gaining more wealth. In Hosea 12:8-9, Ephraim stands under the divine indictment for his ill-gotten wealth and oppression. In Job 20:10, wicked people give back their wealth to the poor.²³¹ Rather than using other words that refer to wealth, Hosea and Job instead employ אָוֶן, impressing the close connection between power and wealth in oppressing others. Moreover, as Fox observes, the word הִיל basically means “physical strength” or “martial power,” but it also indicates “wealth.”²³² Thus, the *qal* verb preceded by the negative adverb in Job 15:29 is paralleled by the phrase לֹא־יִקּוּם הִילוֹ (“his wealth will not endure”). Both lines have the “wicked” as their implied subject (v. 20) and affirm the destruction of their wealth (v. 29).²³³ The parallels of the *hiphil* stem of עָשָׂר (“enrich”) are similarly construed: גָּדַל (“become great,” Jer

²²⁸ Sæbø, “עָשָׂר ‘*āšar*,” 419.

²²⁹ For example, Jeremiah 5:27 describes those who became rich through deceit: “Like a cage full of birds, their houses are full of treachery; therefore they have become great and rich.” Proverbs 28:20 also compares the faithful with those who attempt to get rich quickly: “The faithful will abound with blessings, but one who is in a hurry to be rich will not go unpunished.” In this verse, the sages imply that to strive excessively for riches is not right.

²³⁰ Köhler and Baumgartner, *HALOT*, 22.

²³¹ Wolff, *Hosea*, 214; Sweeney, *The Twelve Prophets*, 1:123; Carol A. Newsom, *The Book of Job: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections*, vol. 4, *The New Interpreter’s Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998), 484.

²³² Michael V. Fox, *Proverbs 10-31: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, *The Anchor Yale Bible* 18B (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 547.

²³³ In particular, Norman C. Habel offers a comment on Job 15:29 that the wicked person’s wealth results from “strength and energy expended efficiently.” Norman C. Habel, *The Book of Job: A Commentary*, *The Old Testament Library* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1985), 260.

5:27) expresses the unrighteous person's economic growth through exploitation,²³⁴ whereas ביתו כבוד ("the wealth [literally 'honor'] of his house increases," Ps 49:17[16]) emphasizes that the wealth in which a person trusts is ephemeral.²³⁵

The nominal form עֵשֶׂר also has various parallels: הוֹן ("wealth," Ezek 27:12, 18, 27, 33; Ps 44:13[12]; 112:3; 119:14; Prov 1:13; 3:9; 6:31; 8:18; 10:15; 11:4; 12:27; 13:7, 11; 18:11; 19:4, 14; 24:4; 28:8, 22; 29:3; Song 8:7), נכסים ("wealth," Eccl 5:18; 6:2; 2 Chr 1:11, 12),²³⁶ כבוד ("glory, splendor," Prov 3:16; 8:18; 1 Chr 29:12; 2 Chr 17:5; 18:1; 32:27), היל ("riches," Ps 49:7[6]), זהב/כסף ("silver/gold," Prov 22:1), and יקר תפארה ("majestic splendor," Esth 1:4).²³⁷ Although these parallels of the nominal form עֵשֶׂר are mainly used to indicate material goods that some might possess, they are valued less than love (Song 8:7) or wisdom (2 Chr 1:11) throughout MT Proverbs, too.

A Contextual Analysis of עֵשֶׂר

Although עֵשֶׂר generally refers to those who have social and economic power, it also sometimes

²³⁴ Robert P. Carroll also supports the meaning of גדול as "wealth" here: "These people [The wicked] have grown rich at the expense of the poor." Robert P. Carroll, *Jeremiah: A Commentary*, The Old Testament Library (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986), 189. As Ernst Jenni notes, גדול basically signifies "to become great," but it also denotes "to be well-off" in several verses including Jeremiah 5:27 (e.g., Gen 24:35; 26:13; 1 Kgs 10:23 = 2 Chron 9:22; Eccl 2:9). Ernst Jenni, "גדול gādōl great," in *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*, ed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann, vol. 1 (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 304; Robert P. Carroll, *Jeremiah: A Commentary*, The Old Testament Library (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986), 189.

²³⁵ According to Moshe Weinfeld, כבוד has two broad meanings of "substance, quantity, power," and "honor and dignity." Thus, כבוד of Psalm 49:17[16] can be regarded as "honor" or "substance"; and "often appears in conjunction and parallelism with *ōšer*, 'wealth'" (cf. 1 Kgs 3:13; Prov 3:16; 8:18; 22:4). Moshe Weinfeld, "כבוד kābōd," in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David E. Green, vol. 7 (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1995), 26. Likewise, because the כבוד of Psalm 49:17[16] is parallel to עֵשֶׂר (*āšar*, "to become rich"), it can be understood as wealth.

²³⁶ According Wits R. Domeris, הון indicates "material possessions including riches," whereas נכסים means "possessions in general including livestock." Wits R. Domeris, "עֵשֶׂר," in *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis*, ed. Willem A. VanGemeren, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Pub. House, 1997), 558.

²³⁷ Sæbø, "עֵשֶׂר 'āšar," 419–20.

specifically connotes the ruling elites and occurs in contexts that critically evaluate this socio-economic individual or group.²³⁸ The negative description of עשיר is mainly related to the immorality of the rich, for instance describing them as those who boast of their possession and behave violently. This negative depiction is most apparent when the texts closely associate the rich with those who possess political power and high social status. In other contexts, the critiques of the rich are presented in a less clear way with words that do not explicitly, but only implicitly, characterize them negatively.

An Economic Term: People Who Possess Wealth

As Sandra L. Gravett et al. have observed, the rich (עשיר) in the Hebrew Bible are characterized by their possession of material resources such as “land, structures, animals, material goods.”²³⁹ According to Gravett et al, two criteria essentially justify identifying a person as belonging to the rich: the quality of the wealth that one possesses and the quantity of the wealth one owns. For example, 2 Samuel 12:2 says, “the rich man (עשיר) had very many flocks and herds.” The person is rightly described as rich because the quantity he had was enormous (“very many”). Although this passage does not explicitly characterize the quality of the rich person’s animals (“flocks and herds”), they are quality things to possess and thus do not need an explicit evaluation of their goodness. This abundant property of the rich man is contrasted with the only lamb—smallness suggests its poor quality—that the poor man had (האיש הראש) in 2 Samuel 12:4. The two terms indicating two persons’ economic status, עשיר and ראש, are buttressed by quality and quantity of

²³⁸ As Domeris observes, עשיר sometimes refers to the rich as “a group” and sometimes as “an individual” in the Hebrew Bible. Domeris, “559”, עשר.

²³⁹ Sandra L. Gravett et al., *An Introduction to the Hebrew Bible: A Thematic Approach* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008), 239.

what each person had. As I demonstrate later, the sages of MT Proverbs likewise use עשיר as an economic term indicating the rich who possess diverse and abundant property.

The word עשיר also sometimes refers to the rich in parallel to the poor to indicate the entire range of persons who constitute a community. Their two polar opposite economic statuses thus stand for the whole social body. For example, Exodus 30:15 exemplifies the basic principle of referring to all Israelites by using the parallel between the rich (העשיר) and the poor (הדל).²⁴⁰ Likewise, as Ibn Ezra noted, the phrase “whether poor or rich” (אם-ידל ואם-עשיר) of Ruth 3:10b identifies the broad range of men whom Ruth could have sought for marriage.²⁴¹ In Psalm 49:2-3[1-2], עשיר in parallel with אביון also represents all people: “Hear this, all peoples! Give ear, all inhabitants of the world, both low and high, rich and poor together.”²⁴²

A Socio-Political Term: The Ruling Class/Elites

The word עשיר thus fundamentally functions as an economic term, but it also serves as a socio-political term that refers to the rich as the ‘ruling class.’ Economic goods empower the rich to gain social power and/or political authority. As Gravett et al. point out, wealth works as “a marker of identity” in a society because “wealth or the lack thereof translates into one’s membership in a certain class.”²⁴³ This relation between wealth and class is connected to an issue

²⁴⁰ As Domeris observes, עשיר of Exodus 30:15 indicates “a definable group of people who are known by their position in society as the rich.” Domeris, “559” עשיר.

²⁴¹ Tamara C. Eskenazi and Tikvah Frymer-Kensky, *The JPS Bible Commentary: Ruth* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2011), 62.

²⁴² The expression גם-בני אדם גם-בני-איש of verse 3a[2a] can be literally translated as “also sons of mankind, also sons of a man.” As J. Clinton McCann explains, however, the phrase “probably connotes high and low status” and thus describes the entirety of society, particularly in the parallel with the rich and the poor in verse 3b[2b]. J. Clinton McCann, Jr., *The Book of Psalms*, New Interpreter’s Bible, vol. 4 (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), 876.

²⁴³ Gravett et al., *An Introduction to the Hebrew Bible*, 240.

of who control(s) wealth or property and achieve(s) social and political power. As Roland Boer explains: “Class is determined by access to and control over the means of production, as well as location in the division of labor.”²⁴⁴ As Gravett et al. suggest, one’s economic and class status in the Hebrew Bible “depends primarily on how much land and its produce he or she either directly or indirectly oversees.”²⁴⁵ According to Boer, those who actually possessed and controlled land and its produce “were landlords and monarchs, as well as their perpetual dinner guests: priests, bureaucrats, scribes, and so on. This much is obvious: no matter how small they might have been in number (less than 2 percent of the population), objectively they were the ruling class.”²⁴⁶ The word עשיר in the Hebrew Bible thus sometimes refers to this ruling class who had wealth and controlled it as a means of exercising authority over the subjugated classes.

For instance, in Ecclesiastes 10:6, the context and rhetoric of the verse imply that the עשיר are members of ruling class who lose their high social position: “Folly is set in many high places and the rich (עשירים) sit in a low place.” As W. Sibley Towner observes, in the larger passage Ecclesiastes 10:5-7 is basically describing the “unpredictability of life” and the subsequent upheaval and reversals it causes in a society.²⁴⁷ The spatial metaphor of sitting in high and low places hints that the reversals in question are indeed social or political. The fact that the rich sit in a low place (שפל) suggests that their new, unexpected position is one of low social or political status or position (cf. Ps 136:23). By contrast the high position, מרום, where folly is

²⁴⁴ Roland Boer, *The Sacred Economy of Ancient Israel*, Library of Ancient Israel (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2015), 122.

²⁴⁵ Gravett et al., *An Introduction to the Hebrew Bible*, 241.

²⁴⁶ Boer, *The Sacred Economy*, 123.

²⁴⁷ W. Sibley Towner, *The Book of Ecclesiastes: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections*, The New Interpreter’s Bible, vol. 5 (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1997), 346.

set likewise indicates a socially and politically elevated status (e.g., Job 5:11).²⁴⁸ As Choon-Leong Seow points out, עשיר refers to “the wealthy upper class” and those who “are expected to be in the ruling class” in the verse.²⁴⁹

The ‘rich ruling class,’ as someone like Boer imagines it, thus would have included the king, royal families, government officials, scribes, soldiers, and priests. Yet it is likely that there was some significant social and economic diversity among at least the officials, scribes, soldiers, or priests. Not all who occupied these roles would have functioned as a ‘ruling class’ in the same way. They were not all, for instance, members of the political and economic elite class, as were kings and royal family members. Certainly some scribes, for instance, occupied high government office (1 Kings 4:3) and belonged to the political and economic elites and likely were ideologically aligned with these elites. Others would have had more modest occupations and also likely would have ideologically distinguished themselves from the political and economic elites. It seems too then that עשיר sometimes specifically refers not to the ruling class as an undifferentiated whole, as Boer imagined it, but more narrowly to the political and economic elites who were the real owners of things and the real rulers. Indeed, Proverbs as we will see seems to assume that not all scribes or sages—e.g., those responsible for the book itself and who critiqued the rich!—were ideologically aligned with all those who might constitute the ‘rich ruling class’ and much less with the political and economic elites. The עשיר in the Hebrew Bible are thus sometimes portrayed more narrowly as the most powerful and rich people within a society.

For example, in Psalm 45:13-14a[12-13a], עשיר refers to the rich as the ruling elites who

²⁴⁸ Köhler and Baumgartner, *HALOT*, 633.

²⁴⁹ Choon-Leong Seow, *Ecclesiastes: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, The Anchor Bible 18C (New York: Doubleday, 1997), 315.

have the greatest material resources and political authority through the superlative use of the construct state: “The daughter of Tyre will seek your favor, the richest (עשירי) of the people with all valuable things.” Psalm 45 is generally regarded as a royal psalm, and is particularly thought to have been intended for the wedding ceremony of the king and the queen. Focusing on the queen in verses 10-16[9-15], the psalmist then states in verses 13-14a[12-13a] that she will receive congratulations along with gifts and all wealth. The close association between the rich who possess wealth with the political elites is hinted at by the fact that the richest of the people of Tyre send gifts to this wedding party, which is a royal wedding or a wedding of political elites. Since the context of Psalm 45 also shows that the richest have an opportunity to participate in royal affairs, עשיר functions as the political term that refers to those who have economic and political power, that is, ruling elites. In Ecclesiastes 10:20, too, the parallel between עשיר and a king who has the mightiest ruling power also enables us to identify the rich of the verse with those who, like the king, exercise authority and power over others: “Do not curse a king even in your thoughts, and do not curse the rich (עשיר) even in your bedroom.”

The Explicit Critiques of the Rich

The explicit critiques of the rich through the use of עשיר arise from the fact that they are identified with the ruling class who abuse economic power and political authority, as mentioned above. In the logic of the act-consequence nexus, we might expect that the wealth of the ruling elites results from their moral and righteous behavior. However, passages that include עשיר suggest that the ruling elites not only abuse the power which their wealth and political status afford but also have become rich by amassing the wealth through immoral means, such as violence and oppression, including exploitation of the poor.

Consider first a critique of the rich whose wealth is acquired immorally in Micah 6:12: “The city’s rich people (עשיריה) are full of violence (חמס).” The word עשיריה can be literally translated as “her rich men” and its third feminine singular suffix indicates the city (עיר) of verse 9, that is, Jerusalem. As James L. Mays points out, the rich people of Jerusalem refer to a socio-economic class of the city.²⁵⁰ But more than just mentioning the socio-economic status of a class, Micah specifically depicts עשיר as those who are full of violence (חמס). The violence of the rich is regarded not only as a physical force over others but also as an exploitation of the poor. According to Hans W. Wolff, this violence of the rich essentially results from “their superior position” in social, economic, and political areas.²⁵¹ The rich are again not simply members of an economic class but the ruling elites who can exercise abusive social and political authority over others, as Ralph L. Smith also points out.²⁵²

This critical description of the rich in Micah 6:12 is sharpened by the following statement: “her inhabitants speak lies and their tongue is deceitful in their mouth.” Although poetically Micah distinguishes between the rich people of Jerusalem and its inhabitants in verse 12a, they are not different but parallel to each other in terms of their unrighteousness, in agreement with Wolff’s suggestion that the rich men of Jerusalem “are expressly said to be inhabitants (ישביה) of city” in verse 12.²⁵³ As much as the wealthy of the city are paralleled with its inhabitants, the violence of the former is also paralleled with the lies and deceit of the latter. Furthermore, Micah pointedly denounces the rich of Jerusalem for corruption and graft in their

²⁵⁰ James L. Mays, *Micah: A Commentary*, The Old Testament Library (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1976), 147.

²⁵¹ Hans W. Wolff, *Micah: A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1990), 194–95.

²⁵² Ralph L. Smith, *Micah-Malachi*, Word Biblical Commentary 32 (Waco: Word Books, 1984), 53.

²⁵³ Wolff, *Micah*, 195.

business undertakings in verses 10-11. The rich of Jerusalem, according to Micah, amassed an immorally acquired fortune in their houses and cheated with fraudulent scales and deceptive weights. Thus, עשיר paints a negative picture of the rich by describing them as those who amass wealth by illegal means, especially through violence and by oppressing others.

In 2 Samuel 12:1-4, the word עשיר also refers to a rich but immoral person who begrudges property and commits an injustice through his wealth, power, and social status. The parable the prophet Nathan tells David points out David's sin and the divine judgment for his transgression. In verse 1b of the parable, the two characters appear: the one rich (אחד עשיר) and the other poor (אחד ראש). Nathan describes the two characters in verses 2-3 as follows: "the rich man had very many flocks and herds, but the poor man had only a little lamb." Nathan first uses the two words, עשיר and ראש, to contrast the two characters' economic statuses: rich vs. poor; many flocks vs. one lamb. However, the characterization of the rich man and the poor man then changes from being an economic contrast to being a moral one in verses 4-5: the rich man did not take his flock or herd to prepare for the traveler but instead extorted the lamb from the poor man. As Bruce C. Birch points out, the rich man attempted to disguise his "crass injustice" as "hospitality" and "graciousness."²⁵⁴ The showing of hospitality is closely related to the right use of a person's wealth. Here, the rich man plays the part of the exemplary person yet, in reality, exploits a poor person through his economic power and social position.

Besides being described as those who gain wealth immorally, the rich in the Hebrew Bible are also criticized for wrongly boasting in their wealth. For example, Jeremiah 9:23[22] says, "Do not let the wise boast in their wisdom, do not let the powerful boast in their power, do not let the rich (עשיר) boast in their wealth (בעשרו)." Here, Jeremiah conveys a message from

²⁵⁴ Bruce C. Birch, *The First and Second Books of Samuel: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections*, vol. 2, The New Interpreter's Bible (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994), 1292.

Yahweh concerning the Israelites' sin and the divine judgment on them. "The categories of wisdom, strength, and riches" of verse 23[22], according to Patrick D. Miller, "represent fundamental grounds of security: intellectual skill and the ability to make things work in life, power and might in oneself or in one's armies, and wealth that enables one to acquire whatever one needs."²⁵⁵ Miller also argues that the human triad of wisdom, power, and wealth is regarded as "typical grounds for boasting."²⁵⁶ Yet, the human triad in verse 23[22] is contrasted with the divine triad of steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in verse 24[23]. Yahweh points out that the sin of the Israelites is to seek security from the human triad when they should instead pursue divine security. Therefore, in Jeremiah 9:23[22], עשיר negatively describes the rich by characterizing them as those who boast of their wealth. As I will demonstrate later in this chapter, this warning against the rich who boast their wealth is consistent and further developed to an admonition to the rich about trusting in wealth in MT Proverbs.

The Implicit Critiques of the Rich

The word עשיר thus refers to the rich not only in economic terms but also in their morally questionable social and political status. These social and political figures, however, can be negatively characterized not only in an explicit fashion but also implicitly in a negative way. In these cases, the questionable character of the rich is revealed by the terms with which they are paralleled or through the context provided by surrounding verses.

For example, as noted above, Ecclesiastes 10:20 describes the rich as those who have political power but the verse does not explicitly use a negative term to depict the rich. However,

²⁵⁵ Patrick D. Miller, *The Book of Jeremiah: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections*, vol. 6, The New Interpreter's Bible (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002), 656.

²⁵⁶ Ibid.

by warning that even secret criticisms might provoke a reaction from the rich, the author hints not only at the extent and nature of the rich person's power, as one who can repress others, but also that they typically do: "For a bird of the air might carry the voice or some winged creature tell the matter." As Towner observes, such a warning hints at "the relative menace posed" by the king and the rich because both have the power to wreak revenge on those who secretly convey "inside jokes."²⁵⁷ In the verse, the word עשיר thus defines the rich as an economic and political class, and at the same time, implicitly describes them as those who unjustly exercise their power.

Likewise, Isaiah 53:9 does not directly express any behavior or character of the rich but offers an implicitly negative description of the rich by placing them in parallel with the wicked: "They assigned his grave with the wicked, and his death with the rich (עשיר), even though he had done no violence and there was no deceit in his mouth." In Isaiah 52:13-53:12 known as the fourth servant song, the prophet depicts the suffering of the servant as his rejection, contempt, and affliction. Regarding the MT's reading of עשיר, Christopher R. Seitz suggests that "the rich" (עשיר) should be emended to "evil doers" (רע עשי) in order to provide a better parallel with "the wicked" (v. 9a).²⁵⁸ What Seitz fails to understand, however, is that the 'rich' in the Hebrew Bible are regularly characterized in negative fashion and so the wicked/rich parallel here is apt.²⁵⁹ Indeed, the larger passage highlights the downtrodden status of the servant vis-à-vis those who can exercise political and social power over him. The innocence of the positive moral type, the servant (v. 9b), thus contrasts sharply with the injustice of the negative moral types, the wicked and the rich (v. 9a). The rich in the verse are regarded as immoral—those who wrongly oppress

²⁵⁷ Towner perhaps underestimates the seriousness of the repression with such a turn of phrase. Towner, *The Book of Ecclesiastes*, 5:349.

²⁵⁸ Christopher R. Seitz, *The Book of Isaiah 40-66: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections*, vol. 6, The New Interpreter's Bible (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002), 467.

²⁵⁹ What's more, the emendation proposed by Seitz leaves MT with an extra ע from רע עשי.

the servant. Verse 9 therefore implies, as Domeris suggests, that the servant “shares a grave with the very people who have oppressed him,” namely the wicked and the rich.²⁶⁰ In this sense, there is no obvious word characterizing the rich negatively, but the line’s broader context and the syntactical parallel of the wicked with the עשיר mark the rich as a negative moral type.

Unlike the previous two verses related to parallels with other characters, in Psalms 49:2-3[1-2], the context of the line is key for recognizing the negative characteristics of the rich as mercenary. As we saw above, when read in isolation, these verses depict the entirety of the community through the parallel between the rich and the poor. However, what should also be noted is that the broader context of the lines provides a negative sense of the rich; the psalmist in verse 7[6] describes the rich as “those who trust in their wealth and boast in their great riches.” In this respect, when read in isolation, עשיר of verse 3[2] may be thought merely to refer to the rich as an economic class. Yet, Psalm 49, as a whole, characterizes the rich as those who are greedy for wealth and power.

In Job 27:19, context likewise expresses a negative sense of עשיר by emphasizing the immorality of the rich and their ephemeral wealth: “He lies down rich (עשיר), but will do so no more; He opens his eyes, and it is no longer.” The verse focuses on the impermanent quality of the rich person’s wealth. Although this verse appears to describe simply the economic status of the rich person, its context clearly associates him with the wicked. As Carol A. Newsom points out, the verse is “the third example” in verses 16-19 that depicts “the ephemeral nature of the wealth of the wicked [person].”²⁶¹ The moral character of the rich person is not identified in verse 16; the text simply hints at the fleetingness of that person’s wealth. However, the larger

²⁶⁰ Domeris, “עשיר,” 559.

²⁶¹ Newsom, *The Book of Job*, 4:528.

context makes clear that he is the wicked person (אדם רשע) of verse 13.

The Exegetical Analysis of the Rich in MT Proverbs

The negative characterizations of the rich through עשיר in the Hebrew Bible are generally similar to those of MT Proverbs and, at the same time, are more elaborated in the wisdom book. As elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible, עשיר basically refers to the rich as those who possess material resources in MT Proverbs, just as the poor are those who regularly lack such wealth (e.g., 10:15:18:11). Moreover, as in other books of the Hebrew Bible, עשיר in MT Proverbs specifically can be members of the 'ruling class' and/or political and economic elites who possess economic wealth and political authority (e.g., 22:2, 7, 16). The rich are not just possessors of wealth but constitute a socio-political class in the book.

The rich in MT Proverbs are thus also regarded as moral agents who can be criticized for their immoral behavior. Herein lies the tension. Convinced that a good action typically ought to result in a good consequence, the sages encourage the reader to follow the ways of wisdom and righteousness (e.g., 4:17-18). Although hardly automatic or mechanistic, the sages suggest at different moments that the attainment of wisdom gives rise to the gain of wealth (e.g., 8:18, 21; 12:27; 14:23-24; 15:6; 21:5, 20; 22:4; 24:4). According to the logic of the act-consequence nexus, those who possess wealth (the rich) are thus supposed to be those who have received a material reward for following wisdom's way and if these follow wisdom they should not be negatively characterized in moral terms. One might expect rather that due to their material possessions the rich would be praised for their good behavior. However, the sages do not describe the rich in such a positive way but criticize them either implicitly or explicitly. While the rich are regarded as possessors of property in MT Proverbs' discourse about wealth and

poverty, their moral status is not merely reckoned through understanding the value of wealth in the logic of the act-consequence nexus. Just as other moral agents (such as the just and the wicked) regularly act in positive or negative ways, so too the rich are characterized as moral agents who do not follow wisdom's way.

The Rich: Possessors of Economic and Social Power

An Economic Term: Possessors of Wealth

In MT Proverbs, עשיר basically functions as an economic term and refers to people who have wealth. When עשיר indicates an economic group or class in MT Proverbs, the sages identify the rich on the basis of two marks: one is what they possess and the other is which group or class is described in parallel with them.

First, when עשיר works as an economic term in MT Proverbs, the rich are identified as those who possess wealth. This description of the rich as those who have wealth is found in the identical 10:15a and 18:11a, “The wealth of the rich is their fortified city” (literally “The wealth of a rich [person] is his fortified city”). In these two verses, the sages describe the rich as those who possess wealth (הון). In MT Proverbs, הון occurs eighteen times (1:13; 3:9; 6:31; 8:18; 10:15; 11:4; 12:27; 13:7, 11; 18:11; 19:4, 14; 24:4; 28:8, 22; 29:3; 30:15, 16) and mainly indicates a large amount of possessions or valuable things. The identification of the rich as possessors of wealth is clarified in the construct chain of two words, הון and עשיר. As Paul Joüon points out, this construct chain of two words frequently “express[es] a notion of possession, of belonging etc.” in biblical Hebrew.²⁶² This usage of עשיר as an economic term in MT Proverbs is similar to what one finds elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible. Yet, the sages of MT Proverbs pay less

²⁶² Paul Joüon, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*, trans. T. Muraoka, 1st ed., with corrections, Subsidia Biblica, 14/I (Roma: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblio, 1993), 275.

attention to identifying the rich by the quality and quantity of their wealth than other parts of the Hebrew Bible that depict the rich's material resources such as money, property, or land (e.g., 2 Sam 12:2-4; Jer 9:23[22]; Ps 45:13-14a[12-13a]). Instead, the sages use only the word הון for depicting the rich as those who possess wealth, even though other words for wealth (עושר, מותר, חסן, אוצר, חיל) frequently appear in the book.

Second, when עשיר in MT Proverbs refers to the rich as an economic marker, it almost always appears in parallel with the poor. In all verses except 18:11, as Storøy observes, עשיר occurs with רש (14:20; 18:23; 22:2, 7; 28:6) and דל (10:15; 22:16; 28:11).²⁶³ In these cases, עשיר indicates a rich person or people who possess(es) a lot of material resources over and against the terms, רש and דל, that refer to a poor person or people who lack(s) material goods. As Whybray observes, the sages regard the rich and the poor “as representing the extremes of economic status.”²⁶⁴ This difference of economic status between the rich and the poor is obviously expressed in 10:15: “The wealth of a rich person is his fortified city; the ruin of the poor is their poverty.” Here, עשיר refers to a rich person who has wealth (הון), whereas דל indicates the poor who have poverty (ריש). In other verses (except 18:11), however, the sages do not use any word to designate the abundance of the rich or the lack of material resources of the poor. Thus, the sages are more concerned about comparing the relative economic status (and social consequences of this status) of the rich and the poor than what precisely the two groups possess or lack. This feature is one way we know the rich is basically an economic designation, but it has other meanings too even in these verses. As we will see soon, the rich are not purely described as those who possess more wealth than the poor, but as those who are criticized for their immoral

²⁶³ Storøy, “Why Does the Theme of Poverty,” 278.

²⁶⁴ Whybray, *Wealth and Poverty*, 18–19.

behavior.

In light of the above analysis, we can recognize that עשיר basically functions as an economic term, referring those who possess wealth in MT Proverbs. However, the sages are less interested in the quantity and quality of wealth the rich possess but rather focus on how the rich use wealth, how they treat others with wealth, and what they seek through acquiring wealth.

A Socio-Political Term: A Ruling Class

In MT Proverbs, not only does עשיר function as an economic term referring to people who have wealth, but it also works as a socio-political term indicating a ruling class who has not only economic power, but social and political power too. The identification of the rich as a ruling class is closely related to their identity as possessors of wealth because material resources empower them to gain social or political power. In MT Proverbs, the power the rich possess is focused on economic and social aspects, so that they function as masters and creditors—part of a ruling class. Unlike in other books of the Hebrew Bible, in MT Proverbs עשיר are not explicitly linked to political and economic elites, a small group of powerful leaders who control a large amount of wealth and other people with political authority. Although MT Proverbs does not offer a clear description of the rich as elites who possess overwhelming economic and political power, on occasion it might implicitly suggest that the rich can be identified as economic and political elites by using a word משל (*māšal*).

When the sages of MT Proverbs use עשיר to indicate the rich as a ruling class, they pay attention to how an economic difference causes distinctions in social power. For example, 18:23 shows that the way the rich and poor speak to someone else is deeply related to social status and power: “A poor person makes supplications, but a rich person responds harshly.” The rich have

the social power to reply bitterly or harshly to the poor person's speech that must be case as an entreaty—the words of a social inferior to a social superior. As I will explain later, the supplications of the poor are also not only petitions for economic help but also a social appeal to the rich as their social superiors. In 22:16b (“The one who gives to the rich comes only to poverty”), discussed below, the sages also view the rich as those who exercise economic power and social authority to change a situation to their own benefit. Finally, in 22:2a (“The rich and the poor meet one another”), also discussed below, the meeting between the rich and the poor is not necessarily an accidental encounter. It can be regarded as an unavoidable engagement between unequal parties in economic and social spheres. As the parallel between 22:2a and 29:13a (“A poor person and an oppressive person meet one another”) suggests, the rich in 22:2a can be identified with those who oppress the poor since the rich of that verse is replaced in 29:13 with the oppressor. This description of עשיר as oppressors of the poor implies that the rich are not only people who possess wealth but also rulers who exercise social power, especially by keeping the poor in subservience and hardship.

Yet, we do not have to rule out completely the suggestion that the rich in MT Proverbs might also be envisioned as the political and economic elites and not merely the hangers-on or “dinner guests” of the truly powerful—as Boer has identified certain members of the ancient “ruling class.”²⁶⁵ This connection between elite economic, political authority and the rich may appear in 22:7a, “The rich rule (ימשול) over the poor.” In this verse, the sages depict the relationship between two economic groups through the word משל, creating the inequity of power between the two. Regarding the meaning of משל in 22:7, J. A. Soggin argues that the word does

²⁶⁵ Boer, *The Sacred Economy*, 123.

not have any “political sense” but refers “to rule in general.”²⁶⁶ Since the sages do not use any word here to indicate officials or political leaders who exercise authority over people, the rich’s rule over the poor seems to be limited to an economic matter such as lending and borrowing money or domestic affairs between masters and slaves. Indeed, the verbal form מָשַׁל (*māšal*) frequently expresses a behavior to rule socially over the subjugated in MT Proverbs (e.g., 12:24; 16:32; 17:2; 19:10). Nonetheless, we do not necessarily have to exclude the political meaning of מָשַׁל because it essentially pertains to one’s dominion over another in a human society, regardless of its size or system. As Fox observes, elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible the *qal* participle מֹשֵׁל (*mōšēl*) supports the political subjugation by a ruler because “a *mōšēl* can be a king (Josh 12:2; 1 Kgs 5:1), a vizier or governor (Gen 45:8; Zech 6:13), or an administrator of a lower rank (Isa 28:14; 2 Chr 23:20).”²⁶⁷ In MT Proverbs, מֹשֵׁל (*mōšēl*) likewise denotes an official who holds a position of authority in a community or a society (6:7; 23:1; 28:15; 29:12, 26). Considering that the verbal form or participle of מָשַׁל is used to express a superior official’s rule over the common people (29:2) or an inferior class such the poor (28:15), the description of the rich’s rule over the poor in 22:7 suggests that the rich are members of ruling class and might be the political elites.

The Ethical Component: The Rich as Moral Agents

The previous analysis demonstrates that עָשִׂיר refers to possessors of wealth and the ruling class or political and economic elites in MT Proverbs like in other books of the Hebrew Bible.

However, as the authors of other books offer various critiques of the עָשִׂיר who gains wealth illegally and exercises socio-economic power unjustly over others, the sages of MT Proverbs

²⁶⁶ J. A. Soggin, “מָשַׁל *mšl* to rule,” in *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*, ed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann, vol. 2 (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 689.

²⁶⁷ Fox, *Proverbs 10-31*, 720.

likewise criticize the rich for such immorality. As noted in the previous chapter, a moral agent is one who is able to choose and act for good or bad. A moral agent has a responsibility for his/her decision, whether it is good or bad. Depending on his/her decision and behavior, a moral agent can be praised or blamed. Since the sages of MT Proverbs regard the rich as those who can be held responsible for their decisions and behaviors, they criticize the rich for their immorality. In other words, the sages depict the rich as moral agents who fail morally because they fail to choose the good.

The Rich Trust Wrongly, or Too Much, in Their Wealth

The first characteristic of the rich as moral agents in MT Proverbs is their wrong trust in their wealth. While wealth, such as money and property, identifies the rich with a socio-economic class, their attitude concerning how they deal with it characterizes them as moral agents who are capable of choosing the good or the bad. The sages acknowledge that wealth offers social advantage to the rich. But they also point out that the rich wrongly understand wealth's worth. They overvalue their wealth and trust too firmly in its ability to protect them.

For MT Proverbs, possession of and desire for wealth are not wrong *per se*. Yet one can come to depend too much on wealth and have obsessive desire for it. Such excessive desire is one of the causes of moral failure by moral agents. As Camp points out, "the desire for wealth is ... a complicating factor in the development of the moral self" in Proverbs because it "is permissible, but only when subordinated to the desire for wisdom."²⁶⁸ In other words, one can articulate his/her desire for wealth but should suppress it with the greatest desire for wisdom. For example, the sages say in 16:16:

²⁶⁸ Camp, "Proverbs and the Problems," 38.

קנה־חכמה מה־טוב מהרוץ וקנות בינה נבחר מכסף

How much better get wisdom than gold; To get understanding is to be chosen than silver.

Since wisdom and wealth are both regarded as good, some effort to gain both is not wrong.

However, the value of wisdom is more significant than that of wealth, so that the sages encourage the reader to pursue wisdom with more vigor than they do wealth that is of limited value. In the verse, it is noteworthy that, as Fox observes, the sages do not state simply “wisdom is better than gold or silver.”²⁶⁹ Rather, they pinpoint the comparison between “to get wisdom” and “to get gold or silver.” While one is regarded as righteous when he/she eagerly seeks to get wisdom, the other is viewed as unrighteous when he/she pursues more wealth than wisdom. The rich, however, are presumed to be obsessed by the desire to get wealth and controlled by the delusion that their possessions provide incomparable advantage. They regard riches, rather than wisdom, as a key to happiness, that which can protect them. This avaricious people consequently neglect the sages’ advice to trust in the true security or authority, Yahweh, and instead choose an ineffective means of protecting them.

Consider 10:15, where the sages clearly compare wealth with poverty in terms of how the economic statuses respectively have an influence on a rich person and the poor. The sages enable us to find the rich person’s implicit action to trust in his wealth by using a pronominal suffix, “his,” and a metaphor of fortress.

הון עשיר קרית עזו מחתת דלים רישם

The wealth of a rich person is his fortified city; the ruin of the poor²⁷⁰ is their poverty.²⁷¹

²⁶⁹ Fox, *Proverbs 10-31*, 618.

²⁷⁰ The LXX translates the Hebrew word, דלים (“the poor”), as the Greek word ἀσεβῶν, which means “the wicked.” As Fox points out, such a translation reflects the moralizing aspects of the LXX. *Ibid.*, 984. See chapter 3.

²⁷¹ Several English Bibles such as NRSV and NJPS translate 10:15b as, “the poverty of the poor is their ruin” to form a better parallel with 10:15a. However, as Clifford and Murphy suggest, the Hebrew text avoids such a

Wealth seemingly functions as a protector of a rich person whereas poverty works as a destroyer of the poor. The sages describe the protection of the rich person's wealth (הון) by using a metaphor of a "fortified city" (קרית עזו). Although the word עז basically refers to the "might" or "strength" of a person or a thing, it can also mean "fortified, strong, well founded" in respect to a tower (Judg 9:51; Ps 61:4) or city (Isa 26:1).²⁷² Here, the term functions as an attributive genitive that expresses a quality of קרית.²⁷³ Thus, קרית עזו can be understood as "his fortified city" rather than "a city of his strength." As Clifford also suggests, the image of a fortified city reminds the reader of "warfare."²⁷⁴ Verse 15a thus means that, as a fortified city protects its residents from any outer attack, wealth as belonging to the rich person keeps him safe.

It is noteworthy that the sages could have just stated, "a fortified city" and not "his fortified city." In such a case the line would function only as the kind of social observation Sandoval speaks of, metaphorically expressing the fact that wealth normally provides its possessors some social advantage.²⁷⁵ By using the pronominal suffix, which refers to the rich person, however, the sages clarify that the wealth surely belongs to him. The pronominal suffix thus may subtly point to the impact wealth has on a person's being or character. It perhaps

direct parallel and instead displays "a chiasm (ABC//CBA)." Richard J. Clifford, *Proverbs: A Commentary*, The Old Testament Library (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999), 115; Murphy, *Proverbs*, 70.

²⁷² Köhler and Baumgartner, *HALOT*, 805.

²⁷³ Bruce K. Waltke and Michael P. O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 149. According to them, "the largest group of adjectival genitives refers to a feature or quality of something. The most common type of these is the attributive genitive, in which C is characterized by G; in English such phrases are often rendered with G as an adjective of C." In 10:15, "a city" is modified by "fortified" and thus the latter (עז) functions as an adjective of the former (קרית), even though "fortified" is used as the genitive of "a city."

²⁷⁴ Clifford, *Proverbs*, 114.

²⁷⁵ Sandoval, *The Discourse*, 189.

implies that a person's wealth can impact his character and cause him to trust unduly in his possessions.

Other sayings about wealth (הון) in MT Proverbs support this point. According to Waltke, the sayings about הון in 10:1-22:16 can be categorized into two groups: one is to “prize it” (12:27; 13:7; 19:4, 14) and the other is not to “trust it” (11:4; 13:11; 18:11).²⁷⁶ Regarding the meaning of הון in 10:15, Waltke believes, “it asserts both its positive and negative features” because wealth functions as an insurance against disaster for the rich person and, at the same time, it can also ruin him because of his “moral insufficiency.”²⁷⁷ Yet, wealth is valuable and is not the problem itself. Rather how one—a moral agent—pursues and overvalues it is the issue. Indeed, the sages always describe wealth as something valuable in MT Proverbs. Yet it is precisely the value of wealth that causes a person who possesses it to be tempted to overvalue it and to trust in it.

MT Proverbs 10:15 also suggests that wealth cannot protect the rich person fully and forever. The metaphor of the fortress of 10:15 does not imply inevitable security, but also by its very nature underscores its vulnerability. Fortresses protect, but they also come under attack and can be destroyed. The sages implicitly associate insecurity of the rich person's fortress with ruin of the poor. In Psalm 89:41[40], a fortress (מבצר) and a ruin (מחיתה) are likewise closely connected:

פרצת כל-גדרתיו שמת מבצריו מחיתה

You have broken down all his walls; you have made his fortress ruins.

²⁷⁶ Bruce K. Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 1-15*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Pub., 2004), 463.

²⁷⁷ Ibid.

In the verse, even the fortress of the anointed king (v. 39[38]) has been destroyed by Yahweh.

Inferring that *מחזה* indicates “the ruins that a fortress becomes,” Fox argues that 10:15b provides the setting for “a destitute man living exposed to danger in the ruins of a defeated city.”²⁷⁸

Although Fox restricts this inference to the reading of 10:15b, the sages’ use of a fortress in 10:15a hints that the fortress of the rich person’s wealth can be also ruined. The rich person’s wealth can disappear and he can experience the socially vulnerable poverty of the poor. The rich person is always exposed to the risk of poverty, much as a fortified city is not secure at all times but rather vulnerable to attack.

In 10:15, then, the rich person as a possessor of wealth is quite the opposite of the poor (*דלים*)—those who lack wealth and thus are in poverty. Within an act-consequence logic, wealth and poverty are regarded respectively as a reward for wisdom and as a punishment for its lack. In 10:15, however, one does not need to assume that the wealth the rich person possesses is a material reward for his wisdom or righteousness. Though within an act-consequence logic wealth can function as a reward, the verse focuses solely on the relationship between wealth and social protection. The sages acknowledge that, for its possessor, wealth works as a social advantage, but they do not characterize the rich person (*עשיר*) as the one who attains wealth because of wisdom and righteousness. Although the symbolic associations of the rich with the way of folly and wickedness that we are pointing to might suggest the rich person here acquired his wealth unjustly, it is possible the rich person is simply a possessor of wealth who may have acquired that wealth righteously. If so, the line suggests this person has begun to wrongly trust in its ability to provide social protection.²⁷⁹

²⁷⁸ Fox, *Proverbs 10-31*, 519.

²⁷⁹ Regarding this point, Sandoval offers a helpful insight: “The line [10:15] clearly contrasts the rich person with the poor person whose lack results in the absence of the same kind of social safety net that the rich

Interestingly, this warning against over-dependence on wealth is clarified further when we read 10:15 in conjunction with 18:11, in which the rich person's wealth appears to be his fortress but is only so in his imagination.²⁸⁰ But by using a concept of imagination the sages imply how the confidence rich person places in the protective value of his wealth affects him. Proverbs 18:11 says:

הון עשיר קרית עזו וכחומה נשגבה במשכיתו
The wealth of a rich person is his fortified city, and it is like a high wall in his
imagination.²⁸¹

In 18:11a, the sages reiterate the message of 10:15a, but they do not mention poverty and the poor in 18:11b.²⁸² Instead, the sages add a fresh reflection, וכחומה נשגבה במשכיתו (“and it is like a

person's wealth might be thought to supply. This, however, is not a simple neutral perception of a social given, for the instructing voice calls such a situation ‘disastrous.’ The poverty of the poor is evaluated as ‘their ruin.’ It may be that the instructing voice of 10:15 knows as well that the overvaluing of wealth, the unbridled quest for economic profit that can make one rich, can also lead to ‘ruinous’ competitiveness and brutality, creating a human environment that does not embody the social virtues the prologue highlights.” Sandoval, *The Discourse*, 191–92.

²⁸⁰ Proverbs 10:15 and 18:11 are located in the second “proverbs of Solomon” collection (10:1-22:16). Although there is disagreement about the division of the collection, it is widely agreed that one can divide it into two parts: the antithetical sayings of 10:1-15:33 and the synonymous or equivalent parallel lines of 16:1-22:16. For example, Richard J. Clifford, *Proverbs: A Commentary*, The Old Testament Library (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999), 108; Michael V. Fox, *Proverbs 10-31: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, The Anchor Yale Bible 18B (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 509; Roland E. Murphy, *Proverbs*, Word Biblical Commentary 22 (Waco: Word Books, 1998), 63; Raymond C. Van Leeuwen, *The Book of Proverbs: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections*, vol. 5, The New Interpreter's Bible (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1997), 105. In contrast, Bruce K. Waltke divides the collection into 10:1-15:29 and 15:30-22:16 because he regards 15:30-16:15 as “an introduction” to the second part. Bruce K. Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 1-15*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Pub., 2004), 15–16. Daniel C. Snell divides it into three parts: 10:1-14:25, 14:26-16:15, and 16:16-22:16. Daniel C. Snell, *Twice-Told Proverbs and the Composition of the Book of Proverbs* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1993), 6.

²⁸¹ Regarding the unusual expression of MT, וכחומה נשגבה במשכיתו, for example, the LXX translates it as follows: ἡ δὲ δόξα αὐτοῦ μέγα ἐπισκιάζει (“and its honor gives much shade”). The Targum and the Vulgate read similarly, “within a strong wall is his dwelling” because they understood משכית (“imagination”) as משכה (“thorn hedge”). Thus, the BHS suggests that the phrase should be changed to נשגב במשכתו (“it is high in his thorn hedge”). Fox, *Proverbs 10-31*, 1018–19.

²⁸² Regarding repetitions in MT Proverbs, Snell defines repetitions of lines as “twice-told proverbs” and divides these into four categories (“whole verses repeated,” “half-verses repeated with variations,” “half-verses repeated in whole verses,” and “syntactically related verses”). He regards the repetition of 10:15 and 18:11 as “half-verses repeated with spelling variations.” Snell, *Twice-Told Proverbs*, 42–43; Knut M. Heim, *Poetic Imagination in*

high wall in their imagination”) to verse 11a. Since the two images of a fortified city (קרית עזו) and a high wall (כהומה נשגבה) underscore the notion of safety that both provide urban dwellers, wealth seems to be established as a social advantage of the rich person. Thus, McKane compares the rich person’s wealth to “a buffer” which “affords security” and protects him from “the chanciness and dangers of life.”²⁸³ Murphy also regards 18:11 as “an obvious fact: riches are a protection.”²⁸⁴ However, defining such an idea as an imagination or delusion (משכית) of the rich person, the sages deftly twist the meaning of the verse and divulge their negative evaluation of the way the rich person relates to his wealth.²⁸⁵ In 18:11, the sages insist that the security the rich person’s wealth provides is guaranteed only in his thoughts and hopes. Much as 10:15 implies that the rich person’s over-dependence on wealth can lead him to ruin under a predicament of poverty (just as a fortified city might sometimes be destroyed), 18:11 also expresses the idea that his overconfidence in his wealth produces the illusion that he is always secure behind a high wall, as it were, of material resources. Although there is a difference between the verses, the sages in both lines characterize the rich person not only as a possessor of wealth but also as the

Proverbs: Variant Repetitions and the Nature of Poetry, Bulletin for Biblical Research Supplements 4 (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2013), 235–40.

²⁸³ William McKane, *Proverbs: A New Approach*, The Old Testament Library (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1970), 517.

²⁸⁴ Murphy, *Proverbs*, 136.

²⁸⁵ This interpretation of משכית as an imagination results from the reading of MT Proverbs 18:11. The word משכית, which derives from the root שכה, generally refers to “sculpture” (Lev 26:1; Num 33:52; Prov 25:11; Ezek 8:12). Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *BDB*, 967; Köhler and Baumgartner, *HALOT*, 641. According to Fox, in Psalm 73:7, משכית does not indicate a carved sculpture but “images of the heart” or “devisings of the heart” with the word לבב (“hearts”). Fox, *Proverbs 10-31*, 642. However, the ancient versions may reflect a different reading from that of MT. For example, the LXX reads ἐπιστάλας which means “overshadow, protect” and corresponds with the Hebrew word סכך. The Vulgate translates משכית of MT into *circumdans eum* (“surrounding him”), which corresponds with the Hebrew word שוך (“hedge or fence up”). The Targum and the Peshitta read it as “his dwelling” which corresponds to the Hebrew word משכן (“abode”). Thus, J. Fichtner suggests that משכית of MT should be modified to במשכתו (“like a fence” or “like a high wall”). As Murphy points out, however, משכית of MT literally means “in his/its image” and thus “metaphorically to indicate imagination” in the verse. Murphy, *Proverbs*, 134. Furthermore, as Waltke observes, the description of wealth as “illusory security” is more contrastive to “real security” of the divine name. Waltke, *Proverbs 16-31*, 67.

one who is blinded by wealth and its ability to provide protection and thus is ironically not secure against danger.

Not only do the sages obviously censure trusting in wealth, but they also suggest where a more reliable locus of trust for social well-being lies—e.g., in righteousness (“Wealth does not profit in the day of wrath, but righteousness delivers from death” [11:4]), etc. The focus of 18:11 is not so much on wealth’s advantage but on the moral religious point that the rich person trusts too much in it. The sages sharpen their negative attitude toward the rich person in 18:11 by pairing it with the previous verse 18:10 in which the divine name ensures safety for a righteous person.

מגדל־עז שם יהוה בִּירֹוץ צַדִּיק וְנִשְׁגָּב

A strong tower is the name of Yahweh; a righteous person runs into it and is secure.

As the sages use the image of a fortified city to describe the protection afforded by the rich person’s wealth in 18:11, they likewise employ an image of warfare when comparing the name of Yahweh to a fortified tower in 18:10.²⁸⁶ The righteous person of 18:10 finds safety by running into the tower of Yahweh. In MT Proverbs, a righteous person or the righteous (צַדִּיק or צַדִּיקִים) are typically good and exemplary figures who show their moral capacity and responsibility by following wisdom’s way.²⁸⁷ This moral characteristic of the righteous is mainly contrasted with the immoral characteristic of the wicked (רָשָׁע). The righteous are also rewarded in the act-consequence nexus²⁸⁸: they receive a material reward for their morality (e.g.,

²⁸⁶ The description of Yahweh as a fortified tower occurs in Psalm 61:4[3] as well: “For you are my refuge, a fortified tower (מגדל־עז) against the enemy.” In the verse, the psalmist is protected under a fortified tower.

²⁸⁷ For example, the righteous walk in integrity (בתמו, 20:7). Their thoughts are just (משפט, 12:5). Their desire ends only in good (טוב, 11:23). They hate falsehood (דבר־שקר, 13:5). Their mouth brings forth wisdom (חכמה, 10:31) and their knowledge (דעה, 11:8) delivers them from trouble.

²⁸⁸ See 4:18; 10:6, 7, 16, 24; 11:8, 9, 30; 12:7, 21; 13:21; 14:32; 15:6, etc.

“prosperity” [13:21]; “treasure” [15:6]) and divine blessing due to their virtue (3:33; 10:3; 15:29). This connection between the righteous and the divine reward is also found in 18:10, in which the sages emphasize the divine security for the righteous. For the sages, one aspect of the righteous person’s character, namely, a proper trust is evaluated as wise. As Sun Myung Lyu and Christopher B. Ansberry note, for the sages the terms wise and righteous are “co-referential.”²⁸⁹

The sages’ pairing of 18:10 and 18:11 thus contrasts not only the genuine security Yahweh provides with the imaginary security wealth offers, but also the character of the righteous person with the immorality of the rich person. In 18:10, the sages regard the righteous person’s behavior as good because he shows his wisdom through appropriate trust in Yahweh. In contrast, in 18:11 the sages evaluate the rich person’s attitude toward wealth as futile or wrongheaded because he exposes his folly by seeking false security. Though the sages do not make explicit such a negative evaluation of the rich person, the parallel between 18:10 and 18:11 makes it possible to find the pointed critique. This contrast between the two moral agents is also found in 11:28 which points to the locus of each one’s trust.

בוטח בעשרו הוא יפל וכעלה צדיקים יפרחו

The one who trusts his riches, he will fall, but the righteous will flourish like a leaf.²⁹⁰

²⁸⁹ Sun Myung Lyu, *Righteousness in the Book of Proverbs* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012), 45, 46. Christopher B. Ansberry explains the concept of “co-referential” relationship as follows: “That is, the antitheses do not have the same meaning or sense, but they refer to the same reality, the same referent in a given context. The righteous/wise, the wicked/fool, and related vocabulary in either semantic field describe the positive and negative, the moral and intellectual traits of the same type of person.” Christopher B. Ansberry, “What Does Jerusalem Have to Do with Athens?: The Moral Vision of the Book of Proverbs and Aristotle’s Nicomachean Ethics,” *Hebrew Studies* 51 (2010): 162.

²⁹⁰ The editor of BHS suggests that the word יפל (“fall”) should be read as יבל (“wither”) because such a modification supports the parallelism between the first line (“wither”) and the second line (“flourish”). As McKane and Murphy point out, however, “there is no textual support for the emendation.” McKane, *Proverbs*, 436; Murphy, *Proverbs*, 84. The LXX also translates the Hebrew word יפל into the Greek word *πρᾶσειται*, which means to fall.

In MT Proverbs, בּוֹטָח refers to the one who trusts in Yahweh (3:5; 16:20; 28:25; 29:25) on the one hand and the one who trusts in his riches (11:28) or his own heart (28:26) on the other. As Yoder points out, the sages' description of one who trusts in his riches in 11:28 is similar to that of other figures, such as “the foolish and wicked who stumble and fall on the way (e.g., 4:19; 22:14; 28:10).”²⁹¹ In the broader logic of the book's two ways discourse, the one who trusts in other things except Yahweh is considered a wicked and foolish person. Thus, the phrase בּוֹטָח בְּעֶשְׂרֵי of 11:28 characterizes the one trusting in his riches as a moral agent who fails in doing the good and thus should be criticized for his immoral behavior. In 11:28, the immorality of the one who trusts in his riches is evident by the comparison with another, positively marked moral agent, the righteous (צַדִּיקִים). “Righteous” in 11:28, of course, carries the connotations of its usages elsewhere in MT Proverbs, where we saw the term is marked by a plethora of morally positive acts. We can also infer from the antithetical parallelism of 11:28a that, unlike the one who trusts in his riches, the righteous do not trust their riches or their own heart but Yahweh.

This contrast between the one who trusts in his riches and the righteous in 11:28 is thus very similar to the contrast between the rich person and the righteous person in 18:10-11. Despite the fact that there is no word עֲשִׂיר which refers to a rich person in 11:28, we can thus identify the one who trusts in his riches as the ‘rich person’ in moral terms. This person possesses wealth as the rich person of 10:15 and 18:11 does, and also, like that person, he is wrongly oriented toward his wealth. Such dependence on wealth distinguishes the rich person from the righteous person who trusts in Yahweh. In 10:15 and 18:11, therefore, the sages describe the rich person (עֲשִׂיר) as a moral agent by painting him in negative moral terms that he trusts in his wealth.

²⁹¹ Christine R. Yoder, *Proverbs*, Abingdon Old Testament Commentaries (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2009), 140.

The Rich Seek Their Own Advantage in Social Relations

The second characteristic of the rich as moral agents in MT Proverbs is that they seek advantage in social relations through their wealth. While the first characteristic is related to the internal aspects of the rich, this characteristic illuminates how their character is expressed externally and in relation to others. The rich thus do not pursue stable and mutually beneficial social relations based on prioritizing social virtues and kinship but rather attempt to derive benefit by using their wealth to their own advantage.

Wealth enables its possessors to build many relations and gain favor with others. These relations constitute one way in which their wealth might serve them as a ‘fortress,’ a social advantage. In contrast, the poor cannot enjoy such a benefit but have a disadvantage that they are hated by their friends and are separated from them. Consider the following sayings:

גם־לרעהו ישנא רש ואהבי עשיר רבים 14:20

Even by his friend a poor person is hated,²⁹² but those who love a rich person are many.

הון יסיף רעים רבים ודל מרעהו יפרד 19:4

Wealth adds many friends, but a poor person is separated from his friend.

The sages seem to offer an objective observation of social reality: once the money is gone so are the friends and vice versa.²⁹³ Suggesting that the sages observe a social phenomenon which results from economic inequity, many scholars conclude that we cannot find the sages’ opinion

²⁹² According to the BHS, the MT offers the passive *niphal* stem (ישנא [yisānē]), “is hated by...), but “s’ny” of the Targum is active voice, *qal* stem (ישנא [yisnā], “hates”). Since 14:20 focuses on hatred and love, which poverty and wealth bring about, the passive voice of the MT is preferred.

²⁹³ Cf. Sirach 13:21-23: “When the rich person totters, he is supported by friends, but when the humble falls, he is pushed away even by friends. If the rich person slips, many come to the rescue; he speaks unseemly words, but they justify him. If the humble person slips, they even criticize him; he talks sense, but is not given a hearing. The rich person speaks and all are silent; they extol to the clouds what he says. The poor person speaks and they say, ‘Who is this fellow?’ And should he stumble, they even push him down.” I will analyze these lines in chapter 4.

about such arrangements.²⁹⁴ However, these sayings should not be regarded merely as an objective comment on social realities but as a critique of the rich who seek advantages through their wealth in social relations based on economic inequality.

In Proverbs 14:20 and 19:4, the sages make clear that many friends of the rich person do not arise from his righteousness or his social virtue but his wealth. This means, again, that the עשיר need not be identified with the one whose wealth is a material reward in the act-consequence nexus. The sages simply describe a social advantage that accrues to the rich person because of his wealth—that those who love him are many. It may be, as Fox observes, that the rich person wins many people’s favor because he can loan others his property.²⁹⁵ It may be also that those who are associated with the rich person receive advantages from his economic resources and social power in any number of other ways. If so, this description of the rich person thus shows that he is not merely as a possessor of wealth but also the one who profits from the social relations.

In particular, the social power the rich possess plays a significant role in establishing favorable social relations in which others are obligated to them. Many people curry favor with the rich who have economic and social power, sometimes by giving them a gift. For the rich, such an attempt to win their favor through a gift serves as an opportunity to increase their wealth and further solidify their powerful place in the social hierarchy by reinforcing the subordinate economic and social place of others. In 19:6-7, the sages highlight a sharp contrast between one

²⁹⁴ For example, Fox argues that 14:20 expresses the benefit of wealth and the drawbacks of poverty without “providing a value judgment.” Fox, *Proverbs 10-31*, 580. Murphy also offers a similar evaluation of the verse: “The proverb makes a statement of fact: riches create differences in social life.” Murphy, *Proverbs*, 105. Finally, Clifford similarly comments on the verse: “An unsparing observation on the connection between wealth and popularity.” Clifford, *Proverbs*, 146.

²⁹⁵ Fox, *Proverbs 10-31*, 580.

who gains favor due to his high social standing and the other who is hated because of his low social status. Proverbs 19:6-7 says:

6 רבים יחלו פני־נדיב וכל־הרע לאיש מתן

Many will seek the favor of a noble person, and everyone is a friend to a giver of a gift.

7 כל אחי־רש שנאהו אף כי מרעהו רחקו ממנו מרדף

All the brothers of a poor person hate him, how much more do his friends distance themselves from him!²⁹⁶

Although the sages do not use the term עשיר in 19:6, the description of relations based on wealth in 14:20 and 19:4 alludes that one's high social-economic status weighs in his favor in the social realm. The sages support the point by using in 19:6 the word נדיב, which refers generally to a person of the upper class as "one who distributes according to his own will, the nobleman."²⁹⁷ Thus, the נדיב is similar to עשיר because both have economic power and high social status in a society, so that both are favored by many people.²⁹⁸ In addition, as Fox observes, the phrase יחלו פני (literally "beseech the face of") usually occurs in "seeking the favor of superiors" (e.g., "the richest of the people" [Ps 45:12]).²⁹⁹ The נדיב is thus described in relation to social and political power, which reminds us of the rich who make up the ruling class, as we already saw in other books of the Hebrew Bible and MT Proverbs. In contrast, 19:7 offers a case of a poor person whose lack of wealth and social power causes him to be hated by his friends and even his brothers.

²⁹⁶ As Murphy notes, the second line of 19:7 in MT Proverbs, אמרים לא־המה ("When they call after them, they are not there," NRSV), is "corrupt" because "it has no connection with the previous couplet." Agreeing with Murphy, I omit the second line and its translation. Murphy, *Proverbs*, 141.

²⁹⁷ Köhler and Baumgartner, *HALOT*, 674.

²⁹⁸ According to Fox, Nahmias provides a comment on the נדיב: "This particular *nādīb* in this saying is a rich man who voluntarily gives to those who ask." Fox, *Proverbs 10-31*, 650.

²⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

More importantly, the parallel between the first line and the second line in 19:6 deepens our understanding of the way the rich seek their own advantage with self-interest by building favorable relations. In 19:6, the sages offer three parallels: many and everyone, to seek a favor and to be a friend, and a noble person and a giver of gift. While in the first line to seek a favor is one way for a social inferior to build relations, to give a gift is another way to establish relations in the second line. Both to seek a favor and to give a gift are not wrong by themselves. The word *מתן*, for instance, usually means “gift or present” given willingly to someone (e.g., Gen 34:12; Prov 18:16; 21:14, etc.) and HALOT regards the phrase *איש מתן* as a “generous [person].”³⁰⁰ It is reasonable to assume that the gift giving connotes a means of gaining a superior’s favor, especially in a hierarchical relation. Thus, as Waltke points out, to give a gift (*מתן*) in 19:6b is closely connected to seeking a favor in 19:6a because both acts place an individual in “the moral danger of serving self.”³⁰¹ Yet, the parallel between *נדיב* and *איש מתן* deftly changes the identification of one who gives a gift from a social inferior to a social superior. As a result, it is a noble or rich person who not only gains favor from subordinates, he is also the giver of gifts to them. This gift giving, however, is thus not to be evaluated simply as a voluntary expression of support. It can also be regarded as an intentional behavior to strengthen social ties that increase one’s own profit. By using the socially marked term *נדיב* that reminds readers of MT Proverbs of the *עשיר*, the sages thus posit that the rich make full use of their wealth as a means of establishing social relations that are primarily beneficial to themselves—a characterization consistent with the emerging broader moral profile of the rich in the book.

³⁰⁰ Köhler and Baumgartner, *HALOT*, 655.

³⁰¹ Waltke, *Proverbs 16-31*, 102.

This description of the rich who manipulate social relations through wealth is comparable to a model of patronage. According to Ronald A. Simkins, patronage is “a system of social relations that are rooted in an unequal distribution of power and goods and expressed socially through a generalized exchange of different types of resources.”³⁰² Despite the fact that a patron possesses more wealth and power than a client does, as Simkins points out, the relationship between the two is basically regarded as reciprocal and thus “idealized as friendship” because “the patron commits himself to protect and support his clients, and the client commits himself to serve his patron.”³⁰³ When we apply the concept of patronage to the rich’s social relations, they are likely to function as patrons who protect their friends as clients because they possess such wealth and power. However, as Boer notes, in reality patronage works to the patron’s advantage due to “hierarchical” economic and social systems, “in which the material balance heavily favors the patron.”³⁰⁴ This feature of patronage illuminates the description of the rich’s social relations in 19:6, in that they appear to ensure the protection of their friends but in reality make such relations beneficial to themselves by using their wealth and power in the hierarchical system.

The rich’s pursuit of hierarchical social relations based on wealth demonstrates their lack of wisdom in the sense that it is not a real expression of social virtue because it does not promote social stability and through the sharp inequalities it establishes may in fact foster social conflict. In MT Proverbs, the sages essentially encourage the reader to exercise social virtue that is founded upon ties of friendship and kinship. In 17:17 and 27:10, for example, as Sandoval observes, the sages emphasize a close bond based on “familial and communal ties” because

³⁰² Ronald A. Simkins, “Patronage and the Political Economy of Monarchic Israel,” *Semeia* 87 (1999): 127.

³⁰³ *Ibid.*, 128.

³⁰⁴ Boer, *The Sacred Economy*, 106.

kinsfolk or friends should be, if they embody wisdom's way, are helpful and supportive in adversity.³⁰⁵ Familial and communal relations ought to be established on stable and just social order among social equals, friendship, or on kinship. Though the familial and communal ties are still steeped in their own set of social hierarchies—gender, age, familial, etc.—they are fundamentally different from social relations the rich seek and establish. Familial and communal ties are established on other grounds often regarded as more fundamental secure. One does not normally have to seek a favor or to give a gift in order to establish or maintain those relations.

In fact, in 14:20-21, the sages specifically admonish the reader not to seek social relations based on wealth but communal ties based on social virtues, especially by showing the generosity to the poor:

גם־לרעהו ישנא רש ואהבי עשיר רבים 20

Even by his friend a poor person is hated, but those who love a rich person are many.

בז־לרעהו חוטא ומחונן עניים אשריו 21

The one despises his neighbor³⁰⁶ is a sinner, but the one who is kind to the poor³⁰⁷ is blessed.

As many scholars suggest, these two verses are closely related to each other because of the parallel both make between a poor person hated by his friend (v. 20) and a person despised by

³⁰⁵ Sandoval, *The Discourse*, 197.

³⁰⁶ The LXX translates לרעהו (“his neighbor”) of 14:21a into πένητας (“the poor”) for the parallel with עניים (“the poor”) of 14:21b.

³⁰⁷ According to MT, *Ketiv* reads עניים (“poor”), but *Qere* reads ענוים (“humble”). Such a textual suggestion is also found in 16:19: “It is better to be lowly in spirit among the poor (K: עניים, Q: ענוים) than to share the spoils with the proud.” As Whybray points out, “the question whether these are two separate words, ‘ānī, ‘poor’ and ‘ānāw, ‘humble’, or are variants of a single word is especially relevant to the interpretation of certain Psalms, but of little significance in Proverbs.” Whybray, *Wealth and Poverty*, 14. Yet, the meaning should follow the reading of *Ketiv* עניים (“poor”) rather than *Qere* ענוים (“humble”) in 14:21 because of the connection between the verse and its previous verse. Most scholars also follow the *Ketiv*'s reading.

his neighbor (v. 21).³⁰⁸ While the sages hint that poverty causes a person to be hated by his friend/neighbor in verse 20, they obviously evaluate the friend/neighbor who hates the poor one as a sinner (חוטא) in verse 21a. Thus, the sages support their critique of those who seek social relations based on economic status instead of on ties of friendship by warning strongly against a repugnance for or rebuffing a poor person. Given that a sinner is frequently identified as the wicked in MT Proverbs (5:22; 10:16; 11:31; 13:6; 21:4, etc.), the one who despises his friend/neighbor falls short of the moral demands of the wisdom tradition.³⁰⁹ In contrast, the one who shows kindness to the poor is evaluated as blessed (v. 21b). This emphasis on social ties based on virtues suggests that the rich show their lack of wisdom because they do not seek such a relationship. The rich's establishment of social relations based on wealth appears to be successful, but it cannot be evaluated as wise or righteous but as foolish or sinful in MT Proverbs.

Furthermore, the sages do not defend the rich's mercenary attitude in social relations but point out their folly by revealing the unreliability of relations based on the weak ties of ephemeral wealth. For the sages who emphasize familial and communal ties based on social virtues, the rich are evaluated as being in danger of depending too much on social relations via their wealth. Though wealth enables the rich to have many friends—i.e., to leverage their wealth to reify social and economic differences to their advantage—the sages warn against this. They

³⁰⁸ Fox, *Proverbs 10-31*, 581; Knut M. Heim, *Like Grapes of Gold Set in Silver: An Interpretation of Proverbial Clusters in Proverbs 10:1-22:16*, Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft, Bd. 273 (Berlin; New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2001), 181–83; Murphy, *Proverbs*, 106; Sandoval, *The Discourse*, 195; Waltke, *Proverbs 1-15*, 599; Van Leeuwen, *The Book of Proverbs*, 142; Yoder, *Proverbs*, 162–63.

³⁰⁹ According to Fox, “*ḥaṭṭa'im* are habitual, dyed-in-the-wool offenders, criminals and not occasional sinners.” Fox, *Proverbs 1-9*, 85. Such a comment implies that חטא refers to a moral wrong rather than a religious sin in MT Proverbs.

insist that the friendship established by such people—the ‘man of friends’—end in ruin. For example, Proverbs 18:24 says:

איש רעים להתרעע ויש אהב דבק מאח

A person who has friends is ruined but there is a friend who sticks closer³¹⁰ than a brother.

While Proverbs 14:20 and 19:4 describe friends as a social advantage for a person who has wealth—a rich person, 18:24 depicts a person who has friends in a negative way and even suggests that he is ruined. Although 18:24 does not clarify why the latter is the case, the sages provide a clue to the reason by comparing many friends with a true friend or a brother. As Waltke argues, the person who has (many) friends is ruined because he “lacks one true friend in adversity.”³¹¹ In other words, no amount of friends can guarantee help or support for this person when he/she faces difficulties. This saying highlights that the social ties produced by wealth, or the leveraging of wealth for social advantage, are weak in comparison to those established by social virtue based ultimately in communal or kinship bonds. The sages imply not only that the friends made via wealth are neither true nor reliable but also that the one who depends on such friends will surely be ruined. Although the sages do not use the word עשיר in 18:24, the symbolic connections produced by their rhetoric links the ‘man of friends’ to the rich. As 14:20 and 19:4 make clear, the one who has many friends is a rich person. Since social relations of the rich are based on the weak ties of ephemeral wealth (vs. kinship or virtue), they do not get help from their friends in their adversity but are brought to ruin.

³¹⁰ According to Fox, the Hebrew word דבק (literally “attached”) means “committing oneself unreservedly to another person.” Fox, *Proverbs 10-31*, 647.

³¹¹ Waltke, *Proverbs 16-31*, 96.

The phrase ‘a man of friends’ (אִישׁ רַעִים) points toward the sort of person who uses wealth to reify social and economic differences that advantage him, especially through another reading of the first line of 18:24: “There are friends for associating with.” This reading comes from modifying two words: from אִישׁ (“a man”) to ישׁ (“there is/are”),³¹² and from להתרעע (רַעַע, “to break”) to להתרעות (רַעַה, “to associate with”).³¹³ Such a reading reinforces the comparison between friends who strive to associate with others (18:24a) and a friend who is closer than family members (18:24b). As Sandoval and Yoder point out, therefore, they “appear to be friends” but in reality are not reliable friends because their friendship is “perhaps based on unreliable things such as wealth.”³¹⁴ For the sages, those who appear as friends are not evaluated as trustworthy because they build social relations with their wealth and social power in order to promote only themselves. Despite the difference, the MT’s reading and the modified reading are consistent with each other in the sense that both one who depends on unreliable friends and one who appears to be a friend surely harm himself or themselves due to their wrong pursuit of friendship based on the weak ties of wealth.

In short, by emphasizing communal ties based on social virtue characterized by support and help in adversity, the sages condemn the rich as those who through their wealth seek their

³¹² According to J. Fichtner, the editor of BHS Proverbs, a Masoretic note (*sebir*), several manuscripts of the Septuagint, the Peschitta, and the Targum support the reading of ישׁ. J. Fichtner, “Proverbia,” in *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*, ed. Albrecht Alt et al. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2007), 1299; Fox, *Proverbs 10-31*, 647.

³¹³ Fichtner suggests that להתרעע (רַעַע, “to break”) should be modified to להתרעות because the latter is used in 22:24, אַף אֶל־תִּתְרַע אֶת־בַּעַל אִיךָ (“Do not make friends with a bad-tempered person”). The codices of the Septuagint and other ancient texts, such as the Targum and the Vulgate, support the modification. Fichtner, “Proverbia,” 1299. Arguing that it “forms a good parallel to the B-line,” Fox also supports the modification. Fox, *Proverbs 10-31*, 647. However, we do not have to modify the reading of the MT because it also makes a good parallel to the B-line to compare many friends with one true friend. The translation of the NRSV, “some friends play at friendship,” is acceptable because it conveys both senses of socializing (רַעַה) and of destruction (רַעַע).

³¹⁴ Sandoval, *The Discourse*, 196; Yoder, *Proverbs*, 201.

own social advantage. This pursuit of their own self-interest in social relations becomes more obvious in the next characteristic of the rich as those who oppress the poor.

The Rich Oppress the Poor

The third way the sages of MT Proverbs characterize the rich is to describe them as those who oppress others, especially the poor. The rich are criticized for oppressing the poor and exploiting them. As I will show soon, the sages emphasize social virtue that one ought to show kindness to the needy and treat them with dignity, but the rich typically do not. This negative characteristic of the rich adds to the ambiguity many detect in the logic of the act-consequence nexus in MT Proverbs. If wealth is a reward for wisdom and the rich possess wealth, how is it that they are also criticized for their moral failings vis-à-vis the poor, whose lack of wealth perhaps indicates their own moral culpability? However, the rich are not, again, presented as those who are simply equal to those who have material goods. Instead, the rich's oppression of the poor demonstrates their identity as moral agents who fail morally to embody wisdom's virtues. Yet, the sages' critique of the rich is not limited to their neglect of the poor or their rejection of showing kindness to the poor but further pays attention to other of their unjust economic practices.

In MT Proverbs, the sages emphasize the care for the poor by insisting that showing kindness, fairness, and justice to them constitutes a foundational virtue (14:21, 31; 17:5; 19:17; 21:3; 22:9; 28:27). Of course, such an emphasis on social justice with regard to the poor is not unique to the sages. It frequently appears in other books of the Hebrew Bible (e.g., Exod 22:22; Lev 19:9-10; Deut 10:18; Isa 1:17; Amos 5:10-15; Zech 7:10; Job 29:11-16, etc.). Yet, the sages do not merely express a duty to help the poor but also apply an act-consequence logic to the sayings. For example, 22:9 says,

טוב־עין הוא יברך כִּי־נתן מלחמו לדל
A generous person will be blessed, for he shared his bread with the poor.

In this verse, the sages promise a generous person (literally “good of eye”) a blessing for sharing his bread with the poor. The generous person is rewarded for his good behavior, especially showing kindness to the poor. Thus, as Sandoval and Whybray show, this kind of proverb that encourages the reader to help the poor enhances “the value of wisdom’s way.”³¹⁵ In other words, one who shows generosity to the poor is evaluated as wise and virtuous, and vice versa. Since the rich are described as those who do not demonstrate such virtue but rather oppress the poor, they must be evaluated as immoral and foolish.

In describing the rich’s oppression of the poor, the sages define the relationship between the two classes as one which is more than economic subjugation. Though of course the sages acknowledge that the rich and the poor are regarded as equal before Yahweh, they do not offer a simple lesson that the rich should treat the poor with generosity and dignity. Instead, the sages strive to reveal how the rich exploit the poor by using their economic and social power. In several sayings such as 22:2 and 29:13—already analyzed in part above—the sages illuminate such an exploitation through a plain but acute expression, “the meeting between the rich and the poor.” Although עשיר is not used in 29:13, the parallel with 22:2 helps the reader identify the rich as oppressors.

עשיר ורש נפגשו עשה כלם יהוה 22:2
The rich and the poor meet one another; Yahweh is the maker of them all.³¹⁶

³¹⁵ Sandoval, *The Discourse*, 181; Whybray, *Wealth and Poverty*, 35.

³¹⁶ The LXX translates the Hebrew word כלם (“all of them”) into the Greek adjective, ἀμφοτέρους (“both”). Such a translation is compatible with 20:12, “The hearing ear and the seeing eye—the LORD has made them both (שְׁנֵיהֶם)” (NRSV). However, there is no need to follow the LXX because it does not produce a different meaning from that of the MT.

רש ואיש תככים נפגשו מאיר־עיני שניהם יהוה 29:13

A poor person and an oppressor meet each other; Yahweh gives light to the eyes of both.

In 22:2, the sages insist that both the rich and the poor have an equal status as human beings created by Yahweh, despite a difference of socio-economic status between the classes: “Yahweh is the maker of them all.” Regarding the ambiguous expression of 22:2a, “the rich and the poor meet one another (נפגשו),” scholars have suggested a variety of interpretations.³¹⁷ The lexica suggest פגש means “to encounter someone in a neutral sense” (e.g., Gen 32:18; 33:8; Exod 4:27; 1 Sam 25:20; 2 Sam 2:13) or “a hostile sense” (e.g., Exod 4:24; Hos 13:8; Prov 17:12).³¹⁸ The phrase of 22:2a thus can be understood as an accidental or intentional meeting between the rich and the poor (cf. Ps 85:11[10]). McKane buttresses the former understanding by arguing that the phrase means “no more than that rich and poor are found side by side in every community.”³¹⁹ Murphy too argues that the meeting should be understood as “a common life bestowed upon them by the Lord.”³²⁰

Yet, as the lexica and other texts suggest another meaning in a hostile sense, this meeting of the rich and the poor might be more than an accidental encounter in their daily lives. The meeting of the rich and the poor in 22:2 is also premised on their unequal economic and social status. As I have consistently demonstrated, the rich are not merely possessors of wealth but also a ruling class who has social power. This identification of the rich enables one to recognize that

³¹⁷ For example, Fox offers eight interpretations of the phrase: (1) “an incidental encounter on the street,” (2) “the poor man approaches the rich man for help,” (3) “in the sense of clashing,” (4) “a legal adjudication in the city gate,” (5) they may meet or come together in concord,” (6) “in the sense of becoming equal,” (7) “side-by-side in every community,” and (8) “a way of saying that both are alive.” See Fox, *Proverbs 10-31*, 695.

³¹⁸ Köhler and Baumgartner, *HALOT*, 911.

³¹⁹ McKane, *Proverbs*, 569.

³²⁰ Murphy, *Proverbs*, 165.

any meeting between the rich and the poor may be accidental, and that such meetings are inevitable and may result from any number of reasons. Leo G. Perdue, for example, focuses on the poor's intention for the meeting by regarding it as "intercession, negotiation, or even litigation in order to avoid or bring to an end mistreatment" (cf. Gen 32:18; 33:8; Exod 4:24-26).³²¹ Perdue is right, but he restricts any cause of the meeting to the poor person's position. While the poor might request a meeting for reducing financial burden or lightening hardship and toil, the rich can also arrange the meeting with the poor to extort materials from them or coerce their labor. Regarding the intentional meeting between the rich and the poor, Boer provides an insightful comment on the connection between the two classes:

Disconnected from the process of production, this nonproductive class [the ruling class] makes its living on the backs of the productive class, made up variously of peasants, slaves, artisans, and so on. The extraction of goods is ensured through a mix of force and persuasion (technically known as exploitation). With further concentration of wealth and power, chieftains and towns appear. Then, when the extraction of essential items becomes sufficiently complex and requires defense of such wealth, the state and its (usually despotic) ruler emerge.³²²

As Boer notes, the ruling class—namely the rich—inevitably needs the connection with the subjugated class—such as laborers and peasants—because the former is separated from productive activities and does not have to engage in such productive works. To support their own living and to maintain their power, the non-productive, rich ruling class that Boer describes, necessarily and intentionally ought to access products, especially the labor, of the subjugated class. Given that the rich and the poor are closely connected to each other in this hierarchical social system, their meeting normally reproduces and reinforces this hierarchy, which as we have

³²¹ Leo G. Perdue, *Wisdom & Creation: The Theology of Wisdom Literature* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994), 111.

³²² Boer, *The Sacred Economy*, 133.

seen is often characterized by the oppression of one over the other. As Boer points out, the way the rich as the ruling class “control the means of production” is frequently seen as an exploitation of the poor who are short of wealth but obliged to produce goods for their oppressors.³²³

This implication of oppression in the meeting between the rich and the poor is made more explicitly by reading 22:2 together with 29:13. As 22:2a describes the meeting (נפגשו) between a rich person and a poor person, 29:13a also depicts a meeting (נפגשו); this time between an oppressor and a poor person. Hence, Proverbs 22:2 and 29:13 appear to be almost identical, but the two verses differ in regard to whom the poor person meets: a rich person in 22:2a and an oppressor in 29:13a. Given that the word תך indicates an oppression with “deception” (Ps 10:7; 55:12) or “violence” (Ps 72:14), the phrase איש תככים (“a person of oppressions”) of 29:13 specifically refers to one who oppresses others, especially the weak, through cruel and violent rule.³²⁴ In this sense, the parallel between עשיר and איש תככים confirms that the character of the rich is symbolically linked to oppressors who abuse their socio-economic opponents—the poor.³²⁵ Furthermore, as Murphy suggests, the parallel between 22:2 and 29:13 signifies the sages’ view of economic inequity that “the poverty of one is due to the oppression by the other.”³²⁶

While Proverbs 22:2 and 29:13 implicitly express the oppressive character of the rich through the meeting between them and the poor, both sayings clarify the symbolic connection between the rich and oppressors. As a result, other sayings about the oppression in MT Proverbs

³²³ Ibid., 122.

³²⁴ Köhler and Baumgartner, *HALOT*, 1729.

³²⁵ Referring to other sayings about the oppression of the poor (14:31; 17:5; 18:23), Waltke also regards the oppressive person as the “tyrannical” rich person who oppresses and mocks the poor. Waltke, *Proverbs 16-31*, 200.

³²⁶ Murphy, *Proverbs*, 222.

reminds the reader of the rich's oppressive character, even if the sages do not use the word עשיר. For example, the symbolic connection between the rich and oppressors enables the reader to read 22:16 as one of descriptions of the rich's oppression of the poor and further to recognize how the rich reinforce their oppression of the poor through economic and social hierarchies. Proverbs 22:16 says:

עשק דל להרבות לו נתן לעשיר אך-למחסור
The one who oppresses a poor person enriches himself;
the one who gives to a rich person comes only to poverty.³²⁷

While the first line reveals why the rich oppress the poor, the second line articulates how the rich exploit others and make them poor. In the first line of 22:16, there is no word עשיר referring to a rich person, but the symbolic connection found in 22:2 and 29:13—along with the sort of sociological analysis Boers offers—makes it possible to assume that one who oppresses a poor person is a rich person. The word עשק in 22:16a conveys a similar meaning to תך of 29:13 because both designate a person who exercises unjustly his economic power and social authority. Köhler and Baumgartner support this point by suggesting that עשק often means to “exploit (a debtor unable to pay, the weaker party in a business contract)” in the Hebrew Bible (e.g., Lev 5:21; Deut 24:14; 1 Sam 12:3f.; Isa 52:4, etc.).³²⁸ As Fox observes, עשק also indicates an action

³²⁷ As most of scholars acknowledge, the translation and interpretation of 22:16 is a conundrum because of the ambiguity of two referents. First, the referent of לו is not clear in the first line, so the one who gets the increase can be either the oppressor (עשק) or a poor person (דל). Second, it is unclear who comes to poverty in the second line; does למחסור point to the one who gives (נתן) or a rich person (עשיר)? If we choose the first option for both lines, the translation is “The one who oppresses a poor person increases himself, and the one who gives to a rich person comes only to a lack.” Clifford and Waltke take this option. Clifford, *Proverbs*, 198–99; Waltke, *Proverbs 16-31*, 216. In contrast, if we choose the second option, the translation is, “There is one who oppresses a poor man yet he ends up giving him more. There is one who gives to a rich man yet he ends up in need.” Fox supports this translation. Fox, *Proverbs 10-31*, 703. My translation is similar to that of Clifford and Waltke because Fox's paradoxical translation is not consistent with other sayings about the rich in MT Proverbs.

³²⁸ Köhler and Baumgartner, *HALOT*, 897.

“to deny persons their legal due” in MT Proverbs (e.g., 14:31; 28:3, 17).³²⁹ This denial of others’ legal due essentially requires another’s privilege, which recalls the social power and political authority the rich possess. In addition, the sages illuminate the reason that the one oppresses a poor person by using the word להרבות (“to enrich”) that expresses an idea of financial gains. Such desire for gaining more money is consistent with the rich’s characteristics we have seen so far, such as lust for wealth and wrong trust in it. Consequently, this oppression increases the wealth of the rich and exacerbates the poverty of the poor.

In the second line of 22:16, the sages say that one who gives to a rich person ends up in poverty. Regarding why the giver comes only to poverty, Yoder suggests that the gift is ineffective in currying the rich person’s favor because he does not need material presents.³³⁰ Assuming that the giver is foolish enough to offer the unnecessary gift to the rich person, Waltke also believes that the sages level an accusation against the giver in 22:16.³³¹ However, the sages’ concern is not so much about the critique of the giver as the illumination of the character of the rich person who leads the giver to be in poverty. Though the sages do not clarify what the one gives to the rich person in the line, the analysis of the rich’s social relation in the previous section suggests that it can be money or a gift (e.g., 19:4, 6). As noted earlier, such money or a gift is usually used to seek the favor of others, especially from economic and social superiors such as the rich. In the context of patronage, the favor might include assurance of security, access to land, and favorable terms of a loan, etc. However, 22:16b indicates that the giver comes only to poverty against his expectation of gaining favor or wealth. As a result, an act of giving is

³²⁹ Fox, *Proverbs 10-31*, 704.

³³⁰ Yoder, *Proverbs*, 227.

³³¹ Waltke, *Proverbs 16-31*, 216.

not helpful for the giver but ultimately reinforces the rich person's superior position by causing the giver to be in poverty. The giving to the rich person reinscribes and even exacerbates the giver's subordinate status in that his social position—and perhaps economic status—is diminished vis-à-vis the rich person. As we have seen, the rich in MT Proverbs leverage their superior economic and social positions to secure further their own advantage in social relations.

The sages are especially concerned about how the rich use the poor's supplications for reestablishing, entrenching their social superiority. Consider Proverbs 18:23:

תחנונים ידבר־רש ועשיר יענה עזות
A poor person makes supplications, but a rich person responds harshly.

In this verse, the sages describe a verbal transaction between a poor person and a rich person, based on a hierarchical relation rather than an equal one. When the poor who lack economic and social resources need help, they likely have to make supplications to the rich who possess abundant wealth and social power. The issue that the sages take up in this verse is the rich person's use of his power in response to the poor person's supplications. For the sages, the rich person's response is evaluated as harsh. Although the word עז literally means “strong” (e.g., עזה חמה [“strong wrath,” Prov 21:14]), it conveys a sense of “fiercely” or brashly in 18:23.³³² Such a connotation of עז strengthens the negative characterization of the rich person by suggesting that he is filled with anger at the bothersome supplication of the poor person and thus vents his anger on the destitute person. Regarding the verse as a social observation, McKane suggests the reason for the rich person's response is that he “hear[s] these hard-luck stories” all the time and has limited means for helping the poor person.³³³

³³² *BDB*, 738; *HALOT*, 804.

³³³ McKane, *Proverbs*, 518.

Yet, the sages' focus is not restricted to the rich person's emotional response to the poor person but extends to their socio-economic inequity. As Murphy points out, the sages basically acknowledge in 18:23 "the privilege that the rich can enjoy over the poor" because they can choose to help the poor or to ignore them.³³⁴ Since 18:23 does not explicitly say what is at issue in the imagined exchange, the supplication the poor person makes could be more than just a pesty petition for an economic help. As noted above, encounters between the rich and the poor serve to reflect and reproduce the social hierarchy. In 18:23, thus, the supplication of the poor person is an inevitable part of such a social context and, at the same time, the harsh response of the rich person is a means of exercising authority over the subjugated group, namely, the poor. Indeed, the poor person's supplication of Proverbs 18:23 might be a request to the rich person for stopping violence like that described in Micah 6:12, or exploitation like that imagined by Nathan in 2 Samuel 12:1-4.³³⁵ Despite the powerless person's serious request, the rich person of 18:23 reinforces the oppression of the supplicant by answering harshly, ignoring his miserable situation, or rejecting his entreaty.

The Rich Demonstrate Intellectual and Moral Hubris

The final characteristic of the rich that MT Proverbs highlights is their intellectual and moral hubris. This characteristic is related to how the rich show their hubris for wisdom and morality. While intellectual hubris refers to self-deception that causes one to overestimate his or her own knowledge, moral hubris denotes an idea that one misjudges his or her moral capacity. However,

³³⁴ Murphy, *Proverbs*, 138.

³³⁵ Although Gerald T. Sheppard deals with prayers in Psalms, he provides a helpful insight into a kind of request for stopping violence. He suggests that individual complaint prayers in Psalms should be regarded as a social and political request because the prayers "were shared with an audience to which the enemies belong." Gerald T. Sheppard, "'Enemies' and the Politics of Prayer in the Book of Psalms," in *The Bible and the Politics of Exegesis: Essays in Honor of Norman K. Gottwald on His Sixty-Fifth Birthday* (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 1991), 61–82.

intellectual hubris and moral hubris are closely linked to each other in MT Proverbs, and often cannot be precisely disentangled. The concept ‘hubris’ is generally defined as “pride” or “excessive self-confidence,” and is essentially related to an attitude of arrogance; one is prouder of one’s ability than one ought to be.³³⁶ Yet, the main issue the sages of MT Proverbs bring out in relation to hubris is how it affects the one exhibiting it and also others. Moreover, by describing the rich as those who are full of intellectual and moral hubris, the sages prevent us from misunderstanding that עשיר functions as a metonym for wealth as a material reward in the act-consequence logic.

The rich’s hubris manifests itself in their trust in and overvaluing of their intellectual and moral power rather than God. The sages thus emphasize that the rich’s hubris leads them to destruction, as they do in 16:18 and 18:12:

לפני־שבר גאון ולפני כשלון גבה רוח

Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.

לפני־שבר יגבה לב־איש ולפני כבוד ענוה

Before destruction a person’s heart is haughty, but humility before honor.

In these verses, one who has pride or is haughty is surely to fall or be destroyed. The sages describe that haughtiness (גבה, literally “height” [16:18] or “high” [18:12]) affects one’s spirit (רוח) or heart (לב) that, as Fox notes, control one’s “deeper awareness” and are equated with one’s self.³³⁷ As Newsom also points out, the heart (בל) is “the locus of the persons moral will” and spirit (רוח) is “a person’s capacities” or “one’s motivation, intention, or will.”³³⁸

³³⁶ “Hubris, n.,” *Oxford English Dictionary*, www.oed.com. Accessed 11/01/2017.

³³⁷ Fox, *Proverbs 10-31*, 609.

³³⁸ Newsom, “Models of the Moral Self,” 10–11.

Thus, the sages imply that hubris makes one fail to recognize properly one's self and to overestimate one's abilities. For the sages, such arrogance always results in one's destruction. The rich's hubris also causes them to treat others with contempt. In 11:2 and 29:23, the sages thus remind the reader of the fact that such hubris will bring not advantage but humiliation:

בא־זֶדוֹן ויבא קִלּוֹן וְאֵת־צְנוּעִים חִכְמָה

When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with the humble is wisdom.

גֹּאוֹת אָדָם תִּשְׁפִּילֵנוּ וְשַׁפְלֵרוּחַ יִתְמַךְ כְּבוֹד

A person's haughtiness will humiliate him but a humble spirit will obtain honor.

The sages here show how one's hubris impacts oneself and others by using the concepts of disgrace (קלון) and humiliation (שפל). Although an arrogant person shows contempt for others by fancying himself or herself to be wise, actually his or her haughtiness causes his or her own downfall.

With regard to the hubris that the rich demonstrate, the sages provide us with the fascinating expression that such persons are "wise in [their] own eyes." In MT Proverbs, the phrase "wise in one's own eyes" (חכם בעיניו or חכם בעיניך) occurs four times (3:7; 26:5, 12; 28:11) and, to quote Van Leeuwen, specifically refers to "a person's subjective evaluation of things in implicit, paradigmatic opposition to some[one] other's evaluation."³³⁹ The one who is wise in his or her own eyes thus represents a figure who is not wise at all but overvalues his or her wisdom, that is, shows hubris. In 28:11, for example, the sages say:

חִכְמָה בְּעֵינָיו אִישׁ עֲשִׂיר וְדָל מִבֵּין יַחְקְרֵנוּ

³³⁹ Raymond C. Van Leeuwen, *Context and Meaning in Proverbs 25-27*, Dissertation Series / Society of Biblical Literature 96 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988), 104, quoted from Fox, *Proverbs 10-31*, 797.

A rich person is wise in his own eyes, but a poor one who has understanding sees through him.³⁴⁰

In this verse, the sages insist that a rich person is inferior to a poor person in terms of wisdom or morality and through the accusation against the rich warn the reader against hubris. The phrase *החכם בעיניו* (“wise in his eyes”) places the rich person’s character in question. The expression specifically conveys a negative sense in that it suggests the rich person does not listen to others’ wisdom but believes himself always to be in the right or to be intellectually and morally superior to others (28:26). This person is thus comparable to one who does not depend on Yahweh as the true source of wisdom (3:7), as Fox notes.³⁴¹ Furthermore, as Yoder points out, the phrase *בעיניו החכם* functions as “a hallmark of fools (e.g., 3:7; 14:12; 26:5, 12; 28:26)” in MT Proverbs.³⁴² What is more, in 26:12 the conceited person is regarded as worse than a fool:

ראית איש חכם בעיניו תקוה לכסיל ממנו
Do you see a person who is wise in his own eyes?
There is more hope for a fool than for him.

This verse compares one who is wise in his own eyes and a fool (*כסיל*): because of his stupidity, the latter seems to be more hopeless than the former. For the sages, however, the one who is wise in his own eyes is evaluated as worse than the fool because, as Fox points out, the former neither

³⁴⁰ Regarding the meaning of *יהקרנו*, many scholars suggest that it means “to investigate him” or “to search him out.” For example, Van Leeuwen, *The Book of Proverbs*, 238; Waltke, *Proverbs 16-31*, 396; Whybray, *Proverbs*, 392; Yoder, *Proverbs*, 268. Such a nuance of investigation or examination is also found in 18:17 and 25:2. However, as Fox points out, a poor person in 28:11 is not likely to “have the opportunity to investigate or interrogate a rich one” because the former does not have power or social position. Fox, *Proverbs 10-31*, 825. Thus, *יהקרנו* should be regarded as “to see through him [the rich person]” meaning that the poor person has an ability to discern the arrogance and self-conceit of the rich person.

³⁴¹ Fox, *Proverbs 10-31*, 797.

³⁴² Yoder, *Proverbs*, 268.

“has [...] no hope of change” nor listens to teachings of sages.³⁴³ Thus, the person who is wise in his own eyes in 28:11 is paradoxically characterized as more foolish than a fool.

The sages’ critique of hubris of the rich person in 28:11 also verifies that עשיר is not simply a person who has wealth as a material reward for his wisdom in the act-consequence nexus. Though עשיר is described as the one who believes himself to be wise, and though his wealth may seem to result from his wisdom, the rich person’s wisdom is not the source of his wealth. As I argued previously, the rich person’s wealth and social power can cause him to be deluded into thinking he is wise. However, by emphasizing that the rich person is only wise in his own eyes, the sages insist that he is not wise at all but instead imply that he is foolish and even worse than fools. As Fox notes, terms referring to folly (בער, חסר-לב, אויל, כסיל, לץ) in MT Proverbs “imply moral culpability, not lack of native intelligence.”³⁴⁴ Besides wealth, what the rich person ‘possesses’ is “lack of good judgment, with consequent distortions in moral and practical choices.”³⁴⁵ In other words, the rich person does not have a good sense of himself and cannot evaluate his own wisdom appropriately.

Another aspect of the rich’s hubris in MT Proverbs is their rejection of wisdom and the fact that they are described as walking on crooked paths with crooked lips. Given that the rich overestimate their wealth as securing their well-being (e.g., 10:15; 18:11), they are deluded into thinking they are on the right path. However, the sages reveal that the rich are really on crooked paths and have crooked lips. Consider, for example, the following sayings:

28:6 טוב-רש הולך בתמו מעקש דרכים והוא עשיר

³⁴³ As Fox suggests, even “simple ones” (פתאים) are invited by Wisdom in 8:5 because they “might listen” to her. Fox, *Proverbs 10-31*, 797.

³⁴⁴ Fox, *Proverbs 1-9*, 38–39.

³⁴⁵ Ibid.

Better is a poor person who walks in integrity than one who is crooked in two ways even though he is rich.³⁴⁶

19:1 טוב־רש הולך בתמו מעקש שפתיו והוא כסיל [עשיר]

Better is a poor person who walks in integrity than one who is crooked in his lips even though he is rich.³⁴⁷

In these verses, the sages reveal the value of virtue outweighs the worth of economic goods, especially through the so-called “better than” type of sayings.³⁴⁸ Yet, the sages pay more attention to the character of a person rather than their value of wealth or virtue *per se* by insisting that a poor but upright (תם) *person* is better than a rich but “doubly crooked” (עקש) *person* (crooked in “two ways,” 28:6) and one whose speech or “lips” are “crooked” (19:1). In MT Proverbs, the word תם frequently describes a person as “ethically and morally correct” (with “to walk” [הלך] or “the way” [דרך]; e.g., 2:7; 10:9, 29; 13:6; 19:1; 20:7),³⁴⁹ whereas the word עקש refers to a distorted character of a person who deviates from the right course, in relation to his

³⁴⁶ The MT uses the dual form, דרכים, whereas the Syriac version and the Targum employ the plural form, דרכיו. I follow the MT because, as Murphy suggests, it represents the two ways (the good way and the bad way), which the sages basically presume in the book. Murphy, *Proverbs*, 213. In addition, as Yoder and Van Leeuwen note, the dual form denotes “duplicity” (cf. “double heart,” Ps 12:2) or a “mixed mind about which ‘way,’ good or evil.” Yoder, *Proverbs*, 267; Van Leeuwen, *The Book of Proverbs*, 238. Moreover, as Waltke points out, the dual form with the use of the word עקש is also found in the second line of 28:18, ונעקש דרכים יפול באחת (“the one who is crooked in two ways will fall all at once”). Waltke, *Proverbs 16-31*, 395.

³⁴⁷ Regarding the second line of 19:1, מעקש שפתיו והוא כסיל (literally “one who is crooked in his lips but he is a fool”), the BHS editor of MT Proverbs, Fichtner suggests that it should be read as עשיר והוא עשיר (“one who is crooked in his ways but he is rich”) because of other ancient translations such as the Syriac version and the Targum, and in light of 28:6. Fox also emends the second line of 19:1 and reads it, “a man of crooked lips who is rich.” Stating that “an innocent poor man is better than either a mendacious man or a fool,” Fox evaluates the reading of MT as “overkill” saying that it “weakens the force of the contrast.” Fox, *Proverbs 10-31*, 647; Clifford, *Proverbs*, 175.

³⁴⁸ According to Fox, the “better than” sayings in MT Proverbs “compare values, and in particular [...] relativize worldly values.” Fox, *Proverbs 10-31*, 598. Yet, the significance of the “better than” saying does not lie in a simple comparison of various values but in the emphasis they place on the virtues that belong to wisdom’s way. Sandoval likewise notes the importance of the comparative sayings that they “make explicit the relational aspect of the value of wisdom.” Emphasizing the wealth and poverty sayings that employ the “better than” form, Sandoval argues that they “speak of the value wisdom’s way holds over material wealth.” Sandoval, *The Discourse*, 129.

³⁴⁹ As Lyu notes, the phrase הלך בתם (“to walk in integrity”) specifically indicates a person who has a “comprehensive moral outlook” (e.g., 2:7; 10:9; 19:1). Lyu, *Righteousness in the Book of Proverbs*, 85.

speech (4:24; 6:12; 8:8), his heart (11:20; 17:20), or his way (22:5; 28:18).³⁵⁰ Thus, as Fox evaluates, a crooked one is regarded as “a moral pervert” and a “fool, deaf to wisdom.”³⁵¹ The moral crookedness of the rich person in 28:6 and 19:1 moreover may very well stem from his intellectual and moral hubris: because he thinks he is wise, he may refuse the instruction of the sages, which would put him on a straight way and grant him straight lips. As noted above, the refusal to listen to rebuke or to be disciplined is key characteristic of a fool in MT Proverbs (e.g., 21:24).

This characterization of the rich person and the poor person in 28:6 does not—on the face of it—fit the logic of the act-consequence nexus in which a person who possesses wealth is supposed to possess wisdom’s virtues because the wealth is regarded as a reward for following wisdom’s way. Yet any wealth that עשיר or a rich person possesses is not simply a material reward for his righteousness and wisdom. Nor does רש refer to one who lacks money because of his unrighteousness and folly. The rich person and the poor person do not have the same status as wealth and poverty do in the act-consequence rhetoric. The rich in MT Proverbs are not just people who have wealth, nor those whose wealth signals their status as wise and righteous in an act-consequence logic. They are rather moral agents whose moral capacity and responsibility can be evaluated on the basis of their character and actions.

The Moral Failure of the Rich

The previous characteristics of the rich as moral agents cause one to wonder why they fail to choose and act for good despite their presumed moral capacity. As we have already noted in the

³⁵⁰ Köhler and Baumgartner, *HALOT*, 1742–43.

³⁵¹ Fox, *Proverbs 1-9*, 117. According to Fox, the characteristic of “crookedness” is analogous to one who has “a constitutional distortion of moral vision” in Ptahhotep (II. 575-84).

previous chapter, Newsom observes that “moral decision making” can be explained by “the interaction of desire, knowledge, and submission to external authority.”³⁵² When one or more of the three elements malfunction and thus produce “obsessive desire,” “a failure of the understanding,” or “rebellion against authority,” the human being does not make good moral choices.³⁵³ The rich likewise do not succeed in choosing and acting for the good because the three elements—desire, knowledge, and submission—malfunction in some way and their interaction disrupts the balance. When Newsom’s three elements are applied to the question of the moral agency of the rich in MT Proverbs, it becomes clear that their moral failure stems from the following factors: 1) Their wrongly formed desire for wealth; 2) their self-deception or wrong knowledge about themselves, their wisdom, and the value of wealth; and 3) their ambition for controlling others and a corresponding failure to submit to the authority of the sages or wisdom—as represented by Proverbs’ moral vision, especially emphasis on social virtue.

The moral failure of the rich first originates from their wrongly formed desire for wealth. As Newsom explains, “desire is not in and of itself negative, but, unless informed and disciplined, it is unruly and untrustworthy as a guide to moral conduct.”³⁵⁴ In the case of the rich in MT Proverbs, their desire is driven by wealth rather than wisdom because, for the rich, wealth is thought to be more valuable than wisdom. As noted above, such a desire for wealth is not wrong in itself, but it is problematic only if it is not disciplined. Unfortunately, the rich’s desire for wealth is not held in check but is allowed to become an obsession, so that they pursue wealth to acquire it and rely on it as much as possible. Since the rich’s obsessive desire for wealth

³⁵² Newsom, “Models of the Moral Self,” 12–13.

³⁵³ *Ibid.*, 13.

³⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 12.

induces them to lose their moral capacity to choose the good, they show moral failure colored with immorality.

Yet, the rich's obsessive desire for wealth is closely connected to their false or inadequate knowledge about themselves and the value of wealth. The two elements,—desire and knowledge, that constitute moral conduct are closely related to each other because, as Newsom notes, “in the wisdom literature knowledge is precisely what evaluates desires and enables the individual to resist destructive ones and to learn to desire what is good.”³⁵⁵ This means that if one lacks knowledge, he or she cannot properly evaluate whether his/her desire for something is good or bad, or cannot know how to train or modify desire toward a more worthy end. Instead, the one who lacks knowledge fails to control or train his/her desire and,—so does not know or choose the good. When we recognize this close relationship between desire, knowledge, and wealth, the moral failure of the rich can be better understood: the rich do not have a proper understanding of the value of wealth and themselves in that they think they do not need wisdom but wealth for happiness. Such lack of knowledge inclines the rich to overvalue wealth and further to be prouder of their moral ability than they ought to be.

This self-deception and misunderstanding of wealth that stems from the rich's misformed desire and lack of knowledge also leads them to resist the authority of the sages or wisdom. Instead of following wisdom's way, the rich have ambition for controlling others. Given that the rich have a wrong desire for wealth and lack knowledge of its value and themselves, their rebellion against an external authority is hardly surprising. For the rich, wisdom or the teaching of the sages does not function as an authority that they have to follow or observe because in their hearts and minds wealth is more valuable than wisdom. As Newsom points out, “where early

³⁵⁵ Ibid.

resistance to the discipline of wisdom is not overcome, it can harden into intractable moral disorder.”³⁵⁶ This may explain why the rich do not adopt the discipline of wisdom and regularly succumb to moral failure: they almost can do no other. In this regard, when the rich take any action, they do not consider the sages’ teaching that can guide them on the right paths. Indeed, they are wise in their own eyes. The moral failure of the rich thus results from the culmination of their obsessive desire for wealth, their incomplete knowledge of themselves and the value of wealth, and their refusal to submit to wisdom.

Rich and the Rhetoric of Honor and Shame

Honor and Shame in MT Proverbs

In the previous section, I offered four characteristics of the rich as moral agents who have moral capacity but fail in choosing the good. Applying Newsom’s three elements—desire, knowledge, and submission—to the rich’s moral failure, I also explained why they behave in an immoral way. The four characteristics of the rich are mainly related to the first and second features of an agent described by the linguistic anthropologist Duranti—“control over their own behavior” and “actions affect other entities.”³⁵⁷ Yet, it is not enough for us to identify the rich as moral agents only with Duranti’s first and second features because their actions are not merely described but evaluated by the sages. This evaluation accords with Duranti’s third feature of agents: agents are those whose “actions are the object of evaluation (e.g., in terms of their responsibility for a given outcome).”³⁵⁸ When the sages evaluate the rich’s actions, they usually employ a hierarchy of

³⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 13.

³⁵⁷ Duranti, “Agency in Language,” 453.

³⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

values in which, as Fox notes, “wisdom as an inherently ethical virtue” is regarded as the best and the most important value.³⁵⁹ The rich, however, do not seek the incomparably valuable wisdom. In addition to the hierarchy of values centered on ethical virtue, the sages use another rhetoric of social value, *viz.*, honor and shame, to evaluate many figures including the rich in MT Proverbs, even though the rich are not explicitly described with the language of honor and shame.

The social status of a person generally means his or her standing or importance in connection with others within a community or a society. Given that social status depends on others’ evaluation in the public sphere, it is closely related to the concepts of honor and shame. As noted in the previous chapter, the idea of honor and shame has been primarily explored in anthropology, especially in relation to the Mediterranean societies of the first century in which honor and shame functioned as an important means of controlling human behaviors. As Malina observes, conceptions of honor typically take two forms in the ancient Mediterranean culture: “ascribed honor” and “acquired honor.”³⁶⁰ While ascribed honor results from one’s genealogy, such as a birth from an honorable family or approval by authorities like God and kings, acquired honor derives from one’s superiority over others through challenge and response. Despite such a difference, the two kinds of honor have one thing in common: one can gain ascribed or acquired honor through wealth. As Pitt-Rivers points out, “honor is always bound to wealth and possessions” because they facilitate hereditary system and, at the same time, enable one to gain honor through virtuous deeds, such as “hospitality, charity, and generosity.”³⁶¹ Political power

³⁵⁹ Fox, *Proverbs 1-9*, 29.

³⁶⁰ Malina, *The New Testament World*, 32–33.

³⁶¹ Pitt-Rivers, “Honor,” 507.

also enables one to gain ascribed honor and acquired honor because it is frequently passed down to one's descendants and, like wealth, provides opportunities for, is used to display generous behaviors to the powerless. In this sense, the wealth and political power—which the rich of MT Proverbs and the Hebrew Bible possess—play a significant role as modes for gaining honor in the ancient Mediterranean culture.

In MT Proverbs, the sages do not insist that it is wrong for a person to seek to establish his or her social status; as we see also in other ancient Mediterranean literature, it is not wrong to seek honor. As several scholars note, the sages frequently use the rhetoric of honor and shame to promote virtues.³⁶² Regarding how to gain honor, the sages have a somewhat similar view to that of others in the ancient Mediterranean context: one gains honor through beneficence. For example, the sages say in 3:9 and 14:31:

כבוד את־יהוה מהונך ומראשית כל־תבואתך 3:9

Honor Yahweh with your wealth and with the first fruits of all your produce.

עשק־דל חרף עשהו ומכבדו חנן אביון 14:31

The one who oppresses the poor insults his Maker, but the one who shows favor to the needy honors him.

Although the sages here deal with honor as respect for Yahweh, they connect it to a right use of wealth. In 3:9, wealth (הון) is explicitly used to pay homage to Yahweh. Although in 14:31 the sages mention no word that refers to wealth, they still imply that wealth can be used to show favor to the needy, such as a donation of money. In MT Proverbs, the sages likewise suggest that persons can gain honor through virtuous or generous behavior. Yet the sages have a distinct perspective: they insist that a person should gain honor through the attainment of wisdom. In the

³⁶² For example, deSilva, *Despising Shame*, 69; deSilva, “The Wisdom of Ben Sira,” 438; deSilva, “Honor and Shame,” 292; Domeris, “Shame and Honour in Proverbs,” 93; John J. Pilch, *The Cultural Life Setting of the Proverbs* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2016), 5; Sneed, *The Social World*, 264.

ancient Mediterranean world, even if one can gain honor by using his or her wealth in an appropriate way, wealth and power that lead to ascribed honor predominantly function as a shortcut to attain honor, as I have suggested above. Yet the sages of MT Proverbs insist that it is the attainment of honor and not the possession of wealth or political power by itself that ought to bring a person honor. In MT Proverbs, honor is for the wise and just who follow wisdom's way, but shame is for the fools who do not seek wisdom's way. MT Proverbs criticizes the rich for using their wealth in inappropriate ways, such as their pursuit of wealth motivated by an obsessive desire and inappropriate trust in wealth.

The sages' obvious interest in conceptions of honor and shame is evident from their use of this rhetoric throughout MT Proverbs (e.g., 1:9; 10:5; 17:2; 18:3; 21:21; 22:1; 25:2, 10, 27; 26:1; 27:21; 28:7, 23; 31:31). On the one hand, the sages use two kinds of terms for indicating honor. The first category of 'honor' terms directly refers to honor as high respect or reputation that a person gains from others: כבוד ("honor," 3:16, 35; 8:18; 11:16; 15:33; 18:12; 20:3; 21:21; 22:4; 25:2, 27; 26:1, 8; 29:23), הדר ("majesty," 20:29; 31:25), הדרה ("royal majesty," 14:28), and הוד ("splendor," 5:9). Among these terms, the noun כבוד (*kābôd*) is the most frequent and important word to indicate honor in MT Proverbs. In the terms Pitt-Rivers and others employ to describe the Mediterranean culture, כבוד is regarded as acquired honor because it refers to respect or reputation that a person ought to gain through the attainment of wisdom. According to Claus Westermann, כבוד is generally understood as "the valued position" among acquaintances (3:35; 11:16; 15:33; 18:12; 29:23).³⁶³ In MT Proverbs כבוד mainly indicates honor as the "reputation" or "distinction," which a wise person achieves.³⁶⁴ For example, 3:35a says, "The wise inherit

³⁶³ Claus Westermann, "כבוד kbd to be heavy," in *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*, ed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann, vol. 2 (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 594–95.

³⁶⁴ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *BDB*, 459; Köhler and Baumgartner, *HALOT*, 457.

honor,” and 3:16 and 8:18 similarly note that honor comes from wisdom. In contrast, other terms (הדר, הדרה, הוד, הוד) of the first category basically mean honor, but they are not directly linked to the acquisition of wisdom but simply ascribed forms of honor. As Domeris observes, the three words mainly describe the majesty of old men (20:29) or of the good wife “in parallel with strength and dignity” (31:25), royal majesty (14:28), or the vigor of a person (5:9).³⁶⁵

The second category of ‘honor’ terms in MT Proverbs does not refer directly to reputation or high respect but is metonymically related to that concept. In other words, the words do not mean ‘honor’ but remind the reader of honor. They belong to a larger discourse of honor. These terms include: הן (“favor,” 1:9; 22:1; 24:23; 28:23), שם (“name,” 22:1), and הלל (“praise,” 27:21; 31:31). As Fox points out, הן and שם express the concept of honor because both are concerned about “how one is regarded by others.”³⁶⁶ According to Waltke, a name symbolizes “a person’s good character and his memory” in MT Proverbs (10:7; 18:10; 21:24) and thus it often functions as a metonymy for reputation.³⁶⁷ Favor also means acceptance by people (13:15), Yahweh (3:34), or both (3:4). The word הלל is also associated with honor because, as Pilch believes, “praise confirms one’s claim to honor.”³⁶⁸ While these kinds of terms can be regarded as ascribed and acquired forms of honor in the Mediterranean culture, they are viewed as acquired honor in MT Proverbs because the sages articulate the idea that one ought to gain honor through the attainment of wisdom rather than from birth into an honorable family, from virtue rather than by means of wealth.

³⁶⁵ Domeris, “Shame and Honour in Proverbs,” 95.

³⁶⁶ Fox, *Proverbs 10-31*, 694.

³⁶⁷ Waltke, *Proverbs 16-31*, 198; Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *BDB*, 1028; Köhler and Baumgartner, *HALOT*, 1549.

³⁶⁸ Pilch, *The Cultural Life Setting*, 148.

The sages of MT Proverbs also employ various words for referring to shame: בּוֹשׁ (10:5; 12:4; 14:35; 17:2; 19:26; 29:15), כָּלֵם (25:8; 28:7), קָלוֹן (3:35; 6:33; 9:7; 11:2; 12:16; 13:18; 18:3; 22:10), and חָסַד (14:34; 25:10). As mentioned above, these terms are used to describe shameful and immoral behaviors of the fools who do not follow wisdom's way. As the verbal form בּוֹשׁ mainly means "to put to shame" or "to act shamefully," it is used as the most frequent word for shame. According to F. Stolz, the *hiphil* participle of בּוֹשׁ specifically characterizes "the unwise fool, primarily in contrast to the wise" (e.g., 10:5; 14:35; 17:2).³⁶⁹ Likewise, the verbal form כָּלֵם refers to an action of "put[ting a person] to shame," such as quarreling with others in haste (25:8) or having a close relation with gluttons (28:7).³⁷⁰ The other two words, קָלוֹן and חָסַד, are used as nouns meaning "dishonor" or "disgrace" that result from wicked and foolish behaviors (e.g., 3:35; 18:3).

Conceptions of honor and shame in MT Proverbs largely function respectively as motives for following wisdom's way and for avoiding the way of folly and wickedness. As deSilva notes, the description of honor and shame "sanctions" some virtuous conduct and "warns against" other corrupt actions (e.g., 13:5, 18; 26:1).³⁷¹ This close connection between honor/shame and wisdom/folly points to how the rhetoric of honor and shame works within the framework of the act-consequence nexus. For example, consider the following verses.

כבוד חכמים ינחלו וכסילים מרים קלון 3:35
The wise inherit honor, but fools gain dishonor.

רדף צדקה וחסד ימצא חיים צדקה וכבוד 21:21
The one who pursues righteousness and kindness will find life, righteousness, and honor.

³⁶⁹ F. Stolz, "בוֹשׁ bôš to be ashamed," in *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*, ed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann, vol. 1 (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 206.

³⁷⁰ Köhler and Baumgartner, *HALOT*, 480.

³⁷¹ deSilva, *Despising Shame*, 72.

While 3:35a and 21:21 motivate wisdom and virtues, such as righteousness and kindness, through the promise of honor, 3:35b warns against being fools by describing the attainment of shame as their consequence.

The rhetoric of honor and shame in the act-consequence nexus thus functions analogously to that of wealth and poverty. Just as wealth is regarded as a legitimate reward for those who follow wisdom's way so too is honor, while poverty and shame are appropriate to the fools and the wicked. Given that the act-consequence nexus works for the sages' promotion of wisdom, it is valid for Sandoval to argue that honor functions with "wealth" and "sexual fulfillment" as one of the "important rhetorical motivations" for encouraging the reader to seek wisdom.³⁷² Wealth and honor, in fact, occur together in several sayings to motivate the pursuit of wisdom (3:16; 8:18; 22:4).³⁷³ Likewise, the combination of poverty and shame occurs in a saying that admonishes the reader not to deviate from wisdom's way (e.g., 13:18, "Poverty [ריש] and shame [קליון] are for the one who neglects instruction, but the one who heeds reproof is honored").

Despite honor and wealth having the same function in the act-consequence nexus—both being regarded as valuable rewards for attaining wisdom, they are not evaluated as having the same worth. Consider 11:16 and 22:1 which mention honor and wealth together.

11:16 אֲשֶׁת־חָן תִּתְמַךְ כְּבוֹד וְעֲרִיצִים יִתְמַכּוּ־עִשָׂר

³⁷² Sandoval, *The Discourse*, 61.

³⁷³ Schwáb argues that honor is one of "the triplet of benefits of wisdom" along with wealth and long life in MT Proverbs (e.g., 3:16; 22:4). Schwáb, *Toward an Interpretation*, 115.

A gracious³⁷⁴ woman achieves honor, but ruthless men seize wealth.³⁷⁵

22:1 נבחר שם מעשר רב מכסף ומזהב הן טוב

A name is preferred to great wealth and good favor to silver or gold.

In 11:16, the sages compare the value of honor with that of wealth by employing the rhetoric of both in relation to virtue and vice. As wealth values virtue and poverty values vice in the wealth/poverty sayings, honor here is something obviously valuable and, along with shame rhetoric, can be used to value virtue and vice. The connection between graciousness and honor is evaluated more positively than the connection between ruthlessness and wealth, for the former values virtue but the latter values vice.

Regarding the relation between ruthlessness and wealth, Fox argues that the notion of wealth for ruthless men in the MT is not consistent with the sages' idea based on the act-consequence nexus. Instead, he modifies MT's reading, ועריצים ("ruthless men"), to והרוצים ("diligent men").³⁷⁶ However, Fox's suggestion represents precisely the sort of typical misunderstanding of the act-consequence nexus and the rhetoric of wealth/the rich I previously mentioned. Although wealth generally functions as a reward for righteousness, those who possess wealth—especially those designated as the rich—are not always regarded as righteous in

³⁷⁴ In MT Proverbs, the word הן basically means "charm (pleasant, agreeable qualities)" including physical attraction (e.g., 11:16). Yet, as Fox observes, it also refers to "favor and good regard, divine and human, which wisdom and piety evoke (3:4)." Especially, in 31:30, the sages link the grace (הן) to honor (הלל): "Charm is deceitful, and beauty (הן) is vain, but a woman who fears Yahweh is to be praised (תתהלל)." Fox, *Proverbs 10-31*, 537.

³⁷⁵ Based on readings of many ancient texts, such as the Septuagint, the Syriac text, the Targum, and the Vulgate, Fichtner suggests that the MT's reading, ועריצים ("ruthless men") should be modified to והרוצים ("diligent men"). The NRSV also adds the translation of the Septuagint to the second line: "A gracious woman gets honor, *but she who hates virtue is covered with shame. The timid become destitute, but the aggressive gain riches.*" This translation makes clearer the antitheses between honor and shame as well as between poverty and wealth. Although this textual modification makes the verse reasonable, it is not necessary to change the MT's reading. I here follow the MT's reading.

³⁷⁶ Fox, *Proverbs 10-31*, 537.

MT Proverbs. Despite the absence of עשיר in 11:16, the symbolic connection between the rich and עריצים suggests that these ruthless men belong to the class of ‘the rich.’ Like the rich elsewhere in MT Proverbs, they seek wealth rather than the more precious virtues. What is more, the word עריץ (“ruthless”) refers to a “violent” or “powerful” action (e.g., Ps 53:5), implying that the ruthless men of 11:16 grasp after wealth by using their power and exploiting the powerless. As we have elsewhere seen, these actions are regarded as typical of the rich (e.g., 18:23; 22:2, 7, 16. Cf. 29:13).³⁷⁷ In 11:16, the sages know that the ruthless’ exercise of power can bring a person wealth. Yet, the line also implies that such vice ought not to give rise to social esteem. Rather honor should arise from a person’s righteousness or virtue—here, his or her graciousness—rather than from the wealth his or her violent exercise of power might produce. The wealth the rich possess does not guarantee their honorable status—at least it ought not to, according to the sages.

The hierarchical relationship between honor and wealth is more obvious in 22:1. Unlike 11:16, in which there is no direct comparison between honor and wealth, 22:1 provides two explicit comparisons: one half of the line compares a name with great wealth, the other half compares favor with gold or silver. The verb בחר (“to be preferred”) and the preposition מן (“than”) affect the two comparisons. As mentioned above, a “name” (שם) and “favor” (חן) closely pertain to honor because both indicate acknowledgment by others of one’s status in a society. The sages thus emphasize in 22:1 that honor represented by name and favor is valuable and even worth much more than valuable things such as wealth (עשר) and precious metals (כסף, זהב). Yet, as Whybray cautions, the sages do not intend “to despise wealth” but suggest that

³⁷⁷ The HALOT suggests that עריצים of 11:16 should be regarded as a “tyrant.” Köhler and Baumgartner, *HALOT*, 884.

social status symbolized by name and favor is more important for “a successful life” than an economic status embodied by the achievement of wealth.³⁷⁸

The purpose of presenting this comparison is not just to illumine the superiority of honor over wealth but also, as already indicated, to emphasize that for MT Proverbs the attainment of social status ought to be achieved by following wisdom’s way, not merely through wealth and power that provide opportunities to demonstrate virtues. As Fox notes, the sages consistently encourage the reader to gain what is most precious “through wisdom (Prov 3:4; 13:15a).”³⁷⁹ As Stewart also explains, the sages employ the rhetoric of honor and shame as “a motivational symbol” for encouraging the reader to walk in the way of wisdom and righteousness—a way that prioritized social virtue, which now we see the sages believed ought to translate into social status.³⁸⁰ In 22:1, the sages do not enumerate the various virtues of wisdom’s way, the possession of which should translate into social status; they only highlight the value of a status emerging from a life of virtue. Thus, the sages offer the comparison between honor and wealth to convince the reader that walking in wisdom’s way and acting morally will bring him or her many valuable things, including social esteem. By contrast, great wealth (or great power) really for the sages, by itself ought not to guarantee such social esteem to those who possess it. The sages do not so much discredit a mode of acquiring honor through wealth and political power as subordinate the mode to the most precious value—wisdom. For the sages, therefore, honor should be acquired through the appropriate use of wealth and political power in terms of demonstrating their possessor’s wisdom and morality. This emphasis on the attainment of honor through the

³⁷⁸ Whybray, *Proverbs*, 317–18; McKane, *Proverbs*, 566.

³⁷⁹ Fox, *Proverbs 10-31*, 694.

³⁸⁰ Stewart, *Poetic Ethics in Proverbs*, 110–11.

appropriate use of wealth and political power can be also found in the ancient Near Eastern and Mediterranean culture, but, as I noted previously, the possession of wealth and political power to themselves works as the substantive means to bring social esteem.³⁸¹ The sages clearly establish their distinctive perspective that attainment of authority and money ought not to guarantee social reputation. Rather, the sages believe that a person achieves, or should achieve, honor not only through advancement in wisdom and virtue but also through the appropriate use of wealth and power.

The Evaluation of the Rich Through Honor and Shame

For the sages of MT Proverbs, the rich do not seek wisdom which is genuine ‘wealth’ and ought to lead to high social status. Rather, the rich seek the lesser goods of wealth and social status itself. In ancient Mediterranean culture, the rich of MT Proverbs would not be recipients of earned honor since they are described as lacking in the good behaviors, such as beneficence, that functioned as a way of acquiring honor in that culture. Yet, given that the wealth and power the rich possessed was a typical way of gaining ascribed honor in the ancient Mediterranean world, they still might be honored in that world, even if they did not use their economic and social resources appropriately. However, MT Proverbs does not permit the morally suspect rich it speaks of to achieve any kind of honor, either ascribed or acquired, because the sages strongly insist that the only way to gain honor is via wisdom and virtue.

As we saw above, the rich do not seek wisdom but instead trust in the ability of riches to protect them (10:15; 18:11). They do not seek to deploy their wealth through socially virtuous actions but strive to establish hierarchical relations of obligation favorable to themselves, based

³⁸¹ Pitt-Rivers, “Honour and Social Status,” 38.

on the weak ties of ephemeral wealth (14:21). The rich are thus oriented toward acquiring wealth and using wrongly it for strengthening their social-economic positions. The rich's oppression of the poor also magnifies their folly and unrighteousness because they do not embody social virtues such as showing kindness to the poor or a donation of money (18:23; 22:2, 16). As their intellectual and moral hubris reveals (28:6, 11), the rich are wise in their own eyes and thus refuse to follow wisdom's way and embody social virtues. Although the wealth and social power the rich possess might have established their honorable status in the ancient world, they are not honored in MT Proverbs because they do not seek what is most valuable in life—wisdom.

In MT Proverbs, the reader can expect that the rich gain honor due to their wealth and authority, but the sages reject such a simple and general viewpoint of honor. Instead, the sages suggest a new paradigm that the rich should be shamed because they fail in wisdom. The sages contest the notion that honor or social esteem ought to be ascribed to those who possess economic power and social authority, merely on the basis of their economic power and social authority. Rather, those who deserve social esteem are none other than the ones who attain wisdom and embody social virtues. For the sages, rulers, of course, can be honored, even people with wealth can be honored—if they advance in wisdom. But in MT Proverbs 'the rich' as moral agents, a kind of moral type, who behave immorally cannot be really honored.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we saw that in MT Proverbs the rich are basically described as possessors of wealth and rulers, as they are in other books of the Hebrew Bible. Yet, I argued that the rich should be identified not merely as possessors of riches but as moral agents who have the moral capacity to choose and act for the good but fail to do so. By applying Newsom's fundamental

threefold grammar of the moral self—desire, knowledge, and submission—to the rich’s moral failure, I suggested that it results from the interaction of their obsessive desire for wealth, their self-deception, and their ambition for controlling others. The rich are those who trust wrongly in their wealth, seek advantage in social relations, oppress the poor, and demonstrate intellectual and moral hubris. As a result, the rich are criticized for their immorality and, at the same time, are believed to deserve not honor (as might be expected in the ancient Mediterranean cultures), but shame, since they fail in showing their moral capacity.

Despite the sages’ identification of the rich as negative moral types, scholars regularly misunderstand their place in an act-consequence nexus. Based on such a misunderstanding, some scholars argue that in MT Proverbs not all rich people, as possessors of wealth, are regarded as bad or oppressive. For example, Fox argues that the rich described in MT Proverbs are not “necessarily bad.”³⁸² Heim offers a similar comment: “While oppressors are usually rich because they extort from others, rich people are not necessarily oppressors.”³⁸³ The sages do not insist that *all* rich people are either bad or oppressive. Scholars who hold such views are right about this to an extent, in that ‘rich’ is often a morally neutral economic term for us today. And in this sense, there are of course many moral rich people, many moral people who possess wealth, accumulate it rightly, use it in socially positive ways, and so forth. However, that is not how MT Proverbs presents the rich. Such a view is too controlled by the interpretative frame of the act-consequence nexus and thus thinks of the rich primarily, in morally neutral terms, as possessors of wealth. Since in the act-consequence nexus wealth is regarded as a reward for the virtuous, interpreters can struggle with the fact that these rich people—possessors of wealth—are

³⁸² Fox, *Proverbs 10-31*, 839.

³⁸³ Heim, *Poetic Imagination in Proverbs*, 511.

nonetheless characterized negatively in moral terms. As I have shown, however, עשיר in MT Proverbs refers not merely to those who have economic power and social power but those who are regularly immoral in their exercise of this power.

The rich may possess abundant wealth and hold their high social standing in the sages' social world, but the rich who have no moral capacity and responsibility can never be evaluated as wise and righteous by the sages of MT Proverbs. This evaluation of the rich in the sages' social world is comparable to that of the translator of LXX Proverbs. As we will see soon, LXX Proverbs criticizes the rich more explicitly than does MT Proverbs and thus prevents us from mistakingly concluding that the rich's wealth might result from their wisdom and righteousness within the act-consequence nexus.

CHAPTER 3: THE RICH IN LXX PROVERBS

Introduction

The Septuagint version of Proverbs generally follows MT Proverbs in describing the rich as those who fundamentally possess wealth and social power. Given that wealth usually functions as a material reward in the act-consequence nexus, one might be fairly confident that these texts consider the wealth of the rich to be their appropriate reward. However, as in MT Proverbs, the rich of LXX Proverbs are never depicted as those who have wealth as a material reward for their wisdom and righteousness but rather are criticized for their immoral behavior. Thus, the rich should also be understood in LXX Proverbs as moral agents who are evaluated by their ability to make moral judgments. The rhetoric of honor and shame that we saw in MT Proverbs, in which one ought to gain social esteem through wisdom and virtue rather than by wealth or social power supports this evaluation of the rich in LXX Proverbs. Because the rich do not seek virtues but exhibit vices such as the oppression of the poor, LXX Proverbs heaps shame on the rich and criticizes them scathingly. Instead of suggesting that wealth is an appropriate reward for the rich, LXX Proverbs moralizes the sayings about the rich, thereby insisting that moral status has very little to do with economic status. Thus, with some important and small changes, LXX Proverbs characterizes the rich more sharply and much more negatively than MT Proverbs does.

In this chapter, after discussing the relationship between MT Proverbs and LXX Proverbs, I offer a philological and contextual study of *πλούσιος*, the primary word that LXX Proverbs uses for the “rich,” and I also consider other terms in the same semantic field. Then, I analyze exegetically the characterizations of the rich in LXX Proverbs not only as possessors of wealth and social power but also as moral agents. In order to illuminate LXX Proverbs’s

moralism in its description of the rich, I particularly compare sayings from MT Proverbs with corresponding verses from LXX Proverbs. Finally, I explore the rhetoric of honor and shame that LXX Proverbs uses to make clear its critique of the rich.

The Relationship between MT Proverbs and LXX Proverbs

As James K. Aitken and Lorenzo Cuppi note, LXX Proverbs has been widely regarded as “the translation written in a semi-literary Greek Koine” of a Hebrew text of Proverbs.³⁸⁴ There is no obvious evidence for identifying LXX Proverbs’s date,³⁸⁵ provenance,³⁸⁶ or the translator,³⁸⁷ but

³⁸⁴ James K. Aitken and Lorenzo Cuppi, “Proverbs,” in *The T&T Clark Companion to the Septuagint*, ed. James K. Aitken, T&T Clark Companions (London; New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2015), 341.

³⁸⁵ Given Emanuel Tov’s argument that “the post-Pentateuchal books were translated after the translation of the Torah,” we can assume that, like other books, LXX Proverbs was translated after the beginning of the third century BCE but before the end of the second century BCE when the preface of Sirach was translated by the grandson of Ben Sira. Emanuel Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*, 3rd ed., and expanded (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012), 131. Thus, many scholars have supported the date of the early second century BCE. For example, Johann Cook argues that the date of LXX Proverbs would be “the beginning of the 2nd century BC[E],” especially in connection to LXX Job. Johann Cook, “The Dating of Septuagint Proverbs,” *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 69 (1993): 399. Michael B. Dick also supports such a dating by suggesting that “LXX Proverbs both consciously plays down a theology of the afterlife and yet still has a universalist outlook.” Michael B. Dick, “The Ethics of the Old Greek Book of Proverbs,” in *The Studia Philonica Annual: Studies in Hellenistic Judaism*, ed. David T. Runia, vol. II, Brown Judaic Studies (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990), 21. David-Marc d’Hamonville also suggests that LXX Proverbs was produced in the period of Ptolemy VI Philometor (181-145 BCE) because “[le] traducteur ... [était] proche des cercles royaux et de la politique en général” (the translator [was] ... close to the royal circles and politics in general). David-Marc d’Hamonville, *Les Proverbes*, La Bible d’Alexandrie 17 (Paris: Les Editions du Cerf, 2002), 23–25. In contrast, Michael V. Fox “loosely” determines LXX Proverbs to be “a mid-to late second-century BCE” work. Michael V. Fox, *Proverbs: An Eclectic Edition with Introduction and Textual Commentary*, The Hebrew Bible: A Critical Edition 1 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2015), 36–37.

³⁸⁶ With regard to the location of the production of LXX Proverbs, many scholars have suggested that it was translated in Alexandria because, as Aitken and Cuppi observe, “its connection with other Septuagint translations and even its affinities with Aristeas and the translator’s ability in Greek would support this.” Aitken and Cuppi, “Proverbs,” 343; Johann Cook and A. van der Kooij, *Law, Prophets, and Wisdom: On the Provenance of Translators and Their Books in the Septuagint Version*, Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology 68 (Leuven: Peeters, 2012), 87–133.

³⁸⁷ As the title of the Septuagint literally means “seventy,” it has generally been assumed that the Greek text was translated by more than a single translator. According to Tov, this assumption is based on “the tradition that seventy-two elders translated the Torah into Greek” and “in the first centuries CE this tradition was expanded to include all the translated biblical books.” However, as Tov points out, “the Epistle of Aristeas and Jewish sources” suggest that different portions of the Septuagint were translated by “different individuals.” Tov, *Textual Criticism*, 128. Unfortunately, there is no evidence concerning who translated LXX Proverbs. Yet, accepting Tov’s argument and scholarly assumption, I use the singular form, “translator,” to indicate the one who translated LXX Proverbs.

the broad consensus today is that an individual Jew who was familiar with the Greek language in the area of Alexandria during the second century BCE produced the book. In contrast, there is not consensus but rather ongoing scholarly debate concerning the relationship between LXX Proverbs and MT Proverbs. This scholarly discussion essentially arises from the fact that, as Johann Cook points out, the two books have both minor differences, such as “the variation in subjects/objects, plural forms instead of singular,” and major differences, such as “minuses, pluses, as well as chapters placed in a different order.”³⁸⁸ Fox also observes that LXX Proverbs “has about 130 stichs and thirty partial sentences not represented in” MT Proverbs.³⁸⁹

There are three main positions concerning how we can understand the variants between LXX Proverbs and MT Proverbs. The first is the position that Emanuel Tov represents when he argues that LXX Proverbs resulted from “a Hebrew book of Proverbs which differed recensionally from that of MT.”³⁹⁰ This argument means that LXX Proverbs’s variants often should be understood as the products of “the recensional stages in the development” of a Hebrew book rather than textual changes the translator made.³⁹¹ The second position, exemplified by Cook, ascribes the variants of LXX Proverbs to the translator’s “free translation technique” and thus defines the book as an “exegetical writing.”³⁹² According to him, the translator of LXX Proverbs shows a distinctive approach to his parent text “on a lexical, syntactic and

³⁸⁸ Cook, *The Septuagint of Proverbs*, 1.

³⁸⁹ Fox, *Proverbs 1-9*, 363.

³⁹⁰ Emanuel Tov, “Recensional Differences between the Masoretic Text and the Septuagint of Proverbs,” in *Of Scribes and Scrolls: Studies on the Hebrew Bible, Intertestamental Judaism, and Christian Origins Presented to John Strugnell*, ed. Harold W. Attridge, John J. Collins, and Thomas H. Tobin, *Resources in Religion* 5 (Lanham: University Press of America, 1990), 56. Yet, Tov does not completely exclude the so-called “inner-translational factors” which resulted from the Greek translation of MT Proverbs. Tov acknowledges that there is “ample evidence of changes made either by the translator or in the course of the textual transmission of the translation” (p. 49).

³⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 43.

³⁹² Cook, *The Septuagint of Proverbs*, 35–36.

stylistic/literary level” and in “theological/exegetical perspectives.”³⁹³ Thus, he regards many “double translations” of LXX Proverbs not only as the work of a translator who was trying to “elucidate a problematic Hebrew/Aramaic reading that appears in his *Vorlage*” but also as “the result of a deliberate exegetical technique applied by the original translator.”³⁹⁴ Moreover, Cook supports his identification of LXX Proverbs as ‘exegetical writing’ by arguing that the translator “use[d] external data” such as “the nuanced application of the rabbinic idea of good and bad inclinations in Proverbs 2.”³⁹⁵ For Cook, the translator of LXX Proverbs is not only “an extremely competent translator” but also one who used “a remarkably free translation technique.”³⁹⁶ Regarding the Hebrew *Vorlage* of LXX Proverbs, Cook concludes that it “did not differ extensively from” MT Proverbs.³⁹⁷ Finally, Fox accepts aspects of both Tov’s and Cook’s arguments, but finally considers LXX Proverbs to be a translation that aims at “a faithful representation of the intentions of the Hebrew text and is best understood in terms of that goal.”³⁹⁸ Since, like Tov, Fox defines LXX Proverbs as “a translation of a parallel recension or edition of the book of Proverbs,” he thinks the Hebrew *Vorlage* of LXX Proverbs is somewhat different from MT Proverbs.³⁹⁹ Yet, at the same time, like Cook, Fox acknowledges the ability or

³⁹³ Ibid., 316.

³⁹⁴ Ibid., 16. Although two terms, “double translations” and “doublets” have been used interchangeably, Cook distinguishes the two. He regards doublets as “the result of the transmission history of the translation” by a scribe, in contrast to double translations produced by a translator.

³⁹⁵ Johann Cook, “The Text-Critical Value of the Septuagint of Proverbs,” in *Seeking out the Wisdom of the Ancients: Essays Offered to Honor Michael V. Fox on the Occasion of His Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, ed. Ronald L. Troxel, Kelvin G. Friebel, and Dennis Robert Magary (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2005), 409–10.

³⁹⁶ Cook, *The Septuagint of Proverbs*, 36, 317.

³⁹⁷ Ibid., 334.

³⁹⁸ Fox, *Proverbs*, 38.

³⁹⁹ Fox, *Proverbs 1-9*, 364.

role of the translator in producing the variants by arguing that a translator justifiably “may diverge from a mimetic rendering.”⁴⁰⁰ Yet, Fox does not warm to the term “free translation” that Cook uses because he thinks it is not an appropriate one for understanding LXX Proverbs’ variants.⁴⁰¹ In contrast to Cook, Fox views the translation technique as merely “flexible” in the sense that various techniques of translation are employed in the book.⁴⁰²

Despite these differences among them, the three scholars acknowledge both that LXX Proverbs was translated from a Hebrew Proverbs which differed, even if only minimally in Cook’s view, from MT Proverbs and that the translator of LXX Proverbs did not make a mimetic Greek translation from his Hebrew text. Nonetheless, their research ironically corroborates the fact that LXX Proverbs reflects neither a new or totally different wisdom project than that of MT Proverbs: both, for example, share an emphasis on the pursuit of wisdom through attaining virtue. In other words, although they demonstrate that the relationship between LXX Proverbs and MT Proverbs is partially one of the differences by focusing on their variants, they nonetheless show that LXX Proverbs was essentially a Greek translation of a Hebrew text relatively close to Proverbs. Even though LXX Proverbs’s parent Hebrew text was not identical to MT Proverbs, it was very much in line with its point of view. LXX Proverbs shares many of its main ideas with MT Proverbs.

When the scope of the variants between LXX Proverbs and MT Proverbs is limited to the sayings about the rich, the proposed relationship between the two texts holds true. Though LXX Proverbs clearly reveals differences with MT Proverbs, the Greek text does not provide a fresh

⁴⁰⁰ Fox, *Proverbs*, 39.

⁴⁰¹ Fox, *Proverbs 1-9*, 361.

⁴⁰² Fox, *Proverbs*, 40. Fox suggests nine techniques used in LXX Proverbs, even though he acknowledges that they are “overlapping”: “mimesis, moralism, refinement, improving the logic, resolving or changing metaphors, disambiguation, elaboration, overexplanation, and enhancing parallelism” (pp. 42-54).

description of the rich. Rather, variants of LXX Proverbs frequently are evidence that its illustration of the rich, far from merely imitating that of MT Proverbs, resembles it and further reinforces MT Proverbs's characterization of the rich. Hence despite the importance of the task of discerning the precise relationship between LXX Proverbs and MT Proverbs, this chapter does not take a text-critical approach to the sayings about the rich of LXX Proverb. I do not examine the textual history of the book, evaluate textual witnesses, or reconstruct the so-called “*Ur-Text*” (original text) of Proverbs. Instead, my textual analysis focuses on how, in light of the variants between the two texts, LXX Proverbs strengthens and shifts MT Proverbs's characterization of the rich.

The Rich in the LXX

Before delving into the sayings about the rich in LXX Proverbs, it will be helpful to investigate how the rich are portrayed in other books of the LXX. In brief, my investigation will show that the rich of LXX Proverbs are described in a similar fashion to the rich as they are depicted in other books of the LXX: they function not only as an economic-political class but also as moral agents, as the following analysis shows.

A Philological Analysis of πλοῦσιος

In the LXX, the Greek word πλοῦσιος (*plousios*) generally refers to the rich who have wealth or “abundant possessions,” and this corresponds with the Hebrew word עשיר.⁴⁰³ According to Friedrich Hauck and Wilhelm Kasch, the adjectival form πλοῦσιος (“rich”) is derived from the Greek stem πλεω, and has the nominal form πλοῦτος (“wealth”) and verbal forms that include

⁴⁰³ Lust, Eynikel, and Hauspie, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 499; Muraoka, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 566.

πλουτέω (“to be rich”) and πλουτιζω (“to enrich”).⁴⁰⁴ Suggesting that these words are related etymologically to “the Indo-Europ. root *pel-*” which means “to fill” or “full,” Hauck and Kasch note the meaning of the πλοῦτος group including πλοῦσιος ranges from a literal “material wealth (esp. money)” on the one hand, to the figurative “true and genuine wealth as the basis of real security,” on the other hand.⁴⁰⁵ In the LXX, the words of the πλοῦτος group appear about 180 times with seventy-six of these instances translating a form of the Hebrew root עָשַׁר.⁴⁰⁶ As Hauck and Kasch point out, the words of the πλοῦτος group mainly occur in the wisdom literature (49 times [34 times in Proverbs, 9 times in Ecclesiastes, 6 times in Job]. Cf. “6 times in the Pentateuch, 9 in the Historical Books Joshua to Samuel, 23 in the later Historical Books, 34 in the Prophets [17 in Is.], 16 in the Psalter”).⁴⁰⁷

A Contextual Analysis of πλοῦσιος

Possessors of Material Wealth

As the favored translation object of עָשַׁר in the MT, πλούσιος shows many similarities to the characterization of the rich in the MT that was discussed in chapter two above. For example, in 2 Samuel 12:1-4, πλούσιος points to a rich person who possesses a great deal of money or property, such as many flocks and herds, in contrast to a poor person who has very little money and few possessions. Elsewhere the word πλούσιος also refers to the rich as a particular socio-economic group, as when it is used in phrases such as “the rich and the poor” (e.g., Ruth 3:10; Ps

⁴⁰⁴ Friedrich Hauck and Wilhelm Kasch, “πλοῦτος πλοῦσιος πλουτέω πλουτιζω,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Geoffrey William Bromiley and Gerhard Friedrich, trans. Geoffrey William Bromiley, vol. 6 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), 319.

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid., 323.

⁴⁰⁷ Ibid.

48:3[MT 49:2]). Moreover, πλούσιος indicates that the rich constitute the ruling class that has economic power and political authority (e.g., Ps 44:13[MT 45:12]; Eccl 10:6; Isa 53:9). Like MT Proverbs, LXX Proverbs also describes the rich in an implicitly or explicitly negative way. As we will see more fully below, πλούσιος is a term that can convey the immorality or unrighteousness of ‘the rich’ as a moral type in the Greek Bible too (e.g., Eccl 10:20; Jer 9:22[23]).

However, πλούσιος sometimes does not translate עשיר of the MT. Nonetheless, in these cases the term provides a similar characterization of the rich. When πλούσιος does not render עשיר in LXX usage, like MT Proverbs, it still of course identifies the rich as those who possess wealth. For example, the translator of Genesis 13:2 translates כבד of the MT with πλούσιος: “Now Abram was very rich (πλούσιος) in livestock and in silver and in gold.”⁴⁰⁸ As Westermann notes, the root כבד literally means “heavy in weight,” but it also can indicate “wealth or numbers, greatness” (cf. Gen 50:9; Exod 12:38; 1 Kgs 10:2).⁴⁰⁹ While the MT expresses Abram’s wealth through the figurative use of כבד and thereby recognizes that Abram’s possessions contribute to his ‘weighty’ social status or honorable reputation, the LXX explicitly describes his status as a possessor of riches through πλούσιος. In Esther 1:20b, the translator likewise elucidates two opposing terms that indicate general, relative social status by employing two economic terms in their place. While the MT furnishes the expression למגדול ועד־קטן (“high and low alike,” NRSV), the LXX specifically construes the terms as indicating socio-economic positions: πλούσιος (the

⁴⁰⁸ In this section, I generally offer the translation of the Septuagint by referring to the following book, Albert Pietersma and Benjamin G. Wright, eds., *A New English Translation of the Septuagint: And the Other Greek Translations Traditionally Included under That Title* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), <http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/nets/>. I usually use its abbreviated title, “NETS,” in this dissertation. However, when necessary, I offer my own translation with translational comments.

⁴⁰⁹ Claus Westermann, “כבד *kbd* to be heavy,” in *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*, eds. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann, vol. 2 (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 591–92.

rich) and πτωχός (the poor): “And thus all women shall bestow honor on their own husbands, from the poor to the rich (ἀπὸ πτωχοῦ ἕως πλουσίου).” The semantic range of לַיָּגֵל is broad, from “great (in size)” on the literal level to “powerful” or “wealthy” on the figurative level.⁴¹⁰

Although the translator underscores the notion that the “great” status of the men in Esther 1:20 refers to their economic condition, the phrase ἀπὸ πτωχοῦ ἕως πλουσίου still signifies a wide range of people who comprise a group or a society, as does the corresponding phrase in the MT (cf. למגדול ודלקטן).⁴¹¹

Ruling Elites

The word πλοῦσιος is sometimes added to the LXX in passages where a corresponding term in the MT is lacking in order to designate the rich more clearly as ruling elites, such as royal families or officials, and members of the upper class who possess the most property and control others. For example, Jeremiah 24:1b describes the exile of Judahite leaders by the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar. While the MT uses the general term יְרֵי (“officials”) to indicate the leaders, the LXX uses the term πλοῦσιους to refer to a specific group of the exiles. Regarding the difference between the two texts, D. N. Freedman suggests that “the added LXX term could point to a loss of *wē’et-he ‘āšîr* (“and the rich”) in the MT by haplography (homoeoteleuton: *r ... r*).”⁴¹² However, it is more likely that the translator simply recognized that the political elites are

⁴¹⁰ Köhler and Baumgartner, *HALOT*, 177.

⁴¹¹ A similar expression also appears in 1 Esdras 3:19[18]: “It makes equal the thoughts of both the king and the orphan, of both the domestic and the free, of both the poor (πένητος) and the rich (πλουσίου).” In the verse concerning the strength of wine, πλοῦσιος points to an exemplary group of “all men, even the king, [who] are powerless to withstand [it],” as Michael F. Bird observes. Michael F. Bird, *1 Esdras: Introduction and Commentary on the Greek Text in Codex Vaticanus*, Septuagint Commentary Series (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2012), 158.

⁴¹² Quoted from Jack R. Lundbom, *Jeremiah 21-36: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, The Anchor Bible 21B (New York: Doubleday, 2004), 230.

the rich and so symbolically associated the two: “and the rulers and the artisans and the prisoners and the wealthy (πλοῦσιους).” Thus, the rich are here associated with the political or economic elites that Nebuchadnezzar took into exile (cf. 2 Kgs 24:10-17). The parallel with another group of exiles—the rulers (ἄρχοντας)—also buttresses this identification of the rich as the ruling elites in the LXX.

In Isaiah 5:14, though appearing without its corresponding Hebrew word, πλοῦσιος also refers to a specific group of the upper class in Jerusalem: “And Hades has enlarged its appetite and opened its mouth without ceasing; and her glorious ones and her great and her rich (οἱ πλούσιοι) and her pestilent shall go down.” As Gene M. Tucker points out, the verse evokes an ominous idea of Hades “swallowing up all the inhabitants of Jerusalem” and thus warns the inhabitants against social injustice (vv. 8-24).⁴¹³ Compared to the MT’s phrase הדרה והמונה (“her [Jerusalem’s] majesty and her multitude”),⁴¹⁴ the LXX gives a detailed account of the inhabitants of Jerusalem by dividing them into the honored (ἔνδοξοι), the great (μεγάλοι), the rich (πλούσιοι), and the pestilent (λοιμοὶ). Especially, the word λοιμός (“pernicious” or “dangerous”) negatively colors the upper class of Jerusalem—the honored, the great, and the rich—with those who have a harmful effect on others through violence and physical force.⁴¹⁵ Like Jeremiah 24:1, Isaiah 5:14 thus also expands upon and enhances the identity of the rich as not merely the wealthy, but as the ruling elites through the parallel he makes between them and other upper

⁴¹³ Gene M. Tucker, *The Book of Isaiah 1-39: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections*, vol. 6, The New Interpreter’s Bible (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2001), 94.

⁴¹⁴ As J. J. M. Roberts argues, the word הדרה והמונה should be regarded as “the concrete” rather than “the abstract.” J. J. M. Roberts, *First Isaiah: A Commentary*, Hermeneia: A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015), 81.

⁴¹⁵ Muraoka, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 435.

classes such as the honored and the great. These all are evaluated as those who do social injustice.

In Isaiah 32:9, *πλοῦσιος* strikingly refers to rich women: “Rise up, you wealthy women (*γυναῖκες πλούσιαι*) and hear my voice; you daughters in hope, hear my words.” While the MT does not specify the description of the women but adds an ambiguous expression *שְׂאֵנִית* (“at ease” [BDB] or “undisturbed” [HALOT]),⁴¹⁶ the LXX characterizes them as wealthy women who belong to the upper class or those who enjoy the social privilege granted them through their noble husbands.⁴¹⁷ In addition, as Hauck and Kasch suggest, the description of stripping and being bare in Isaiah 32:12 implies that they “will be deprived of their social standing” as rich rulers due to their wickedness and injustice.⁴¹⁸ In this regard, the rich are especially described as women who are ashamed.

Negative Characters

Although we have just seen that the rich can be associated with injustice in the LXX, *πλοῦσιος* is frequently used to describe the rich critically or negatively, in comparison to particular positive moral types such as the innocent or the pious. For instance, Psalm 9:29[MT 10:8] of the LXX shows a marked difference from that of the MT by employing *πλοῦσιος* rather than a word corresponding to *הַצָּר* (“villages”): “He [the sinner] sits in ambush with the rich (*πλουσίων*), in secret places to kill the innocent (*ἀθῶον*).” The psalmist of the MT uses *הַצָּר* to hint at the secret scheme of the sinner perhaps because, as John Goldingay notes, “the villages might be

⁴¹⁶ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *BDB*, 983; Köhler and Baumgartner, *HALOT*, 1375.

⁴¹⁷ Yet, as Roberts suggests, *שְׂאֵנִית* “refer[s] to those women, probably primarily resident in Jerusalem, who were so at ease and comfortable in their wealth and position that they had no worries about the health of the nation as a whole.” Roberts, *First Isaiah*, 415.

⁴¹⁸ Hauck and Kasch, “Πλοῦτος Πλοῦσιος Πλουτέω Πλουτιζω,” 324.

dangerous.”⁴¹⁹ In such places, one who plans a crime might hide oneself and slay the innocent. In contrast, paying more attention to those who are involved in the sinner’s conspiracy, the translator of the LXX uses *πλουσίων* in the line. As a result, the rich are identified here as those who help sinners (ὁ ἁμαρτωλός, 9:25; cf. MT 10:4 רשע [“the wicked man”]), attempting to kill the innocent. Although the rich are not exactly same as the sinner, the verse symbolically associates the two and implies that both take part in such a murder of the innocent and that they are neither innocent nor moral.⁴²⁰

Psalms 33:11[MT 34:11] of the LXX also offers the contrast between the rich and the pious by using a word that does not literally render כפירים (“young lions”) of the MT: “The rich (πλούσιοι) became poor and hungry, but those who seek the Lord shall not suffer a decrease in any good thing.” Given that seekers of the Lord will not lack anything, one might assume the rich suffer from poverty and hunger because they do not seek the Lord. In the MT, it is the young lions (כפירים) that suffer from poverty and hunger.⁴²¹ With the textual evidence of the LXX and the Peshitta, the sudden appearance of the animal image may have led the editor of the BHS Psalms to correct כפירים of MT to כבדים (“the rich,” literally “the heavy”) or כבירים (“the mighty”), thereby explaining the LXX’s reading. However, as J. J. M. Roberts points out, the image of young lion symbolizes “the impious” who trust themselves rather than God, with “the

⁴¹⁹ John Goldingay, *Psalms*, vol. 1, Baker Commentary on the Old Testament Wisdom and Psalms (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 181.

⁴²⁰ Interestingly, the secret scheme of the sinner in Psalm 9:29 reminds us of Proverbs 1:10-18 in which impious men (ἄνδρες ἄσεβεις, v. 10) also attempt to ambush a just man (ἄνδρα δίκαιον, v. 11).

⁴²¹ The word כפיר also functions a symbol for the royal house of Judah (e.g., Isa 5:29). In wisdom literature rulers are regularly compared to young lions to reveal some aspect of their character such as power, unpredictability, or danger (e.g., Prov 19:12; 20:2). Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *BDB*, 498; Köhler and Baumgartner, *HALOT*, 493.

self-assertive autonomy” also found in Job 4:10-11 and other texts of ancient Near East such as the Babylonian *Theodicy* and the *Kutha Legend*.⁴²²

Those Who Boast of Their Wealth

The word πλοῦσιος sometimes emphasizes the description of the rich as those who boast of their wealth. To boast is to talk with pride and self-satisfaction; it is the voice of arrogance and selfishness. This characteristic is connected to a kind of hubris the rich demonstrate because they are very proud of many possessions and also seek their own advantage in social relations. For example, 1 Samuel 2:10 of the LXX includes the words, “Let not the clever boast in his cleverness, and let not the mighty boast in his might, and let not let the wealthy (ὁ πλούσιος) boast in his wealth (πλούτῳ).” The MT of Samuel is not the source of this reading of the LXX. Yet, as P. Kyle McCarter observes, it is remarkable that this expression is identical with an other LXX text that of Jeremiah 9:23[MT 9:22]⁴²³: “This is what the Lord says: Let not the wise boast in his wisdom, and let not the mighty boast in his might, and let not the wealthy boast in his wealth.” Although it is not clear whether Jeremiah 9:23[22] affected 1 Samuel 2:10, the rich of both lines are depicted as those who boast about their wealth, but ought not to. The texts do not say why the rich should not boast of their wealth, however. In light of the following lines that encourage one to boast instead in one’s understanding and knowledge of God, we can also assume that the rich are criticized for not relying on God but trusting wrongly or too much in their own wealth.

⁴²² J. J. M. Roberts, “Young Lions of Psalm 34:11,” *Biblica* 54 (1973): 17–19.

⁴²³ P. Kyle McCarter, *I Samuel: A New Translation*, The Anchor Bible 8 (Garden City: Doubleday, 1980), 70.

The Exegetical Analysis of the Rich in LXX Proverbs

Overview

As in other books of the LXX, the word *πλοῦσιος* in LXX Proverbs refers both to the rich as those have wealth but also to the ruling class who possesses significant economic resources, political power, and are morally suspect. Indeed, if one believes there is a strong or simple act-consequence nexus at work in LXX Proverbs, the descriptions of the rich who possess wealth in the book can seem problematic because they are frequently depicted negatively. However, as I will demonstrate soon, the translator enables us to see that those who possess wealth as a result of following wisdom's way are not identical to the rich. As in MT Proverbs, the rich in LXX Proverbs have a distinct status as moral agents given the act-consequence nexus.

The term *πλοῦσιος* occurs ten times in LXX Proverbs (10:15; 14:20; 18:11; 19:22; 22:2, 7, 16; 23:4; 28:6, 11), usually rendering MT's עשיר (10:15; 14:20; 18:11, 23; 22:2, 7, 16; 28:6, 11). However, while עשיר occurs in 18:23 of MT Proverbs, *πλοῦσιος* does not appear in that verse in LXX Proverbs. While *πλοῦσιος* also occurs in 19:22 and 23:4 of LXX Proverbs, the corresponding verses in MT Proverbs do not employ עשיר. The overall occurrence and particular characterization of the rich in LXX Proverbs indicate many similarities between it and MT Proverbs. Yet, the sayings about the rich in LXX Proverbs reveal a moralizing tendency: e.g., by changing or adding a word to characterize more fully the morality/immorality of the rich or another figure in a given line. Of course, this moralizing style is not restricted only to the sayings about the rich in LXX Proverbs but applies to the book as a whole. Most of the differences between MT and LXX Proverbs arise from LXX Proverbs's moralizing judgments. As Fox writes, "M[T]-Proverbs is, to say the least, already a heavily moralizing book, judging behavior as good or bad, rarely with ethical shadings. G[LXX]-Proverbs only increases this moralism.

Where a saying in M[T] might be read as utilitarian, G[LXX] usually makes sure that it is not.”⁴²⁴ Similarly, Dick underscores the “ethical dualism” of LXX Proverbs:

Many of the Septuagint verses that seem to have changed Hebrew synonymous parallelism to antithetical exhibit a pattern towards highlighting this ethical dualism, an ethics of the ‘two ways.’ These alterations stress the conflict between good and evil, smart and foolish. In so doing, Greek Proverbs also emphasizes the consequences natural to the two respective behaviors.⁴²⁵

When LXX Proverbs emphasizes this ethical dualism *vis-à-vis* the poor and the rich, it does so by changing a word or adding a term. For example, compared to the ambiguous antithesis between a poor person and an oppressor in MT 29:13a, LXX 29:13a suggests a clearer antithesis between creditor and debtor. Moreover, MT 19:22b compares a poor person with a liar, whereas LXX 19:22b contrasts a poor righteous person with a rich liar. As a result, LXX 19:22b enhances the antithesis on both the economic and ethical levels. Thus, LXX Proverbs resembles the descriptions of the rich in MT Proverbs and, at the same time, slightly differs from the Hebrew text by its clear moralism and dualism.

The Rich as Possessors of Economic and Social-Political Power

The rich in LXX Proverbs, as in MT Proverbs, are most fundamentally possessors of wealth. Since the term ‘rich’ essentially indicates a particular economic status, the identification of the rich is evident by the fact that they possess money or property. When the translator expresses what the rich possess, he uses the genitive construction. For example, 10:15a says, “The possessions of the rich (κτῆσις πλουσίων) are a strong city.” Similarly, 18:11a says, “The

⁴²⁴ Fox, *Proverbs*, 43.

⁴²⁵ Dick, “The Ethics,” 22.

substance of a rich man (ὑπαρξίς πλουσίου ἀνδρὸς) is a strong city.” As we will see soon, both the words κτήσις and ὑπαρξίς basically refer to material goods that one possesses or an abundant status of one’s possessions.⁴²⁶ In the two verses, the words indicate the possessions or substance that the rich have. That the rich are most basically possessors of wealth in LXX Proverbs is also indicated by the fact that as in MT Proverbs, the rich are regularly contrasted with another terminology that represents economic status—the poor: πτωχὸς (14:20; 19:22; 22:2, 7; 28:6) and πένης (22:16; 23:4; 28:11). Yet, LXX Proverbs also depicts the rich more fully and in particular ways. As in MT proverbs, they also can be described as a ruling class. Wealth obviously enables its possessors—the rich—to acquire political power and, at the same time, their high social standing also empowers them to attain abundant wealth. For example, 22:7 says, “The rich rule over (ἄρξουσιν) the poor, but domestics will lend to their own masters.” As I will show soon, the word ἄρχω (“to rule”) refers to the exercise of power and authority by social-political leaders over others.⁴²⁷ Nonetheless, the translator of LXX Proverbs does not merely focus on how the rich become social rulers but also on how they exercise their authority over others such as the poor. They are in other words, as we will see, colored as moral agents who are negatively evaluated.

The Rich as Moral Agents

Thus far, my analysis of πλοῦσιος has suggested that it serves not only as the economic term that refers to possessors of wealth but also the social term that indicates the ruling class in LXX Proverbs. In verses that depict the rich as possessors of wealth, the translator does offer some

⁴²⁶ Lust, Eynikel, and Hauspie, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 358, 628; Muraoka, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 416, 695.

⁴²⁷ Lust, Eynikel, and Hauspie, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 87; Muraoka, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 95-96.

judgment of the rich, but he does not offer obvious critiques in verses related to the ruling class. The translator, that is, regularly appears to describe the rich by focusing on their role or function in a society without any comment or evaluation. However, by paying much more attention to the rich's characteristics in terms of moral capacity and moral responsibility, it is possible to discern the translator's critical perspectives on them in their social-political functioning. In short, as in MT Proverbs, the rich in LXX Proverbs are described as moral agents who have the moral capacity to choose and act for the good but fail in doing so.

The Rich Wrongly Trust in Their Wealth

Like the sages of MT Proverbs, the translator of LXX Proverbs grants that wealth benefits those who possess it, including the rich, but he also implicitly criticizes them as those who wrongly trust in their wealth. The translator enables us to discover his negative evaluation of the rich by reminding us of the fact that placing one's trust in anything besides God is regarded as wrong in the book. This description of the rich and the inference of their moral or religious failure are similar to those of MT Proverbs. Yet, the translator differentiates his evaluation of the rich from that of the sages by stressing the vulnerability of the rich's wealth.

In describing the rich as those who trust in their wealth, the translator implicitly offers the reason why they put their trust in their wealth. Like the sages of MT Proverbs, the translator basically acknowledges that wealth is advantageous to those who possess it, including the rich. But, as the sages did, so here the translator casts doubt on the efficacy of the protection the rich can get from their wealth by suggesting that it is not as reliable as divine protection and thus does not guarantee security. Unlike the wise and just people who trust in the divine and use their wealth in virtuous ways, the rich put their trust in their wealth and believe that, like a fortress, it

is their wealth that keeps them safe from any risk. However, the translator undermines the idea of the protective function of wealth in different ways than the sages do. In contrast to the sages, who restrict wealth's protective function to the rich's imagination, the translator illuminates its vulnerability by using the images of sun and shadow. Consider the following:

10:15

הון עשיר קרית עזו

מחתת דלים רישם

The wealth of the rich is their fortress;
the poverty of the poor is their ruin.

κτῆσις πλουσίων πόλις ὄχυρά,

συντριβὴ δὲ ἀσεβῶν πενία.

The *possessions* of the rich are a strong city,
but poverty is the ruin of the *impious*.⁴²⁸

18:10-11

מגדל־עז שם יהוה

בר־ירוץ צדיק ונשגב

The name of the LORD is a strong tower;
the righteous run into it and are secure.

ἐκ μεγαλowsύνης ἰσχύος ὄνομα κυρίου,

αὐτῷ δὲ προσδραμόντες δίκαιοι

ὑψοῦνται.

The name of the Lord is of *majestic*
strength,

and the righteous, when they run to it,
are exalted.

הון עשיר קרית עזו

וכחומה נשגבה במשכיתו

The wealth of the rich is their strong city,
and in their imagination it is like a high wall.

ὑπαρξις πλουσίου ἀνδρὸς πόλις ὄχυρά,

ἢ δὲ δόξα αὐτῆς μέγα ἐπισκιάζει.

The *substance* of a rich man is a strong city,
and *its glory casts a huge shadow*.⁴²⁹

⁴²⁸ Compared to MT 10:15b, LXX 10:15b uses a different word ἀσεβῶν (“the impious”) rather than a corresponding word of דלים (“the poor”). Toy and Fox attempt to resolve the difference between the two texts by choosing “the variant ἀσθενῶν” (“the weak”) found in “the third-century Antinoe Papyrus (G^{ant} V 336 613)” rather than ἀσεβῶν. The important evidence the two scholars cite is the use of ἀσθενῶν in 21:13: “He who blocks his ears so as not to hear the weak (ἀσθενοῦς, cf. לל [“the poor”] in the MT) will himself also call, and there will be nobody who listens.” Based on the reading of ἀσθενῶν, Fox argues that πενία (“poverty”) in 10:15 should be regarded as “a misfortune” rather than “a punishment.” Crawford H. Toy, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Proverbs*, The International Critical Commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments 16 (New York: C. Scribner’s Sons, 1899), 211; Fox, *Proverbs*, 179. However, based on the parallel with πτωχός (22:22) and πένης (31:9), I argue that ἀσθενῶν can denote the lower class and the poor in LXX Proverbs. Thus, it is difficult to catch the delicate nuance of difference between ἀσεβῶν and ἀσθενῶν in 10:15.

Regarding the different reading of LXX 10:15, Giese explains, “In 10.15 the negative image associated with poverty was too repulsive, and accordingly the translator altered the verse to impute the undesirable condition to the ungodly instead of [to] the poor.” Giese, “Qualifying Wealth,” 110. Given that poverty is negatively described as what causes ruin, for the translator, the MT’s attributing ruin to the poor appears to be apathetic about them.

⁴²⁹ Regarding this textual difference of 18:11b between the MT and the LXX, the editor of BHS’s Proverbs, Fichtner, suggests that במשכיתו of the MT (“in his imagination”) should be modified to במשכתו (“in its protection” or “in its hedge”). Murphy argues that this modification is based on MT 15:19a (“The way of the lazy is like a hedge [כמשכת] of thorn”) and, ἐπισκιάζει of LXX 18:11b. Roland E. Murphy, *Proverbs*, Word Biblical Commentary 22 (Waco: Word Books, 1998), 134. However, BHS’s modified reading במשכתו is different from ἐπισκιάζει of LXX 18:11b because, as Jan de Waard points out, the Greek word ἐπισκιάζω corresponds to the Hebrew word סכך (“to

In these verses, like the sages, the translator evaluates wealth as beneficial to the rich in that it can protect them from any danger or problem. Like a strong city, wealth is helpful to those who possess it. Compared to 10:15a and 18:11a of the MT (that are identical to each other), the corresponding lines of the LXX display two differences. First, while the MT uses the same word $\eta\eta$ to refer to the wealth that the rich possess, the LXX employs different words $\kappa\tau\eta\sigma\iota\varsigma$ (“possession,” 10:15a) and $\upsilon\pi\alpha\rho\xi\iota\varsigma$ (“substance,” 18:11a). Although these two words do not appear as frequently as $\pi\lambda\omicron\upsilon\tau\omicron\varsigma$ (e.g., 3:16; 8:18; 11:16, 28; 13:7, 8, 22, 23; 19:4; 21:17; 22:1, 4; 24:4; 28:8; 29:3; 30:8; 31:3, 29), they also refer to ‘wealth’ ($\kappa\tau\eta\sigma\iota\varsigma$ [1:13; 8:18] and $\upsilon\pi\alpha\rho\xi\iota\varsigma$ [8:21; 13:11; 19:14]).⁴³⁰ In this sense, there is no significant difference between the MT and the LXX in describing what the rich possess. Second, unlike the MT 10:15 and 18:11, which assert that wealth surely belongs to the rich (by using a possessive pronoun in קרית עזו or “his fortified city”), the verses of the LXX offer a simpler phrase $\pi\acute{o}\lambda\iota\varsigma \delta\chi\upsilon\rho\acute{\alpha}$ (“a fortified city”). The LXX does not convey a sense of possessing wealth as much as the corresponding verses of the MT do. However, as Fox observes, the translator frequently does not represent “possessive pronouns” of MT Proverbs when “unnecessary” (e.g., 1:8; 5:11; 9:1; 14:13; 20:21; 25:8, 22; 29:21).⁴³¹ In 10:15 and 18:11, the translator likewise does not apply the possessive case to the description of the rich’s wealth, but he still implies that the wealth belongs to the rich.

What is important in the LXX is a suspicion that arises about how wealth ensures protection for the rich and the negative evaluation of the rich who put their trust in their wealth.

overshadow” or “to cover”) rather than $\eta\eta$ (“to hedge” or “to fence in protectively”). Jan de Waard, $\text{משלי} = \text{Proverbs}$ (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2008), 33.

⁴³⁰ Lust, Eynikel, and Hauspie, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 358, 628; Muraoka, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 416, 695.

⁴³¹ Fox, *Proverbs*, 87, 424.

The translator supports his suspicion of wealth's protective function in 18:11 by implying that it can be attacked and lost (1:13; 13:11).⁴³² As we saw in MT Proverbs, the metaphor of wealth as a strong city entails not only protection, but potentially also vulnerability. In LXX Proverbs, however, the protection wealth offers is called into question in another way, as we will see shortly. In any case, the phrase πόλις ὄχυρά in the LXX denotes a fortified city with high walls that protects its inhabitants against attack and inherently symbolizes safety (e.g., 18:19; cf. Num 13:29; Deut 3:5, etc.). The πόλις ὄχυρά of LXX Proverbs 10:15 and 18:11 likewise signifies a strong city that guarantees security to its residents—the rich. This meaning of πόλις ὄχυρά in the LXX is no different to קרית עזו in the MT. However, there are crucial differences between the two texts.

On the one hand, the translator clarifies more than the sages do how the wealth that the rich possess is ephemeral and thus can vanish at any time. In particular, through a connection with 21:22 the translator emphasizes that the rich's wealth is not like an impregnable fortress:

עיר גברים עלה חכם
וירד עז מבטחה

One wise person went up against a city of warriors
and brought down the stronghold
in which they trusted.

πόλεις ὄχυράς ἐπέβη σοφὸς
καὶ καθεῖλεν τὸ ὄχύρωμα, ἐφ'
ὃ ἐπεποίθισαν οἱ ἀσεβεῖς.

A wise person attacked *strong cities*
and demolished the strongholds
in which *the impious* trusted.

In this verse, the translator of LXX uses the same expression as he does in 18:11, only in the plural—πόλεις ὄχυράς (“strong cities”). The sages of MT, however, do not employ the same phrase in 21:22 as they did in 18:11 and 10:15. Instead of קרית עזו (“his fortified city”) in 10:15 and 18:11, they write in 21:22 עיר גברים (“a city of warriors”). As we saw, his close link between

⁴³² Cf. “let us take his valuable possessions, and let us fill our homes with booty” (1:13). “Property gotten hastily with lawlessness is diminished, but he who gathers for himself with piety will be increased. A just person is compassionate and lends” (13:11).

18:11 and 21:22 in the LXX makes it clearer that the wealth the rich possess, which seems to be an impregnable fortress, can be attacked and demolished by a wise person. As Fox points out, a wise person's attack against strong cities in 21:22 shows that "practical shrewdness" of wisdom overwhelms an armed power established on other terms, such as by wealth.⁴³³ This superiority of wisdom over other sorts of power reaches a climax in the expression, "(a wise person) attacked strong cities," so that the translator enables the reader to recognize that wisdom is a stronger force than wealth. To the translator, those who put their trust in wealth that offers weak protection are not wise but foolish. If this is true in MT with varied terminology, then in LXX, given the repetition of πόλις ὄχυρά in 10:15, 18:11, and 21:22, the negative evaluation of the rich who trust wrongly in their wealth becomes particularly evident.

On the other hand, the translator also reinforces the point that wealth is not always reliable by connecting the metaphor "a strong city" (πόλις ὄχυρά), to concepts of glory (δόξα) and a shadow (ἐπισκιάζει) in 18:11b. Unlike the MT that compares the rich's wealth to a high wall (חומה נשגבה), the LXX pays attention to the glory of the rich's property that gives much shade. The MT warns against their overreliance on wealth by restricting wealth's protecting power to the rich's imagination. By contrast, LXX 18:11 notes wealth's influence on its possessors by using the word ἐπισκιάζει (literally "to overshadow"). Since ἐπισκιάζω usually means "to provide protective shade" in the LXX (e.g., Ps 90[91]:4; 139[140]:8), presumably in Proverbs 18:11 its use means that wealth fortifies and protects the wealthy.⁴³⁴ With the protective

⁴³³ Fox, *Proverbs 10-31*, 689.

⁴³⁴ Muraoka, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 280. In Psalm 90[91]:4 and 139[140]:8, ἐπισκιάζω specifically refers to the divine protection when the psalmists are in danger of attack, clarifying that it is not to darken with shade but to cover with divine shield and power against enemies.

function of πόλεις ὀχυράς (“strong cities”), this connotation of ἐπισκιάζω supports the notion that wealth provides the rich with a means to avoid a disaster.

However, like the image of a strong city, which protects but which itself might come under attack, the image of a shadow is ambiguous. Indeed shade, inevitably comes and goes and the terminology of shade does not always carry a positive sense of glory or protection in the LXX but sometimes is associated in a negative sense with death. For example, in Isaiah 9:1, the prophet proclaims a message of hope that those who walk in darkness and those who live in the shadow of death (σκιᾷ θανάτου) will see a great light. In Psalm 22:4[23:4], the psalmist also closely connects shadow and death: “For even if I walk in the midst of death’s shadow (σκιᾷ θανάτου), I will not fear evil, because you are with me.” This connection between shadow and death might also arouse suspicion about the protective shade wealth provides and further implies that wealth might lead the one who trusts in it to the destruction of death. In addition, the juxtaposition of the divine name (ὄνομα κυρίου) and wealth in 18:10-11 underlines the point that the former would offer more and more reliable security than the latter would do. Emphasizing that one gains true safety from the divine name, the translator characterizes the rich as negative moral agents who trust wrongly in their wealth.

The negative evaluation of the rich who trust in wealth is connected to a warning against their obsessive desire for their wealth due to its ephemerality. This caution about the desire for wealth is not unique in the LXX but is also evident in the MT (e.g., 11:4; 13:11), as noted in the previous chapter. Yet, the translator further points out not only the foolishness of the obsessive desire for ephemeral wealth but also the unrighteousness of the rich who demonstrate an insatiable desire for it. For example, Proverbs 23:4-5 says:

23:4

אל־תִּגַּע לְהַעֲשִׂיר
מִבִּינְתָךְ חֵדֶל

Do not wear yourself out to get rich;
be wise enough to desist.

23:5

הַתְּעוֹף עֵינֶיךָ בּוֹ וְאִינּוֹ
כִּי עָשָׂה יַעֲשֶׂה־לּוֹ כִּנְפַיִם
כִּנְשָׁר וְעֵיף הַשָּׁמַיִם

When your eyes light upon it,
it is gone;⁴³⁵

for suddenly it takes wings to itself,
flying⁴³⁶ like an eagle toward heaven.

μὴ παρεκτείνου πένης ὧν πλουσίῳ,
τῆ δὲ σῆ ἐννοία ἀπόσχου·

*If you are poor, do not measure yourself with the rich,
but be restrained by your own insight.*

ἐὰν ἐπιστήσης τὸ σὸν ὄμμα πρὸς αὐτόν, οὐδαμοῦ φανεῖται,
κατεσκευάσται γὰρ αὐτῷ πτέρυγες ὥσπερ ἀετοῦ,
καὶ ὑποστρέφει εἰς τὸν οἶκον τοῦ προεστηκότος αὐτοῦ.

If you set your eyes upon *him*,
he will disappear totally,

for *he* has been equipped with wings as of an eagle
and *he* returns to *the house of his master*.

As Van Leeuwen and Waltke note, both contexts of MT and LXX 23:4-5 basically deal with “restraint of appetite” and a danger of “greed,” especially in relations with rulers (23:1-3) and the stingy (23:6-8).⁴³⁷ This context colors the desire for wealth in a negative way, and urges that this desire be restrained. Yet, the two texts reveal an important difference. In the MT, the sages target the desire for wealth and thus warn against struggling (יגע) to become rich.⁴³⁸ As Fox notes, MT 23:4 clearly admonishes the reader “not [to] stare at wealth or focus on it obsessively.”⁴³⁹ This view is supported by the next verse that describes ephemeral wealth through an image of a flying eagle. In contrast to the sages who caution against the obsessive desire for wealth, the translator

⁴³⁵ Although the *Ketiv* (התעור, *qal*) means “Do your eyes fly...?”, the *Qere* (התעור, *hiphil*) means “Do you cause your eyes to fly...” According to Fox, the sentence with the interrogative ה “is equivalent to a conditional.” Thus, Fox translates the sentence, “If you but let your eyes fly on it.” Fox, *Proverbs 10-31*, 724. The NRSV likewise opts for such a conditional formulation through the use of “when.”

⁴³⁶ According to Fox, the *Ketiv* (ועיר) is “an impossible form and thus should be modified to ועף (“and he fled”) or ויעוף (“and he fled”). Ibid. The *Qere* of the MT has the reading of יעוף (“he will fly”). The translation of the NRSV, “flying,” reflects the reading of *Qere*.

⁴³⁷ Van Leeuwen, *The Book of Proverbs*, 206; Waltke, *Proverbs 16-31*, 237.

⁴³⁸ Although the second line of MT 23:4 can be understood differently, it buttresses the first line’s warning against striving to be rich. MT 23:4b can be literally translated, “Cease from your understanding,” but it is difficult to grasp its meaning. According to Yoder, it can be read in two ways: “(a) Stop because you understand” (cf. NRSV); (b) “Stop relying on your insight in this regard” (cf. Waltke’s translation: “Stop trusting in your own insight”). Yoder, *Proverbs*, 234; Waltke, *Proverbs 16-31*, 226.

⁴³⁹ Fox, *Proverbs 10-31*, 723.

articulates the desire to become like ‘the rich’ in 23:4 by advising a poor person not to measure (παρεκτείνω) himself against the rich. By rendering the object of the verb παρεκτείνω (“to measure”) as πλουσίω (“a rich person”) rather than the MT’s corresponding *hiphil* infinitive construct of עָשָׂר (“to get rich”), the translator sharpens his critique of the rich. In particular, the word παρεκτείνω here signifies one’s comparison with the rich and even one’s desire for becoming like them.⁴⁴⁰

In 23:5, the translator also reiterates and strengthens his warning against becoming like the rich through an emphasis on their short-livedness. Although the translator uses the same image of a flying eagle as the sages do in 23:5, he does not associate the image with wealth but with the rich person by employing words in the third masculine singular form (αὐτόν, φανεῖται, κατεσκευάσται, ὑποστρέφει). As D’Hamonville points out, the translator intimately links the verses in the MT and the LXX by paying attention to the rich person and wealth and the ephemerality of both.⁴⁴¹ In the last line of LXX 23:5, the translator also uses a different expression, “he returns to the house of his master,” in comparison to that of the MT, “toward heaven.” According to Fox, LXX 23:5b means that the rich person returns to the house of his master, “that is to say, God,” meaning that he will die.⁴⁴² By implying the rich’s ultimate end—death—the translator emphasizes their transitory life. In other words, the rich’s wealth appears to provide them with reliable protection, but in reality it does not offer such protection because they will disappear totally along with their possessions. In view of their ephemeral life, the obsessive desire for wealth and for becoming like the rich is evaluated as being foolish. The rich’s trust in

⁴⁴⁰ The word παρεκτείνω essentially expresses a judgment of others through comparison and an attempt to reach out for something (e.g., Ezek 47:19, “extending [παρεκτείνων] to the great sea”).

⁴⁴¹ D’Hamonville, *Les Proverbes*, 289.

⁴⁴² Fox, *Proverbs*, 310.

their wealth is viewed as a vain pursuit for protection, the result of one who is consumed with greed. Therefore, the rich are criticized for their unrighteousness in terms of trusting in wealth rather than in God and for their foolishness in attempting to gain protection from life's uncertainties.

As in MT Proverbs, in LXX Proverbs trust in the divine is a fundamental value of wisdom. While those who trust in God are evaluated as wise and righteous, those who rely on other beings or things are viewed as foolish and unrighteous (e.g., 3:5; 28:25-26). For LXX Proverbs, the rich deserve to be criticized because they put their trust in their wealth. Especially in 11:28, the translator illuminates how trust in wealth, an important characteristic of the rich, is foolish. This he does by comparing two kinds of persons:

בוטח בעשרו הוא יפל

וכעלה צדיקים יפרחו

The one who trusts his riches, he will fall,
but the righteous will flourish like a leaf.

ὁ πεποιθὸς ἐπὶ πλούτῳ οὗτος πεσεῖται

ὁ δὲ ἀντιλαμβανόμενος δικαίων οὗτος ἀνατελεῖ

As for him who puts his trust in wealth, he will fall,
but as for him *who supports*⁴⁴³ the righteous, he will flourish.

In MT 11:28, the sages compare the one who trusts in his riches with the righteous in terms of their locus of trust. Yet, as mentioned in chapter two, the concept of trust is connected to morality and wisdom because those who trust in Yahweh are regarded as wise and righteous but those who trust in other things besides Yahweh as foolish and wicked. Thus, the one who trusts in his riches will fall, but the righteous will flourish. In LXX 11:28, the translator basically reiterates the point of MT 11:28 by showing the two different persons and their different ends—

⁴⁴³ According to Fox, the variant between the MT and the LXX arises from “a rendering of ומעלה (“raise up,” implying assistance) for [the] M[T]’s וכעלה (“like foliage”). Ibid., 195.

fall and prosperity.⁴⁴⁴ The translator thus warns against the one who puts his trust in wealth and enables the reader to associate him with a rich person, even though there is no term *πλοῦσιος* in the verse.

The Rich Are Liars and Delude Themselves

The second characteristic of the rich in LXX Proverbs is to lie and delude themselves with their intellectual and moral hubris. Because the identification of the rich as liars is peculiar to LXX Proverbs, it reinforces their negative moral character more than MT Proverbs does. This point again corroborates that the term ‘the rich’ points to negative moral agents. Although the rich possess wealth, they are not a synonym for wealth in the act-consequence schema.

While the first characteristic of the rich has to do with their attitude toward wealth, this characteristic is related to their inability to behave morally and wisely, something that can be highlighted through comparison with the poor. Like the sages of MT Proverbs, the translator of LXX Proverbs describes both the rich and the poor not only as socio-economic classes but also as moral agents who have moral capacity and responsibility. It is worth noting that the translator more explicitly identifies the rich and even the poor as moral agents than the sages do. In MT Proverbs, as Murphy notes, the poor mostly appear as “a special object of care” (e.g., 14:31; 17:5; 22:2, etc.).⁴⁴⁵ Yet, though the identification of the poor as moral agents is not as obvious as that of the rich, the sages sometimes show the moral ability of the poor in comparison to that of the rich (e.g., 28:6, “Better is a poor man who lives blamelessly than a rich man whose ways are crooked”; cf. 19:1 “Better a poor man who lives blamelessly than one who speaks perversely and

⁴⁴⁴ One difference between the two versions is “the righteous” of the MT becomes “supporters of righteous” of the LXX.

⁴⁴⁵ Murphy, *Proverbs*, 261.

is a dullard”).⁴⁴⁶ The translator of LXX Proverbs, however, expands on the MT’s identification of the rich and the poor by coloring the two with other moral characteristics, such as integrity and deceit. Subsequently, in LXX Proverbs the identification of the rich as negative moral agents is more palpable than in MT Proverbs, an effect achieved through comparison with other positive moral qualities associated with other agents, like the poor.

As in MT Proverbs, this description of the rich (and the poor) as moral agents in LXX Proverbs is achieved by juxtaposing an economic good or bad state with a moral good or bad state in order to claim that a moral state is more important than an economic state. The translator especially removes the ambiguity of the rich who, because they are possessors of wealth, might be thought to possess wisdom by characterizing them as negative moral types—liars. Thus, the translator makes clear that the wealth that the rich possess should not be regarded as a material reward for their wisdom or righteousness. Consider the following verses:

19:22

תאות אדם חסדו
טוב־רש מאיש כזב

What is desirable in a person is loyalty,
and it is better to be poor than a liar.

καρπὸς ἀνδρὶ ἐλεημοσύνη,
κρείσσων δὲ πτωχὸς δίκαιος ἢ πλούσιος ψεύστης.
Compassion is a *profit*⁴⁴⁷ for a man,
and a poor *righteous* person is better than a *rich* liar.

28:6

טוב־רש הולך בתמו מעקש דרכים והוא עשיר

κρείσσων πτωχὸς πορευόμενος ἐν ἀληθείᾳ
πλουσίου ψευδοῦς.

⁴⁴⁶ These translations follow NJPS because they show more clearly the comparison between the poor and the rich than other translations do.

⁴⁴⁷ The reading of LXX 19:22a is comparable to that of MT 19:22a, “The desire of a person is his fidelity.” First, תאות of the MT generally means “desire” or “longing” (e.g., Prov 10:24; 11:23, etc.). However, as Fox points out, the MT’s literal translation, “A man’s desire is his kindness,” does not seem to “make much sense.” Fox, *Proverbs 10-31*, 659. Second, חסדו of the MT is usually understood as “his loyalty,” but, as Yoder observes, it can be regarded as “disgrace” or “reproach” (cf. 14:34). Yoder, *Proverbs*, 207. Yet, Fichtner, the editor of BHS, suggests that חסדו should be modified to סחרו (“his profit,” cf. 3:14; 31:18). For these reasons, MT 19:22a has been treated in two ways: positively (e.g., “What is desirable in a person is loyalty” [NRSV]) or negatively (e.g., “Greed is a reproach to a man” [NJPS]). With regard to the issue, the translator of LXX Proverbs offers the following translation, “Compassion is a profit for a man.” As καρπὸς of the LXX indicates a “fruit” (e.g., Prov 12:14; 31:16, etc.), the translator construes the corresponding word in the MT as תבואה rather than תאות. Thus, the translator treats 19:22a in a positive way that kindness is encouraged as a fruit a person should produce.

Better to be poor and walk in integrity
than to be crooked in one's way
even though rich.

Better is a poor person who walks in *truth*
than a rich *liar*.⁴⁴⁸

In contrast to the sages of MT who compare the two classes only in 28:6, the translator here offers clear moral antitheses between the rich and the poor both in 19:22 and 28:6, as Gerleman and D'Hamonville also observe.⁴⁴⁹ In 19:22, the word δίκαιος (“righteous”) clarifies the moral character of a poor person, whereas the word ψεύστης (“a liar”) enhances the immorality of a rich person. Combining an economic status with a moral state more elaborately than the MT, the translator clarifies a logic that morality is better than wealth and immorality is worse than poverty. The verse exemplifies the point that the economic state of the rich and the poor does not derive from their moral status. This logic also operates in LXX 28:6 where truthfulness (ἀληθεία) of a poor person is evaluated as being better than the deceitfulness (ψευδοῦς) of a rich person, in sharp contrast to MT 28:6 where a poor person with integrity is regarded as being better than a rich person with crooked ways.

Of special importance is that the translator characterizes the rich as liars (ψεύστης [19:22]; ψευδής [28:6]). The word ψευδής frequently indicates “lying, false” in LXX Proverbs (6:19; 8:7; 12:22; 17:4, 7; 19:5, 9; 21:6, 28; 23:3; 25:14, 18; 26:28; 28:6; 30:6, 8-9; 24:28; 31:30) and in the LXX (e.g., Ex 20:16; Judg 16:10, etc.). Likewise, ψεύστης simply refers to a liar, even though it rarely occurs (Ps 115:2[116:11]; Sir 15:8; 25:2).⁴⁵⁰ Both ψεύστης and ψευδής typically mean a lying behavior as traits of the morally and intellectually suspect. For example, liars are

⁴⁴⁸ As Fox notes, LXX 28:6 produces “a monostich” by using LXX 19:22b rather than translating MT 28:6 in that the images of walking in a good or bad way are used to describe the moral characteristics of the rich and the poor. Fox, *Proverbs*, 363.

⁴⁴⁹ Gerleman, *Proverbs*, 21; D'Hamonville, *Les Proverbes*, 271.

⁴⁵⁰ Lust, Eynikel, and Hauspie, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 672; Muraoka, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 742.

equated with evildoers who listen to transgressors (17:4) or the foolish who have false lips (17:7). Thus, the rich described as liars in 19:22 and 28:6 are symbolically associated with a broader range of the immoral types. Indeed, cheating or tricking can be one of the rich's ways for augmenting their wealth. In 21:6, the translator directly addresses his message to a person who acquires treasures through a lying tongue—whom we now see is symbolically associated with the rich.

פעל אוצרות בלשון שקר
הבל נדף מבקשי־מות
The getting⁴⁵¹ of treasures by a lying tongue
is a fleeting vapor and a snare of death.

ὁ ἐνεργῶν θησαυρίσματα γλώσση ψευδεῖ
μάταια διώκει ἐπὶ παγίδας θανάτου.
He who obtains treasures by a lying tongue
pursues vanity into the *snares* of death.

As Otto Plöger suggests, in the MT verse 6 is closely connected to verse 5 (“The plans of the diligent lead surely to abundance, but everyone who is hasty comes only to want” [NRSV]) and thus provides an example of the wrong pursuit of profit.⁴⁵² The LXX has no corresponding verse 5, but it still offers the same point about warning against unrighteous acquisition by using the images of a lying tongue and snares of death. In this verse, working for obtaining unlawful treasures, “a lying tongue” (γλώσση ψευδεῖ) functions as an effective means of enriching oneself, at least temporarily.⁴⁵³ Yet, as Waltke notes, the translator of LXX straightly points out the immorality of the one who obtains (ὁ ἐνεργῶν) treasures through a lying tongue, in contrast to the sages of MT who pay attention to the deed or behavior to acquire (לַעֲל, *pō ‘al*) illicitly.⁴⁵⁴ In

⁴⁵¹ According to Fox, לַעֲל of MT 21:6a “is awkward” because “an action (“making,” לַעֲל) is said to be something (“a drive vapor”) and to seek something (death).” Fox, *Proverbs*, 288; Murphy, *Proverbs*, 157.

⁴⁵² Otto Plöger, *Sprüche Salomos (Proverbia)*, Biblischer Kommentar. Altes Testament 17 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1984), 245.

⁴⁵³ The phrase γλώσση ψευδεῖ also appears in 26:28: “A false tongue (γλῶσσα ψευδῆς) hates truth, and an unguarded mouth works instability.”

⁴⁵⁴ Waltke, *Proverbs 16-31*, 192.

this sense, the one who enriches himself through the deceit of 21:6 is closely linked to rich liars of 19:22 and 28:6 because both make themselves wealthy through dishonest means—deception. More importantly, 21:6 explicitly shows the fatal consequence of one who acquires wealth through a lying tongue: he will cause his own destruction. In light of 21:6, the rich liars of 19:22 and 28:6 likewise appear to amass a fortune but really pursue vanity all the way into the snares of death. It is worth noting that the emphasis in 21:6 on the rich's ephemeral fate also has a clear connection with LXX 23:5 in which, unlike the MT, ephemerality is ascribed not to riches but to the rich. By characterizing the rich as liars, the translator enables the reader to avoid the confusion about their status in the act-consequence logic: the term 'the rich' is not a synonym for wealth according to this logic but has its distinctive status as negative moral agents.

Along with the rich's deceitful trait of enriching themselves through lies, the translator focuses on their self-delusion and lack of knowledge. While the deceitful trait is related to the rich's fraud in deceiving others, the self-delusion pertains to their false beliefs about themselves. They believe themselves to be wise and thus depend on their own wisdom without listening to others. Since the self-delusion of the rich arises from lack of knowledge, it is evaluated as foolish and arrogant. Consider the following sayings:

28:11

חכם בעיניו איש עשיר
ודל מבין יחקרנו

A rich person is wise in his own eyes,
but a poor one who has understanding see
through him.

σοφὸς παρ' ἑαυτῷ ἀνὴρ πλούσιος,
πένης δὲ νοήμων καταγνώσεται αὐτοῦ.

A rich man is wise in his own eyes,
but an intelligent poor person will see
through him.

28:26

בוטח בלבו הוא כסיל
והולך בחכמה הוא ימלט

Those who trust in their own wits
are fools;
but those who walk in wisdom

ὃς πέποιθεν θρασεία καρδία, ὁ τοιοῦτος ἄφρων
ὃς δὲ πορεύεται σοφία, σωθήσεται.

He who trusts in a *bold* heart,
such a one is a fool,
but he who walks in wisdom

come through safely.

will be saved.

26:12

ראית איש חכם בעיניו
תקוה לכסיל ממנו

εἶδον ἄνδρα δόξαντα παρ' ἑαυτῶ σοφὸν εἶναι,
ἐλπίδα μέντοι ἔσχεν μᾶλλον ἄφρων αὐτοῦ.

Do you see persons wise in their own eyes? ¹⁴⁵⁵ have seen a man who *thought himself* to be wise,

There is more hope for fools than for them. but there is a more hope for a fool than for him.

As the sages of MT do in 28:11, the translator of LXX compares a rich but foolish person with a poor but intelligent one in the verse. Although the rich person seems to be wise (σοφός), the translator defines his wisdom as self-delusion by using the phrase παρ' ἑαυτῶ (literally “for himself”) to the description. According to Tremper Longman III, בעיניו of the MT (“in his own eyes”) frequently “refer[s] to self-presumption,” and such a meaning is applied to παρ' ἑαυτῶ of the LXX because it also means “in the estimation of himself” or “to be (wise or right) to himself” (e.g., 3:7; 14:12; 26:5, 12).⁴⁵⁶ Like MT 28:11, LXX 28:11 first appears to portray the rich person as wise, but it restricts his wisdom to self-conceit, a kind of false knowledge about oneself. Indeed, the rich person deludes himself with self-conceit that he is wise.

With regard to the rich’s self-delusion, LXX 28:26 bolsters their immorality by associating them with those who manifest folly, evil, and arrogance, doing so through the peculiar expression, “a bold heart.” As noted in the previous chapter, the ‘heart’ (לב) is the seat of the intellect in Hebrew moral anthropology. To quote Fox, the term is often equated with “wisdom” in MT Proverbs (e.g., 15:32: “Those who ignore instruction despise themselves, but

⁴⁵⁵ According to Waard and Fox, unlike the second person of the MT (ראית, “Do you see...?”), the translator of the LXX produced the first person (εἶδον, “I have seen...”) because of a different reading, ראיתי (“I have seen...”). Fox says, “the additional yod arose by distant dittography with שיא.” Waard, משלי = *Proverbs*, 48; Fox, *Proverbs*, 345.

⁴⁵⁶ Tremper Longman III, *Proverbs*, Baker Commentary on the Old Testament Wisdom and Psalms (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 491; Muraoka, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 523.

those who heed admonition gain understanding [לב], NRSV).⁴⁵⁷ In addition, as Newsom points out, heart functions as “the locus of the persons moral will” and “th[e] organ that is responsible for a person’s words and actions.”⁴⁵⁸ The phrase בוטה בלבו of the MT (literally “the one who trusts in his own heart”) thus means that he trusts in his own moral-intellect abilities, rather than letting that command center be formed by wisdom. Interestingly, the translator adds θρασεία (“bold”) to the MT’s description of self-delusion, enriching its meaning. The word θρασύς basically means “bold, fearless” as traits of showing courageous behaviors (e.g., Num 13:29; Sir 4:29) and, at the same time, signifies “in [a] pejorative sense, [the] excessively bold, audacious” characteristic of negative figures, especially in LXX Proverbs: fools (9:13; 18:6), the wicked (13:17), and the arrogant (21:24).⁴⁵⁹

This symbolic connection identifies the one who trusts in a bold heart of 28:26 with other negative characters—fools, the wicked, and the arrogant. The translator particularly clarifies this symbolic connection in 28:26 by evaluating the one who trusts in a bold heart as a fool (ἄφρων. cf. כסיל). The word ἄφρων that refers to a fool in LXX Proverbs translates כסיל and אויל of MT Proverbs. As Fox notes, the two Hebrew words do not simply mean foolishness as lack of intelligence but rather “moral perversion” in relation to moral inability to “choos[e] good and reject evil” (e.g., 1:7) or “smug obtuseness” (e.g., 1:32).⁴⁶⁰ Since this connotation of moral inability and arrogance through the term ἄφρων is closely associated with the phrase θρασεία καρδία in LXX 28:26, the one who trusts in a bold heart represents a moral agent who fails to

⁴⁵⁷ Fox, *Proverbs*, 370.

⁴⁵⁸ Newsom, “Models of the Moral Self,” 10.

⁴⁵⁹ Muraoka, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 331.

⁴⁶⁰ Yet, כסיל and אויל show a slight difference with regard to moral perversion: “אויל is obtuse by virtue of his moral perversion, כסיל is, or probably will become, morally perverse by reason of his obtuseness.” Fox, *Proverbs 1-9*, 41.

demonstrate his or her moral ability due to arrogance, i.e., chooses own judgment for own benefit over that of wisdom. More importantly, the immoral and arrogant fool of 28:26 is symbolically linked to the rich person of 28:11 via a rhetoric of self-conceit via similar rhetoric. In 26:12, the arrogant person with self-conceit is evaluated as worse than fools. In short, there is no hope for the rich who delude themselves with self-conceit, arrogance, and folly and truly show themselves to be moral agents who unable to choose and act for the good.

When we compare the self-conceit of the rich to the thoughtfulness of the poor in 28:11 and elsewhere, this negative characteristic of the rich becomes definitive. As a poor person is depicted as one who has understanding (מבין) in MT 28:11b, he is also described as one who is thoughtful (νοήμων) in LXX 28:11b. Though it occurs only in LXX Proverbs (1:5; 10:5, 19; 14:35; 17:2, 12; 28:11) and Sirach (19:29; 21:7), the word νοήμων refers to a wise person. This thoughtfulness of the poor person is supported by his reaction to the rich person's self-conceit, καταγνώσεται (NETS "to see through," but literally "to condemn").⁴⁶¹ According to Muraoka, the word καταγνώσεται here specifically means "to observe closely and form an unfavourable opinion of [others]."⁴⁶² The text of LXX 28:11b thus means that the poor person does not react emotionally or unreasonably to the rich person's self-conceit but makes a thorough investigation into him and only then expresses a negative opinion.⁴⁶³

The Rich Seek Their Own Advantage in Friendship

⁴⁶¹ Lust, Eynikel, and Hauspie, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 311.

⁴⁶² Muraoka, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 369.

⁴⁶³ This description of the poor person suggests the poor too are not regarded as merely an economic class but are becoming a positive moral type that, unlike the rich, they succeed in showing their moral ability. To determine if they are the same sort of type, more directed investigation would be needed.

The third characteristic of the rich as moral agents in LXX Proverbs is that they seek their own advantage in friendship. The translator knows that social benefit accrues to the rich on account of their wealth; it brings them many friends. Contrasting them with the poor who are hated by their friends, the translator shows the social advantage the rich can enjoy. Yet, the translator neither approves nor promotes the sort of relation the rich pursue because it is based on ephemeral ties of wealth and so is inherently weak when compared with social ties based on kinship or emerging from one's social virtue. What's more, the translator emphasizes the rich's immorality by revealing that they use their wealth to construct social relations that are also deeply hierarchical and beneficial to themselves. Especially, the translator criticizes more sharply the rich for establishing social relations based on wealth and seeking their own advantage than the sages of MT Proverbs do, because the friendship they seek has a particular valence in Hellenistic culture.

Like the sages of MT Proverbs, the translator of LXX Proverbs offers social observations that the rich enjoy advantages, such as many friends and favor, in social relations because of their wealth. In describing the social benefit the rich enjoy, the translator makes clear this advantage arises from wealth and social power they possess. Note the following sayings:

14:20-21

גם־לרעהו ישנא רש
ואהבי עשיר רבים

The poor are disliked even by their neighbors,
but the rich have many friends.

בז־לרעהו הוטא
ומחונן עניים אשריו

Those who despise their neighbors are sinners,
but happy are those who are kind to the poor.

φίλοι μισήσουσιν φίλους πτωχούς,
φίλοι δὲ πλουσίων πολλοί.

Friends will hate poor *friends*,
but the friends of the rich are many.

ὁ ἀτιμάζων πένητας ἀμαρτάνει,
ἐλεῶν δὲ πτωχοὺς μακαριστός.

He who dishonors *the needy*⁴⁶⁴ sins,
but one who pities the poor is deemed
most happy.

⁴⁶⁴ In LXX Proverbs, πένης corresponds to several Hebrew words referring to the poor: לַד (14:31; 22:16, 22; 28:11), אביון (30:14; 31:9, 20), and יגע (23:4).

19:4

הון יסיף רעים רבים
ודל מרעהו יפרדWealth adds many friends,
but the poor are left friendless.πλοῦτος προστίθησιν φίλους πολλούς,
ὁ δὲ πτωχὸς καὶ ἀπὸ τοῦ ὑπάρχοντος φίλου
λείπεται.Wealth adds many friends,
but the poor [person] is deserted *even*⁴⁶⁵
by the *only* friend he has.

In these verses, the translator displays the social benefit of the rich by comparing how wealth and poverty respectively affect social relations of the rich and the poor: the rich have many friends because of their wealth, but the poor lose favor with their friends and thus become objects of hatred. However, like the sages of the MT, the translator does not support social relations based on wealth and poverty but negatively describes such relations by offering a judgment on those who seek such relations in 14:21. By contrasting one who sins by dishonoring the poor with the other who pities them, the translator criticizes those who seek social relations based on economic status and, at the same time, encourages the reader to seek communal ties founded on social virtues, especially by showing the generosity to the poor. More importantly, like the MT, the LXX makes clear that the many friends the rich have are not the result of their virtue or righteousness but merely due to their possession of wealth. The translator thus implies that the friends of the rich build relationships with them to gain advantages from the rich's economic resources and social power. Moreover, the rich are here regarded as those who profit from social relations rather than possessors of wealth.

Yet, the translator bolsters his critique of those who seek social relations based on economic status by describing consistently the relations as friendships through the word φίλος that refers to a friend. In 14:20 and 19:4, φίλος is used to render רע and רעה of the MT that

⁴⁶⁵ According to Muraoka, the word καὶ “introduces an extreme case or invites comparison of the assertion, negation etc. with a less plausible one that might have been made.” Muraoka, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 354.

generally mean ‘a friend.’⁴⁶⁶ However, as Graham I. Davies notes, אהב (*ōhēb*, literally “lovers”) means a friend with an emphasis on “affection,” whereas רע (*rē‘a*) basically refers to “a neighbor” as “another person involved in an activity.”⁴⁶⁷ Thus, the friendship expressed by אהב signifies a much closer and more intimate relationship between people than the friendship meant by רע does.⁴⁶⁸ The emphasis on affection toward friends suggested by אהב is closely associated with φίλος in the LXX (e.g., Mic 7:5; Prov 17:17, etc.) because, as Davies points out, the Greek word likewise denotes “dear, beloved [friends].”⁴⁶⁹ In contrast, as Gustav Stählin observes, רע is much more frequently equivalent to πλησίον in the LXX (e.g., Hab 2:15; Zech 14:13, etc.).⁴⁷⁰ Yet, the translator collapses the two words אהב and רע into the single word φίλος in 14:20 and 19:4. The LXX’s use of φίλος might suggest that the translator evaluates the social relations of the rich more narrowly and morally than the sages of the MT do. The translator thus offers a moral lesson that one should be trustworthy and reliable to his or her friends, regardless of their economic status. The translator’s emphasis on true friendship also suggests that the rich who have many friends should have more responsibilities for cultivating true friendship. However, the

⁴⁶⁶ Of course, as Saul M. Olyan observes, אהב serves as a synonym of רע in the Hebrew Bible (e.g., Ps 38:12; 88:19; Prov 17:17; 18:24). Saul M. Olyan, *Friendship in the Hebrew Bible*, The Anchor Yale Bible Reference Library (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017), 4.

⁴⁶⁷ Graham I. Davies, “The Ethics of Friendship in Wisdom Literature,” in *Ethical and Unethical in the Old Testament: God and Humans in Dialogue*, ed. Katharine J. Dell, Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies 528 (London; New York: T & T Clark, 2010), 137.

⁴⁶⁸ Indeed, as Ronald E. Clements also suggests, אהב represents “the narrower ideal of a friend” than the רע does in MT Proverbs. Ronald E. Clements, “The Good Neighbour in the Book of Proverbs,” in *Of Prophets’ Visions and the Wisdom of Sages: Essays in Honour of R. Norman Whybray on His Seventieth Birthday*, eds. Heather A. McKay and David J. A. Clines, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament. Supplement Series 162 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 211.

⁴⁶⁹ Davies, “The Ethics of Friendship,” 137.

⁴⁷⁰ Gustav Stählin, “φίλος κτλ,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, vol. 9 (Grand Rapids: Wm.B. Eerdmans, 1985), 156; Muraoka, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 565.

rich do not take an interest in fostering true friendship in their social relations but seek their own advantage.

The critique of the rich for seeking their own profit in their friendship, and what it might mean to seek what I above call ‘true’ friendship, become clear through an analogy with discussions of Hellenistic friendship. As Clements notes, the sages of the MT are very interested in building “a stable and mutually supportive community” through the wide use of רַע.⁴⁷¹ By contrast, the translator of the LXX endeavors to encourage the reader to seek true friendship in his or her relations and to cultivate virtues such as mutual trust and support by using his preferred term φίλος. In Hellenistic culture, friendship grounded in altruistic love is regarded as true, but a friendly bond based on wealth or social standing is evaluated as false. Many ancient Greek authors extolled as an ideal friendship that one should be a genuine and reliable friend to others. At the same time, they warned against failing to embody such an ideal friendship.⁴⁷²

Among these authors, Aristotle’s idea about friendship can be used to understand friendship in LXX Proverbs in terms of emphasizing true friendship and warning against friendship based on wealth. As Frederic M. Schroeder observes, Aristotle systematically categorizes friendships into three types: 1) “character friendship or friendship that is grounded in virtue”; 2) “friendship grounded in pleasure”; and 3) “friendship grounded in utility.”⁴⁷³

⁴⁷¹ Clements, “The Good Neighbour,” 224.

⁴⁷² For example, as Jeremy Corley shows, Euripides (480-406 BCE) defined a true friendship as fulfillment of “the duty of assisting one’s friends in their time of need.” Though Euripides did not specify the situation of friends who are in trouble, he showed a similar interest in helping poor friends to that of LXX Proverbs. Isocrates (436-338 BCE) also addressed a genuine friendship in relation to showing mercy to friends in need: “Prove your friends by means of the misfortunes of life ... We come to know our friends when we are in misfortune” (*To Demonicus*. 25). Jeremy Corley, *Ben Sira’s Teaching on Friendship*, Brown Judaic Studies 316 (Providence: Brown Judaic Studies, 2002), 8.

⁴⁷³ Frederic M. Schroeder, “Friendship in Aristotle and Some Peripatetic Philosophers,” in *Greco-Roman Perspectives on Friendship*, ed. John T. Fitzgerald, Resources for Biblical Study 34 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997), 37.

Aristotle's second and third types of friendship based respectively on pleasure and utility, are comparable to the friendship based on wealth in LXX Proverbs because such friendships are built on things other than love and trust. By contrast, the so-called "character friendship" of Aristotle (e.g., *Nicomachean Ethics* 8.3.115611-12) with an emphasis on altruistic love is quite comparable to the 'true' friendship of LXX Proverbs wishes to promote (e.g., 14:21).⁴⁷⁴ This analogy with Aristotelian friendship implies that social relations based on economic status in LXX Proverbs 14:20-21 and 19:4 can be viewed as a kind of friendship grounded in pleasure or more precisely in utility. The friendship the rich build is regarded as untrustworthy because their friends associate with them precisely because of their wealth and social position. Moreover, the rich do not embody virtues in such friendships but seek their own advantage.

The analogy with Hellenistic friendship is also helpful in understanding LXX Proverbs's negative description of the rich who easily gain the favor of others, have the power to control their friends, and ensure unequal relations. In Hellenistic culture, as Zeba A. Crook points out, the relationship even between socially unequal persons was regarded as a kind of friendship that is comparable with the patronage I stated in the previous chapter.⁴⁷⁵ Since the friendship between social unequals is essentially built on their economic and social status, it accompanies the participants' self-interest and self-desire to gain or increase their own advantage.⁴⁷⁶ In such a friendship, the one with higher social standing derives much more profit from the friendship than the other with social lower standing because the friendship is structured by the hierarchy. The

⁴⁷⁴ Ibid., 43.

⁴⁷⁵ Zeba A. Crook, "Friendship, Kinship, and Enmity," in *Oxford Bibliographies in Biblical Studies*, ed. Christopher Matthews (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 1, <http://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780195393361/obo-9780195393361-0011.xml?rskey=QLTVyU&result=2&q=zeba#firstMatch>. Accessed 01/15/2017.

⁴⁷⁶ Ibid.

translator of LXX Proverbs more obviously displays the relationship between social unequals than the sages of MT do, by reflecting the concept of Hellenistic friendship. Consider 19:6-7ab:

19:6

רבים יחלו פני־גדיב

וכל־הרע לאיש מתן

Many seek the favor of the generous,
and everyone is a friend to a giver of gifts.

πολλοὶ θεραπεύουσιν πρόσωπα βασιλέων,

πᾶς δὲ ὁ κακὸς γίνεται ὄνειδος ἀνδρί.

Many render service to the persons of *kings*,
but every *evil* one becomes a *reproach* to a man.⁴⁷⁷

Like MT 19:6, LXX 19:6 depicts how it is that many people build relations with others who have high social status. Yet, the MT implicitly describes a person with high social standing through the word גדיב (“a noble person”), but the LXX explicitly refers to the upper class, such as officials or royal families, by using the phrase πρόσωπα βασιλέων (“the persons of kings”; cf. literally “the faces of kings”). As Fox notes, the word βασιλεύς “elevates a high-ranking person (קצין [25:15]; נגיד [28:16]; משל [29:12]) to royal status.”⁴⁷⁸ Thus, the translator clearly identifies those who receive service from many as members of a ruling class who possess economic and socio-political power. As we have seen so far, the rich belong to the ruling class and thus are effortlessly served by many who are inferior to them in economic and social power. In light of the Hellenistic idea about friendship based on social unequals, the rich’s friendship is not built on cultivating social virtues but on increasing their self-interest and further consolidating their position.

More importantly, the word θεραπεύουσιν of 19:6 enriches the untrustworthy and immoral aspect of the social relationship that seems to be favorable to the rich. The word

⁴⁷⁷ The second line of LXX 19:6 is quite different from that of MT 19:6. As Fox suggests, such a different reading of the LXX might result from misconstruing הרע (“the friend”) of the MT as הרע (“evil”) and מתן (“gift”) as מדון (“reproach”). Fox, *Proverbs*, 272.

⁴⁷⁸ Ibid.

θεραπεύω basically means “to serve, especially a high ranking courtier” (e.g., Esth 1:1; Prov 14:19, etc.) and, at the same time, here expresses a service of “flattery” toward kings.⁴⁷⁹ The θεραπεύω also occurs in 29:26 that describes another service toward high-ranking people (πρόσωπα ἡγουμένων, “the persons of leaders”):

רבים מבקשים פני־מושל	πολλοὶ θεραπεύουσιν πρόσωπα ἡγουμένων,
ומיהוה משפט־איש	παρὰ δὲ κυρίου γίνεται τὸ δίκαιον ἀνδρί.
Many seek the favor of a ruler,	Many show deference to the persons of <i>leaders</i> ,
but it is from the LORD that one gets justice.	but from the Lord a man obtains that which is right.

In this verse, the translator depicts showing deference to leaders as a form of currying favor with those people who possess economic power and social authority. The translator’s description of flattery in social relations is comparable to the description in a treatise of Plutarch (ca. 45-120 CE), Πῶς ἂν τις διακρίνειε τὸν κόλακα τοῦ φίλου (“How to Tell a Flatterer from a Friend” [48E-74E]).⁴⁸⁰ In the treatise, Plutarch thinks of a flatterer as one who builds a relationship with those who have wealth and social power in the guise of friendship. For example, Plutarch says, “flattery does not attend upon poor, obscure, or unimportant persons ... but where renown and power attend, there do they [flatterers] throng and thrive” (49D-E).⁴⁸¹ Like Plutarch, LXX Proverbs 19:6 shows how the friendship between social unequals may be built through flattery. Given that the rich are identified as those who have high social standing, many people serve them with flattery to obtain what they want from the rich and finally become friends to the rich.

⁴⁷⁹ Muraoka, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 327.

⁴⁸⁰ Plutarch, “How to Tell a Flatterer from a Friend,” in *Moralia*, trans. Frank Cole Babbitt, vol. 1, Loeb Classical Library 197 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1927).

⁴⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 267–69.

For the rich, friendship works as a good opportunity to cement their power and dominion over their friends.

If we take the Hellenistic idea about friendship into account, we recognize more easily the LXX translator's emphasis on true friendship, especially with regard to how he deftly connects to kinship the issue of hatred toward the poor. Consider 19:7ab:

19:7ab

אִי־רָרָשׁ שְׁנֵאֵהוּ אָף
כִּי מִרְעֵהוּ רַחֲקוּ מִמֶּנּוּ

...

If the poor are hated even by their kin,
how much more are they shunned
by their friends!

...

παῖς, ὃς ἀδελφὸν πτωχὸν μισεῖ,
καὶ φιλίας μακρὰν ἔσται.

...

*Every one who hates a poor brother
will also be far from⁴⁸² friendship.*

...⁴⁸³

...

In this verse, the translator provides a powerful and instructive message that anyone who hates his poor brother is far from friendship (φιλίας μακρὰν ἔσται).⁴⁸⁴ As Fox observes, the translator

⁴⁸² In the LXX, the adverb μακρὰν basically denotes a spatial distance from a place (e.g., Gen 44:4; Ex 8:28; 33:7, etc.) and even in LXX Proverbs (e.g., 2:16; 4:24; 5:8; 22:15; 27:10). Yet, μακρὰν sometimes means figurative distance in terms of difference or opposition (e.g., Prov 13:19, “the deeds of the impious are *far from* knowledge”; 15:29, “God is *far from* the impious ...”; 30:8, “Put *far from* me a vain word and lies ...”). Viewed in this way, the phrase φιλίας μακρὰν ἔσται of 19:7ab can be understood as “he will be deserted by his friends and be left alone.” Lust, Eynikel, and Hauspie, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 381; Muraoka, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 439.

⁴⁸³ As mentioned in chapter 2, MT 19:7c (מִרְדָּף אִמְרִים לִדְרֹמָה) is uncertain. As Waltke points out, the line is usually regarded as an “incomplete, an unintelligible fragment.” Waltke, *Proverbs 16-31*, 116. The last line of 19:7 can be translated as, “He who pursues words to him, are they” (“He who pursues words to him, not they,” in *Ketiv* [אֵל]). In contrast, LXX 19:7 has two couplets, the first of which reads as follows: ἐννοια ἀγαθὴ τοῖς εἰδόσιν αὐτήν ἐγγεῖ, ἀνὴρ δὲ φρόνιμος εὐρήσει αὐτήν. ὁ πολλὰ κακοποιῶν τελεσιουργεῖ κακίαν· ὃς δὲ ἐρεθίζει λόγους, οὐ σωθήσεται (“Insight will draw near to them who know it, and a prudent man will find it. He who does much evil perfects wickedness, and he who uses provoking words will not be saved”). According to Fox, “the second couplet is an independent proverb absent from M[T]” and “the third couplet ... had a Hebrew source.” Fox, *Proverbs*, 273. Based on LXX 19:7c-f, many scholars have tried to recover the original text of the MT. See Waltke, *Proverbs 16-31*, 116. Since only 19:7a-b is related to the sayings about the rich, I do not analyze 19:7c-f.

⁴⁸⁴ Comparing 19:4 and 19:7, Giese argues that “the ideology of the translator led him to a different vocalization” of 19:7a-b from 19:4. According to Giese, unlike MT 19:7a that has “the plurals of נָא and שָׁנָא,” LXX 19:7a takes their corresponding words as “singular” (ἀδελφὸν, μισεῖ) and thus “functions as a counterbalance to LXX 19.4.” Ronald L. Giese, “Compassion for the Lowly in Septuagint Proverbs,” *Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha* 11 (1993): 116.

changes the MT's "cynical assertion" of social reality "to a moral lesson" that one should not hate one's poor brother.⁴⁸⁵ Yet, the translator strengthens his moral instruction by suggesting that how one acts in relationships of kinship is closely linked to how one acts in relationships of friendship. This close connection between friendship and kinship is again comparable to Plutarch's understanding of friendship. As Edward N. O'Neil notes, Plutarch regards kinship as "a type of friendship."⁴⁸⁶ In the *Περὶ φιλαδελφίας* ("On Brotherly Love" [479B-492D]), Plutarch says, "Most friendships are actually shadows, imitations, and images of that first friendship which Nature has implanted in children toward parents and in brothers toward brothers; ... Or what sort of man is he who addresses his comrade as 'brother' in salutations and letters, but does not care even to walk with his own brother when they are going the same way?" (479C-D).⁴⁸⁷ Plutarch here criticizes the one who treats his friend as his brother but shuts his eyes to his real brother, establishing a close connection between friendship and kinship. The translator of LXX likewise strengthens such a connection in 19:7ab that one cannot build true friendship if he/she fails in kinship or natural friendship. For the translator, friendship based on virtues such as mutual support is as trustworthy and strong as kinship. By contrast, the friendship based on wealth and social hierarchy is unreliable and weak. It is the rich that establish the weak and unreliable friendship and seek their own advantage by using their power in the friendship. In addition, given that the rich do not seek true friendship, they do not take an interest in helping the poor and even their poor friend or brother. Rather, as we will analyze soon, their wealth and favor cause the rich to oppress the poor.

⁴⁸⁵ Fox, *Proverbs*, 273.

⁴⁸⁶ Edward N. O'Neil, "Plutarch on Friendship," in *Greco-Roman Perspectives on Friendship*, ed. John T. Fitzgerald, Resources for Biblical Study 34 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997), 106.

⁴⁸⁷ Plutarch, "On Brotherly Love," in *Moralia*, trans. W. C. Helmbold, vol. 6, Loeb Classical Library 337 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1939), 255.

The Rich Oppress the Poor

The last characteristic of the rich as moral agents in LXX Proverbs is to depict them as those who oppress the poor. This description of the rich essentially arises from the identification of them as a ruling class who is superior to the rest in terms of economic power and social authority. Although the rich are expected to show mercy to the poor through almsgiving, in this book they do not function in such a way. In regard to the rich's oppression of the poor, as we will see soon, the translator of LXX Proverbs uses a certain kind of hierarchical relationship between creditors and debtors. The association of the rich with creditors hints at how the rich oppress the poor (who here are considered equivalent to debtors) by demanding impossible terms and a high rate of interest. With this mind, the rich have the power to control social inferiors and make unjust profits in the social hierarchy. Yet, the translator further describes the rich in a negative way through a symbolic connection to foolish masters. Thus, the wealth and power that the rich possess are not regarded as economic and social rewards for their wisdom and righteousness but a means of oppressing the powerless.

To strengthen his critique of the rich's oppression of the poor, the translator emphasizes that both have equal status as divine creatures. Based on their equal status, the translator insists that the rich should not oppress the poor but treat them with dignity. Nonetheless, by using the parallel to the relationship between creditor and debtor, the translator makes it clearer than the sages of MT do that the rich exploit the poor with their economic and social power. Consider the following sayings:

22:2

עשיר ורש נפגשו
עשה כלם יהוה

πλούσιος καὶ πτωχὸς συνήντησαν ἀλλήλοις,
ἀμφοτέρους δὲ ὁ κύριος ἐποίησεν.

The rich and the poor have this in common; the LORD is the maker of them all. The rich and the poor have encountered each other, but the Lord has made them both.

29:13

רש ואיש תככים נפגשו

מאיר־עיני שניהם יהוה

The poor and the oppressor have this in common;

the LORD gives light to the eyes of both.

δανιστοῦ καὶ χρεοφειλέτου ἀλλήλοις συνελθόντων ἐπισκοπὴν ποιεῖται ἀμφοτέρων ὁ κύριος.

When *creditor* and *debtor*⁴⁸⁸ meet each other,

the Lord makes an *inspection* of both.

Like the sages of MT, the translator of LXX basically depicts the meeting (συνήντησαν) of the rich (πλούσιος) and the poor (πτωχός) in 22:2. Since the lexica suggest the meaning of συναντάω as “to meet each other”⁴⁸⁹ or “to meet together,”⁴⁹⁰ the NETS construes the word in 22:2 as “to encounter” in the sense of an unexpected meeting. In 22:2, however, συναντάω can be also understood as an intentional or unavoidable meeting of the rich and the poor precipitated by their unequal economic and social status: for example, as we saw with the verse of the MT, it might be a meeting in which the poor request the rich to reduce a debt, or a meeting in which the rich plan to exploit the poor’s labor or materials. Despite the unequal status of the two groups, the translator states in 22:2 that both the rich and the poor are made by the Lord. Their equal status as the divine creation thus suggests that although the poor are inferior to the rich in socio-economic status, they should not be treated unfairly or improperly by the rich because of that status.

Although the basic tone emphasizing the equal status of different groups as the divine creation continues in 29:13, the translator applies it specifically to the relationship between

⁴⁸⁸ As D’Hamonville observes, the word χρεοφειλέτης appears only twice in the LXX: here and in Job 31:37 (“and if I did not tear it up and hand it back, having taken nothing from the *debtor*—”). D’Hamonville, *Les Proverbes*, 335.

⁴⁸⁹ Muraoka, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 652.

⁴⁹⁰ Lust, Eynikel, and Hauspie, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 587.

creditor and debtor. While MT 29:13 insists on a fundamental equality between a poor person and an oppressor, LXX 29:13 pays more attention to a financial obligation with the same emphasis on the equality of creditor and debtor. For the creditor, the meeting with the debtor might work variously as a chance to get his money back, to seize a pledge, to remind the borrower of payment, or to renegotiate terms. Moreover, other books of the LXX hint how a creditor uses the meeting with a debtor for increasing his own interests: the creditor scrutinizes all that a person has to seize it (Ps 108:11) or insult a money-borrower to collect the debt (Sir 29:28). In order to get his money back and further increase his own interests, a creditor might not only investigate thoroughly what the debtor has but also reproaches the debtor who fails in paying back the borrowed money. As Adams argues, the story of Elisha and a widow (2 Kgs 4:1-7) also demonstrates that a creditor might use a meeting to press a debtor or his household into “debt slavery.”⁴⁹¹ According to Boer, a creditor might manipulate the institution of debt slaves “to secure labor in a situation in which labor is scarce and land plentiful.”⁴⁹² Thus, a creditor lends money to a debtor at high rates of interest on labor, which gives rise to usury.

In contrast, a debtor can use the meeting with a creditor to perform his financial obligation by paying off a debt, to request to borrow more, or to plead for mercy. The translator does not postulate such a situation for the debtor but implies that he is unlikely to perform his obligation, by exhorting the reader to avoid standing surety for others (e.g., 6:1-5; 11:15; 17:18; 20:16; 22:26).⁴⁹³ Although surety functions as the terms of the agreement between creditor,

⁴⁹¹ Adams, *Social and Economic Life*, 78.

⁴⁹² Boer, *The Sacred Economy*, 158–59.

⁴⁹³ Fox offers an insightful comment on surety, even though it is related to the Hebrew Bible: “A borrower could deposit an item of value as collateral for his own loan (see Deut 24:6, 10-13, 17; Exod 22:25-26). He could pledge his houses and fields (Neh 5:3) or even his children (v. 2; read *ʿrbym*). Alternatively, a borrower could have the loan guaranteed by someone else, whose possessions in their entirety would be vulnerable to seizure. The proverb “Take his garment, for he has gone surety for a stranger” (27:13a), shows that a guarantor was liable to loss

guarantor, and debtor, it mainly works to the creditor's advantage because, as Fox points out, loans could often be "usurious [and] exploitive" (e.g., 22:26).⁴⁹⁴ Since a high rate of interest prevents the debtor from paying off a debt, the guarantor is always in danger of forfeiting his property to the creditor. Probing the exploitative aspect of debt, Boer emphasizes "the result that the lender's own wealth increases" and concludes that it "reinforc[es] economic hierarchies."⁴⁹⁵ For this reason, De Lagarde argues that the translator understood תכנים of MT 29:13 as pointing to τόκος ("usury").⁴⁹⁶ For the creditor, including the rich, usurious loans serve as a means of amassing money quickly. This is the exploitation of the debtor who are referred to the poor more broadly.

Regarding LXX 29:13's specific focus on the relationship between creditor and debtor, several scholars point out that it has a more restricted meaning than MT 29:13 does because it concentrates narrowly on monetary transactions between two persons.⁴⁹⁷ Compared to the hierarchy between the poor and the oppressor in the MT, the relationship between creditor and debtor in the LXX appears to be less sharp. In fact, the translator focuses more on a kind of business relation that became more typical or institutionalized in the Hellenistic era. As Adams notes, financial exchanges between creditors and debtors were so prevalent that they functioned as "a core aspect of the economy" during the late Second Temple period.⁴⁹⁸ Thus, the translator

of possessions down to his very *bege*d, the large cloak which provided protection against the nighttime chill." Fox, *Proverbs 1-9*, 215.

⁴⁹⁴ Fox, *Proverbs 10-31*, 717.

⁴⁹⁵ Boer, *The Sacred Economy*, 157–58.

⁴⁹⁶ Quoted from Fox, *Proverbs*, 374.

⁴⁹⁷ Ibid.; Waltke, *Proverbs 16-31*, 454; Whybray, *Proverbs*, 401.

⁴⁹⁸ Adams, *Social and Economic Life*, 104.

exhorts the reader to show fairness in a particular kind of economic interaction between creditor and debtor. More importantly, the translator reinforces the fairness between creditor and debtor through the depiction of the Lord as their inspector (ἐπισκοπήν) in the second line.⁴⁹⁹ The depiction of LXX 29:13b is different from the MT's identification of the Lord as a giver of life (מאיר-עיני, "the one who gives light to the eyes").⁵⁰⁰ As Fox suggests, the designation of God as the inspector enables the creditor to "remember that God has both under view" and thus to "pressure the debtor" to act morally.⁵⁰¹ Yet, LXX 29:13b also empowers the debtor to appeal to the creditor in the meeting by noting that the Lord sees the intention of the creditor. Viewed in this light, LXX 29:13 offers a lesson about fairness in financial exchanges and, at the same time, warns creditors (including the rich) against oppressing debtors through impossible terms and high rates of interest.

The parallel between 22:2 (the rich and the poor) and 29:13 (creditor and debtor) concerning the meeting of different economic-social groups makes clear the symbolic connection between the rich and creditors. Such a symbolic connection vividly shows how the rich oppress the poor by treating the powerless in an unjust way, such as through usury. Yet, the translator does not restrict the rich's oppression of the poor to such financial interactions. Rather, the rich's oppression is linked more broadly to a variety of economic and social hierarchies where they make unfair profits. Consider 22:16:

עשק דל להרבות לו
נתן לעשיר אך-למחסור

Oppressing the poor in order to enrich

ὁ συκοφαντῶν πένητα πολλὰ ποιεῖ τὰ ἑαυτοῦ·
δίδωσιν δὲ πλουσίῳ ἐπ' ἐλάσσονι.

He who oppresses the needy

⁴⁹⁹ In the LXX, ἐπισκοπή basically means "enquiry, investigation" (Lev 19:20; Job 31:14) or "act of overseeing" (Num 4:16). Muraoka, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 280.

⁵⁰⁰ In the Hebrew Bible, the phrase מאיר-עיני ("to give light to the eyes") frequently functions as a metonym for giving life (e.g., Prov 15:30; Job 3:16; Ps 13:4; 38:10; 49:19).

⁵⁰¹ Fox, *Proverbs*, 374.

oneself, makes many things his own,⁵⁰²
 and giving to the rich, will lead only to loss. yet gives to the rich to make it less.

In this verse, the translator describes a person who oppresses the poor but gives to the rich. Although the oppressor (ὁ συκοφαντῶν) is not clearly identified in 22:16a, he exercises his authority over the poor by treating them unjustly. The word συκοφαντέω always refers to an unjust treatment of the poor in LXX Proverbs: “The one who cheats (ὁ συκοφαντῶν) the needy upsets his maker” (14:31a); “A bold man blackmails (συκοφαντεῖ) the poor with impious acts” (28:3a).⁵⁰³ In 22:16, this unjust treatment of the poor is supported by the phrase πολλὰ ποιεῖ τὰ ἑαυτοῦ (“makes many things his own”): the oppressor takes many things by force from the poor and consequently increases his wealth. However, the oppressor reaches an unfortunate end in the second line because he gives the rich something but has less. As D’Hamonville suggests, the oppressor first seems to enrich himself through the oppression of the poor and the giving to the rich but in reality impoverishes himself.⁵⁰⁴ Notably, the rich are here depicted as those who derive benefit from the oppressor of the poor and make him lose his things. As we have seen earlier, such benefits to the rich result from their high social standing because many people curry favor with them (cf. 19:6a, “Many render service to the persons of kings”) to get protection, access to land, reasonable terms of a loan, etc. In the social hierarchy, the rich make unfair profits by getting something from the oppressor of the poor and making him poor.

⁵⁰² According to Fox, several “G[reek] manuscripts (G^{ScA MSS})” add a word κακά (“troubles”) to 22:16b. Unlike the MT or the LXX, this reading implies that an oppressor of a poor person increases his own troubles rather than his own things or property. *Ibid.*, 303.

⁵⁰³ The word συκοφαντέω (“to oppress”) basically means “to slander” or “to accuse falsely” (e.g., Gen 43:18; Lev 19:11). Lust, Eynikel, and Hauspie, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 578.

⁵⁰⁴ D’Hamonville, *Les Proverbes*, 285.

By associating the rich with foolish and crafty masters, the translator enhances their immorality and criticizes their oppressive rule over others. Consider Proverbs 22:7:

עשיר ברשים ימשול	πλούσιοι πτωχῶν ἄρξουσιν,
ועבד לזה לאיש מלוה	καὶ οἰκέται ἰδίῳις δεσπόταις δανιοῦσιν.
The rich rule over the poor,	The rich rule over the poor,
and the borrower is the slave of the lender.	but <i>domestics will lend to their own masters</i> . ⁵⁰⁵

By noting the poor stand in a subordinate relation with the rich, the translator declares that the rich rule over (ἄρξουσιν) the poor. The word ἄρχω (“to rule”) means to exercise a higher person’s social power or political authority over a lower person. As in the MT I suggested, the rich are seen here not just as an economic class but also as a social or political group that governs the poor with their wealth and power.

The second line of LXX 22:7 specifically places another set of hierarchical relationship—domestics (οἰκέται) and masters (δεσπόταις)—in parallel to the rich and the poor. Compared to the MT, LXX 22:7b reveals two differences. First, the translator changes the designations of lender and borrower in the MT to masters and domestics. While the lender-borrower pair in the MT is part of a specialized financial transaction, the pairing of masters and domestics in the LXX is focused on household relations. Second, unlike the MT that bolsters the hierarchy between rich lenders and poor borrowers, the LXX upends the relationship between masters and domestics by stating that domestics will have more power than masters will. Fox attributes this reading of LXX 22:7b to the translator’s misreading of MT 22:7b, suggesting that he “mistak[es]

⁵⁰⁵ According to Fox, this reading of LXX 22:7 is similar to the Syriac text: “As for the rich man, the poor man will rule over him, and the slave will lend to him who used to lend to him” Compared to the LXX, the Syriac text overturns even the hierarchical relationship between the rich and the poor of MT 22:7a. As Fox believes, this change reflects “an eschatological expectation.” Fox, *Proverbs*, 298. The Syriac text of Proverbs 28:6 also shows a similar preference of the poor to the rich.

עבד as the subject of לויה ... and identifies איש מלוי as the master.”⁵⁰⁶ Gerleman also suggests that such a reading of LXX 22:7b results from the translator’s attempt “to avoid synonym parallelisms” of the MT.⁵⁰⁷ Although these assumptions justify the LXX’s different reading, they are not necessary. The reversal of roles in LXX 22:7b shows not only that the rich normally oppress and dominate others but also that they are symbolically related to foolish masters, especially in 13:13A and 17:2:

13:13A⁵⁰⁸

υἱῷ δολίῳ οὐδὲν ἔσται ἀγαθόν,
οἰκέτη δὲ σοφῷ εὖοδοι ἔσονται πράξεις,
καὶ κατευθυνθήσεται ἡ ὁδὸς αὐτοῦ.
*To a crafty son nothing will be good,
but a wise domestic will have prosperous business,
and his way shall be guided.*

17:2

עבד־משכיל ימשל בבן מביש	οἰκέτης νοήμων κρατήσῃ δεσποτῶν ἀφρόνων,
ובתוך אחים יחלק נחלה	ἐν δὲ ἀδελφοῖς διελεῖται μέρη.
A slave who deals wisely will rule over	An intelligent domestic will rule over
a child who acts shamefully,	<i>foolish masters,</i>
and will share the inheritance	and will divide portions among <i>brothers.</i>
as one of the family.	

The rich do not appear in these verses, but they are comparable to a deceitful son (13:13A) and foolish masters (17:2) due to their dominative position over domestics. Like 22:7, both 13:13A and 17:2 describe a reversed hierarchy between domestics and masters. Yet, by characterizing masters and domestics respectively as foolish and wise, 13:13A and 17:2 offer the reason for why the hierarchy is reversed between the two groups. In other words, the son and masters lose

⁵⁰⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁷ Gerleman, *Proverbs*, 61.

⁵⁰⁸ Since LXX 13:13A has no corresponding verse in the MT, I use the capital “A” for the additional verse of LXX. Yet, Fox points out, its first and second lines echo MT 17:2. Fox, *Proverbs*, 211.

their dominion over domestics because of deceitfulness and folly. As Fox and Murphy suggest, MT 17:2 uses an example of a wise servant's rule over a shameful son to "warn against those who shirk their duties."⁵⁰⁹ This is true in LXX 13:13A, too. The reversed hierarchy between masters and domestics exhorts the reader to perform his or her duty. This does not mean the translator's support for social revolution but, as Giese notes, an emphasis on "the superiority of wisdom over foolishness" is obvious.⁵¹⁰ The deceitful and foolish masters are thus symbolically associated with the rich through the parallel in 22:7 and the thematic connection to 13:13A and 17:2. The translator thus makes sure that the rich symbolically associated with fools/folly are not identical to those who possess financial and social rewards for following wisdom's way.

The Rich from the Viewpoint of Honor and Shame

Honor and Shame in LXX Proverbs

Like the sages of MT Proverbs, the translator of LXX Proverbs also uses the idea of honor and shame to promote its core value, that is, wisdom. When a person follows wisdom's way, he or she is or should be honored. However, one who is foolish is or should be shamed. As in MT Proverbs, in LXX Proverbs the attainment of honor through embodying wisdom's virtues, especially social virtues, includes the appropriate use of wealth and social power. As noted in the previous chapters, such a way of gaining honor through the right use of wealth and social power is comparable to the common way in which honor is attained in ancient Mediterranean culture. However, while one might be ascribed honor on account of their wealth and social power in the ancient world, the two by themselves do not or should not assure the attainment of honor in LXX

⁵⁰⁹ Fox, *Proverbs 10-31*, 624; Murphy, *Proverbs*, 128.

⁵¹⁰ Ronald L. Giese, "Strength through Wisdom and the Bee in LXX-Prov 6,8a-C," *Biblica* 73 (1992): 408.

Proverbs. As in MT Proverbs, in LXX Proverbs the rich are not explicitly described with the rhetoric of honor and shame. Yet, given that the rich are oriented toward the accumulation of wealth rather than attaining wisdom, they are not honored in LXX Proverbs. The symbolic connection with the foolish and unrighteous suggest that the rich should be ashamed. While the previous four characteristics of the rich are related to their moral capacity, this evaluation of the rich is linked to their moral responsibility. The moral failure of the rich thus means they deserve to be shamed.

Like the sages of MT, the translator of LXX uses two categories to express honor. The first category of ‘honor’ terms point to honor as high public esteem or fame gained through wisdom. This kind of honor is comparable to acquired honor in the ancient Mediterranean culture that can be attained through wealth and social power rather than attribution due to birth in an honorable family or an acknowledgment by authorities. To indicate this category of honor, the translator mainly uses δόξα that means “the opinion which others have of s[ome]b[ody], estimation, repute (of pers[on].)”⁵¹¹ or “status of honour and distinction.”⁵¹² As δόξα frequently corresponds to כבוד of the MT (e.g., 3:16, 35; 8:18; 11:16; 15:33; 18:12; 20:3; 21:21; 22:4; 25:2; 26:8; 28:12; 29:23), it is used as a social reward for following wisdom’s way.⁵¹³ Another word, τιμή, in LXX Proverbs, also refers to honor in terms of “high esteem: arising from outward splendour” (12:9; 22:9; 26:1) and likewise is regarded as a reward for wisdom.⁵¹⁴ The second

⁵¹¹ Lust, Eynikel, and Hauspie, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 159.

⁵¹² Muraoka, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 175.

⁵¹³ The Greek word δόξα sometimes translates the Hebrew words הדרה (14:28) and תפארת (20:29) that mean “honor” in the MT. In LXX Proverbs 26:11A, δόξα appears without any corresponding word in MT Proverbs: “There is a sense of shame that leads to sin, and there is a sense of shame that is glory (δόξα) and grace.”

⁵¹⁴ Like δόξα, τιμή sometimes appears without a parallel term in the MT (e.g., 12:9; 22:9a). Muraoka, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 681.

category of ‘honor’ terms implicitly refers to honor in the metonymical sense—they indirectly indicate reputation or esteem: χάρις (“favor,” e.g., 1:9; 3:3; 11:27; 22:1; 25:10a; 26:11a; 28:23), ὄνομα (“name,” e.g., 22:1), ἐγκωμιάζω (“praise,” e.g., 12:8; 27:2; 29:2), and αἰνέω (“praise,” e.g., 31:31). Like the first category of honor, this one is also achieved through attainment of wisdom in LXX Proverbs.

While the translator understands honor to be a reward for the attainment of wisdom, he employs shame as the consequence of foolish behaviors. Regarding shame, the translator also uses various words: ἀτιμία (3:35; 6:33; 9:7; 11:2, 16; 12:9, 11a, 16; 13:18; 14:35; 18:3), ὄνειδος (“disgrace,” 3:31; 6:33; 18:3, 13; 19:6; 26:6), and αἰσχύνη (“dishonor,” 9:13; 19:13; 26:11a). Unlike δόξα, which faithfully and mainly functions as the single word that corresponds with כבוד, two Hebrew words for shame, קלון and בוש, are not as uniformly translated. For example, ἀτιμία is mainly used for קלון (e.g., 3:35; 6:33; 9:7; 11:2; 12:16; 13:18; 18:3), but it also occurs for בוש (e.g., 14:35). In addition, ὄνειδος corresponds to קלון (e.g., 6:33) and כלמה (e.g., 18:13). Interestingly, αἰσχύνη does not have a corresponding word in the MT that specifically means shame, though it does render a negative word, הוה (“ruin,” e.g., 19:13). In addition, with regard to בוש, the translator also employs κατασχύνω (“make [to] feel shame,” as in 19:26) or a derivative word such as αἰσχύνω (“transform into s[ome]th[ing] shameful,” e.g., 29:15).⁵¹⁵ The greater variety of words for shame in LXX Proverbs than in MT Proverbs are likely due to the fact that the translator provides new sentences that speak of shame but which have no corresponding text in the MT (e.g., 3:31; 9:13; 11:16; 12:11a; 19:6; 22:2, 26; 26:6, 11a; 28:21; 29:25).

⁵¹⁵ Ibid., 17, 371.

This analysis of terms concerning honor and shame demonstrate that the translator is interested in such social values. In particular, the translator uses the rhetoric of honor and shame to encourage the reader to follow the way of wisdom. Consider the following verses:

8:18

עשר־וכבוד אתי

הון עתק וצדקה

Riches and honor are with me,
enduring wealth and prosperity.

πλοῦτος καὶ δόξα ἐμοὶ ὑπάρχει

καὶ κτήσις πολλῶν καὶ δικαιοσύνη·

Wealth and honor are at my disposal,
and the acquisition of many things and justice.

19:13

הות לאביו בן כסיל

ודלה־טרד מדיני אשה

A stupid child is ruin to a father,
and a wife's quarreling is a continual
dripping of rain.

αἰσχύνη πατρὶ υἱὸς ἄφρων,

καὶ οὐχ ἄγναι εὐχαι ἀπὸ μισθώματος ἑταίρας.

A foolish son is a *disgrace* to his father,
and *vows from the price* of a prostitute are not
pure.⁵¹⁶

3:35

כבוד הכמים ינחלו

וכסילים מרים קלון

The wise shall obtain honor,
But dullards get disgrace as their portion.⁵¹⁷

δόξαν σοφοὶ κληρονομήσουσιν,

οἱ δὲ ἀσεβεῖς ὕψωσαν ἀτιμίαν.

The wise will inherit glory,
but *the impious* have exalted disgrace.

In 8:18, personified wisdom claims that the social value serves as a benefit for the wise. In 19:13 shame functions as a consequence of foolishness, even though it is brought to a father whose son is foolish. As in the MT, in LXX 3:35a the wise gain honor (δόξαν) because of their wisdom. In this verse, honor and shame likewise function respectively as a benefit and a drawback. The rhetoric of honor and shame thus articulates an important principle—that one can or should attain

⁵¹⁶ The second line of LXX 19:13 is different from that of MT 19:13. Regarding the difference, de Waard suggests that the translator might read מדיני (“contention”) of the MT as מנדן (“gift”; cf. Ezek 16:33) and thus might translate it as ἀπὸ μισθώματος ἑταίρας (“from the price of a prostitute”). Waard, *משלי* = *Proverbs*, 48. Fox and d’Hamonville think that LXX 19:13b recalls Deuteronomy 23:18 (“You shall not bring the fee of a prostitute or the exchange for a dog into the house of the Lord your God for any vow, for it is an abomination to the Lord your God—in fact both”). Fox, *Proverbs*, 275; d’Hamonville, *Les Proverbes*, 269.

⁵¹⁷ This translation follows *Tanakh: The Holy Scriptures: The New JPS Translation according to the Traditional Hebrew Text* (NJPS).

honor through wisdom and *vice versa*. However, the second line of LXX 3:35, “the impious have exalted disgrace” offers a different description from that of the MT, “dullards get disgrace as their portion.” As Fox observes, this difference arises from the word מרים (*hiphil* participle of the root רוּם) because its basic meaning (“to lift up”) “does not fit this context well.”⁵¹⁸

Understanding מרים as “to get or to acquire,” Fox suggests 3:35b means “while dolts gain only contempt” (cf. 14:29b, “And the impatient man gets [מרים] folly”).⁵¹⁹ In MT 3:35b, the dullards deserve to get disgrace due to their foolishness. In contrast, by offering the basic meaning of רוּם through the translation of ὑψῶσαν (“to exalt”), LXX 3:35b emphasizes the immorality of the impious because they are so bad that they have fundamentally confused what they should exalt—wisdom and what they should not exalt—a disgrace.

This function of honor and shame is similar to that of wealth and poverty because the two economic statuses also serve as motivational symbols to encourage the reader to choose wisdom’s way. For example, in 8:18, wealth and honor seem to have equal value. Both valuable items belong to wisdom, and presumably to the one who finds wisdom. However, elsewhere, like the sages of MT, the translator of LXX suggests that honor is valued more than wealth. Consider 22:1:

נבחר שם מעשר רב
מכסף ומזהב חן טוב
Repute is preferable to great wealth,
Grace is better than silver and gold.⁵²⁰

αἰρετώτερον ὄνομα καλὸν ἢ πλοῦτος πολὺς,
ὕπερ δὲ ἀργύριον καὶ χρυσίον χάρις ἀγαθή.
A *good* name is a better choice than great wealth,
and good favor is above silver and gold.

⁵¹⁸ Fox, *Proverbs 1-9*, 169.

⁵¹⁹ Ibid., 162, 169. Alter also suggests a similar translation, “and fools take away disgrace.” According to Alter, “the poetic parallelism indicates that a word meaning ‘to take possession’ was intended.” Alter, *The Wisdom Books*, 207. The translation of NJPS I offered above is also consistent with such translations.

⁵²⁰ This translation follows the NJPS.

Compared to MT 22:1, LXX 22:1 adds καλὸν (“good”) to ὄνομα (“name”). According to D’Hamonville, such an addition is to achieve poetic balance with πλοῦτος πολὺς (“great wealth”).⁵²¹ Yet, as Fox points out, LXX 22:1a rather emphasizes “moral clarity” through the addition of καλὸν.⁵²² In light of the moral vision in LXX Proverbs, a good name or good reputation arises from good behavior. Although both name and wealth are evaluated as valuable, the former is evaluated as of more worth than the latter in 22:1a. Moreover, the translator also clarifies the ambiguity of MT 22:1b by using the adjective ἀγαθὴ as the attributive. There are two ways of understanding MT 22:1b: one is to understand the word כֶּסֶף as an attributive use (“good favor [is preferred] to silver and gold”)⁵²³ and the other is to regard it as a predicative adjective parallel to 22:1a (“favor is better than silver and gold”).⁵²⁴ As the translation of LXX 22:1b is compatible with the attributive use of כֶּסֶף, it gives rise to the parallel between ὄνομα καλὸν (“a good name”) and χάρις ἀγαθὴ (“good favor”).⁵²⁵ Since both ὄνομα and χάρις are terms belonging to the rhetoric of high social standing, the adjectives καλὸν and ἀγαθὴ seem to be unnecessary in the verse. Nonetheless, using the adjectives “good,” the translator emphasizes the moral component of one’s reputation or favorable status with others. When name and favor are accompanied by good behavior and morality, they are better than great wealth and treasures. Compared to the sages of MT, the translator of LXX shows more clearly that honor should include moral character rather than be attained through wealth and riches. In addition, such

⁵²¹ D’Hamonville, *Les Proverbes*, 283.

⁵²² Fox, *Proverbs*, 297; Giese, “Qualifying Wealth,” 411.

⁵²³ Fox, *Proverbs 10-31*, 694.

⁵²⁴ Murphy, *Proverbs*, 163; Waltke, *Proverbs 16-31*, 193.

⁵²⁵ Regarding this issue, Toy argues that the attributive expression, “good favor” is “improbable; good is not a proper epithet of favor (in which it is implied).” Toy, *The Book of Proverbs*, 413. However, as I suggest, the attributive idea is more probable.

moralizing makes the way of attaining honor in LXX Proverbs more distinct from the Hellenistic understanding of honor, which says that one can get a reputation and favorable status not only from virtuous acts but also from the possession of wealth and social power.

The Evaluation of the Rich through Honor and Shame

Before exploring LXX Proverbs' evaluation of the rich from the viewpoint of honor and shame, we need to consider how their resources work in gaining honor. As Pitt-Rivers notes, "in a stratified society ... the distribution of honor" is closely related to "social status and as such, it is more often ascribed by birth than achieved."⁵²⁶ Considering that the society of LXX Proverbs is frequently described with words about wealth inequality and social rank, one might expect that in the book honor is likely to be conferred to one who inherits it from his or her family at birth. According to Pitt-Rivers, "titles and property, the honorific and effective forms of hereditary power, endow the social system with continuity in this regard; honor is ascribed."⁵²⁷ As we already noted, the rich of LXX Proverbs possess economic resources and social power, and they are probably granted honorable status by birth or from their family. However, the previous analysis of honor and shame in LXX Proverbs corroborates that the translator rarely promotes the ascribed honor which emanates from an honorable family or by birth. Rather, far greater attention is lavished on honor that is acquired through the attainment of wisdom than on ascribed honor. More importantly, as Halvor Moxnes observes, given that acquired honor as "merit" is

⁵²⁶ Pitt-Rivers, "Honor," 507.

⁵²⁷ Ibid.

“conferred on the basis of virtuous deeds,” LXX Proverbs’ specific emphasis on wisdom attained by virtues is reasonable.⁵²⁸

In light of this idea of honor and shame in LXX Proverbs, the rich should cultivate virtues such as generosity or charity in order to achieve honor, even though they might have been ascribed honor by birth. The rich ought to demonstrate their wisdom in using properly their wealth and social power to attain honor. However, as in MT Proverbs, in LXX Proverbs the rich neither show virtuous behaviors nor use their wealth as a means of achieving the honor. As we have seen, the rich are not described as those who seek wisdom and practice good deeds. Since the rich wrongly put their trust in their wealth whose protection is not reliable, they are evaluated as foolish. Because the rich also lie to others and delude themselves, their possessions do not help them cultivate their moral character but instead reveal their folly. Striving to build untrustworthy friendships based on wealth, the rich are not interested in showing generosity to their poor friends. Moreover, we sometimes see the rich who oppress social inferiors through economic and social power thanks to the upended hierarchy in which they lose their power and are under the rule of the powerless. Thus, the rich are not depicted as those who use properly their wealth and social power to cultivate virtues, such as beneficence. The rich do not take an interest in gaining honor through the pursuit of wisdom but attempt to acquire money and covet more wealth. Such figures are regarded as the foolish in LXX Proverbs, especially in 28:25: “A greedy man judges rashly, but he who trusts in the Lord will be attentive.” The rich instead use their wealth to protect themselves, make many friends, rule over others, and produce more wealth. The way the rich use their wealth proves that they are not really qualified to be given honor.

⁵²⁸ Halvor Moxnes, “Honor and Shame,” in *The Social Sciences and New Testament Interpretation*, ed. Richard L. Rohrbaugh (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1996), 22.

Conclusion

Given that LXX Proverbs fundamentally resulted from the translation of its Hebrew *Vorlage*, which was similar to but not identical to MT Proverbs, the book's descriptions of the rich share strong similarities. The rich are basically described as possessors of economic and social power and, at the same time, they function as negative moral agents who do not choose and act for the good but fail in showing their moral capacity and responsibility: they wrongly trust in their wealth, delude themselves and others, seek their own advantage in friendship, and oppress social inferiors such as the poor.

However, the translator did not produce a mechanical or literal translation of the parent Hebrew text but shows important differences from it by instilling in LXX Proverbs the idea of moralizing and reflecting the Hellenistic culture. Not only does the translator undermine the protective function of wealth that the rich possess and in which they trust, he also points out their greedy desire for ephemeral and untrustworthy wealth. Negatively characterizing the rich as liars, the translator cements his moral and intellectual suspicion of them. The translator also reflects closely the highest Hellenistic idea of virtuous friendship with its emphasis on mutual trust and support, demonstrating that the rich foolishly endeavor to build weak and unreliable friendships. The symbolic connection with creditors sheds light on the rich's oppression of the poor by pointing to ways to exploit them, such as through usury. What is more, the association of the rich with foolish and crafty masters highlights the rich's immorality in lording it over the powerless. The rich surely deserve to be negatively evaluated for their moral incapacity and irresponsibility, which is also supported by the rhetoric of honor and shame that says one ought to gain honor through the attainment of wisdom. As a result, the translator of LXX Proverbs

makes the point that the rich are not identical with those who possess wealth as rewards for seeking wisdom in the act-consequence nexus. Moreover, the wealth the rich possess in LXX Proverbs does not necessarily result from their virtue or wisdom.

Regarding these characteristics of the rich as moral agents, Newsom's model again provides a helpful insight to understand why the rich fail in showing their moral capacity. Newsom argues that the grammar of the moral self is basically formed by the relation of three elements—"desire, knowledge, and submission to external authority."⁵²⁹ When we apply these three elements to the moral agency of the rich in LXX Proverbs, we again see that their moral failure results from the interaction of their obsessive desire for wealth, their lack of knowledge about wisdom and their self-deception, along with their resistance to the external authority of wisdom. The lack of knowledge about wisdom causes the rich to fail to recognize its value. Instead, the rich overvalue wealth and thus think that their wealth provides them with total protection against any danger. The lack of knowledge about wisdom also leads the rich to trust inappropriately in their wealth rather than in God and thus arouses in them a strong desire for gaining wealth. Given that the rich are obsessed with wealth, they are primarily concerned with acquiring material goods as much as possible in social relations. Moreover, the rich's obsessive desire for wealth and their lack of knowledge about wisdom drive the rich to cheat others in order to augment their wealth and to pursue their own advantage, even in friendship. These two factors of desire and knowledge also cause the rich to resist the sapiential instruction regarding kindness and justice that is to be shown the poor, and to dominate others in order to amass wealth and gain more social power. In this regard, the rich's moral failure originates from the

⁵²⁹ Newsom, "Models of the Moral Self," 12.

combination of their obsessive desire for wealth, their lack of knowledge about wealth and themselves, and their resistance against the book's teaching.

The LXX Proverbs's moralizing characterization of the rich continues in other wisdom books produced in the Hellenistic epoch, specifically in Sirach. As we will see soon, Ben Sira adopts his predecessors' identification of the rich as negative moral agents and, at the same time, makes his negative description of the rich more explicit. As the distinctive status of the rich as moral agents becomes more obvious in Sirach, they are not logically understood as wise and righteous.

CHAPTER 4: THE RICH IN SIRACH

Introduction

Thus far I have argued that the rich in Proverbs should be identified as possessors of economic and social power, and as moral agents who have moral capacity but who fail to choose and act for the good. This understanding enables us to correct a misunderstanding that they are logically to be regarded as wise and righteous in the act-consequence nexus. This also suggests that the rich become a negative moral type that is criticized for their immorality. The evidence of this identification of the rich as a negative moral type in wisdom instructions continues in Sirach—one of the wisdom books produced during the Hellenistic epoch. As we will see in this fourth chapter, Sirach is similar to MT Proverbs and LXX Proverbs in identifying the rich as possessors of wealth and social power, and as moral agents. Yet, by sometimes making its descriptions of the rich more explicitly negative than MT and LXX Proverbs did, Sirach contributes to our understanding of the development of the figure of the rich in wisdom instructions whose logical status in the act-consequence discourse is not the same as the logical place of wealth in that discourse.

Introductory Matters of Sirach

As the grandson of Ben Sira evidently states in the prologue of Sirach, the book was first written in Hebrew (“for what was originally expressed in Hebrew does not have the same force when it is in fact rendered in another language”). Nevertheless, the book’s exclusion from the Jewish canon caused the original Hebrew text of Sirach to vanish for centuries. Instead, until modern times its main languages of transmission were Greek, later Latin, and Syriac. Thus, the Hebrew version of Sirach gradually fell into obscurity, despite the citations that survive in rabbinic

literature. However, the discovery of Hebrew versions of the texts, such as the Geniza manuscripts, the Dead Sea Scrolls, and the Masada manuscripts, have led scholars to conclude that the extant Hebrew manuscripts reflect the original Hebrew text, even though they contain many corruptions, mistakes, and glosses. Skehan and Di Lella conclude that “about 68 percent of the book is now extant in Hebrew.”⁵³⁰ The Greek text of Codex Vaticanus contains the complete book.

Unlike other biblical wisdom books, such as Proverbs,⁵³¹ Job, and Ecclesiastes,⁵³² that do not have a single named author, Sirach unusually offers the name of its author in its title. As Crenshaw observes, “in most Greek manuscripts” the text is identified as Σοφία Ἰησοῦ υιοῦ Σιραχ (“The Wisdom of Jesus the son of Sirach”).⁵³³ The Greek name Ἰησοῦς also appears in 50:27 (Ἰησοῦς υἱὸς Σιραχ Ελεαζαρ, “Jesus the son of Sirach”) and in the prologue written by his grandson (ὁ πάππος μου Ἰησοῦς ... συγγράψαι “My grandfather Jesus ... wrote ...”). As Skehan and Di Lella note, the Hebrew name ‘Yeshua’ (יֵשׁוּעַ) does not occur because there is no “extant Hebrew MSS [that] contains.”⁵³⁴

⁵³⁰ Skehan and Di Lella, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira*, 53; Joseph Ziegler, ed., *Sapientia Iesu filii Sirach*, Septuaginta, vol. XII, 2 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1965); Pancratius C. Beentjes, ed., *The Book of Ben Sira in Hebrew: A Text Edition of All Extant Hebrew Manuscripts and a Synopsis of All Parallel Hebrew Ben Sira Texts*, Supplements to Vetus Testamentum 68 (Leiden; New York: Brill, 1997). When I need to mention particular Hebrew manuscripts due to differences or parallels found in them, I follow the division of Beentjes (pp. 13-19).

⁵³¹ As I have already mentioned in chapter 1, the term ‘Proverbs’ that has no prefix (MT or LXX) here refers to both texts.

⁵³² In the book of Ecclesiastes or Qohelet, Qohelet’s identification as בֶּן־דָּוִד (“son of David,” Eccl 1:2) has led many to attribute its authorship to Solomon described as the literal son of David in the Hebrew Bible. However, as Seow points out, such a superscription “intends to evoke the memory” of Solomon but does not mean the information of its real author. Thus, the author of Ecclesiastes is better regarded as “an unknown sage who took the pen name Qohelet.” Seow, *Ecclesiastes*, 38, 97.

⁵³³ Crenshaw, “Sirach,” 606.

⁵³⁴ Yet, the Hebrew name ‘Yeshua’ appears in 50:27 (“Yeshua son of Eleazar son of Sira”) and in 51:30 (“Simon son of Joshua son of Eleazar son of Sira”) of the “Cairo Geniza MS B.” The author of Sirach called Ben Sira is thus identified as “Yeshua [‘Jesus’ in Greek], the son of Eleazar, the son of Sira.” Skehan and Di Lella, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira*, 3.

Regarding the date of Sirach, most scholars agree that it was written in the first quarter of the 2nd century BCE.⁵³⁵ Such an approximate date of composition arises from two pieces of evidence. First, in the prologue, the grandson of Ben Sira states that he moved to Egypt in the thirty-eighth year of the reign of King Euergetes. Since the name ‘Euergetes’ can refer to Ptolemy VII Euergetes II Physkon (170-163 and 146-117 BCE), the grandson’s arrival in Egypt can be dated to 132 BCE.⁵³⁶ Thus, the grandson’s translation, including the writing of the prologue, was completed after the death of Ptolemy VII Euergetes in 117 BCE.⁵³⁷ If we apply the average lifespan (ca. 40-50 years) to the grandson, in light of his arrival in Egypt in 132 BCE, Ben Sira was likely to have taught and written wisdom in the first quarter of the 2nd century BCE.⁵³⁸ Second, in Sirach 50, the author praises the high priest in Jerusalem, “Simon son of Jochanan (Onias [Ὀνειάας] in Greek, v. 1),” who is usually identified with Simeon II (219-196 BCE). As Crenshaw suggests, since Ben Sira’s description of the high priest premises his death, the completion of Sirach can be dated to after 196 BCE.⁵³⁹ To quote Collins, given that there is

⁵³⁵ Richard J. Coggins, *Sirach*, Guides to Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 18–19; John J. Collins, “Ecclesiasticus, or the Wisdom of Jesus Son of Sirach,” in *The Oxford Bible Commentary*, ed. John Barton and John Muddiman (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 667; Jeremy Corley, *Sirach*, New Collegeville Bible Commentary. Old Testament 21 (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2013), 5; Crenshaw, “Sirach,” 611; Daniel J. Harrington, *Jesus Ben Sira of Jerusalem: A Biblical Guide to Living Wisely*, Interfaces (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2005), 1; Skehan and Di Lella, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira*, 8–10; John G. Snaith, *Ecclesiasticus, or the Wisdom of Jesus Son of Sirach*, The Cambridge Bible Commentary: New English Bible (London; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1974), 1; James C. VanderKam, *An Introduction to Early Judaism* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2001), 116; Wright, “Sirach,” 412.

⁵³⁶ According to Skehan and Di Lella, the name ‘Euergetes’ (“Benefactor”) is only applied to two kings: “Ptolemy III Euergetes I (246-221 BC[E]) and Ptolemy VII Euergetes II Physkon (170-163 and 146-117 [BCE]). The reason for the preference of the latter (Ptolemy VII) is that his long reign is compatible with the grandson’s move in the thirty-eighth year of the reign of Euergetes in the prologue. Skehan and Di Lella, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira*, 8.

⁵³⁷ As several scholars observe, the participle συγχρονισίας in the prologue is “the most convincing” evidence for the date because it “ordinarily implies simultaneity” and thus means “I [the grandson] was there for the remainder of his [Ptolemy VII Euergetes] reign.” Ibid., 9; Crenshaw, “Sirach,” 610.

⁵³⁸ Skehan and Di Lella, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira*, 9.

⁵³⁹ Crenshaw, “Sirach,” 611.

no mention of “the upheavals of the time of Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175-164 [BCE]),” Ben Sira must have completed his writing before 175 BCE.⁵⁴⁰ In these respects, Sirach was regarded as being written and produced between 195 BCE and 175 BCE, most likely around 180 BCE given Ben Sira’s old age. It is thus roughly contemporary with LXX Proverbs.

Ben Sira lived in Jerusalem during the Hellenistic period. The descriptions of the high priest and the repair of the temple (50:1-4), as noted above, support the place of composition as Jerusalem. Ben Sira lived, worked, and wrote this book there. As Coggins also notes, the phrase in 50:27, “Jesus son of Eleazar son of Sirach of Jerusalem,” offers a clue to the author’s origin, even though it has been evaluated as “an addition.”⁵⁴¹ Furthermore, Ben Sira’s professional function as a scribe and a teacher suggests the locus of Sirach’s composition as Jerusalem since there he likely had easy access to many resources of the biblical traditions and to a significant number of young, well-to-do students. Yet, as Collins observes, Sirach still reflects Ben Sira’s “travels in foreign lands” (51:13) that were under the impact of Hellenistic cultures and ideas.⁵⁴² Because of this and because of Jerusalem where Ben Sira lived was also under the control of the Ptolemaic and Seleucid dynasties, he surely fell under the influence of Hellenization. Thus, Sirach has a Judean provenance, but the geographical and ideological scope of its influence is not restricted to that region alone but extends to the surrounding areas. This background is consistent with the purpose of writing the book because, as Skehan and Di Lella point out, Ben Sira strived to “convince Jews and even well-disposed Gentiles” that the locus of “true wisdom” does not lay in Alexandria but in Jerusalem and in biblical traditions.⁵⁴³

⁵⁴⁰ Collins, “Ecclesiasticus,” 667.

⁵⁴¹ Coggins, *Sirach*, 46.

⁵⁴² Collins, “Ecclesiasticus,” 667.

⁵⁴³ Skehan and Di Lella, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira*, 16.

Since Sirach has a great affinity with Proverbs, Job, and Ecclesiastes, it has been widely recognized that Sirach is a part of biblical wisdom literature. Of the three books, Proverbs not only influenced the form and content of Sirach most but also, as Harrington points out, functioned as “a primary source” for its composition.⁵⁴⁴ To quote Skehan and Di Lella, “Ben Sira’s dependence on Proverbs can be detected in almost every portion of his book.”⁵⁴⁵ As the sages of Proverbs did, Ben Sira fundamentally encourages the reader to seek wisdom through the embodiment of virtues by using forms such as maxims and instructions, and accepts the act-consequence nexus found in Proverbs. But the sage does not mechanically copy instructions and mimic the act-consequence logic of his predecessors. As we will see soon, Ben Sira skillfully weaves sapiential teachings like those of Proverbs with other biblical traditions, such as the Torah, and Hellenistic ideas. Consequently, as Skehan and Di Lella conclude, Ben Sira produced his own viewpoint of wisdom by developing the biblical traditions including Proverbs in a way that was “more understandable and more applicable to” his contemporary readers.⁵⁴⁶

A Philological Analysis of the Rich in Sirach

As Proverbs serves as an important resource of Sirach, the words Ben Sira uses for referring to the rich are basically identical to those of Proverbs. Thus, as in MT Proverbs and LXX Proverbs, the Hebrew term עשיר and the Greek term πλούσιος are used to indicate the rich in Sirach.⁵⁴⁷ As mentioned in the previous chapters, עשיר of MT Proverbs is regularly rendered into πλούσιος in LXX Proverbs. This relation between the two words continues in the Hebrew and Greek texts of

⁵⁴⁴ Harrington, *Jesus Ben Sira*, 15.

⁵⁴⁵ Skehan and Di Lella, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira*, 43.

⁵⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 44–45.

⁵⁴⁷ Wright and Camp, “Ben Sira’s Discourse,” 73.

Sirach. However, in MT and LXX Proverbs there is no simple a one-to-one correspondence between the terms. While עשיר appears thirteen times in the Hebrew text (10:30[MS B]; 13:2, 3, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23; 30:14; 31:1, 3), πλούσιος occurs seventeen times in the Greek text (8:2; 10:30; 13:2, 3, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23; 25:2; 26:4; 30:14; 31:3, 8; 44:6). This different rate of occurrence of the two words arises primarily from variants between the Hebrew text and the Greek text. Nonetheless when such variants are present, the Hebrew and Greek texts sometimes express a similar description of the rich. For example, the Hebrew phrase אִישׁ לֹא <לְ>הוֹן (“the one who has wealth”) of 8:2 is simply expressed with the word πλουσίου (“a rich person”) in the Greek text.⁵⁴⁸ Both texts basically refer to the one who possesses wealth, but such a difference in the terminology concerning the rich suggests that the rich do not appear merely as individuals who possess wealth but function more clearly as a moral type in the Greek text.⁵⁴⁹ Likewise, the phrase אֲנָשֵׁי הַיֵּל (“the people of wealth”) of 44:6 is similar in meaning to ἄνδρες πλούσιοι (“rich people”) in the Greek text. However, other variants offer different readings: גַּר (“stranger”) vs πλούσιος (“a rich person”) in 10:22, עשיר (“a rich person”) vs πλούτος (“wealth”) in 31:1, and אִישׁ (“a person”) vs πλούσιος (“a rich person”) in 31:8. In addition, 13:17 exists only in the Hebrew text, whereas 25:2 and 26:4 appear only in the Greek text.

As in Proverbs, the nominal forms עשיר(ו) and πλούτος refer to wealth in Sirach. While עשיר(ו) occurs eight times (3:17; 10:30-31; 11:14; 13:24; 14:3; 30:16, 19), πλούτος appears eleven times (10:30, 31; 11:14; 13:24; 14:3; 18:25; 21:4; 24:17; 28:10; 30:16; 31:1). As Wright, Camp, and Asensio observe, however, Ben Sira sometimes uses other Hebrew words related

⁵⁴⁸ In the margin of MS A 8:2, the Hebrew word לוֹ is added to the text. Thus, the phrase literally means “the one, wealth is for him.” Beentjes, *The Book of Ben Sira in Hebrew*, 31.

⁵⁴⁹ This difference of the terminology concerning the rich between the Hebrew text and the Greek text is also found in Sirach 10:30: “there are those who are honored because of their riches” (Hebrew) vs. “a rich person has repute because of his wealth” (Greek). I will explain it in more detailed later.

semantically to עושר (עושר) הון (“wealth,” 6:14; 8:2; 10:27; 31:3; 38:11), חיל (“strength” or “wealth,” 5:1; 14:15; 40:26; 44:6), חרוץ (“gold,” 14:3; 31:5), טובה/טוב (“goods/prosperity,” 6:11; 11:19, 25, 30; 12:8, 9; 14:4, 5; 30:16), and מחיר (“money,” 6:15; 7:18; 8:2; 31:5).⁵⁵⁰ In the Greek text, Ben Sira likewise employs other words connected semantically to πλούτος: χρῆμα (“possession,” 5:1, 8; 10:8; 14:3, 5; 21:8; 29:5, 6; 31:3; 33:20; 34:20; 37:6; 40:13, 26; 46:19), θησαυρός (“treasure,” 1:25; 6:14; 20:30; 29:11; 40:18; 41:12, 14; 43:14), χρυσίον (“gold,” 7:18, 19; 8:2; 28:24; 29:11; 30:15; 31:5, 6, 8; 40:25; 41:12; 45:11; 47:18; 50:9), ἀγαθός (“prosperity,” 6:11; 11:25; 12:8, 9), διάφορος (“cash,” 7:18; 27:1; 31:5; 42:5), κτήμα (“possession,” 28:24; 36:25; 51:21), and ἰσχύς (“strength,” 44:6).

The verbal forms of עשיר and πλούσιος also appear in Sirach, but not quite as often as in Proverbs. In the Hebrew text of Sirach, עשיר (“to become rich”) occurs only twice (11:18; 19:1). Still, the contexts in which עשיר is used connote a negative sense of becoming rich by showing self-affliction (מהתענות, 11:18) and contempt (בוזה) of small things (19:1). In the Greek text of Sirach, πλουτέω (“to be rich”) appears only in 11:18 where it likewise carries a negative connotation of being rich by describing it as a miserly life (σφιγγίας). The causative verb πλοθτιζω (“to enrich”) occurs in 11:21 and 19:1 where it emphasizes trust in the Lord who makes the poor wealthy and warns that one who indulges will not become rich. Another causative verb πληθύνω mainly means “to multiply,” but it sometimes signifies “to get rich” (27:1) or “to amass wealth” (47:18).

The Exegetical Analysis of the Rich in Sirach

The Rich as Possessors of Material Wealth and Social Power

⁵⁵⁰ Wright and Camp, “Ben Sira’s Discourse,” 73; Asensio, “Poverty and Wealth,” 156.

Possessors of Material Wealth and Social Power

As in MT and LXX Proverbs, in Sirach the rich are basically described as those who possess wealth. That is to say, when עשיר or πλούσιος are used, they refer to possessors of money or property. Like Proverbs, Sirach depicts the rich as possessors of wealth in two ways: one is to emphasize wealth or property the rich possess and the other is to place them in parallel with the poor.

On the one hand, Ben Sira identifies the rich as an economic class by noting the material resources they possess. When the sage describes a rich person or rich people, he uses words that refer explicitly or implicitly to wealth. For example, Sirach 10:30b says, “And a rich person has repute because of his wealth.” In the verse, the genitive case, ‘his wealth’ (עשרו; πλοῦτον αὐτοῦ), makes clear that the rich possess real material wealth. In the Greek text of 44:6a, Ben Sira employs the word ἰσχὺς to refer to the wealth rich people possess: “rich men endowed with resources (ἰσχύου)” (NRSV). As noted above, ἰσχὺς basically means “strength” or “might,” but it sometimes refers to “wealth, material possessions as [an] indication of one’s strength.”⁵⁵¹ Thus, ἰσχὺς strengthens the connotations of the rich as possessors of both real wealth and social power. The Hebrew text (MS B) of 44:6a reveals a similar idea by using the word כח with the sense of “property” (literally “power.” cf. Prov 5:10; 24:10), as will be simplified below: “The men of wealth (היל) are supporters of property (כח).”⁵⁵² Wealth (and sometimes strength) are properties of the rich.

In 8:1-2ab, although Ben Sira does not use a term that refers explicitly to wealth, he still describes the rich as those who possess wealth: “Do not contend with the powerful (גדול);

⁵⁵¹ Johan Lust, Erik Eynikel, and Katrin Hauspie, *Greek-English Lexicon of the Septuagint*, Rev. ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2003), 291; Muraoka, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 345.

⁵⁵² Köhler and Baumgartner, *HALOT*, 469.

δυνάστου), or you may fall into their hands. Do not quarrel with the rich, in case their resources outweigh yours” (NRSV).⁵⁵³ As Victor M. Asensio notes, גדול basically means a physically great one, but in the Hebrew text of 8:1 it denotes an economically and socially powerful one, especially in parallel with the phrase איש לא <לו> הון (“the one who has wealth”) of 8:2.⁵⁵⁴ As we have already seen in chapter 2, this use of גדול is also found in the Hebrew Bible (e.g., 2 Sam 19:33; 2 Kgs 4:8). In the Greek text of 8:1, גדול is rendered as δυνάστης, which refers to “one who is a position of power” (see also 10:3, “An uneducated king will destroy his people, and a city will be populated by the intelligence of its rulers [δυναστῶν]).⁵⁵⁵ Both גדול and δυνάστης strengthen the rich’s identification as those who possess economic and social power—a ruling class, which is consistent with those of Proverbs. As Asensio points out, נדיב also refers to powerful people in Sirach (7:6; 8:2, 4; 11:1; 13:9; 38:3), but it is different from גדול because it is never paralleled with עשיר in the book.⁵⁵⁶ In this verse, Ben Sira thus warns against quarreling with the rich because they have more material or social resources than others do. Yet, this warning against arguing with the rich further implies that they use their economic and social resources to win the argument. As I will explain soon, Ben Sira criticizes the rich for their unrighteous use of money and social power.

On the other hand, Ben Sira frequently clarifies the rich’s identity as possessors of wealth through parallels with the poor (10:30 [Greek]; 13:3, 18, 19, 20, 21-22 [Hebrew], 23; 25:2

⁵⁵³ The NETS offers the literal translation of this verse: “Do not quarrel with a rich person, lest he counter (ἀντιστήση) your weight (ὀλίγην).”

⁵⁵⁴ Victor M. Asensio, “Poverty and Wealth: Ben Sira’s View of Possessions,” in *Der Einzelne Und Seine Gemeinschaft Bei Ben Sira*, ed. Renate Egger-Wenzel and Ingrid Krammer, Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft 270 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1998), 155.

⁵⁵⁵ Muraoka, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 179.

⁵⁵⁶ According to Asensio, נדיב specifically “refers to illustrious people, with influence and politic power.” Asensio, “Poverty and Wealth,” 155.

[Greek]; 30:14; 31:3-4). In this case, the rich are identified more clearly as those who have abundant riches through the comparison with the poor who lack wealth. When Ben Sira compares the rich with the poor, he pays attention to benefits the former enjoy and disadvantages the latter experience. In Sirach 13:23, for example, the sage says, “A rich person spoke, and all kept silent, and they exalted his word up to the clouds. A poor person spoke, and they said, ‘Who is this?’ And if he should stumble, they will even overturn him.” Here, the sage says that the rich win popularity and enjoy broad social support, but the poor are disregarded by others and even overthrown. In Sirach 31:3-4, moreover, a rich person enjoys rest with his possessions and dainties, but a poor person labors in vain and does not enjoy rest. In Sirach, however, the rich are not always described as better than the poor on account of their wealth—a motif to be explored further below. For example, Sirach 13:3 illuminates the immorality of the rich: “A rich person did wrong, and he was angry to boot; a poor person has been wronged, and he will plead.” Importantly, this verse corresponds to the negative descriptions of the rich in Proverbs by using words ענה (“to oppress”)/ἀδικέω (“morally to wrong”) and נה (“to boast”)/προσεμβριμάομαι (“to orally express indignant displeasure”) that emphasize their immorality.⁵⁵⁷

Based on the above analysis, Ben Sira basically describes the rich as possessors of wealth and social benefit, but he also pays attention to their immoral characteristics. Although the sage sometimes describes the rich with words referring to wealth, he is less concerned about how much they possess and more interested in showing how and to what extent the rich have a relationship with the poor, how they gain wealth, and how they act immorally.

A Ruling Class

⁵⁵⁷ Köhler and Baumgartner, *HALOT*, 853; Muraoka, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 10, 593; Skehan and Di Lella, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira*, 249.

In his book, Ben Sira also recognizes the rich as members of a ruling class that possess not only abundant economic resources, but also significant social-political power (e.g., 8:2; 13:4, 19-20, etc.).⁵⁵⁸ We already saw that representations of wealth of the rich are associated with social power/strength or benefit. Since this social-political power is not attributed to everyone but only to a particular class who has wealth, it is a special sort of social advantage that only members of the ruling class enjoy. As Gregory points out, wealth is joined to social or political power so that its possessors, namely the rich, are able to control others.⁵⁵⁹ Like the rich of Proverbs (e.g., 22:7), the rich of Sirach exercise dominion over others, but Ben Sira specifically focuses on how they exercise their power in exploiting the poor or those who are under their control. In other words, Ben Sira gives special attention to the rich's extortion of the powerless through force or threats.

For example, as we have already explored above, Sirach 8:2ab depicts a rich person as a possessor of wealth, but this text further implies that he overpowers others, and thus warns others against quarreling with him. As Collins notes, the context provides several examples of “an imbalance of power” among people and emphasizes the overwhelming power of the rich person.⁵⁶⁰ Even so, the rich person's power is not limited to material resources but linked to social power because of the parallel with “a powerful person” (אִישׁ גְּדוֹל; ἀνθρώπου δυνάστου) in verse 1. As Corley suggests, the sage warns against quarreling with the powerful or the rich because it incites them to “become hostile” and potentially take others' possessions or rights by force.⁵⁶¹ The rich's exploitation of the powerless is also evident in 13:4 and 13:19:

⁵⁵⁸ As I mentioned in chapter 2, the term ‘a ruling class’ would have included a variety of groups, such as the king, royal families, government officials, scribes, soldiers, and priests (p. 69). Here, I use the term as an undifferentiated whole and as a specific indication of economic and political elites.

⁵⁵⁹ Gregory, *Like an Everlasting Signet Ring*, 49.

⁵⁶⁰ Collins, “Ecclesiasticus,” 675.

⁵⁶¹ Corley, *Sirach*, 30.

13:4 (MS A)

אם תכשר לו יעבד בך
 ואם תכרע יחמל עליך
 If you seem fit to him
 he will make you his slave
 but if you become worn out
 he will take pity on you.

ἐὰν χρησιμεύσης, ἐργᾶται ἐν σοί·
 καὶ ἐὰν ὑστερήσης, καταλείψει σε.
 If you are useful,
 he will work with you,
 and if you are in want,
 he will abandon you.

13:19 (MS A)

מאכל ארי פראי מדבר
 כן מרעית עשיר דלים
 The lion's food is the wild donkey—
 likewise the grazeland of the rich is the poor. thus the poor are the fodder of the rich.

κυνήγια λεόντων ὄναγροι ἐν ἐρήμῳ·
 οὕτως νομαὶ πλουσίων πτωχοί.
 The prey of lions is onagers in the desert;
 likewise the grazeland of the rich is the poor. thus the poor are the fodder of the rich.

As Skehan and Di Lella note, 13:4 shows how the rich person is selfish in terms of his treatment of others “for [his] own purposes.”⁵⁶² More importantly, Ben Sira sheds light on the rich person's exploitation by noting that he regards a poor person as useless and thus abandons him. Although the sage criticizes the rich's unjust treatment of the poor, he also acknowledges that they are the powerful who use their authority for their own profit. In Sirach 13:19, the rich's exploitation of the poor is compared to the law of the jungle in the world of animals. By reminding us that powerful lions prey on weak onagers, Ben Sira clarifies that the rich exploit the poor using the words *מרעית* and *νομαὶ* that mean pasture (cf. “feeding grounds” [NRSV]) to emphasize this: the rich plunder the poor and satisfy their avarice by using their power, as I will analyze it later. As Georg Sauer also points out, such a metaphor emphasizes how the rich victimize those who are weaker than them.⁵⁶³

Far greater attention is lavished on the character of the rich as exploiters in Sirach than in Proverbs, and in the former they are also closely associated with the ruling elites. Since the rich

⁵⁶² Skehan and Di Lella, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira*, 253.

⁵⁶³ Georg Sauer, *Jesus Sirach/Ben Sira*, *Alte Testament Deutsch - Apokryphen*, Bd. 1. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2000), 122.

are consistently depicted as those who benefit unfairly from the work of the poor, they surely have the social and political power to control others. In 38:24-34, Ben Sira provides a description of how the society in which he lives consists largely of two groups: one is the lower class (vv. 25-31) that includes peasants,⁵⁶⁴ artisans, smiths, and potters; and the other is the upper class (vv. 32-34), which includes the council of the people, the leaders of the public assembly, judges, and rulers.⁵⁶⁵ While the former have to do with farming and crafts, the latter descriptors pertain to social-political positions and activities. As Collins observes, this description is regarded as “diplomatic” because Ben Sira appeals to the superiority of his job as a scribe over such manual laborers on the basis of his opportunity for leisure compared to their dainties (v. 24).⁵⁶⁶ Leisure depends on whether one has sufficient wealth and enjoys one’s spare time without laboring physically at one’s job. This emphasis on leisure to study provides a hint of Ben Sira’s status: economically and socially he can afford to enjoy his leisure. However, this does not mean that Ben Sira was among the social and political leaders who ruled over others with their wealth and power; indeed, he differentiates himself from them by giving his students advice on how to act cautiously before the leaders (e.g., 4:7; 31:12-24; 32:9). As Horsley points out, the scribe (סופר/γραμματέως, 38:24) or the sage belongs to Gerhart E. Lenski’s concept of a “retainer class”

⁵⁶⁴ Even if Ben Sira divides his world in such a way, peasants might not necessarily occupy the same social space as artisans, smiths, and potters. As Adams observes, most of the population engaged in farming in the sage’s time, “during the Second Temple period.” According to him, “the available evidence does not reveal percentages in this regard, but most individuals farmed the land in some form or another. Agrarian life was not so much a choice as a way to survive, maintain family plots, and provide for one’s household.” Adams, *Social and Economic Life*, 82–83; Richard A. Horsley, *Scribes, Visionaries, and the Politics of Second Temple Judea* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007), 65–66.

⁵⁶⁵ As Walter J. Houston suggests, ruling elites or political leaders described in 38:32-34 were probably “aristocratic landowners, who are city-dwellers, high officials, and leading priests” and they were usually rich people. Walter J. Houston, “The Scribe and His Class: Ben Sira on Rich and Poor,” in *Writing the Bible: Scribes, Scribalism and Script*, ed. Thomas Römer and Philip R. Davies, BibleWorld (Durham: Acumen, 2013), 112.

⁵⁶⁶ Collins, “Ecclesiasticus,” 691.

who served a ruling class and mediated between them and ordinary people.⁵⁶⁷ Thus, the sage's enjoyment of leisure stems from his profession as a retainer who worked for his wealthy patron(s) or ruler(s).

Ben Sira points particularly to the affinity between the rich and rulers, especially in the form of the aristocratic priests. In Sirach 10:24, the sage addresses several kinds of political leaders, such as the “noble” (μεγιστῶν, רש), “judge” (κριτῆς, שופט), and “ruler” (δυνάστης, מושל). According to Richard A. Horsley and Patrick Tiller, these terms refer to “members of the priestly aristocracy of Jerusalem” who were “the high priest[s] as political ruler[s].”⁵⁶⁸ As Horsley and Tiller show, “the tithes and offerings” in a temple-state served as the major means of enabling high priests and their officers to gain wealth that supported their social-political status.⁵⁶⁹ In this sense, Ben Sira does not posit that all the rich are political leaders who have positions of the top layer in a social hierarchy, but his descriptions of the leaders suggest that many of them were most likely the rich.

The Rich as Moral Agents

Although the rich in Sirach function as possessors of wealth and social-political power, Ben Sira focuses more on how they use their wealth and concomitant power. Rather than evaluate the goodness or badness of the wealth and power the rich possess, Ben Sira judges the behaviors of the rich as moral or immoral according to how they acquire, amass, and use their wealth and

⁵⁶⁷ Gerhard E. Lenski, *Power and Privilege: A Theory of Social Stratification*, McGraw-Hill Series in Sociology (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966), 246; Horsley, *Scribes, Visionaries, and the Politics*, 67.

⁵⁶⁸ Richard A. Horsley and Patrick Tiller, “Ben Sira and the Sociology of the Second Temple,” in *Second Temple Studies III: Studies in Politics, Class, and Material Culture*, ed. Philip R. Davies and John M. Halligan, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament. Supplement Series 340 (London; New York: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 82–83.

⁵⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 84.

power. Ben Sira neither mechanically praises nor criticizes the rich simply because they possess wealth. Rather, the rich serve as moral agents who have moral capacity and responsibility but do not choose and act for the good. In other words, in Sirach the rich are not criticized for possessing wealth or being wealthy but for being rich in immorality. Based on Ben Sira's description, the rich do not embody typical wisdom virtues, such as helping the needy, but instead indulge in vice—specifically in the exploitation of the poor. Duranti's linguistic-anthropological concept of agents is again applicable to the identification of the rich in Sirach as moral agents because of how they control their behavior and how their behaviors affect others. Hence, they are evaluated for their behaviors.⁵⁷⁰ The rich in Sirach thus remind us of the rich in Proverbs. Yet, Ben Sira expresses his critique of the rich more explicitly than his predecessors did, and thus provides us with more negative characteristics of the moral agents known as the rich and reveals how the rich in wisdom instructions are evolving into a moral type.

The Rich Love Gold

The first characteristic of the rich as moral agents in Sirach is to 'love gold,' that is, the money and property they possess. This characteristic is closely connected to the rich's attitude toward their wealth more broadly. Ben Sira emphasizes the rich's strong attachment to their wealth in such a way that we are to understand it as an obsessive desire for wealth. As we have explored, the sage does not directly evaluate wealth itself but makes a moral judgment of how people use it. Given that Ben Sira severely criticizes a strong attachment to wealth, the rich who are obsessive about their possessions deserve to be criticized. Ben Sira buttresses his critique of the

⁵⁷⁰ Duranti, "Agency in Language," 453.

rich for their strong attachment to their wealth by warning that they will shake with anxiety and ultimately be destroyed.

In Sirach 31:1-7, Ben Sira offers a description of the rich (v. 3) by elaborately weaving his characterization of the rich with other moral claims. Ben Sira symbolically connects negative figures, such as lovers of gold and the fool, to the rich. Consider Sirach 31:1-7:⁵⁷¹

MS B

1

שקד עשיר ימחה שארו
דאגת מחיה תפריע נומה
A rich man's sleeplessness wastes away
his flesh,
anxiety about life disturbs sleep.⁵⁷²

Ἀγρυπνία πλούτου ἐκτῆκει σάρκας,
καὶ ἡ μέριμνα αὐτοῦ ἀφιστᾷ ὕπνον.
Wakefulness over wealth wastes away
flesh,
and anxiety about it removes sleep.

2

דאגת מחיה תפריג נומה
ומחלי חזק תפריע נומה
רע נאמן תניד חרפה
ומסתיר סוד אוהב כנפש
Anxiety about life drives away sleep
and it disturbs sleep more than a grievous illness.
Bringing shame upon a faithful companion
will cause him to drift away from you
but the friend of one who keeps confidence
is as his own soul.

μέριμνα ἀγρυπνίας ἀποστήσει νυσταγμόν,
καὶ ἀρρώστημα βαρὺ ἐκνήψει ὕπνον.

Anxiety over wakefulness will remove
sleepiness,
and a severe illness will carry off sleep.

3

עמלי עשיר לקבל הון
ואם ינוח לקבל תענוג
A rich man's toils are for the acquisition of wealth
and if he rests, it is to acquire pleasure.

ἐκοπίασεν πλούσιος ἐν συναγωγῇ χρημάτων
καὶ ἐν τῇ ἀναπαύσει ἐμπίμπλαται τῶν
τρυφημάτων αὐτοῦ.

A rich person toiled at the accumulation of
money,
and in rest he fills himself with his
delicacies.

4

יגע עני לחסר ביתו

ἐκοπίασεν πτωχὸς ἐν ἐλαττώσει βίου

⁵⁷¹ According to John J. Collins, "the order of chapters in Greek and Hebrew diverges (Gk. ch. 31 = Heb. ch. 34)." Collins, "Ecclesiasticus," 687.

⁵⁷² With regard to the translation of the Hebrew text, I refer to the translation of Benjamin H. Parker and Martin G. Abegg, Jr. This translation is available on the website of "The Book of Ben Sira," n.d., <http://www.bensira.org>, accessed 12/01/2017.

ואם ינוח יהיה צריך
עמל עני לחסר כחו
ואם ינוח לא נחה לו

A poor man wears to the detriment of
his household⁵⁷³

and if he rests, it will cost him dearly.

A poor man toils to the detriment of his strength
and if he rests it will be no respite for him.

5

רודף חרוץ לא ינקה
ואוהב מחיר בו ישגה

One who pursues gold will not go unpunished
and he who loves a bribe goes astray
because of it.

6

רבים היו חבולי זהב
והבוטח על פנינים

ולא מצאו להנצל מרעה
וגם להושע ביום עברה
כי תקלה הוא לאויל
וכל פותה יוקש בו

Many have been destroyed by gold

and he who trusts in jewels.

and has not found it able to deliver in the day of wrath
or to save in the day of misfortune.

For it is a stumbling block to the foolish
and every simpleton is ensnared by it.

7

אשרי איש נמצא תמים

ואחר ממון לא נלון

Happy is the man who is found to be blameless

and who does not turn aside after mammon.

καὶ ἐν τῇ ἀναπαύσει ἐπιδειῆς γίνεται.

A poor person toiled for a diminution of life,
and in rest he becomes needy.

Ὁ ἀγαπῶν χρυσίον οὐ δικαιωθήσεται,
καὶ ὁ διώκων διάφορα ἐν αὐτοῖς
πλανηθήσεται.

He who loves gold will not be justified,
and he who pursues profits will be led astray
by them.

πολλοὶ ἐδόθησαν εἰς πτώμα χάριν χρυσίου,
καὶ ἐγενήθη ἡ ἀπώλεια αὐτῶν κατὰ
πρόσωπον αὐτῶν.

Many were given over to ruin because of
gold,
and their destruction has happened in front
of them.

ξύλον προσκόμματός ἐστιν τοῖς
ἐνθουσιάζουσιν αὐτῷ,

καὶ πᾶς ἄφρων ἀλώσεται ἐν αὐτῷ.

It is a block for stumbling for those who are
possessed by it,
and every fool will be taken captive by it.

In verses 3-4, Ben Sira basically describes a rich person as one who toils to amass money, in
comparison with a poor person who toils without profit. After the comparison, the sage also

⁵⁷³ The translation of Sirach 31:4a (MS B) is mine.

juxtaposes the rich person's enjoyment of delicacies with the poor person's distress (vv. 3-4). In these verses, the sage is not suspicious of the causal relation between toil and wealth but of the rich person's purpose of toil: he toiled for the accumulation of wealth and in rest he fills himself with his delicacies. Thus, the rich person seeks comforts that such accumulation secures. What's more, the surrounding verses all have to do with the rich person's obsessive desire to gain more wealth. As Gregory notes, verses 1-2 function as an introduction to "the theme of the whole section," that is, the rich person's obsessive desire for wealth, by foreshadowing such a person's anxious wakefulness about wealth.⁵⁷⁴ According to verses 1-2 in the Greek text, one who has anxiety about wealth suffers from insomnia (ἀγρυπνία) and a severe illness. Despite the absence of πλούσιος, the context suggests that the one who suffers from insomnia in verses 1-2 accords with the rich person who strives to accumulate wealth in verse 3. More importantly, verse 1 of the Hebrew text (MS B) obviously identifies the one who suffers from insomnia with a rich person: שקד עשיר ימהה שארו ("A rich man's sleeplessness wastes away his flesh").⁵⁷⁵ Viewed in this light, even if the rich person fills himself with delicacies by virtue of his wealth, his strong attachment to the wealth gives rise to anxiety about gaining more money and consequently drives away sleep. In short, such a person loses rather than gains from wealth.

Ben Sira reinforces the negative description of the rich person who obsessively desires wealth by drawing a parallel with one who loves gold in verses 5-7. As noted earlier, the Hebrew words, חרוץ (31:5) and זהב (31:6), and the Greek word χρυσίον (31:5-6) literally mean gold, but metaphorically in Sirach they more broadly suggest wealth or money. As Victor H. Matthews observes, gold was basically one of the jewels that showed a person's or a place's "prosperity

⁵⁷⁴ Gregory, *Like an Everlasting Signet Ring*, 51.

⁵⁷⁵ Refer to the translation of the New English Bible that reflects the Hebrew text: "A rich man loses weight by wakeful nights." Snaith, *Ecclesiasticus*, 151.

and economic wealth” in the ancient world (e.g., Gen 24:35; 1 Kgs 6:20f.).⁵⁷⁶ Yet, as gold stereotypically functions as an object of great value and thus as being something that is greatly desired, it appears in comparison with other things, especially in Proverbs where the sages compare the value of gold with that of wisdom (3:14; 8:19; 16:16). As Fox notes, such comparisons are not to “teach the avoidance of wealth but [to] set it above legitimately valued items,” such as gold.⁵⁷⁷ In his book, Ben Sira likewise employs gold, emphasizing that it is worth less than a faithful brother (7:18), a wise and good wife (7:19), and health and vigor (30:15).⁵⁷⁸ In verse 5 of the Hebrew and Greek texts, gold specifically symbolizes the enchantment of wealth and, at the same time, reveals how the rich person values it more than other important figures or things.

In verse 5a of the Greek text, the rich person’s strong attachment to wealth is emphasized by the word ἀγαπάω (‘to love’), in comparison to the word רדף (‘to pursue’) of the Hebrew text, even though רדף also suggests strong desire. Yet, verse 5b of the Hebrew text also supports the rich person’s deep attachment to wealth by using the word אהב (‘to love’): “one who loves money” (מחיר).⁵⁷⁹ In verse 5 of both the Hebrew and Greek texts, therefore, Ben Sira identifies the rich person as one who has a strong attachment to the love of gold and the pursuit of money. Furthermore, Ben Sira sharply criticizes the one who loves gold by making a moral judgment

⁵⁷⁶ Victor H. Matthews, *The Cultural World of the Bible: An Illustrated Guide to Manners and Customs* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015), 130.

⁵⁷⁷ Fox, *Proverbs 1-9*, 270.

⁵⁷⁸ In Sirach 7:18, Ben Sira uses a specific expression, “gold of Ophir”: “Do not exchange a friend for money, or a real brother for the gold of Ophir.” According to Skehan and Di Lella, Ophir was “a region on the coast of southern Arabia or eastern Africa, famous in antiquity for its gold (cf. 1 Kgs 9:28; 10:11; Isa 13:12; Job 22:24; 28:16; Ps 45:10).” Skehan and Di Lella, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira*, 205.

⁵⁷⁹ Cf. Verse 5b of the Greek text has the word διάφορα that literally means “ready money” or “cash.” Muraoka, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 163.

that such a person—the rich person—will not be justified but will be led astray by it. Ben Sira thus bolsters his critique of the one who has the strong attachment to wealth (cf. 27:1 “Many have sinned on account of cash [διαφόρου], and he who seeks to increase will avert an eye”).⁵⁸⁰ The lover of gold and the pursuer of money are symbolically connected to the rich person because all three figures show a strong attachment to wealth. As a result, Ben Sira pushes the reader to identify the rich as those who love and pursue their wealth excessively.

Along with the moral judgment of the rich, Ben Sira accusingly points out the results of their choices by remarking in verses 6-7 on the catastrophic consequences of such choices. As Gregory observes, the love of gold and the pursuit of money are “deceptive” because while wealth appears to guarantee “security,” in reality it causes those who have the obsessive desire for it—the rich—to be ruined and destroyed.⁵⁸¹ Pointedly, Ben Sira compares the rich to fools (אִוִּיל; [v. 6e]; פֹּתְהָהּ [v. 6f]; ἄφρων [v. 7b]) in two ways: on the one hand, the rich do not recognize that greed for money becomes a stumbling block, and on the other, their avarice makes them captive to wealth. It is noteworthy that in verse 7 of the Greek text the sage uses the specific term ἐνθουσιάζω (“to be madly taken up by” or “to be inspired or possessed by a god”) to spotlight the rich’s intense but harmful desire (cf. NRSV, “It is a stumbling block to those who are avid for it”).⁵⁸² This deceptive effect of the obsessive desire for wealth reminds us of the sapiential teaching of Proverbs that wealth works as a fortified city for its possessors and thus causes them (*viz.* the rich) to put their (misplaced) trust in it (Prov 10:15; 18:11). Ben Sira does not merely

⁵⁸⁰ There is no extant Hebrew text of Sirach 27:1.

⁵⁸¹ Gregory, *Like an Everlasting Signet Ring*, 51.

⁵⁸² Muraoka, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 238; Lust, Eynikel, and Hauspie, *Greek-English Lexicon of the Septuagint*, 204.

imply that the rich's obsessive desire for wealth prompts them to trust mistakenly in it but further warns that their avarice will surely lead to their ruin and destruction.

The critique of the rich for their greed for wealth in 31:1-7 corresponds to Ben Sira's strong warnings against the obsessive desire for wealth. In 14:9, the sage regards the greedy as those who are not satisfied with their portion:

MS A

בעין כושל מעט הוא חלקו
ולוקח חלק רעהו מאבד חלקו
In the eye of the failing, his portion is
small⁵⁸³
but he who takes the portion of
his neighbor loses his own.

πλεονέκτου ὀφθαλμὸς οὐκ ἐμπίπεται μερίδι,
καὶ ἀδικία πονηρὰ ἀναξηραίνει ψυχὴν.
The eye of the greedy is not satisfied
with a portion,
and wicked injustice withers the soul.

While the Hebrew text of this verse does not directly describe a greedy person (because כושל literally means “one who stumbles”), its Greek counterpart obviously identifies the one who is not satisfied with his portion as a greedy person (πλεονέκτης). Ben Sira criticizes the greedy person for showing a strong desire for wealth despite already having a portion. Furthermore, Ben Sira shows that such a greedy person who inordinately desires riches becomes morally depraved.

For example, Ben Sira says in 8:2:

MS A

אל תחרש על איש לו הון
כן ישקל מ' [רך ואבדת
כי רבים הפחיו זהב
וה' [משגה ל'] יבים
Do not plot against a wealthy man
lest he weigh out the price for your destruction.
For gold has broken the restraint of many
and we[alth] drives the hea[rts of nobl]emen mad.

μη ἔριξε μετὰ ἀνθρώπου πλουσίου,
μήποτε ἀντιστήση σου τὴν ὀλκίην·
πολλοὺς γὰρ ἀπώλεσεν τὸ χρυσίον
καὶ καρδίας βασιλέων ἐξέκλινεν.
Do not quarrel with a rich person,
lest he counter your weight;
for gold has ruined many
and has perverted hearts of kings.

⁵⁸³ The translation of Sirach 14:9a (MS A) is mine.

In this verse, Ben Sira uses gold (זָהָב, χρυσίον) to emphasize the enchanting but corruptive effect of greed for money. Regarding the reason, the Hebrew text suggests that gold causes many persons to be reckless by it and according to the restored text, wealth drives the hearts of nobles to err. The Greek text simply states that gold ruins many and perverts the hearts of kings. Despite this slight difference, both texts nonetheless clarify that greed for gold and wealth can lead to the ruin of those who have it. By drawing a parallel between the danger of greed (8:2cd) and a rich person (8:2ab), the sage insists that the rich person belongs to those who have been ruined and corrupted because of avarice.

Moreover, Ben Sira reinforces his critique of the rich for their greed for wealth by admonishing the reader not to rely on wealth and not to be preoccupied with his money. For example, Ben Sira says in 5:1-3:

MS A

1

אל תשען על חילך
ואל תאמר יש לאל ידי
אל תשען על כוחך
ללכת אחר תאות נפשך

Do not rely on your wealth;
Do not say, "I am capable in my power."⁵⁸⁴
Do not rely upon your strength
to follow after that which you long for.

2

אל תלך אחרי לבך ועיניך

ללכת בחמודות רעה
Do not follow after your heart and your eyes
to walk in evil desires.

3

אל תאמר מי יוכל כחו
כי יי מבקש נרדפים

Μὴ ἔπεχε ἐπὶ τοῖς χρήμασίν σου
καὶ μὴ εἴπῃς Αὐτάρκη μοί ἐστιν.

Do not be occupied with your money,
and do not say, "I am self-sufficient."

μὴ ἐξακολουθεῖ τῇ ψυχῇ σου καὶ τῇ ἰσχύι
σου

πορεύεσθαι ἐν ἐπιθυμίαις καρδίας σου·
Do not follow your soul and your strength,
to walk in your heart's desires.

καὶ μὴ εἴπῃς Τίς με δυναστεύσει;
ὁ γὰρ κύριος ἐκδικῶν ἐκδικήσει.

⁵⁸⁴ The translation of Sirach 5:1b (MS A) is mine.

Do not say, “Who can overcome my power?” ⁵⁸⁵	And do not say, “Who shall hold power over me?”
for the LORD demands retribution on behalf of those who are oppressed.	For the Lord, when he punishes, will punish.

In verse 1, Ben Sira explicitly warns the reader against relying on his or her wealth. In the Hebrew text, by using the words *חיל* and *כוח* the sage further advises the reader against relying on and boasting about his or her strength. Verse 2 provides the reason for the warning. As Crenshaw observes, such reliance on wealth provokes one to “self-reliance” and to pursue the desires of his heart.⁵⁸⁶ The divine judgment of verse 3 strengthens the sage’s warning against reliance on wealth. Although in this passage Ben Sira does not use the word *עשיר* or *πλούσιος* to refer to the rich, the description of reliance on wealth reminds us of the rich who have a strong attachment to their wealth, as we saw in 31:1-7. In this regard, Ben Sira discredits the rich’s obsessive desire for wealth through the revelation of the divine judgment on them.

The Rich Exploit Others in Social Relations

The second characteristic of the rich that Ben Sira describes is their penchant. Like the sages of Proverbs, Ben Sira acknowledges that the rich’s economic and social resources empower them to enjoy social benefits, such as their friends’ support and praise. Yet, based on teachings about friendship in which Ben Sira emphasizes loyalty and trustworthiness, the rich are criticized for their self-serving attempts to build relationships with others only to exploit them. In addition, the analogy with utilitarian friendship of Aristotle clarifies how the rich use social relations for their

⁵⁸⁵ According to Skehan and Di Lella, the reading of *כחי* (“my power”) is preferable to *כחו* (“his power”) of MS A, because of “the confusion of *waw* and *yod* in the Geniza MSS.” Skehan and Di Lella, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira*, 181–82. I here follow this reading of *כחי*.

⁵⁸⁶ Crenshaw, “Sirach,” 677.

own ends. The sage thus admonishes the reader not to associate with the rich lest he or she be abandoned by them.

In his book, Ben Sira takes a profound interest in friendship, frequently employing words that refer to a friend or a fellow: φίλος (“friend.” 6:1, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 13, 14, 15, 16; 7:12, 18; 9:10[×2]; 12:8, 9; 13:21[×2]; 14:13; 19:8, 13, 15; 20:16, 23; 22:20, 21, 22[×2], 25; 27:16, 17; 28:9; 29:10; 30:3, 6; 33:6, 20; 37:1[×3]; 2, 4, 5, 6; 40:23; 41:18, 22) and πλησίον (“fellow.” 5:12; 6:17; 9:14; 10:6; 13:15; 15:5; 16:28; 17:14; 18:13; 19:14, 17; 22:23; 25:1, 18; 27:18, 19; 28:2, 7; 29:1, 2[×2], 5, 14, 20; 31:15, 31; 34:26). As we observed in LXX Proverbs, φίλος mainly corresponds to the Hebrew word כָּהֵן (*ōhēb*; 6:5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 13, 14, 15, 16; 7:18; 9:10; 12:8; 14:13; 37:1, 4, 5), whereas πλησίον is translated from the Hebrew word רֵעַ (*rēa* ‘; 6:17; 7:12; 9:14; 12:9; 31:21; 37:2).⁵⁸⁷ In these sayings, Ben Sira basically insists that it is good for one to have a friend. For example, the sage evaluates friendship as beautiful in 25:1: “My soul found passion in three things, and these are beautiful before the Lord and human beings: harmony of brothers and friendship of fellows and a wife and husband who accommodate each other.” In 25:9 of the Latin and Syriac texts, Ben Sira also says, “Happy is the one who finds a friend” (NRSV).⁵⁸⁸ As Corley also observes, Ben Sira regards friends as one of “[the] good things” in life in 40:23: “Friend and companion meet at the right moment, and above both is a wife with a husband.”⁵⁸⁹ In 20:16, Ben Sira even evaluates one who does not have a friend as a fool: “A foolish person says, ‘I do not have a friend, and there is no gratitude for my good deeds.’ Those who eat his bread are mean in tongue.” For Ben Sira, it is significant for a person

⁵⁸⁷ Olyan, *Friendship in the Hebrew Bible*, 160.

⁵⁸⁸ In contrast, the Greek text of 25:9 says, “Happy is he who found prudence (φρόνησι)” (NETS).

⁵⁸⁹ Corley, *Ben Sira’s Teaching on Friendship*, 214.

to have a friend because when he or she faces difficulty or suffering, like a shelter his or her friend can help him or her. For example, Sirach 6:14 says, “A loyal friend is a sturdy shelter (σκέπη κραταιά), and he who finds him has found a treasure.”⁵⁹⁰ To quote Corley, the word σκέπη frequently refers to something that provides protection, such as “the tent protecting the sanctuary” (Exod 26:7).⁵⁹¹ The loyal friend of Sirach 6:14 likewise functions as a protection for one in need or suffering.

Considered in light of Sirach’s emphasis on the goodness of friendship, it is hardly surprising that the fact that the rich have many friends is not evaluated negatively in the book. Indeed, Ben Sira says that the rich get support from their friends, in comparison to the poor whose friends disregard them. Sirach 13:21-23 says:

MS A

21

עשיר מוט בסמך מרע

ודל נמוט נדחה מרע אל רע

A rich man stumbles and finds support
from a friend

but a poor man is tripped

and is thrust away from friend to friend.

22

עשיר מדבר ועזריו רבים

ודבריו מכווערין מהופין

דל נמוט גע גע ושא ודבר

משכיל ואין לו מקום

A rich man speaks and his helpers
are multiplied;

though his words are corrupt,
they are perceived as beautiful.

A poor man is tripped and people mock,
saying, “Go ahead and land on the ground
and lift yourself up, too!”

Though his word is wise

πλούσιος σαλευόμενος στηρίζεται ὑπὸ φίλων,
ταπεινὸς δὲ πεσὼν προσαποθεῖται ὑπὸ φίλων.

When a rich person totters, he is supported
by friends

but when a humble person falls,
he is pushed away by friends.

πλουσίου σφαλέντος πολλοὶ ἀντιλήμπτωρες·
ἐλάλησεν ἀπόρρητα, καὶ ἐδικαίωσαν αὐτόν.

When a rich person staggers,
many are his helpers;

he spoke things not to be spoken,
and they justified him.

A humble person staggered,
and in addition they rebuked him;

he uttered sense,

⁵⁹⁰ The Hebrew text of 6:14 (6:13 in Beentjes’s version) reads differently: “A faithful friend is a powerful friend (אוהב תקור) and the one who finds him has found a treasure.”

⁵⁹¹ Corley, *Ben Sira’s Teaching on Friendship*, 58.

there will be no place for it.

23

עשיר דובר הכל נסכתו

ואת שכלו עד עב יגיעו

דל דובר מי זה יאמרו

ואם נתקל גם הם יהדפוהו

When a rich man is speaking, all are silent
and his understanding they exalt to
the clouds.

When a poor man speaks they say,
“Who is this?”

And if he stumbles
they will also push him away.

and no place was given to him.

πλούσιος ἐλάλησεν, καὶ πάντες ἐσίγησαν
καὶ τὸν λόγον αὐτοῦ ἀνύψωσαν ἕως τῶν νεφελῶν.

πτωχὸς ἐλάλησεν καὶ εἶπαν Τίς οὗτος;
κἄν προσκόψῃ, προσανατρέψουσιν αὐτόν.

A rich person spoke, and all kept silent,
and they exalted his word up to
the clouds.

A poor person spoke, and they said,
“Who is this?”

And if he should stumble,
they will even overturn him.

In these verses, Ben Sira focuses on the contrast between a rich person and a poor person by depicting how others respond to the two persons when they are in trouble: the rich person’s friends support him but the poor person’s friends push him away. Identifying the others as friends (v. 21; רע; φίλων), Ben Sira enables the reader to understand the support that such others provide as a benefit of friendship. This description of the support from friends is consistent with the sage’s emphasis on the protection that one can get from friends (6:14), as noted above. In addition, as Corley points out, one who supports (στηρίζω; ἡμσ) his friend in 13:21 is contrasted with the enemy of 12:17 who pretends to help (ἡμσ; βοηθέω) his friend but trips him up.⁵⁹²

Regarding the description of social benefits that the rich enjoy, one might read this with a strong act-consequence logic. However, Ben Sira does not posit that the rich person gets the support and help from his friends because of his virtue or that the poor person is shunned by his friends because of his vice. Rather, Ben Sira simply observes how wealth and poverty have an impact on the social relations of the rich and the poor. Of pivotal importance is the fact that Ben Sira indicates that it is not the rich person’s wisdom that prompts others’ help. Sirach rather describes such a rich person in verse 22 as one who speaks improper words, in contrast to the

⁵⁹² Ibid., 147.

poor person who utters sense. Viewed in this light, as the sages of Proverbs showed in 14:20-21 and 19:4, Ben Sira implies that it is merely wealth that grounds the rich person's ability to get support and help from his 'friends,' who are in essence not true friends. For Ben Sira, as with the sages of Proverbs, the social benefit of friendship that the rich person enjoys does not result from his virtue or wisdom, nor is it based on kinship ties. It is tied to his possession of ephemeral wealth, as we will see below.

Despite the social benefit of friendship that the rich enjoy, Ben Sira does not describe the rich positively in terms of friendship because they do not take an interest in being true friends to others. For Ben Sira, true friendship is a moral category and hence it should be founded on and characterized in terms other than wealth or profit, terms such as loyalty, trustworthiness, and love. Indeed, Ben Sira argues that true friendship entails showing virtues, such as loyalty, trustworthiness, and love, to one's friend. For example, the sage highlights the value of a loyal friend in 6:15-16: "A faithful (אמונה; πιστοῦ) friend is beyond price, no sum can balance his worth. A faithful (אמונה; πιστὸς) friend is a life-saving remedy, such as the one who fears God finds."⁵⁹³ In addition, Ben Sira urges the reader to love his or her friend and trust him or her in 27:17: "He who reveals secrets has destroyed trust (πίστιν) and will never find a friend for his soul. Show a friend affection (στέργον), and keep faith with him, but if you reveal his secrets, do not follow after him." Unfortunately, the rich in Sirach do not cultivate virtues such as loyalty and mutual trust that are necessary to build true friendship, even though they have abundant opportunity to do so. Rather, the rich exploit others in social relations; they mistreat others to satisfy their obsessive desire for wealth without seeking mutual support and loyalty to build the true friendship. Consider Sirach 13:2-8:

⁵⁹³ Skehan and Di Lella, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira*, 186.

MS A

2

כבד ממך {מה} תשא
 ואל עשיר ממך מה תתחבר
 מה י{ת} חבר פרור אל סיר
 אשר הוא נוקש בו והוא נשבר
 What reason would make you bear
 a burden too heavy for you?
 So why should you associate with
 someone who is richer than you?
 Why should an earthen jar associate
 with an iron pot?

For the iron one will strike against the other
 and the earthen one will be broken.

3

עשיר יענה הוא יתנוה
 ועל דל נעוה הוא יתחנן
 A rich man mistreats another
 and brags about it,
 but a poor man is mistreated
 and pleads for forgiveness.

4

אם תכשר לו יעבד בך
 ואם תכרע יחמל עליך
 If you seem fit to him
 he will make you his slave
 but if you become worn out
 he will take pity on you.

5⁵⁹⁴

אם שלך ייטיב דבריו עמך
 וירששך ולא יכאב לו
 If you have any possessions
 he will speak pleasant words to you,
 but he will make you poor
 and he will not grieve.⁵⁹⁵

6

צריך לו עמך והשיע לך
 ושוחק לך והבטיחך
 When he is in need he will be with you
 and be friendly to you and joke with you
 and make promises to you.

βάρος ὑπὲρ σὲ μὴ ἄρης
 καὶ ἰσχυροτέρῳ σου καὶ πλουσιωτέρῳ μὴ κοινώνει.
 τί κοινωῆσει χύτρα πρὸς λέβητα;
 αὕτη προσκρούσει, καὶ αὕτη συντριβήσεται.
 Do not lift what is too heavy for you,

and do not associate with one stronger
 and richer than you.
 How will a clay pot associate with a cauldron?

The former will strike against,
 and the former will be smashed.

πλούσιος ἠδίκησεν, καὶ αὐτὸς προσεनेβριμήσατο·
 πτωχὸς ἠδίκηται, καὶ αὐτὸς προσδεηθήσεται.
 A rich person did wrong,
 and he was angry to boot;
 a poor person has been wronged,
 and he will plead.

ἐὰν χρησιμεύσης, ἐργᾶται ἐν σοί·
 καὶ ἐὰν ὑστερήσης, καταλείψει σε.
 If you are useful,
 he will work with you,
 and if you are in want,
 he will abandon you.

ἐὰν ἔχῃς, συμβιώσεται σοι
 καὶ ἀποκενώσει σε, καὶ αὐτὸς οὐ πονέσει.
 If you have something,
 he will live with you,
 and he will clean you out,
 and he will not suffer.

χρείαν ἔσχηκέν σου, καὶ ἀποπλανήσει σε
 καὶ προσγελάσεται σοι καὶ δώσει σοι ἐλπίδα·
 He has need of you and will deceive you
 and will smile at you
 and will give you hope;
 he will speak nice things to you

⁵⁹⁴ Skehan and Di Lella points out the corruption of Sirach 31:5-7 (MS A) as follows: "The various sources here show textual confusion, already present in the Gr; Syr and MS A are weaker witnesses here." Ibid., 251.

⁵⁹⁵ The translation of Sirach 13:5b (MS A) is mine.

7

עד אשר יועיל יהתל בך
פעמים שלש יעריצך
ובכן יראך
והתעבר בך ובראשו יניע אליך

As long as he is able to find some profit
from you.
But then he will mock you,
he will terrify you three times over
and he will look at you in that state
and pass you by and shake his head at you.

8

השמר אל תרהב מאד
ואל תדמה בחסירי מדע
Guard yourself. Do not be too haughty.
and do not perish
through lack of knowledge.

and say, “What do you need?”

καὶ αἰσχυνεῖ σε ἐν τοῖς βρώμασιν αὐτοῦ,
ἕως οὗ ἀποκενώσει σε δις ἢ τρίς,
καὶ ἐπ’ ἐσχάτων καταμωκήσεται σου·
μετὰ ταῦτα ὄψεται σε καὶ καταλείψει σε
καὶ τὴν κεφαλὴν αὐτοῦ κινήσει ἐπὶ σοί.
He will shame you with his foods
until he cleans you out two or three times,
and at last he will mock you;
after these things, he will see you

and leave you and will shake his head at you.

πρόσεχε μὴ ἀποπλανηθῆς
καὶ μὴ ταπεινωθῆς ἐν ἀφροσύνῃ σου.
Take care that you are not led astray,
and do not be humiliated
by your folly.

In this pericope, Ben Sira describes how the rich selfishly use others for their own gain without showing loyalty and mutual trust in their social relations including, presumably, friendship. In verse 2, Ben Sira admonishes the reader not to form an association with the rich who have more resources and power.⁵⁹⁶ Such an admonition appears to be incongruous with Ben Sira’s emphasis on the goodness of friendship elsewhere. As Skehan and Di Lella point out, the sage here presents “the incompatibility of rich and not so rich” through contrastive metaphors of a clay pot and a cauldron because the rich put others including friends at risk by exploiting them.⁵⁹⁷ In verse 3, Ben Sira shows how the rich fail in building the true friendship with the poor: the rich do moral wrong to the poor and even brag (בִּוְה) about mistreatment of them or otherwise insult

⁵⁹⁶ As Corley observes, a Greek poet Theognis offers a similar lesson of relations among social unequals: “If you mingle with the base, you will lose even the sense you have” (Theognis 35-36). Corley, *Sirach*, 41.

⁵⁹⁷ Skehan and Di Lella, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira*, 252.

(προσεμβριμάομαι) them.⁵⁹⁸ Such immoral behavior foreshadows the rich's unjust treatment of others to increase their profit without building true friendship; it further signals their lack of social virtue that is important to wisdom.

The characterization of the rich as those who have no interest in true friendship is most noticeable in 13:4-7 in which Ben Sira focuses exclusively on how the rich exploit and use others for their own profit. As Camp notes, Ben Sira here suggests that the rich “might turn [any] relationship to [their] own advantage.”⁵⁹⁹ The rich view others not as friends to whom they have an obligation to show loyalty, trustworthiness, and love but as resources to be evaluated of whether they are of use to the rich or not. If the rich regard a person as useful to increase their wealth, they will work with him (v. 4), live with him (v. 5), smile and encourage him (v. 6b), and speak nicely to him (v. 6c). However, the rich perform such behaviors merely to gain some advantage without cultivating social virtues for building true friendship. The deceptive techniques of the rich cause their useful friends to lose their resources and to be abandoned by the rich (v. 7). In contrast, if the rich view a person as useless to themselves or to the rich's own ends, they immediately abandon that person and no longer have any relationship with him (v. 4).

What is striking in Ben Sira's description of the rich as exploiters is his emphasis on their pursuit of utilitarian friendship. Moreover, the utilitarian friendship the rich seek is in marked contrast with the true friendship that Ben Sira emphasizes. Ben Sira's idea of friendship bears many similarities to that of LXX Proverbs because both highlight trust and support between friends and, at the same time, warn against the utilitarian friendship by which one attempts to

⁵⁹⁸ According to Muraoka, the word προσεμβριμάομαι specifically means “to orally express indignant displeasure besides causing some other discomfort or injury.” Muraoka, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 593.

⁵⁹⁹ Claudia V. Camp, *Ben Sira and the Men Who Handle Books: Gender and the Rise of Canon-Consciousness*, Hebrew Bible Monographs 50 (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2013), 49.

gain his own advantage by using others. The contrastive description of true friendship and utilitarian friendship in LXX Proverbs and Sirach is quite consistent with that of Aristotle's distinctions, even though, as Olyan notes, it is not clear whether Ben Sira actually borrowed the Aristotelian concept of friendship and applied it to his teaching.⁶⁰⁰ Nonetheless, the description of the utilitarian friendship in Sirach 13:4-7 conjures up Aristotle's friendship based on utility:

Hence in a friendship based on utility or on pleasure men love their friend for their own good or their own pleasure, and not as being the person loved, but as useful or agreeable ... Consequently friendships of this kind are easily broken off, in the event of the parties themselves changing, for if no longer pleasant or useful to each other, they cease to love each other. And utility is not a permanent quality; it differs at different times. Hence when the motive of the friendship has passed away, the friendship itself is dissolved, having existed merely as a means to that end (*Nicomachean Ethics* 8.3.1156a15-25).⁶⁰¹

As in Sirach 13:2-8, Aristotelian friendship based on utility (and on pleasure) is built and maintained for one's own good. Just as the friendship of the rich in Sirach is broken after they use their friends, the friendship based on utility Aristotle describes is dissolved because, as he explains, utility is not a firm basis for an enduring friendship. While Aristotle does not identify those who seek friendship based on utility, Ben Sira clearly associates those who build such friendship with the rich. For Ben Sira, however, the utilitarian friendship of the rich is not just a kind of simple personal unreciprocated friendship such as moderns might often experience.

Sirach 13:2-8 suggests the utilitarian acts of the rich are really and unmistakably about economic

⁶⁰⁰ Olyan, *Friendship in the Hebrew Bible*, 96. With regard to "the degree and nature of the influence of Greek thought on Ben Sira," Olyan judges there be two positions among scholars: "While some scholars are confident of Greek literary influence, others are skeptical, with some suggesting the possibility that Greek ideas and figures of speech, if discernible, were not necessarily discovered by Ben Sira in literary works" (p. 166). Since the Greek literary influence on Ben Sira's friendship is not the main issue in this dissertation, I do not deal with it in detail. Yet, I essentially think that Hellenistic literature and culture influenced Ben Sira's teaching of friendship because he taught his students and wrote his book in Jerusalem, an urban setting that surely experienced the impact of Hellenistic culture, including Hellenistic letters.

⁶⁰¹ Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Harris Rackham, New and rev. ed., Loeb Classical Library 73 (London; Cambridge: W. Heinemann; Harvard University Press, 1934), 459.

gain because their interest is focused on what others own (v. 5a) and how they drain others' resources (vv. 5b, 7).

Just as obsessive desire for wealth plays an important role in preventing the rich from demonstrating positive moral capacity in dealing with their possessions, so too does it serve as a catalyst for inciting them to behave selfishly in their social relations and friendship. Although Ben Sira does not articulate the reasons for the rich's moral failure in their friendship, Sirach 13:2-8 implies that the failure can again in part be attributed to their obsessive desire for wealth. The rich's choice of their friends or fellows is entirely determined by the utility of the friends or fellows to the rich. As noted above, in utilitarian friendship the rich concentrate on enhancing their economic-social advantage rather than on exercising social virtues that build true friendship. The reason why the rich enter into relationships with others is only to increase their advantages and position. With this mind, Ben Sira characterizes the rich as those who are indifferent to building true friendship but seek false friendship through the exploitation of others due to their obsessive desire for wealth. The rich's selfish and exploitative traits become clearer in the next characteristic concerning their oppression of a specific group—the poor.

The Rich Prey on the Poor

The third characteristic of the rich in Sirach is to prey on the poor who are economically and socially inferior to them. As we noted earlier, the rich in Sirach are described as members of a ruling class who possess significant economic resources and social power. In his book, Ben Sira does not cast suspicion on the fact that the rich rule over the poor but on the way they exercise that power over the powerless. Just as the rich exploit others in their social relations and friendship to increase their profit, so too do they treat unfairly the poor to gratify their selfish

desire for wealth. Given that Ben Sira consistently encourages the reader to help the poor—a fundamental social virtue of wisdom, the rich deserve to be criticized for their oppression of the poor. This critique of the rich shows many affinities with that of Proverbs, but Ben Sira specifically emphasizes the impossibility of peace between the rich and the poor. Comparing the rich to wild beasts that prey on weak animals, the sage provides a fascinating picture of how they oppress the poor and, at the same time, discloses their predatory character.

Ben Sira insists that people whose economic and social standing is high should not treat socially marginalized people, such as the poor, widows, orphans, and aliens, unjustly due to their low economic and social status. As we saw in chapters 2 and 3, this emphasis on social justice in relation to the treatment of the social marginalized is frequently found in the Hebrew Bible and the Septuagint (e.g., Exod 22:22; Lev 19:9-10; Deut 10:18; Isa 1:17; Amos 5:10-15; Zech 7:10; Job 29:11-16; Prov 14:31; 22:22; 29:7, etc.). As Corley observes, Ben Sira inherits much from biblical traditions and thus encourages the reader to foster social virtue through caring for the powerless (e.g., 3:30-4:10; 29:8-13; 34:21-35:20).⁶⁰² The divine generosity toward economic and social inferiors plays an especially prominent role in building the teachings about social virtue and justice in Sirach, as Crenshaw points out.⁶⁰³ For example, in 4:6, Ben Sira assures his readers that when a poor person cries out due to unfair treatment, the one who made him (ὁ ποιήσας αὐτόν) will hear his prayer (cf. 21:5, “The prayer of the poor goes from their lips to the ears of God, and his judgment comes speedily [NRSV]; cf. also Exod 22:22, “If you do abuse them, when they cry out to me, I will surely heed their cry”).⁶⁰⁴ In 4:10, Ben Sira also ensures that God

⁶⁰² Jeremy Corley, “Social Responsibility in Proverbs and Ben Sira,” *Scripture Bulletin* 30 (2000): 9.

⁶⁰³ Crenshaw, “Sirach,” 664.

⁶⁰⁴ In the Hebrew text of Sirach 4:6, the word צורר (“his rock”) is used to designate God. As Joseph E. Jensen notes, “צורר [likewise] refers to Israel’s God and to God as creator of humans” in Deuteronomy 32:4-6, 15,

will be a father to those who take care of orphans (cf. Ps 68:5, “Father of orphans and protector of widows is God in his holy habitation”).

Based on the assurance of divine generosity, Ben Sira reinforces his teachings of social virtue, especially with regard to help of the poor. Yet, his emphasis is on particular sorts of actions to be undertaken or avoided in relation to the poor rather than on general instruction to help them. In 4:1-5, Ben Sira admonishes the reader not to defraud the lives of the poor, delay giving to them, or turn his or her face away from them. It is noteworthy that such an admonition functions as the basis for the sage’s critique of the rich who oppress the poor. In 34:24-25, moreover, Ben Sira even equates the oppression of the poor with murder: “One who slaughters a son in front of his father is he who brings a sacrifice from the property of the needy. Bread is life for the poor when they are destitute; he who withholds it is a person of blood.” As Skehan and Di Lella show, Ben Sira particularly makes charity for the poor “a mandate the violation of which is [the] moral equivalent of murder.”⁶⁰⁵ In the following verses (34:26-27), Ben Sira also identifies one who deprives his fellow of his living and withholds the wages of a hired work with a murderer. In Sirach, therefore, helping the poor is not advice that one can accept or reject but a moral imperative that one should observe.

Given the emphasis on the help of the poor, it is reasonable for Ben Sira to evaluate negatively the rich, who he suggests regularly avert their eyes from the needy poor and treat them unfairly by depriving them of their property. As noted earlier, Sirach 13:2-8 provides a vivid description of how the rich exploit others in their social relations. In the pericope, Ben Sira

and 18. Joseph E. Jensen, “Ben Sira’s Teaching on Social Justice” (Ph.D. Dissertation, The Catholic University of America, 2005), 114.

⁶⁰⁵ Skehan and Di Lella, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira*, 417. With regard to the Greek word ἐπιδομένων (“the needy”) of verse 25, Skehan and Di Lella suppose that it came from the Hebrew word נָחַם. Thus, they read verse 25a as: “The bread of charity is life itself for the needy” (p. 411-12).

pays more attention to the rich's selfish and utilitarian use of others for their own advantage.

This exploitative way of the rich is also applied to their exploitation of the poor who lack economic resources and social power. As far as the rich's exploitation of the poor is concerned, however, Ben Sira takes a strong stand against it by drawing an analogy between human domination of other humans and predatory relations between certain non-human animals.

Consider Sirach 13:15-20:

MS A

15

כל הבשר יאהב מינו
וכל אדם את הדומה לו
All flesh loves its own kind
and every person the one who is like him.

Πᾶν ζῶον ἀγαπᾷ τὸ ὅμοιον αὐτῷ
καὶ πᾶς ἄνθρωπος τὸν πλησίον αὐτοῦ·
Every living thing loves what is like to it,
and every person his fellow.

16

מין כל בשר אצלו
ואל מינו יחובר אדם
All flesh has its own kind near him
and a person associates with his own kind.

πᾶσα σὰρξ κατὰ γένος συνάγεται,
καὶ τῷ ὁμοίῳ αὐτοῦ προσκολληθήσεται ἀνὴρ.
All flesh congregates according to kind,
and with one like himself will a man cleave.

17

מה יחובר זאב אל כבש
כך רשע לצדיק
וכן עשיר אל איש נאצל
What fellowship has a wolf with a lamb?
So is with the wicked and the righteous.
And so it is with a rich man
and a man of meager means.

τί κοινωνήσει λύκος ἀμνῷ;
οὕτως ἁμαρτωλὸς πρὸς εὐσεβῆ.

What will a wolf have in common with a lamb?—
so is a sinner to a pious person.

18

מאיש שלום צבוע אל כלב
מאין שלום עשיר אל רש
From whe[re] can a hyena find goodwill
for a dog?⁶⁰⁶
From where can a rich man find goodwill
for a poor man?

τίς εἰρήνη ὑαίνη πρὸς κύνα;
καὶ τίς εἰρήνη πλουσίῳ πρὸς πένητα;
What peace is there between a hyena and a dog?

And what peace between a rich person
and a needy person?

19

מאכל ארי פראי מדבר
כן מרעית עשיר דלים
The lion's food is the wild donkey—
likewise the grazeland of the rich is the poor. thus the poor are the fodder of the rich.

κυνήγια λεόντων ὄναγροι ἐν ἐρήμῳ·
οὕτως νομαὶ πλουσίων πτωχοί.

The prey of lions is onagers in the desert;

⁶⁰⁶ As Skehan and Di Lella point out, Sirach 13:18a (MS B) is “garbled.” The first of word מאיש (“from a man”) should be modified to מאין (“from where”). Ibid., 251.

20

תועבת גאווה ענוה

ותועבת עשיר אביון

Humility is an abomination to pride
and the needy are an abomination
to the rich.

βδέλυγμα ὑπερηφάνῳ ταπεινότης·

οὕτως βδέλυγμα πλουσίῳ πτωχός.

An abomination to a proud person is humility;
thus an abomination to a rich person is
a poor person.

After admonishing the reader not to associate with a powerful person in the previous passage (13:9-13), Ben Sira characterizes associations between the rich and the poor slightly differently in this pericope.⁶⁰⁷ As Gregory observes, Ben Sira here “develops the observations in 13:2-3” in which he warned against an association with the rich.⁶⁰⁸ Yet, the sage now specifically focuses his discourse on the conflictual nature of the relations between the rich and the poor rather than warning against associating with the rich. Premising his remarks with the notion that every living thing loves its own kind in verses 15-16, Ben Sira pointedly observes the conflict or lack of harmony between the rich and the poor; the latter have no choice but to be victims of social predation.⁶⁰⁹ As Collins observes, Ben Sira’s description of social predation is not unique but “often noted in wisdom literature” (e.g., Prov 14:20; Eccl 9:16; Sayings of Ahikar, 55).⁶¹⁰ Nonetheless, it is noteworthy that Ben Sira uses three analogies from animal life characterized by the predator-prey relation (or at least by conflict): wolf and a lamb (v. 17a), hyena and a dog (v.

⁶⁰⁷ There is no Hebrew text of Sirach 13:14 (13:16 in Beentjes’s version), but as Ziegler observes, other ancient texts, such as Syrohexapla and Vulgate, add the following verse: ἀκούων αὐτά ἐν ὕπνῳ σου γρηγόρησον, πάση ζωῆ σου ἀγάπα τὸν κύριον, καὶ ἐπικαλοῦ αὐτὸν εἰς σωτηρίαν σου (“When you hear them in your sleep, wake up. In your entire life, love the Lord, and call upon him for your deliverance”). Ziegler, *Sapientia Iesu filii Sirach*, 186.

⁶⁰⁸ Gregory, *Like an Everlasting Signet Ring*, 66.

⁶⁰⁹ According to Corley, the idea that one should love his/her own kind reflects “a commonplace of Greek thought,” such as Homer’s *Odyssey*, Plato’s *Symposium* and *Gorgias*, and Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*. Corley, *Ben Sira’s Teaching on Friendship*, 131–32.

⁶¹⁰ Collins, “Ecclesiasticus,” 677.

18a), and lion and an onager (v. 19a), to dramatize the class conflict between the rich and the poor.

In the Hebrew Bible and the Septuagint, predatory animals like wolves, hyenas, and lions frequently represent those who have social-political power and oppress the poor. For example, as Corley observes, wolves symbolize the Israelite officials (רש; ἄρχων) who tear the powerless (Ezek 22:27) or devour them (Zeph 3:3) in the prophetic literature.⁶¹¹ Lions are similarly compared to political leaders (רשק; οἱ ἀφηγούμενοι) who tear their prey of the marginalized (Ezek 22:25) or princes (נשיא; ἄρχων) who catch their people and devour them (Ezek 19:5-6). In the biblical traditions, a hyena (צבוע; ὕαινα) occurs only once in Jeremiah 12:9 without an implication of oppression. As Corley points out, however, hyenas' predation on weak animals, especially dogs, is also found in the Hellenistic literature—such as in the *History of Animals*, in which Aristotle describes them as beasts that “catch dogs by making a retching noise” (7.5 [=8.5] §594b).⁶¹² As we have seen consistently, such political leaders or ruling elites are closely associated with the rich in terms of wresting from the poor what little they might possess. In contrast, the predators' prey—the poor—here portrayed as lambs, dogs, and onagers, appear as the victim of the ruling class including the rich. The symbolic association of the poor with these animals characterizes the poor in particular ways no less than the characterization of the rich with predatory animals characterizes that social group.

For example, as lambs frequently appear as sacrificial offerings in the Hebrew Bible (Lev 3:7; 5:6), they essentially signify how they easily lose their lives to others who attempt to accomplish their own purpose at the lambs' expense (Isa 53:7; Jer 11:19). If we extend the image

⁶¹¹ Corley, *Ben Sira's Teaching on Friendship*, 136.

⁶¹² *Ibid.*, 139.

of lambs to all sheep, we can see further how they are vulnerable and in some sense in need of protection (e.g., Ps 23; Hos 4:16). With regard to dogs, Skehan, Di Lella, and Gregory highlight their protective function (Isa 56:10; Job 30:1) and thus pay attention to the enmity between dogs and hyenas rather than to their “predatory relationship.”⁶¹³ Given that hyenas are generally regarded as scavengers, however, Sirach 13:18 suggests that dogs are characterized as those who have their food stolen by more powerful ones, such as hyenas. Moreover, by signifying their lowly status in parallel with a servant (2 Kgs 8:13), dogs assume the role of the humble victim to the more powerful hyenas in Sirach 13:18. As Skehan and Di Lella point out, onagers exemplify the poor who scavenge for food in the desert in Job 24:5. This characteristic of lambs, dogs, and onagers discloses how, like them, the poor and powerless people are pursued and exploited by their predators, namely, the rich and powerful group.

In addition to characterizing the rich and poor by allusions to animal life, as the ancients typically perceived this, Ben Sira reinforces the characterization of the rich as oppressors of the poor by identifying them explicitly with negative moral figures. While Ben Sira uses the predatory relationship of animals in each first line of verses 17-19, he furnishes three contrasts between the rich and the poor in each second line of the verses. The contrast between a sinner and a pious person in verse 17b is related to the antithesis between a wolf and a lamb in verse 17a. The two figures stand in a predatory relationship. A sinner is to wolf as a pious person is to a lamb. Or, as the Hebrew puts it in moral language typical of the wisdom tradition, a wicked person (רשע) is to a wolf as a righteous person (צדיק) is to a lamb.⁶¹⁴ The following contrast

⁶¹³ Skehan and Di Lella, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira*, 254; Gregory, *Like an Everlasting Signet Ring*, 68.

⁶¹⁴ As Skehan and Di Lella notes, the moral contrast between a wicked one and a righteous one is comparable to Proverbs 29:27, “The unjust are an abomination to the righteous, but the upright are an abomination to the wicked.” Skehan and Di Lella, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira*, 254.

between the rich and the poor in verses 18-19 further enables the reader to associate the sinner with a rich predator who commits an immoral act of abusing the pious and poor person.

In light of the sage's emphasis on care for the poor, the rich's violent treatment of the poor should be evaluated as their moral failure and irresponsibility. Although Ben Sira does not clarify what causes them to fail morally, the images in the passage suggest that their obsessive desire for wealth is an important contributor to this failure. The picture of devouring animals reminds us of lovers of gold who are unsatisfied with their possession and voraciously seek to gratify their desire for gaining more wealth.

The Rich Are Blameworthy

In Sirach, the last characteristic of the rich as moral agents is that they are truly blameworthy. As we have explored with regard to other characteristics of the rich in the book, they not only overvalue riches (shown in their love of gold), they also immorally behave in social relations by exploiting others and also do moral wrong through the oppression of the poor. This negative description of the rich as the immoral corroborates the fact that they are not identical to those who possess wealth as a material wealth for their wise and righteous behavior. At least one further negative moral description of the rich in Sirach ought to be noted: they engage in deception. Yet, Ben Sira also appears to assume an ambiguous attitude toward the immorality of the rich by presenting the notion of the righteous rich. However, such a notion of the ideal rich functions perhaps only as powerful rhetoric that substantiates their immorality.

Ben Sira strengthens his negative evaluation of the rich by describing them as liars. As we already saw in the previous chapter, this characterization of the rich as liars is also found in LXX Proverbs (19:22; 28:6). Yet, Ben Sira does not follow his predecessors slavishly but

underscores his negative evaluation of the rich as liars with forceful rhetoric. Consider Sirach 25:2:⁶¹⁵

τρία δὲ εἶδη ἐμίσησεν ἡ ψυχὴ μου	But three kinds my soul hates,
καὶ προσώχθισα σφόδρα τῇ ζωῇ αὐτῶν·	and I was offended at their life:
πτωχὸν ὑπερήφανον, καὶ πλούσιον ψεύστην,	an arrogant poor person and a rich liar,
γέροντα μοιχὸν ἐλαττούμενον συνέσει.	an old adulterer lacking in understanding.

As Skehan and Di Lella observe, this verse is a “numerical proverb” in which Ben Sira lists three things his soul hates: “an arrogant poor person, a rich liar, and an old adulterer.”⁶¹⁶ A numerical proverb is generally expressed in the form of ‘X, X+1’ in the Hebrew Bible (e.g., Prov 6:16; 30:10-33), but to quote Fox, “the single-number list,” such as this verse, is “very common in later Hebrew literature” including Sirach.⁶¹⁷ Despite the disagreement about its intention, as Fox notes, a numerical proverb has a “rhetorical purpose” of “provid[ing] implicit moral guidance by analogy.”⁶¹⁸ The numerical proverb of Sirach 25:2 likewise offers an ethical lesson by enumerating three immoral figures. These figures are sharply contrasted with three things in which he takes pleasure, in verse 1: “(1) harmony of brothers, and (2) friendship of fellows, and (3) a wife and husband who accommodate each other.” In comparison with the three things of verse 1 related to harmony, the three figures of verse 2 symbolize those who are “isolate[d] from society” due to their immoral behaviors, as Snaith notes.⁶¹⁹

⁶¹⁵ There is no existing Hebrew text of Sirach 25:2.

⁶¹⁶ Skehan and Di Lella, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira*, 340.

⁶¹⁷ As Fox points out, “the second number, X+1” is harmonized with “the subsequent listing” in most of numerical proverbs. Fox, *Proverbs 10-31*, 863.

⁶¹⁸ Ibid. Roger N. Whybray more fully provides four purposes of such numerical proverbs: “entertainment, simple observation, education, and reflection.” Ibid.; Roger N. Whybray, *The Book of Proverbs: A Survey of Modern Study*, History of Biblical Interpretation Series 1 (Leiden; New York: Brill, 1995), 97–98.

⁶¹⁹ Snaith, *Ecclesiasticus*, 127.

Although arrogance (ὕπερήφανος) is clearly evaluated as an immoral characteristic that should be avoided in Sirach (3:28; 11:30; 21:4, etc.), its association with a poor person is unique. According to Skehan and Di Lella, the arrogant poor person is criticized for having “little to boast of in the first place.”⁶²⁰ This point is helpful, but it can be understood more clearly in relation to the hierarchical social vision of Sirach. Like the sages of Proverbs, Ben Sira argues that the poor should not be oppressed, but his vision of justice is patriarchal and paternalistic rather than radical and egalitarian. In the world of Sirach, the poor can expect justice and protection only within the hierarchical system. Thus, Ben Sira implicitly suggests that the poor should not arrogantly presume to merit or demand more than justice or protection. As Skehan and Di Lella point out, an old adulterer is condemned for his lack of understanding because he “is supposed to be ... a model of virtue and wisdom” (Prov 20:29; 23:22).⁶²¹ Yet, the old adulterer is truly a social disrupter because he not only sows discord between husband and wife, but potentially between himself and the cuckold. Like the arrogant poor person and the old adulterer, the rich person is criticized for his immoral conduct of lying rather than his possession of wealth because he should not be tempted to deceive given his abundance. As we have seen so far, the rich typically seek their own advantage in social relations and in oppressing the poor. Since the rich overvalue wealth and voraciously pursue it like wild animals, it is no wonder that they use deception here. This lack of truth telling just adds to the rich’s fundamental lack of concern with social virtue and harmony.

Indeed Ben Sira brings up the topic of whether the rich can be righteous or not. Given that the rich are consistently characterized negatively, it is remarkable that Ben Sira introduces

⁶²⁰ Skehan and Di Lella, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira*, 341.

⁶²¹ Ibid.

an ideal figure of the rich and righteous person in his book. This depiction, however, does not mean that the sage seriously entertains the possibility of the existence of a rich, righteous person. Rather, Sirach ironically sketches the possibility in order to underscore the unlikelihood, even impossibility, of such a turn of events. Put differently, Ben Sira clarifies the status of the rich in an act-consequence logic that is distinctive from that of wealth by using the literary device of irony. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, irony is generally defined as “the expression of one’s meaning by using language that normally signifies the opposite, typically for humorous or emphatic effect.”⁶²² The point of irony is to express a contrary idea or thought to what one is supposed to get in his or her interpretation of a text or an event. Wayne C. Booth’s concept of “stable irony” is particularly noteworthy in terms of providing solid ground for reading Ben Sira’s description of a rich, righteous person as irony. Regarding “two basic respects” of stable irony, Booth says, “the authors have offered us an unequivocal invitation to reconstruct, and the reconstructions have not themselves been later undermined.”⁶²³ Booth’s emphasis in relation to irony is on the author’s offer of ironic expressions that are “covert, intended, stable, and finite.”⁶²⁴ Booth believes that the author invites the reader to read his/her text ironically by providing clues, such as “(1) straightforward warnings in the author’s own voice; (2) known error proclaimed; (3) conflicts of facts within the work; (4) clashes of style; [and] (5) conflicts of belief.”⁶²⁵ In Sirach 31:8-11, Ben Sira likewise offers ironic statements of the rich and righteous person through several clues that signal irony.

⁶²² “Irony, N.,” *Oxford English Dictionary*, accessed 03-30-2018, <http://www.oed.com.ezproxy.tcu.edu/view/Entry/99565?rskey=Ek4T0N&result=1&isAdvanced=false#eid>.

⁶²³ Wayne C. Booth, *A Rhetoric of Irony* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), 233.

⁶²⁴ *Ibid.*, 5-7.

⁶²⁵ *Ibid.*, 53-76.

MS B

8

אשרי איש נמצא תמים

ואחר ממון לא גלז

Happy is the man⁶²⁶ who is found to be
blamelessand who does not turn aside after mammon.⁶²⁷

9

מי הוא זה ונאשרנו

כי הפליא לעשות בעמ[.].

Who is he, this one, that we may pronounce
him happy?

For such is amazing to do among [] people.

10

מי הוא זה שנדבק בו

והיה לו שלום והיה לו תפארה

כי ברבות שלום חייו

אהיה לך לתפארת

מי ברכו וישלם חייו

היא לך לתפארת

מי יוכל לסור ולא סר

ולהרע רעה ולא א[.].

Who is he, this one, who was clung to [it]

and he had peace and he had glory.

For his life will be exceedingly peaceful

I will be your glory

Who will bless and reward his life?

She will be your glory.

Who was able to go astray but did not go astray
and could surely have done evil

but was not wi[lling] to do so.

11

על כן חזק טובו

ותהלתו יס[....]ל

Therefore his possessions are secure
and [the assem]bly shall rec[ount] his praise.

μακάριος πλούσιος, ὃς εὐρέθη ἄμωμος

καὶ ὃς ὀπίσω χρυσίου οὐκ ἐπορεύθη·

Happy is a rich person who was found
blameless

and who did not go after gold.

τίς ἐστίν, καὶ μακαριοῦμεν αὐτόν;

ἐποίησεν γὰρ θαυμάσια ἐν λαῶ αὐτοῦ.

Who is he and shall we call

him happy?

For he did wonders among his people.

τίς ἐδοκιμάσθη ἐν αὐτῷ καὶ ἐτελειώθη;

καὶ ἔσται αὐτῷ εἰς καύχησιν.

τίς ἐδύνατο παραβῆναι καὶ οὐ παρέβη,

καὶ ποιῆσαι κακὰ καὶ οὐκ ἐποίησεν;

Who has been tested by it and been made
perfect?

And it will be as a boast for him.

Who was able to transgress and did not
transgress,

and to do evil and did not do so?

διὰ τοῦτο στερεωθήσεται τὰ ἀγαθὰ αὐτοῦ;

καὶ τὰς ἐλεημοσύνας αὐτοῦ ἐκδιηγῆσεται
ἐκκλησία.Therefore his good things will be confirmed,
and his acts of charity an assembly will
recount.

⁶²⁶ Based on the Greek, Syriac, and Latin texts, Skehan and Di Lella modify אשרי ("a man") of MS B to עשיר ("rich"). Skehan and Di Lella, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira*, 381. Accepting this modification, I argue that the word עשיר dropped out of MS B.

⁶²⁷ As Skehan and Di Lella observe, it is Ben Sira who first employs the Hebrew word ממון that also appears as the Greek word μαμωνᾶς in the New Testament (e.g., Matt 6:24; Luke 16:9, 11, 13). Ibid., 383.

For some who read this passage literally, the introduction of a rich, righteous person (v. 8) might imply that Ben Sira does not entirely abandon the notion that a rich person can be righteous and wise. For example, Collins argues that the ideal figure represents one who “had the power to sin, but refrained.”⁶²⁸ For Collins, the sage suggests, the possibility of the ideal rich person who has the moral capacity to choose and act for the good and, at the same time, succeeds in showing such an ability. However, the sage does not extol the ideal rich person in order to approve that he is logically to be understood as wise and virtuous due to his possession of wealth. Rather, the unusual introduction of the righteous rich person should be regarded as ironic emphasizing that it is really hard or impossible to find such a person.

In 31:8-11, the most obvious textual clue for irony is that the possibility of the rich person being righteous seems so unlikely based on the rest of Sirach, especially the previous pericope. As noted earlier, 31:1-7 shows how the rich have a strong desire for wealth and thus come to ruin because of it. This context is inconsistent with this passage (31:8-11, and especially verse 8) in which Ben Sira presents the notion of an ideal rich person who is blameless and does not pursue wealth. Moreover, the words תמים and ἄμωμος that mean ‘to be blameless’ are used to refer to a figure—a righteous and wise person—who stands in contrast to the immoral rich in Proverbs (11:5, 20) and even in Sirach (תמים: 7:6; 44:16. ἄμωμος: 40:19). In addition, the ideal rich person in verses 8-11 is not like the rich person of verse 5 who pursues money and is led astray by it in verse 5.

If we read this passage with other descriptions of the rich, conflicts of facts within the work, in relation to inconsistency between the rich’s immorality and their morality, become more

⁶²⁸ Collins, “Ecclesiasticus,” 687.

obvious. Along with the rich's strong attachment to wealth (31:1-7), the sage has also blamed the rich for seeking their own advantage in social relations without cultivating virtues of loyalty and trustworthiness (13:2-8). Furthermore, Ben Sira has condemned the rich's immoral behavior of depriving the poor of their food and property through the analogy of animals (13:15-20). By describing the rich as liars, the sage has culminated his critique of the rich for their immorality (25:2). This tension between what Ben Sira has described the rich's immorality in other passages and what he presents as the rich's morality in this passage enables the reader to reject the literal meaning of this text. Instead, the reader ponders a new meaning of 'rich, righteous person' with the assumption that there is no way Ben Sira could be speaking seriously here.

Another clue that we are intended to read this passage ironically are its rhetorical questions. After offering conflicts of descriptions of the rich person in verse 8, Ben Sira asks questions that begin with the interrogative pronoun 'who' (מִי; τίς) in verses 9-10. As Wright, Camp, and Crenshaw observe, these questions emphasize "the difficulty of being rich and also virtuous."⁶²⁹ Yet, the questions do not merely underline the improbability of the ideal rich and righteous person but support Ben Sira's argument that the rich person cannot be righteous but is more likely immoral. In verse 9, Ben Sira addresses the praiseworthiness of the ideal rich person because of his wonderful works. By asking, "Who is he and shall we call him happy?", the sage expresses a strong suspicion about the existence of the praiseworthy rich person. In verse 10, the sage reinforces his doubt regarding such an ideal rich figure by questioning, "Who has been tested by it and been made perfect?" As Skehan and Di Lella clarify, the "it" of verse 10a indicates mammon/gold that the ideal rich person does not pursue in verse 8.⁶³⁰ Thus, the ideal

⁶²⁹ Wright and Camp, "Ben Sira's Discourse," 76; Crenshaw, "Sirach," 780.

⁶³⁰ Skehan and Di Lella, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira*, 383.

rich person is supposed to demonstrate his righteousness and be approved as perfect by passing a test of whether he pursues mammon/gold or not. The test makes a distinction between the righteous rich one and the unrighteous rich one: “Who was able to transgress and did not transgress, and to do evil and did not do so?” Indeed, this righteous rich person is totally different from the rich, as analyzed above, who love gold, pursue it, exploit others in their social relations, and prey upon the poor. Ben Sira leads the reader to recognize the covert but intentional meaning of the rich, righteous person: there is no such a person in the world of the sage. The answer to this sort of rhetorical question is obvious: no one is rich and righteous! Through the ironical statement and rhetorical questions in 31:8-11, therefore, Ben Sira effectively prevents the reader from reading them literally and instead leads the reader to infer the opposite meaning of the text.

Yet, this idea of the incompatibility between the rich and virtues does not mean that all those who possess wealth are bad and unrighteous. In other words, the rich are not criticized for their possession of wealth but the way they obtain and use it, and one might say, what it makes of them, their character in other words. For example, the sage says in 13:24:

MS A

טוב העושר אם אין עון

ורע העוני על פי זדון

Riches are good if there is no iniquity in them
but poverty is evil according to the proud.

ἀγαθὸς ὁ πλοῦτος, ὃς μὴ ἐστὶν ἁμαρτία,
καὶ πονηρὰ ἡ πτωχεία ἐν στόματι ἀσεβοῦς.
Wealth in which there is no sin is good,
but in the mouths of an impious person
poverty is wicked.

In this verse, Ben Sira clearly states that wealth is good in itself but only if it is free from sin—meaning only if its possessor does not sin in attaining or using it or he does not become ‘rich.’

However, this point does not mean that, contrary to wealth, poverty is considered to be something that is in itself wicked. Note that in the second line of the verse, the sage does not say

that poverty is the reward of the wicked but that in the mouths of an impious person it is wicked. He is making a moral distinction. The rich and the poor are not identical to those who possess wealth as a material reward and those who have poverty as a material disadvantage in the act-consequence nexus. Sirach 13:24 thus reinforces the ironical notion of the ideal rich person depicted in 31:8 by suggesting that he is not the same as a person who does well in attaining and using his wealth.

By contrast to the person who uses his wealth properly, the rich who are deceptive in attaining wealth and foolish in using it deserve to be criticized. For example, in 14:3-19 Ben Sira compares a miser who uses his wealth improperly with a generous person who uses his wealth properly. Ben Sira insists in verse 3 that wealth is not good for a petty (לב קטן; μικρολόγῳ; literally “small-minded”) one and is useless for a begrudging (רע עין; βασκάναφ) person.⁶³¹ These two figures represent a miser who is not free from sin because the way he uses his wealth is evil or he does not use it: “he turns away and disregards people” (v. 8, NRSV). Associating the miser with a greedy person whose eye is not satisfied with his portion, Ben Sira warns against the avarice that causes one to be destroyed (v. 9). As Gregory points out, Ben Sira shows “the deconstructive nature of miserliness and greed in relation to the inevitability of the loss of possessions.”⁶³² In contrast, Ben Sira offers an example of how to use wealth appropriately through the image of one who enjoys his life and shows generosity to others in 14:11-19.⁶³³ In

⁶³¹ As Skehan and Di Lella observe, the Hebrew phrase רע עין (“the evil of eye”) of 14:3b also appears in Proverbs 23:6 (“Do not eat the bread of the stingy; do not desire their delicacies”) and 28:22 (“The miser is in a hurry to get rich and does not know that loss is sure to come”). *Ibid.*, 259.

⁶³² Gregory, *Like an Everlasting Signet Ring*, 103.

⁶³³ As Collins notes, the sage’s emphasis on enjoyment of life reminds us of Ecclesiastes 8:15: “So I commend enjoyment, for there is nothing better for people under the sun than to eat, and drink, and enjoy themselves, for this will go with them in their toil through the days of life that God gives them under the sun.” Collins, “Ecclesiasticus,” 677.

verse 13, Ben Sira specifically encourages the reader to share his possessions with his friends: “Before you die, treat a friend well, and, according to your strength, reach out, and give to him.” This generosity in friendship is in marked contrast to the rich’s exploitation of their friends. Like the miser and the greedy person, the rich are thus evaluated as wicked not because they possess wealth but because they fail in choosing and acting for the good with regard to how to use their wealth.

The Rich and the Rhetoric of Honor and Shame

Honor and Shame in Sirach

The idea of honor and shame plays a significant rhetorical role in establishing Ben Sira’s moral teaching that one should seek wisdom. As the sages of MT Proverbs and the translator of LXX Proverbs did in their books, so too Ben Sira links the rhetoric of honor and shame with the pursuit of wisdom: if one observes the way of wisdom, one is honored. In contrast, if one does not follow the sapiential teaching, one should be ashamed. Yet, compared to Proverbs, Sirach bears far more similarity to honor and shame codes in ancient Mediterranean culture than its predecessors because in his book Ben Sira acknowledges that wealth and social-political power enable their possessor to receive honor. Thus, the critique of the rich is less severe in Ben Sira’s discourse of honor and shame. However, this does not mean that the sage approves or defends the way the rich gain honor through their economic resources and social-political power. Given that the rich do not use their wealth in appropriate ways, they should be ashamed.

It is obvious that Ben Sira takes a profound interest in addressing the discourse of honor and shame because he frequently uses the concepts and employs a variety of words for the discourse. Ben Sira basically uses the same words as the sages of MT Proverbs and the translator

of LXX Proverbs did. On the one hand, in his book, Ben Sira mainly uses כבוד and δόξα to refer to honor. According to Camp, כבוד occurs 21 times in the extant Hebrew text and δόξα appears 53 times in the Greek text.⁶³⁴ In addition, the sage employs other Hebrew words, such as הוד, תפארת, and הדר, and Greek words, such as τιμή and ἔντιμος, to indicate honor. As Camp notes, honor in Sirach predominantly refers to a divine glory or “a human status” of high respect.⁶³⁵ On the other hand, Ben Sira also employs various Hebrew words (בוש, קלון, חרפה, כלם, חסד) and Greek words (αἰσχύνη, ἀτιμία, ὄνειδος) to refer to shame. In Sirach, these words basically indicate shameful or foolish behavior or low status and loss of respect.

As already noted, conceptions of honor and shame contribute to bolstering Ben Sira’s emphasis on the pursuit of wisdom. Like the sages of Proverbs (3:35; 13:5, 18; 26:1), Ben Sira frequently embodies a fundamental principle that the person who seeks wisdom gains honor but the person who strays into folly will be disgraced. Yet, Ben Sira does not imitate the sages of Proverbs in this regard, but articulates in his book another way of attaining wisdom—namely, through the concept of fear of the Lord. As in Proverbs,⁶³⁶ the fear of the Lord likewise functions as the “primary theme” and “the fundamental thesis” of Sirach, as Skehan and Di Lella point out, but it is closely associated with wisdom and the Law: “wisdom, which is identified with the Law, can be achieved only by one who fears the Lord and keeps the commandments.”⁶³⁷ Ben Sira

⁶³⁴ Claudia V. Camp, “Understanding a Patriarchy: Women in Second Century Jerusalem through the Eyes of Ben Sira,” in *Women like This: New Perspectives on Jewish Women in the Greco-Roman World*, ed. Amy-Jill Levine (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1991), 6.

⁶³⁵ Ibid.

⁶³⁶ As Murphy notes, the concept of ‘the fear of the Lord’ (1:7; 2:5; 9:10; 31:30) functions as being “central” to Proverbs. Murphy, *Proverbs*, 254–55. The fear of the Lord is also closely connected to wisdom (e.g., “the fear of Yahweh is the beginning of wisdom [1:7]), but, unlike wisdom, it is not linked immediately to honor in Proverbs except in one saying (22:4, “The reward for humility and fear of Yahweh is wealth and honor and life”). However, as Fox notes, the fear of God and wisdom are not regarded as equal in Proverbs but wisdom is subordinated to the fear of God. Fox, *Proverbs 1-9*, 69.

⁶³⁷ Skehan and Di Lella, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira*, 75–76.

illuminates that the achievement of wisdom originates from the fear of the Lord and its concomitant observance of the Law (e.g., 1:1-2:18; 24:1-22; 25:10-11).⁶³⁸ For Sirach, those who fear the Lord and observe the Law are not different from those who follow wisdom's way because both are regarded as wise due to their pursuit of wisdom (e.g., 14:22, 25; 15:2-3). By contrast, Ben Sira evaluates those who neither fear the Lord nor obey the divine commandments as foolish and sinful (e.g., "Witless people will never lay hold of her [wisdom], and sinful men will never see her. She is far from arrogance, and lying men will never remember her" [15:7-8]).

Of pivotal importance is Ben Sira's application of the relation between wisdom and fear of the Lord to conceptions of honor and shame, suggesting that one who fears the Lord and observes the Law attains honor. In Sirach 10:19, for example, Ben Sira clearly answers the question about who can be honorable or dishonorable:

MS A

זרע נכבד מה זרע לאנוש
זרע נקלה עובר מצוה

MS B

זרע נקלה מה זרע לאנוש
זרע נקלה עובר מצוה

Whose offspring are honorable?

Human offspring.

The race that is held in dishonor is
the transgressor of the commandments.

Whose offspring are dishonorable?

Human offspring.

The race that is held in dishonor is
the transgressor of the commandments.⁶³⁹

Σπέρμα ἔντιμον ποῖον; σπέρμα ἀνθρώπου.
σπέρμα ἔντιμον ποῖον; οἱ φοβούμενοι τὸν κύριον.

σπέρμα ἄτιμον ποῖον; σπέρμα ἀνθρώπου.
σπέρμα ἄτιμον ποῖον; οἱ παραβαίνοντες ἐντολάς.

What kind of offspring is honorable?

Human offspring.

What kind of offspring is honorable?

Those who fear the Lord.

What kind of offspring is dishonorable?

Human offspring.

What kind of offspring is dishonorable?

Those who transgress the commandments.

⁶³⁸ However, several scholars of Proverbs have recently noted that its instructions are in fact more related to the Torah. For example, Bernd U. Schipper argues that in Proverbs "wisdom can serve as a hermeneutic of Torah, transmitting the divine word from one generation to the other." Bernd U. Schipper, "When Wisdom Is Not Enough! The Discourse on Wisdom and Torah and the Composition of the Book of Proverbs," in *Wisdom and Torah: The Reception of "Torah" in the Wisdom Literature of the Second Temple Period*, ed. Bernd U. Schipper and David A. Teeter, Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism 163 (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 75; Stuart Weeks, *Instruction and Imagery in Proverbs 1-9* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 105.

⁶³⁹ The translation of Sirach 10:19 (MS A and MS B) is mine.

In this verse that consists of four questions and answers, Ben Sira argues that human beings are honorable when they fear the Lord and do not transgress the commandments. As deSilva notes, wisdom as the fear of the Lord (v. 19b) is here regarded as equivalent to the observance of the Law (v. 19d).⁶⁴⁰ Ben Sira intimately associates the attainment of wisdom through obedience to the Law with the achievement of honor. Thus, the peculiar idea of gaining honor is nowhere more evident than in Ben Sira's emphasis on the fear of the Lord and the observance of the Law.

Ben Sira provides a fascinating picture of how one gains honor in his contemporary culture. As noted earlier, in the ancient Mediterranean world wealth and social-political power functioned as important means by which to gain honor: such honor was not only ascribed to a person's family or relationship by the authorities but also was acquired through a person's right use of economic and social resources (e.g., beneficence). Even if the rich did not use their wealth and social-political power, they were likely to gain honor in the ancient Mediterranean world because social esteem was also granted them by their honorable birth or by the approval of authorities such as kings or nobles. In Sirach 10:20-24, Ben Sira introduces those who were eligible to gain honor due to their social-political positions in ancient Mediterranean culture. However, the sage insists that none of them should be honored more than the one who fears the Lord (v. 24):

MS B

20

בין אחים ראשם נכבד

וירא אלהים נכבד ממנו

Among his brothers, their chief is
worthy of honor

and those who fear God are worthy

ἐν μέσῳ ἀδελφῶν ὁ ἡγούμενος αὐτῶν ἔντιμος,
καὶ οἱ φοβούμενοι κύριον ἐν ὀφθαλμοῖς αὐτοῦ.

In the midst of kin their leader is honorable,

and those who, in his eyes, fear the Lord.

⁶⁴⁰ deSilva, "The Wisdom of Ben Sira," 444.

of honor in his eyes.⁶⁴¹

21

Προσλήψεως ἀρχὴ φόβος κυρίου,
ἐκβολῆς δὲ ἀρχὴ σκληροσμός καὶ ὑπερηφανία
[The beginning of acceptance is fear of the Lord,]
[but the beginning of rejection is obduracy and
arrogance.]⁶⁴²

22

גר זר נכרי ורש
תפארתם יראת יי
Sojourner <wayfarer>, foreigner
and poor man
their glory is the fear of the LORD.

προσήλυτος καὶ ξένος καὶ πτωχός
τὸ καύχημα αὐτῶν φόβος κυρίου.
Guest and stranger
and poor person—
their boast is fear of the Lord.

23

אין לבזות דל משכיל
ואין לכבד כל איש חמס
A poor man with good sense is not
to be despised
and every man of violence is not
to be honored.

οὐ δίκαιον ἀτιμάσαι πτωχὸν συνετόν,
καὶ οὐ καθήκει δοξάσαι ἄνδρα ἁμαρτωλόν.
It is not right to dishonor
an intelligent poor person,
and it is not proper to glorify
a sinful man.

24

שר שופט ומושל נכבדו
[.....]

A prince, a judge, and a ruler are
to be honored
[]

μεγιστὰν καὶ κριτῆς καὶ δυνάστης δοξασθήσεται,
καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν αὐτῶν τις μείζων τοῦ φοβουμένου
τὸν κύριον.
Noble and judge and ruler
will be glorified,
but none of them is greater than he who
fears the Lord.

In this passage, Ben Sira acknowledges that honor as a social value is closely connected to social positions in a society. Yet, the sage compares those who are in socially or politically honorable positions—a leader of kin (v. 20), a noble (v. 24), a judge (v. 24), and a ruler (v. 24)—with those who gain honor through the fear of the Lord and the observance of the Law—a guest (v. 22), a stranger (v. 22), and a poor person (v. 22). To quote Skehan and Di Lella, the Hebrew word אהיב

⁶⁴¹ The translation of Sirach 10:20 (MS B) is mine.

⁶⁴² There is no extant Hebrew text of 10:21. According to Skehan and Di Lella, the Greek text of 10:21 is an “expansion of GII [the expanded Greek translation of Ben Sira], unknown to Syr[iac] or Lat[in] [texts]” and “imports the thought of 10:12, 13, 18 into the new section 10:19-24.” Skehan and Di Lella, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira*, 228.

(literally “brothers” or “kin”) of verse 20 is not merely restricted to an area of a family⁶⁴³ but applied to “members of the same religious or political community.”⁶⁴⁴ As the leader of kin (v. 20) is thus regarded as a religious or political chief, he is also parallel to three figures—a noble, a judge, and a ruler (v. 24)—who possess social and political power. Just as these social-political leaders had gained status through their “hereditary” resources such as “titles” in the ancient Mediterranean world, they are also described as being honored in Sirach due to their social-political power.⁶⁴⁵ If we apply the language of verse 19 to these social-political leaders, they appear to be the human offspring of those who are honorable.

However, Ben Sira suggests that possession of power ought not guarantee honor to the social-political leaders at least not highest honor, especially if we construct a hierarchy of values, as the sages of Proverbs did. In the hierarchy of values, wisdom is ranked above all other values such as honor, power, and wealth. In Sirach, the one who attains wisdom by fearing the Lord and observing the Law is evaluated as more virtuous than the other who possesses social esteem, power, or wealth. Thus in Sirach, the one who fears the Lord (v. 24) is much greater and more honorable than those who have social-political power. Furthermore, Ben Sira emphasizes the attainment of honor through the fear of the Lord by individually comparing the three leaders of verse 24 with the powerless, such as a guest, a stranger, and a poor person (v. 22). Along with the poor, according to the Law of the Hebrew Bible guests and strangers are regarded as socially marginalized people who need care (e.g., Lev 19:10; Deut 24:21, etc.). Although these socially

⁶⁴³ Consider the translation of the NRSV: “Among family members their leader is worthy of honor, but those who fear the Lord are worthy of honor in his eyes.”

⁶⁴⁴ Skehan and Di Lella, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira*, 230; Ernst Jenni, “אָחִי Brother,” in *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*, ed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann, vol. 1 (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 74.

⁶⁴⁵ Pitt-Rivers, “Honor,” 507.

marginalized figures would not generally have honorable status due to their lack of wealth or social-political power in the ancient Mediterranean world, in Sirach they deserve to be honored if they fear the Lord and observe the Law. More importantly, Ben Sira underpins his distinctive understanding of honor and shame by suggesting in verse 23 that an intelligent poor person can be honored but a sinful person should be despised. This suggestion means that in Sirach true honor is given only to one who has wisdom (or fear of the Lord), regardless of economic, social, and political status. Note that the Hebrew text of verse 23b reads כל איש חמס (“every man of violence”), in comparison with the Greek text that has a phrase of ἄνδρα ἀμαρτωλόν (“a sinful man”). Note also that the “every man of violence” is symbolically linked to the rich and social-political leaders because, as we have seen, they are described as those who commit violence toward the poor (cf. Prov 22:16; 28:3; 29:13). This line implies that those who have the power to use violence against the powerless—the rich ruling classes—should not be honored in Sirach, even if on other grounds they are eligible for being ascribed honor in the ancient Mediterranean world.

The Evaluation of the Rich Through Honor and Shame

Ben Sira supports his emphasis on the achievement of honor through wisdom as the fear of the Lord and the observance of the Law by applying it to descriptions of the poor and the rich. The sage basically depicts the rich as those who might typically can gain honor because of their wealth and power. However, the honor the rich gain from their economic and social-political power is not as valuable as a true honor one achieves by fearing the Lord and keeping the Law. Consider Sirach 10:30-11:1:

MS A

10:30

יש דל נכבד בגלל שכלו

ויש נכבד בגלל עשרו

There are poor people who are honored
because of their good sense
and there are those who are honored
because of their riches.

10:31

נכבד בעשרו איככה

ונקלה בעיניו איככה

How much people are held in honor
when they are rich!

And how much people are held in dishonor
when they are poor!

11:1

חכמת דל תשא ראשו

ובין נדיבים תשיבנו

The wisdom of a poor man will lift up
his head

and will seat him among the great.

πτωχὸς δοξάζεται δι' ἐπιστήμην αὐτοῦ,
καὶ πλούσιος δοξάζεται διὰ τὸν πλοῦτον αὐτοῦ.

A poor person has repute
because of his knowledge,
and a rich person has repute
because of his wealth.

ὁ δεδοξασμένος ἐν πτωχείᾳ, καὶ ἐν πλούτῳ
ποσαχῶς;

καὶ ὁ ἄδοξος ἐν πλούτῳ, καὶ ἐν πτωχείᾳ ποσαχῶς;
He who has repute in poverty,
how much more also in wealth?

And he who is held in disrepute in wealth,
how much more also in poverty?

σοφία ταπεινοῦ ἀνυψώσει κεφαλὴν αὐτοῦ
καὶ ἐν μέσῳ μεγιστάνων καθίσει αὐτόν.

A humble person's wisdom will raise up
his head,
and it will seat him in the midst of nobles.

In 10:30, Ben Sira makes the point that both a poor person and a rich person are honored, but notes that the sources of honor the two gain are different. While the poor person's honor results from his knowledge, the rich person's honor arises from his wealth. Since the Hebrew text of 10:30 just mentions "one who is honored because of his wealth (עשרו)," it does not make a clear distinction between one who possesses wealth and a rich person. In contrast, by naming "a rich person" through the word πλούσιος, the Greek text elucidates that he is not merely identical to one who possesses wealth, perhaps as a reward for virtue, and further functions as a specific moral type. While some are honored due to their riches and the right use of the resources, the rich cannot be honored because of their immorality. As Camp points out, "social norms" with regard to honor and shame "are confronted" in 10:30.⁶⁴⁶ Given that Ben Sira has established wisdom as the most important value in his book, the honor of the poor person who possesses

⁶⁴⁶ Camp, "Understanding a Patriarchy," 9.

wisdom is evaluated as more valuable than that of the rich person who has wealth, as Skehan and Di Lella note.⁶⁴⁷ As Ben Sira emphasizes in 11:1, it is indeed wisdom that enables a humble person's head to be lifted up and to sit among the nobles. In this hierarchy of values, one who has wisdom is truly honored, regardless of his economic and social status.

Despite such a negative description of the rich, one can cast doubt on Ben Sira's evaluation of the rich with regard to honor and shame because the sage seems to acknowledge that the rich do actually attain honor in reality—albeit for their wealth (10:30). As Wright and Camp note, the sage also offers the social observation that the rich “receive recognition from others” though they are not qualified to be honored (13:21-23).⁶⁴⁸ Wright and Camp argue that such ambiguity essentially originates from the sage's social location as a retainer—“the betwixt- and betweenness.”⁶⁴⁹ Wright and Camp suggest that the sage ought to associate with his superiors (including noble and rich people) to maintain his social status and, at the same time, should bolster his teaching based on his observance of the Law by being charitable toward the poor. Wright and Camp regard Ben Sira's rhetoric of honor and shame as a means of reducing the tension between the sage's idealistic world and his real world. Wright and Camp thus reveal the latent but existent conflict between the two worlds in the discourse of Ben Sira.

Nonetheless, the identity of the rich as negative moral agents is still obvious in the rhetoric of honor and shame. Though Ben Sira offers an observation that the rich are honored in a society, it does not mean that he supports their honorable status or approves of how they gain honor. Based on the sage's strong emphasis on the attainment of true honor through the

⁶⁴⁷ Skehan and Di Lella, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira*, 232.

⁶⁴⁸ Wright and Camp, “Ben Sira's Discourse,” 92.

⁶⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 83.

achievement of wisdom, the kind of honor the rich gain signals that they illegitimately claim it or are ascribed it simply by virtue of possessing wealth rather than by their virtuous use of it. For Wright and Camp, the logical status of the rich in the act-consequence nexus appears to be identical with the logical place of wealth in the nexus. As far as the conceptions of honor and shame are concerned, Ben Sira evaluates differentiates the rich from those who gain honor through the achievement of wisdom because they gain ascribed honor, such as a birth from an honorable family, or acquired honor through the achievement of wealth and social-political power. For example, the depiction of the rich as honorable in 10:30 compares the social honor that derives from one's inherent social status with the true honor that derives from the attainment of wisdom. Furthermore, Sirach 11:1 endorses the validity of Ben Sira's emphasis on the acquisition of honor through the attainment of wisdom by clarifying that a poor but wise person will be honored and seat in the midst of nobles. Therefore, Ben Sira does not take an ambivalent attitude toward the rich but consistently critiques them for their lack of wisdom and moral capacity.

In the light of these considerations, the rich deserve to be criticized for their failure to gain true honor that comes only through wisdom as the fear of the Lord and the observance of the Law. Although the rich are obviously honored by society because of their wealth and social-political standing, they are disqualified from being honored in Ben Sira's world due to their immorality and/or lack of wisdom. The rich that Ben Sira describes are not wise at all but foolish: they go astray because of their obsessive desire for wealth (31:1-7), their use of others for their own profit, the way they exploit friends in social relations (13:2-8, 21-23), their lack of concern for and oppression of the poor (13:15-20), and their ignorance regarding how to use their wealth properly (31:8-11). These characteristics of the rich prove that they neither fear the Lord

nor observe the Law. Thus, it is not appropriate for the rich to be honored because they are replete with greed, selfishness, violence, deception, and stupidity.

Conclusion

It should thus be concluded that Ben Sira describes the rich not only as those who possess abundant wealth and social-political power but also as negative moral agents who have moral capacity but fail to act rightly. This description of the rich bears many similarities to the basic identification of the rich in MT Proverbs and LXX Proverbs. However, Ben Sira distinguishes his discourse on the rich from his predecessors' work by characterizing the rich more negatively than they. In his book, Ben Sira fundamentally defines the rich as those who love gold and obsessively desire wealth. Connecting, often implicitly, the unbridled passion for wealth with other moral failings, the sage accuses the rich of exploiting others and a lack of concern for others, especially the powerless who are economically and socially inferior to the rich. In the depiction of the rich's exploitation of the poor, Ben Sira focuses on the rich's predatory character and subsequently reveals their ignorance regarding the right use of wealth that would promote social cohesion and stability. Finally, given that the rich do not seek wisdom (meaning fear of the Lord and observance of the Law), they are not eligible to gain true honor. When compared with Proverbs, the rich in Sirach are more clearly presented as a moral type than those who demonstrate a specific form of immorality. For Ben Sira, furthermore, wealth and its possession are also more dangerous and less neutral than they were in Proverbs.

Newsom's grammar of moral agents—"desire, knowledge, and submission to external authority"—is again useful for explaining why the rich in Sirach fail to show their moral

capacity.⁶⁵⁰ As in Proverbs so in Sirach the rich's moral failure results from their obsessive desire for wealth, their lack of knowledge about wisdom and themselves, and their resistance to external authority. Yet, although Ben Sira describes the rich more negatively than his predecessors did, the workings of the three elements are evident. The rich's moral failure first stems from their strong attachment to their wealth. Rather than merely seeking wealth and taking an interest in it, the rich love it and treasure it. The rich's love of gold drives them to pursue it inordinately and harbor greed. It is noteworthy that Ben Sira connects the rich's obsessive desire for wealth and their moral failure by stating that they are led astray by their wealth and come to ruin (31:5). The rich's obsessive desire for wealth also has everything to do with their lack of knowledge about wisdom because they foolishly treasure wealth more than the most important value, wisdom. Put differently, the rich do not know the value of wisdom but show foolishness by committing vice, such as exploiting their friends and oppressing the poor. Furthermore, the rich's wrong knowledge of themselves makes them fail to act morally because they misunderstand what brings happiness;—for them, it is not wisdom but wealth. The rich's lack of knowledge demonstrates their resistance to the external authority that is expressed not only in the sage's teaching but also in the concepts of the fear of the Lord and the observance of the Law. The rich's strong attachment to wealth leads them astray and makes them ignorant about wisdom's value. The rich do not fear the Lord or observe the Law. The interaction of these three elements prevents the rich from walking in wisdom's way but instead prompts them to fail morally.

⁶⁵⁰ Newsom, "Models of the Moral Self," 12.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

Summary of the Argument

In this dissertation, I have argued that the rich in three didactic wisdom books—MT Proverbs, LXX Proverbs, and Sirach—do not just signify individuals who possess economic wealth. The term also points to the rich as social-political leaders and who are moral agents. I have shown how the rich in and through the three wisdom instructions are becoming or have become a moral type that is criticized for their immorality. The rich are consistently described as moral agents who regularly fail to choose and act for the good. In other words, they regularly fail to choose wisdom's way and to cultivate the virtues of that way.

The main purpose of this dissertation has been to clarify the confusion of the logical status of the rich with wealth as a material reward for following wisdom's way in the act-consequence nexus. Since Koch suggested an act-consequence nexus, many scholars have studied the rhetoric of wealth and poverty in Proverbs and Sirach in terms of that thesis: the attainment of wisdom and righteousness is rewarded by the attainment of real material wealth. If the rich, who by definition are at least possessors of wealth, are judged on this understanding, they must be described as moral and wise. However, the sages of Proverbs and Sirach claim that the rich's wealth does not necessarily arise from their good behavior; the rich are not always, in fact essentially never virtuous or wise. Regarding the critical descriptions of the rich, scholars have attributed the conflict to an inherent ambiguity of the act-consequence nexus or as an exception to the nexus. Yet, the misconception about the rich in the act-consequence rhetoric arises from an association of material wealth as a kind of legitimate reward for those who follow the way of wisdom with the rich as possessors of material wealth.

When the three elements of Newsom's grammar of moral agency—desire, knowledge, and submission to authority—are applied to the moral agency of the rich in the wisdom instruction, three factors that give rise to their moral failure can be discerned: 1. The rich possess a wrongly formed desire for wealth; 2. The rich are self-deceived and hold wrong understandings about themselves and the value of wealth; and 3. The ambition of the rich is for controlling others, which corresponds to a failure to submit to the authority of the sages or wisdom. Based on these three elements, the rich are characterized as negative moral agents who are blamed for their foolish choice of immorality and their wrongdoing in Proverbs and Sirach.

MT Proverbs, the starting point of this study, revealed how the rich are becoming a moral type in didactic wisdom texts. As the sages uncover the rich's illusion that their wealth can protect them like a fortress (10:15; 18:11), they show that the rich overestimate the value of wealth and, thus, put too much confidence in it. Because of this misguided trust in wealth, the rich seek their own advantage rather than embody virtues in social relations (14:20; 19:4). The rich's pursuit of their own advantage consolidates the hierarchy between the rich and others, including their friends by controlling relations with the purpose of increasing their own profits (19:6-7). Especially in their relationships with the poor, who are identified as economically and socially marginalized, the rich increase their wealth and strengthen control over the poor by oppressing them (22:16). These immoral characteristics serve as evidence of the rich's intellectual and moral hubris: they overestimate their own knowledge or wisdom (28:11). To support their critique of the rich, the sages employ a distinctive rhetoric of honor and shame, saying that one should gain honor through attainment of wisdom rather than of wealth. While the rich who possess wealth and power are eligible to gain honor in the ancient Mediterranean world,

they do not deserve to be honored, according to MT Proverbs, because they do not use their wealth and power to follow wisdom's way.

Although LXX Proverbs shows many similarities with MT Proverbs in describing the rich, it makes the rich a more distinctive 'moral type' by emphasizing their immorality through overall moralizing tendency. The translator's strong suspicion about wealth as a reliable means to protect the rich discredits the rich's trust in their wealth (10:15; 18:11; 21:22). By designating the rich as liars, the translator effectively keeps the reader from believing that they have wealth as a material reward for their wisdom and morality (19:22; 28:6). The deceitful trait of the rich further proves how they believe themselves to be wise and rely on their own wisdom (28:11). By evoking notions of Hellenistic friendship whose concept is based on mutual trust and support, the translator persuasively demonstrates that the friendships the rich build are unreliable and weak (14:20-21; 19:4). The relationship between creditor and debtor also illuminates the rich's oppression of the poor because it clarifies more fully how the rich unjustly treat the poor through their wealth and exercise of social power (22:7; 29:13). In LXX Proverbs in which the translator reinforces moralizing through the rhetoric of honor and shame, the rich cannot really or ought not attain honor. The rich ought to be ashamed, their immorality disqualifies them from gaining honor.

As one of the didactic wisdom texts, Sirach undergirds Proverbs' identification of the rich and, at the same time, reinforces the rich's distinctive status in the act-consequence nexus. For Ben Sira, the rich's strong attachment to wealth is negatively evaluated as their love of gold (31:1-7), so that they suffer from anxiety and eventually perish. The sage also illuminates that the rich build false friendships, mistreating others to satisfy their avarice for the wealth (13:2-8). The analogy with the utilitarian friendship in the broader Hellenistic culture undergirds the

sage's critique of the rich's selfishness and greed. In describing the rich as oppressors of the poor, Ben Sira underscores their predatory character through images of wild beasts and weak animals (13:15-20). Along with the emphasis on the rich's deceptive characteristic (25:2), the ironic statement of a rich, blameless person culminates the sage's characterization of the rich as a negative moral type. In this regard, Ben Sira invalidates the social esteem that the rich can gain from their economic and social-political power by insisting that it is not as valuable as the true honor one attains by fearing the Lord and keeping the Law. Therefore, the identification of the rich as a moral type began in MT Proverbs, developed in LXX Proverbs, and came to a climax in Sirach.

A Sketch of the Rich as a Literary-Moral Type

My analysis of the rich in the didactic wisdom books—MT Proverbs, LXX Proverbs, and Sirach—has revealed a process of understanding the rich as a moral type rather than just an economic category. This understanding of the rich continued in the subsequent literature, especially other Second Temple texts. As we will see soon, 1 Enoch, especially the Epistle of Enoch, is noteworthy in that it offers sharper critiques of the rich than the three didactic wisdom books do, and further evaluates the rich as sinners who will face divine judgment due to their unrighteousness. This description of the rich as a negative moral type is also found in the Wisdom of Solomon and the New Testament. I cannot offer here a full study of the rich in these texts but deal with a number of passages related to the characterization of the rich as a moral type. Such an analysis is an initial gesture toward how the rich as a literary-moral trope might be traced in certain wisdom or wisdom related texts during the Second Temple period. For this study to be complete, more is thus needed than what can be reasonably included in this

dissertation.

The Epistle of Enoch (1 Enoch 91-107)

While Proverbs and Sirach belong to wisdom literature, 1 Enoch has been considered apocalyptic literature. Since Gottfried Christian Friedrich Lücke introduced the term ‘apocalyptic’ (or ‘*Apokalyptik*’ in German), it was long not clear whether the term “designated a literary genre or a kind of theology,” as Collins points out.⁶⁵¹ After Klaus Koch and Paul Hanson insisted on a distinction between “‘apocalypse’ as a literary type,” and “‘apocalypticism’ as a social ideology,” and “‘apocalyptic eschatology’ as a set of ideas and motifs” in the early 1970s, the Apocalypse Group of the Society of Biblical Literature (SBL) sought to define the terms of the debate more sharply. The result of their work was the publication of *Semeia* 14 in 1979.⁶⁵² In his article in this volume Collins offered a definition of the term ‘apocalypse’ as “a genre of revelatory literature with a narrative framework, in which a revelation is mediated by an otherworldly being to a human recipient, disclosing a transcendent reality which is both temporal, insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation, and spatial, insofar as it involves another, supernatural world.”⁶⁵³ Based on whether one has “an otherworldly journey” or not, Collins divided the Jewish apocalypses from the period 250 BCE to 150 CE into two types:

⁶⁵¹ John J. Collins, “What Is Apocalyptic Literature?,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Apocalyptic Literature*, ed. John J. Collins, Oxford Handbooks (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 1.

⁶⁵² Klaus Koch, *The Rediscovery of Apocalyptic: A Polemical Work on a Neglected Area of Biblical Studies and Its Damaging Effects on Theology and Philosophy*, Studies in Biblical Theology, 2nd ser., 22 (Naperville: A. R. Allenson, 1972); Paul Hanson, “Apocalypse, Genre and Apocalypticism,” in *The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible Supplement Volume*, ed. Keith Crim (Nashville: Abingdon, 1976), 27–34; John J. Collins, ed., *Apocalypse: The Morphology of a Genre*, *Semeia* 14 (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1979).

⁶⁵³ John J. Collins, “The Jewish Apocalypses,” *Semeia* 14 (1979): 22.

“historical apocalypses” and “apocalypses with an otherworldly journey.”⁶⁵⁴ This definition of the term ‘apocalypse’ has been widely accepted in the scholarship, even though there has been objection and controversy.⁶⁵⁵

Seen in this perspective, 1 Enoch is widely regarded as one of the Jewish apocalypses because it has, to quote Nickelsburg, “revelations of a hidden past or future and/or of hidden parts of the cosmos mediated through a revealer figure.”⁶⁵⁶ In general, 1 Enoch is regarded as a collection that consists of five sections: (1) the Book of Watchers (chs. 1-36), (2) the Book of Similitudes (chs. 37-71), (3) the Book of Astronomical Writings (chs. 72-82), (4) the Book of Dream Visions (chs. 83-90), and (5) the Book of the Epistle of Enoch (chs. 91-107).⁶⁵⁷ Based on this collective feature, the five sections were written in different times and writers, but Nickelsburg dates their collection and composition “between the late fourth century BCE and the turn of the Common Era.”⁶⁵⁸ Although the whole of 1 Enoch “has been preserved only in a fifth- to sixth-century CE Ethiopic (Ge‘ez) translation of an intermediate Greek translation,” 1 Enoch was probably composed “partially in Aramaic and partially in Hebrew,” as analysis of the

⁶⁵⁴ Ibid., 22–28.

⁶⁵⁵ For example, Newsom evaluates the definition of the term ‘apocalypse’ by the Apocalypse Group of SBL as “a reconstructive one” rather than “a constructive one” in the sense that scholars of the Group attempted to “make explicit the tacit assumptions held by ancient writers about how one composes an apocalypse.” Carol A. Newsom, “Spying out the Land: A Report from Genology,” in *Seeking out the Wisdom of the Ancients: Essays Offered to Honor Michael V. Fox on the Occasion of His Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, ed. Ronald L. Troxel, Kelvin G. Friebel, and Dennis R. Magary (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2005), 438.

⁶⁵⁶ George W. E. Nickelsburg, “Wisdom and Apocalypticism in Early Judaism: Some Points for Discussion,” in *Conflicted Boundaries in Wisdom and Apocalypticism*, ed. Lawrence M. Willis and Benjamin G. Wright (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005), 20.

⁶⁵⁷ E. Isaac, “1 (Ethiopic Apocalypse of) Enoch,” in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. James H. Charlesworth, vol. 1. Apocalyptic Literature and Testaments (Garden City: Doubleday, 1983), 5; George W. E. Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch: A Commentary on the Book of 1 Enoch, Chapters 1-36; 81-108*, vol. 1, Hermeneia: A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001), 7–9.

⁶⁵⁸ Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch*, 1:1.

Qumran Aramaic manuscripts suggests.⁶⁵⁹ The place of its composition is not known, but 1 Enoch seems to have “originated in Judea and was in use at Qumran.”⁶⁶⁰

Despite the difference of literary genre, the apocalyptic literature—1 Enoch—is comparable to wisdom books, namely, Proverbs and Sirach. As Matthew Goff observes, the scholarly interest in the relationship between wisdom and apocalypse was aroused by Gerhard von Rad who evaluated the latter as the “eschatologization of wisdom” (“*Eschatologisierung der Weisheit*” in German).⁶⁶¹ Although most scholars have not agreed with von Rad’s preference of wisdom over prophecy in describing the development of the Jewish apocalypse, “connections” between wisdom and apocalypse have been widely regarded as obvious, as Lawrence M. Wills and Benjamin G. Wright have noted.⁶⁶² In 1 Enoch in particular Nickelsburg notes that the book still has many “wisdom components,” such as occurrence of the term “wisdom” (e.g., 5:6; 37:1; 92:1; 93:10) and “an appeal to observe the created world (2:1–5:4).”⁶⁶³ Among five sections of 1 Enoch, the fifth and last one called the Epistle of Enoch (hereafter “The Epistle”), which might be dated to the 2nd century BCE, is worth noting in that it shows many similarities to Proverbs.⁶⁶⁴ As Nickelsburg observes, like the sages of Proverbs, the author of the Epistle employs “the two-ways instruction (e.g., 91:3–4, 18–19; 94:1–4; 99:10; 105:2)” by comparing the righteous and the

⁶⁵⁹ Isaac, “1 Enoch,” 6; Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch*, 1:1.

⁶⁶⁰ Isaac, “1 Enoch,” 7–8; Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch*, 1:1.

⁶⁶¹ Gerhard von Rad, *Theologie Des Alten Testaments*, 4th ed., Bd. 2, Die Theologie Der Prophetischen Überlieferungen Israels (München: Kaiser Verlag, 1965), 329; Matthew J. Goff, “Wisdom and Apocalypticism,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Apocalyptic Literature*, ed. John J. Collins, Oxford Handbooks (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 58.

⁶⁶² Lawrence M. Wills and Benjamin G. Wright, “Introduction,” in *Conflicted Boundaries in Wisdom and Apocalypticism*, ed. Lawrence M. Wills and Benjamin G. Wright, Society of Biblical Literature Symposium Series 35 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005), 1.

⁶⁶³ Nickelsburg, “Wisdom and Apocalypticism,” 24.

⁶⁶⁴ Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch*, 1:8.

sinners.⁶⁶⁵ It is also noteworthy that, as Isaac explains, the sinners in the Epistle are consistently “identified with the exploitative wealthy and oppressive powers” (e.g., 95:4-7; 96:4-8; 97:7-10; 98:4-8; 103:9-15), that is, ‘the rich’ we have seen in the wisdom instructions.⁶⁶⁶ The power and authority the rich possess in the Epistle, however, likewise originate from their economic wealth. The critique of the rich in Epistle is much sharper and more scathing than in Proverbs and Sirach. In the Epistle, moreover, it is not the poor but the righteous who are oppressed and exploited by the rich. Of course, it is often thought the righteous in the Epistle do not merely function as a purely moral type that refers to those who do the good. They are also regarded as economically and socially marginalized people: the weak and the lowly. Still, the description of the righteous as victims of the rich is related to the apocalyptic message of the Epistle, in which the author explicitly addresses the final judgment of the rich.

As in Proverbs and Sirach, the rich in the Epistle are still identified as negative moral agents who fail to act morally. The author of the Epistle criticizes the rich for their immoral character and behavior rather than for their possession of wealth and social power. In other words, the author describes how the rich trust wrongly in their wealth, acquire wealth unjustly, and oppress the socially marginalized through their wealth. For the author of the Epistle, the rich neither deal with their wealth properly nor know how to use their wealth in a just way. In the Epistle, this characterization of the rich as the moral opposite of the righteous also makes it impossible to view the rich’s wealth as any sort of reward for their righteousness. This, however, is only to make explicit what the wisdom instructions also suggest, even if it at times has been

⁶⁶⁵ Nickelsburg, “Wisdom and Apocalypticism,” 24; Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch*, 423.

⁶⁶⁶ Isaac, “1 Enoch,” 5.

difficult to recognize because of a flawed understanding of the place of the rich in the act-consequence nexus.

The Rich's Trust in Wealth and Divine Judgment

In the Epistle, the rich are clearly depicted as those who possess wealth. In comparison to the sages of Proverbs and Sirach, however, the author of the Epistle takes less interest in describing the social advantages the rich enjoy from their wealth, whether security, many friends or something else. Instead, the author focuses more on how the rich firmly put their trust in their wealth. Consider 1 Enoch 94:7-8 and 97:7-10:⁶⁶⁷

- 94:7 Woe to those who build their houses with sin;
for from all their foundations they will be overthrown,
and by the sword they will fall.
And those who acquire gold and silver in judgment will quickly perish.
- 8 Woe to you, rich, for in your riches you have trusted;
from your riches you will depart,
because you have not remembered the Most High in the days of your riches.
- 97:7 Woe to you, sinners, who are in the midst of the sea and on the land;
the reminder against you is evil.
- 8 Woe to you who acquire gold and silver unjustly and say,
“We have become very wealthy,
and we have gotten possessions,
and we have acquired all that we have wished.
- 9 And now let us do what we have wished,
for silver we have gathered up in our treasuries,
and many goods in our houses;
and as water they are poured out.”
- 10 You err!
For your wealth will not remain,
but will quickly ascend from you;
for you have acquired everything unjustly,
and you will be delivered to a great curse.

⁶⁶⁷ For the translation of 1 Enoch, I follow George W. E. Nickelsburg and James C. VanderKam, eds., *1 Enoch: A New Translation: Based on the Hermeneia Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004).

In these two passages, the author pointedly charges the rich with trust in their wealth and warns that such trust is in vain since wealth is ephemeral. As Nickelsburg notes, the rich (*'abe'lt*, *πλούσιοι*) in 94:8 are explicitly described as those who possess wealth (*be' l = πλοῦτος*).⁶⁶⁸ Despite the absence of the term in 97:7-10, the author enables the reader to identify sinners (v. 7) as the rich because, as noted above, both are symbolically connected to each other in terms of exploiting and oppressing others. In comparison to Proverbs in which the rich's trust in their wealth is implicitly expressed through a range of symbolic connections and in a couple of instances via the metaphor of a fortified city, the Epistle more clearly indicates the rich's dependence upon their riches by using the phrase "in your riches you have trusted" (94:8).⁶⁶⁹ By using the form of a litany of 'woe,' the author warns that the wealth the rich have attained will leave them (94:8), and further that their ill-gotten wealth will quickly ascend from them (97:10). This description of wealth's ephemerality appears in Proverbs 23:4-5 and Sirach 11:18-19 (cf. Eccl 6:1-2), but 1 Enoch 97:8-10 tightly links the stern warning to the divine punishment: "you will be delivered to a great curse" (v. 10).⁶⁷⁰ As Nickelsburg argues, 1 Enoch 97:8-10 "mark[s] an important turning point in a long-lived tradition" of the rich because the pericope regards the rich's loss of wealth "as divine judgment" rather than the outcome of their immorality.⁶⁷¹

When the author suggests a divine judgment of the rich, he provides two reasons: one is because they have not remembered the Most High, that is, God (94:8), and the other because they have acquired everything unjustly (97:10). Given that the remembrance of God functions as

⁶⁶⁸ Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch*, 1:462.

⁶⁶⁹ For example, the sages of Proverbs say in 10:15a and 18:11a, "The wealth of a rich person is *his fortified city*."

⁶⁷⁰ According to Nickelsburg, "the verb *παραδίδωμι* ("to deliver") is common in connection with human and divine judgment and punishment." Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch*, 474.

⁶⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 1:475.

a source of true security (95:3), the rich's trust in their wealth reveals their foolish and inappropriate pursuit of security. The rich's unjust acquisition of everything also demonstrates their inappropriate trust in their wealth, and their effort to "control their future," as Nickelsburg suggests.⁶⁷² As in Proverbs and Sirach, in which we can infer that the rich's trust might originate from their obsessive desire for the good things that wealth might procure, the Epistle emphasizes that such dependence upon wealth arises from their desire to control and enjoy their lives. The rich's desire to enjoy their lives through wrongly acquired wealth is evaluated as immoral through the word *πεπλάνησθε* (v. 10, "to err") that indicates "morally errant" status, as Nickelsburg argues.⁶⁷³ The author of the Epistle emphasizes that the rich deserve such a harsh judgment of God due to their inappropriate trust in their wealth and their wrong way of gaining their wealth. Significantly, it is not only the wrongly acquired wealth itself but also the rich who will perish as a result of the divine judgment.

The Rich Oppress the Righteous

The second characteristic of the rich in the Epistle is that they oppress the righteous, who represent economically and socially marginalized people, such as the poor and the lowly. Yet, such an identification of the righteous as victims of the rich reinforces moral and immoral characteristics of both by revealing that the rich treat the righteous in an unjust way. In Proverbs and Sirach, it is the poor that the rich oppress with their economic and social power. In contrast, the author of the Epistle does not use the word "poor" but the word "lowly" once only in 96:5. Yet, such a tendency to use other words rather than a term referring to the poor does not

⁶⁷² George W. E. Nickelsburg, "Revisiting the Rich and the Poor in 1 Enoch 92-105 and the Gospel According to Luke," *Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers* 37 (1998): 583.

⁶⁷³ Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch*, 1:474.

necessarily mean that the author has no interest in economic oppression. As Nickelsburg points out, the author is still concerned about the issue of the rich's oppression of economically and socially weak people by depicting them as "slaves, day laborers, persons whose goods and livelihood have been taken unjustly by the rich and the powerful."⁶⁷⁴ Moreover, the author pays more attention to, as Nickelsburg again says, "the injustice of the situation" of those oppressed by the rich rather than the identification of those who are exploited.⁶⁷⁵ As Patrick A. Tiller also suggests, the Epistle's preference of the righteous to the poor shows its concern with "social dominance by those who are deemed unrighteous by the Enochic writer."⁶⁷⁶ Consider 1 Enoch 96:4-5, 8:

- 96:4 Woe to you, sinners, for your riches make you appear to be righteous,
but your heart convicts you of being sinners;
and this word will be a testimony against you,
a reminder of (your) evil deeds.
- 5 Woe to you who devour the finest of the wheat,
and quaff <wine from the mixing bowl>,
while you tread on the lowly with your might.
- 8 Woe to you, mighty, who with might oppress the righteous one;
for the day of your destruction will come.
In those days, many good days will come for the righteous
—in the day of your judgment.

As I noted earlier, these verses belong to the second discourse (96:4-98:8) directed against the rich and the mighty who are designated as sinners (96:4). The addressees of these verses are thus sinners who are symbolically connected to the rich. In verse 5, the author criticizes sinners who

⁶⁷⁴ Nickelsburg, "Revisiting the Rich," 587.

⁶⁷⁵ Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch*, 1:427.

⁶⁷⁶ Patrick A. Tiller, "The Rich and Poor in James: An Apocalyptic Ethic," in *Conflicted Boundaries in Wisdom and Apocalypticism*, ed. Lawrence M. Willis and Benjamin G. Wright, Society of Biblical Literature Symposium Series 35 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005), 175.

have wealth—the rich—for their indulgence in devouring luxurious food and their oppression of the lowly (*tehutān*). As Nickelsburg suggests, 1 Enoch 96:5 evokes Amos 5:11 and 6:6,⁶⁷⁷ implying that the finest of the wheat the rich possess “has been exacted from the lowly.”⁶⁷⁸ The word “might” (*hāyl*) also sheds light on the rich’s exercise of their power in oppressing and exploiting the lowly. Not only do the rich have the lowly produce foodstuffs that satisfy their appetites, they do so by force; they tread upon the lowly to enhance their own pleasures.

After criticizing the rich for their exploitation and immorality in verses 6-7, the author shifts his focus to the mighty in verse 8. The mighty (*hāylān*) are not described specifically as those who have economic resources in the verse, but, like the rich of verses 4-7, they use their might in oppressing others, especially the righteous. It is worth noting, moreover, that the word ‘might’ (*hāyl*) is cognate to the Hebrew word (לִּיָּא) that indicates physical strength and economic wealth. As in other passages that accuse the rich of immorality, in 96:8 the author bolsters his critique of the mighty by promising divine judgment: they will be destroyed. Interestingly, the identification of the rich in 1 Enoch as social-political leaders who possess wealth and authority is similar to those of Proverbs and Sirach. However, the detailed critique of the rich who exploit the lowly through their power is closer to Sirach and the prophetic literature of the Hebrew Bible (e.g., Isa 10:1-4; Amos 6:4-6; Mic 6:11-14).

Notably, the author of the Epistle also depicts the rich’s oppression from the angle of lower class people. Consider 1 Enoch 103:9-15:

103:9 Do not say, you who are righteous and pious in life,

⁶⁷⁷ Amos 5:11 says, “Therefore because you trample on the poor and take from them levies of grain, you have built houses of hewn stone, but you shall not live in them; you have planted pleasant vineyards, but you shall not drink their wine. Amos 6:6 also says, “who drink wine from bowls, and anoint themselves with the finest oils, but are not grieved over the ruin of Joseph!”

⁶⁷⁸ Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch*, 471.

- “In the days of our tribulation, we toiled laboriously,
 and every tribulation we saw, and many evils we found.
 We were consumed and became few, and our spirits, small;
 10 and we were destroyed and there was no one to help us with word and deed;
 we were powerless and found nothing.
 We were crushed and destroyed,
 and we gave up hope any more to know safety from day to day;
 11 we had hoped to be the head and became the tail.
 We toiled and labored and were not masters of our labor;
 we became the food of the sinners.
 The lawless weighed down their yoke upon us;
 12 our enemies were our masters,
 they goaded us on and penned us in,
 and to our enemies we bowed our necks,
 and they had no mercy on us.
 13 We sought to get away from them,
 so that we might escape and be refreshed;
 but we found no place to flee and be safe from them.
 14 We complained to the rulers in our tribulation,
 and cried out against those who struck us down and oppressed us;
 but our complaints they did not receive,
 nor did they wish to give a hearing to our voice.
 15 They did not help us,
 they did not find (anything) against those who oppressed us and devoured us.
 But they strengthened against us
 them who killed us and made us few.
 They did not disclose their iniquities,
 nor did they remove from us the yoke of them who devoured us and dispersed us
 and murdered us.
 They did not disclose concerning those who murdered us,
 nor did they make mention that they raised their hands against us.”

This passage is part of several sections that make up the final discourse of divine judgment (102:4-104:8) that Nickelsburg describes as “a disputation on justice and the judgment.”⁶⁷⁹ As in the previous discourses, the author here addresses his message respectively to the righteous and sinners. Given that the righteous have been represented as those who are economically and socially oppressed by the rich in the Epistle, the oppressors of the righteous are symbolically related to the rich, despite the absence of the term ‘rich.’ It is noteworthy that the author quotes

⁶⁷⁹ Ibid., 1:511.

the words of the righteous and pious in relation to their labor. Although the terms “righteous” and “pious” generally have ethical and religious senses, their self-awareness described in this passage has a social and political implication because they think of themselves as victims of the powerful who possess wealth and authority (vv. 9-10). The tension between the righteous/pious and their oppressors is expressed with a hierarchical relationship of head and tail in verse 11a. In addition, the author reveals the unfair relationship between the two classes by stating that the righteous/pious are not masters of their labor but the food of the sinners in verse 11bc. As Nickelsburg points out, the images of “yoke” (v. 11d) and “goad” (v. 12b) reinforce the slavery of the righteous/pious as “animals ... made to serve their masters.”⁶⁸⁰ It is also remarkable that, from the viewpoint of the righteous/pious, their masters are identified as “enemies” (v. 12ac) because their masters restrain their slaves and arouse a feeling of hostility (v. 13).

The following verses 13-15 clearly describe a relation between those who oppress the righteous/pious with rulers who exercise dominion over them. Although the righteous and pious demanded fair compensation from their masters, they failed in accomplishing their purpose and instead their situation worsened. As verse 14 indicates, the righteous and pious appeal to the rulers for help by accusing their masters of oppressing them with unfair treatment. The masters of the righteous/pious are here differentiated from the rulers who function as judges. As Nickelsburg notes, such judging role of rulers is supported by the use of “the legal technical terminology for lodging a complaint in court” (ἐνετύχομεν = קבלנא, “we lodged a complaint”).⁶⁸¹ Against the expectations of the righteous/pious, however, the rulers neither receive their complaints nor listen to their voice (v. 14) but instead exonerate the oppressors’ iniquities and

⁶⁸⁰ Ibid., 1:527.

⁶⁸¹ Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch*, 527.

just look on their oppression without doing anything (v. 15). Those who oppress the righteous/pious thus justify their unjust exercise of power by “conspir[ing] with the rulers and judges,” as Nickelsburg suggests.⁶⁸² The rich here are not exactly identical to the rulers because the latter with political or judicial power have a higher position than the former do. Nonetheless, the rich are closely tied to the rulers in terms of oppressing and exploiting the righteous and pious. With the connivance of the rulers, the rich trample upon marginalized people and make unfair profits. The conspiracy with the rulers enables the rich to keep their economic resources and social power.

The Rich Sin by Virtue of Evil Spirits

As we have seen so far, the description of the rich as possessors of wealth does not mean in the Epistle that their wealth functions as a material reward for following wisdom’s way in the act-consequence nexus. As the sages of Proverbs and Sirach prevent the reader from assuming such a logic by showing the rich’s immoral behaviors, the author of the Epistle basically displays the similar approach. Nevertheless, by characterizing the rich as sinners, the author undoubtedly differentiates them from the promise of material wealth in the act-consequence nexus. In 1 Enoch 96:4, the author says:

Woe to you, sinners, for your riches make you appear to be righteous,
but your heart convicts you of being sinners;
and this word will be a testimony against you,
a reminder of (your) evil deeds.

⁶⁸² Nickelsburg, “Revisiting the Rich,” 586.

After addressing his first discourse “directed against the rich and the mighty” in 1 Enoch 94:6-96:3, the author continues to offer his second discourse in 96:4-98:8.⁶⁸³ Despite the absence of the term ‘rich’ in this discourse, as we have seen, the rich are symbolically connected to sinners in that they exercise their wealth and power in an unjust way. The rich stand in stark contrast to the righteous who are encouraged to take courage (97:1-2) and the wise who will see the divine judgment of the sinners. In this depiction of the rich as sinners, the author acknowledges that their wealth makes them appear to be righteous. Based on an act-consequence logic, the attainment of wealth regularly results from the attainment of wisdom and righteousness. Evaluating the logic as “a Deuteronomic theology,” Nickelsburg argues that the author “contradicts this theory by referring to the coming judgment.”⁶⁸⁴ Yet, like the sages of Proverbs and Sirach, the author of the Epistle does not discredit an act-consequence logic but discloses a distinctive status of the rich in that logic. As Frederick J. Murphy notes, in 1 Enoch the prosperity the rich enjoy does not arise from their “righteousness” but “sin.”⁶⁸⁵ To be sure, it is not the rich’s wealth but their heart—their moral orientation and acts—that demonstrates their sinfulness, for it discloses their wickedness hidden under their prosperity (v. 4b). To quote Nickelsburg, the ‘heart’ signifies “one’s intention and true moral state.”⁶⁸⁶ Moreover, as we have seen, the heart has also functioned as the center of the rich’s “moral will” in Proverbs and Sirach,

⁶⁸³ Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch*, 1:471.

⁶⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁸⁵ Frederick J. Murphy, *Apocalypticism in the Bible and Its World: A Comprehensive Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 136.

⁶⁸⁶ Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch*, 1:471.

as Newsom notes.⁶⁸⁷ In the verse, the rich are thus identified as those who show guilty heart and evil deeds.

With regard to the characterization of the rich as those who have sinned, the author of the Epistle suggests that their sin results not only from their heart but also demonic spirits. In Proverbs and Sirach, as I mentioned earlier, the sinfulness or the moral failure of the rich stems from the interaction of the obsessive desire for wealth, wrong knowledge about self and the good, and the resistance to external authority. In the Epistle, such an interaction of three elements still works for explaining the rich's moral failure. However, the moral self of the rich in 1 Enoch is also revealed to be distinct in an important fashion from the moral self of the rich in the wisdom instructions since demonic spirits specifically serve as a factor in instigating them to sin. Consider 1 Enoch 99:12-14:

- 99:12 Woe to you who lay the foundations of sin and deceit,
and cause bitterness on the earth;
for because of it they will be brought to an end.
- 13 Woe to those who build their houses not with their own labors,
and make the whole house of the stones and bricks of sin.
Woe to you; you will have no peace.
- 14 Woe to those who reject the foundation and everlasting inheritance of their
fathers;
and a spirit of error pursues you;⁶⁸⁸
You will have no rest.

As in the previous discourses (94:6-96:3; 96:4-98:8; 98:9-99:10), the author of the Epistle addresses his message against sinners as well in 99:11-100:6 that includes the above verses. The symbolic connection between sinners and the rich thus remains in this passage, even though the

⁶⁸⁷ Newsom, "Models of the Moral Self," 10.

⁶⁸⁸ Based on the Ethiopic manuscript, Isaac translates verse 14b: "Who shall pursue after the wind—the idol." According to him, "Possibly this is a corruption for 'the soul [or 'spirit'] of the idol [or 'error'].'" Isaac, "1 Enoch," 80.

author does not clearly express to whom the woes are directed. Both the implication of a power to build their houses without their labors and the parallel text (94:6-7) suggest the rich as their target.⁶⁸⁹ As Nickelsburg observes, employing the idea of a foundation both on literal and metaphorical levels in this passage, the author offers several woes against the rich who lay the foundations of sin and deceit, and build their houses with labors of others.⁶⁹⁰

After indicting the rich in verses 12-14a, the author offers an important judgment on them in verse 14bc by stating that a spirit of error pursues them and thus they will have no rest. The author here attributes the cause of their immorality to “a spirit of error” (πνεῦμα πλανήσεως). In other words, the author acknowledges the external forces that affect one’s moral agency by articulating the idea that evil spirits drive the rich to commit a wrong act. As Newsom notes, the main job of evil spirits or demons was “to inflict illnesses and sudden death” rather than to effect “the moral corruption of human beings.”⁶⁹¹ According to Newsom, after this time the impairing of “a person’s moral functioning” by demons appears in Jewish literature of the Second Temple period, such as the Aramaic Levi Document (e.g., supp. 10), the Dead Sea Scrolls (e.g., 11Q5 XIX, 15-16), Jubilees (e.g., 10:1-14), and 1 Enoch (e.g., 15:8-16:1).⁶⁹² Especially, 1 Enoch 15:11a says,

And the spirits of the giants <lead astray>, do violence, make desolate, and attack and wrestle and hurl upon the earth and <cause illnesses>.

⁶⁸⁹ For example, 1 Enoch 94:6-7 says: “Woe to those who build iniquity and violence, and lay deceit as a foundation; for quickly they will be overthrown, and they will have no peace. Woe to those who build their houses with sin; for from all their foundations they will be overthrown, and by the sword they will fall. And those who acquire gold and silver in judgment will quickly perish.”

⁶⁹⁰ Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch*, 1:497.

⁶⁹¹ Newsom, “Models of the Moral Self,” 18.

⁶⁹² *Ibid.*, 18–19.

In this verse, not only do the spirits of the giants—evil spirits—cause illnesses, but they also lead people astray. Though the description of demons occurs in a different section (the Book of the Watchers, chs. 1-36), it supports the depiction of evil spirits as those who impair the rich’s moral capacity in 1 Enoch 96:4. Moreover, a similar expression to “a spirit of error” in 1 Enoch 96:4 emphasizes the demons’ impairing power of human moral agency. 1 Enoch 99:7 says:

Those who worship stones—
and who carve images of silver and gold and wood and stone and clay
and worship phantoms and demons and abominations and *evil spirits* and all errors,
not according to knowledge; no help will you find from them.

The author here employs the expression “evil spirits” (πνεύμασιν πονηροῦς) with “all errors” to describe idols that sinners worship.⁶⁹³ According to Nickelsburg, the parallel between spirit and error in 99:7 and 99:14 suggests that the author equates “idolatry” with “perversion of the law.”⁶⁹⁴ Although evil spirits are more related to idolatry in 99:7, they are still depicted as beings who have the power of causing one to make moral errors. Thus, the author ascribes the moral failure of the rich to the seducing forces of evil spirits. The attribution of the rich’s moral failure to evil spirits is consistent with, to quote Newsom, “the Two Spirits model” that “represents the drama of moral conflict as simultaneously internal and external, psychological and cosmological.”⁶⁹⁵ More importantly, the description of evil spirits as beings who cause the rich to make moral errors is peculiar to the Epistle, in comparison to Proverbs and Sirach where the

⁶⁹³ According to Nickelsburg, the expression “spirits of errors” is also found in the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, the Book of Jubilees, and 1 John 4:6. Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch*, 1:498–99.

⁶⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 1:498.

⁶⁹⁵ Newsom, “Models of the Moral Self,” 20–21.

triad interaction of the obsessive desire, self-deception, and the resistance to external authority induces the rich to fail morally.

In sum, the rich in the Epistle of Enoch basically play a role as possessors of wealth and power. Compared to Proverbs and Sirach, however, the Epistle criticizes more sharply the rich's trust in their wealth by pointing out its vanity and ephemerality. Moreover, the author strengthens his critique of the rich by proclaiming the divine judgment on them and their ill-gotten wealth. This divine judgment on the rich is peculiar to the Epistle and reflects its apocalyptic view. In addition, the author blames the rich for the oppression of the economically and socially marginalized, such as the lowly and righteous/pious. Though the author does not use the term 'poor,' he vividly describes how the rich exploit marginalized people through the abuse of their economic and social power. The author thus brings an accusation against the iniquity of the rich and, at the same time, openly and boldly criticizes the rulers for connivance with the rich's oppression of the weak. Although the author does not explicitly identify the rich as rulers, he suggests that the two groups closely conspire to deprive the lower class of their wealth and to consolidate their positions. Finally, the author clarifies that the rich have sinned by virtue of evil spirits. The author's description of the rich's moral failure effectively prevents the reader from regarding their wealth as a material reward for following the way of wisdom. In this sense, the rich are still identified not only as possessors of wealth and power but also as negative moral agents. In the Epistle of Enoch whose genre is apocalyptic literature, the rich nonetheless function as the new sort of moral agents: they are not merely criticized for their immorality but judged by God for their sin and for their moral failure.

Other Second Temple Texts

As I have shown in the previous section, the rich do not function merely as a signifier of individuals who possess economic wealth, but they are becoming or have become a moral type in texts that were produced after the didactic wisdom books, namely, Proverbs and Sirach. In addition to the Epistle of Enoch, the description of the rich as a moral type can also be traced in other biblical texts produced during the Second Temple period. As with Enoch, full studies of these trajectories in the depiction of the rich in the Second Temple literature cannot be offered here. Only brief soundings in a couple of texts, even briefer than in Enoch, are offered as a conclusion to the study of the rich in the wisdom instructions and as a springboard for the study of the same in related works. Since I only initially probe the Wisdom of Solomon and the New Testament, more analysis would be needed to illuminate the identification of the rich as a moral type in the texts.

The Wisdom of Solomon

The Wisdom of Solomon (hereafter ‘Wisdom’) that has been generally dated to the 1st century CE, also provides a description of the rich.⁶⁹⁶ Despite the debate about its genre, Wisdom is comparable to other wisdom works, such as Proverbs, Sirach, and the Epistle of Enoch, in that

⁶⁹⁶ The title “the Wisdom of Solomon” appears in the Septuagint, but in the Vulgate it is designated as “the book of Wisdom.” Regarding its language and place of composition, many scholars have assumed that Wisdom was written in Greek by a Hellenized Jew of Alexandria. Since there is no agreement about the date, however, Wisdom has been dated between 250 BCE and 150 CE. Yet, the date suggested above—the 1st century CE is supported by many scholars due to the similarities between the Wisdom and the writings of Philo (ca. 30 BCE-40 CE). David Winston, *The Wisdom of Solomon: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, The Anchor Bible 43 (Garden City: Doubleday, 1979), 3; Michael Kolarcik, *The Book of Wisdom: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections*, vol. 5, The New Interpreter’s Bible (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1997), 437–40; Richard J. Clifford, *Wisdom*, New Collegeville Bible Commentary. Old Testament 20 (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2013), 5–7.

the book is essentially concerned with wisdom's power to enable one to live morally.⁶⁹⁷

Although Wisdom does not use the word *πλούσιος* to refer specifically to the rich as possessors of wealth, we can nonetheless infer that the wicked whom the text mentions are symbolically connected to the moral type of the 'rich' whom we have met in other texts because of many similarities between the two groups, especially in its first section (1:1-6:21).⁶⁹⁸ In Wisdom, the wicked are basically described as those who have no hope of immortality due to their inappropriate reasoning (2:1), in contrast to the just who pursue righteousness that guarantees wisdom and immortality. Based on their inappropriate understanding of life and death, the wicked indulge in good things, especially luxurious items in this world (2:6-9).⁶⁹⁹ This depiction implies that the wicked possess sufficient economic power to buy valuable goods or sufficient social power to seize them from others by unrighteous means.

⁶⁹⁷ Both Friedrich Focke and David Winston regard the genre of the Wisdom as "the *logos protreptikos* or exhortatory discourse" by using the *Protrepticus* of Aristotle as an example. Friedrich Focke, *Die Entstehung der Weisheit Salomos: ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des jüdischen Hellenismus*, Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments, n. F., 5. Heft, der ganzen Reihe 22. Heft (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1913), 85; Winston, *The Wisdom of Solomon*, 18; James M. Reese, *Hellenistic Influence on the Book of Wisdom and Its Consequences*, *Analecta Biblica* 41 (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1970), 119–21.

However, several scholars do not accept the genre of exhortatory discourse because, as Collins observes, "the protreptic genre is poorly attested" in Wisdom. For example, Maurice Gilbert, "Wisdom Literature," in *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period: Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha, Qumran, Sectarian Writings, Philo, Josephus*, ed. Michael E. Stone, *Compendia Rerum Iudaicarum Ad Novum Testamentum. Section 2. The Literature of the Jewish People in the Period of the Second Temple and the Talmud 2* (Assen; Philadelphia: Van Gorcum; Fortress Press, 1984), 307. Collins, *Jewish Wisdom*, 181–82;

Regarding the debate of the genre of Wisdom, Collins accepts the two positions and produces a compromise by suggesting that "the different parts of the book have different characters." John J. Collins, *Jewish Wisdom in the Hellenistic Age*, *The Old Testament Library* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 181–82.

⁶⁹⁸ The word *πλούσιος* appears twice in the book as follows: "But your gift is great in kindness, and rich (*πλούσιον*), and he whose hope is in you will not be sparing with a gift" (5:14); "O Lord, your pity is over the works of your hands forever; your goodness is over Israel with a rich (*πλουσίου*) gift" (18:1). In these verses, *πλούσιος* does not indicate possessors of wealth but plentiful or abundant status of wisdom's gift (5:14) or the divine character (18:1). Thus, the uses of *πλούσιος* in Wisdom are not directly comparable to the description of the rich of other wisdom books.

⁶⁹⁹ According to Sverre Aalen, the wicked people's enjoyment of good things is comparable to the rich's pleasure of many goods in 1 Enoch 97:9: "And now let us do what we have wished, for silver we have gathered up in our treasuries, and many goods in our houses; and as water they are poured out." Sverre Aalen, "St Luke's Gospel and the Last Chapters of I Enoch," *New Testament Studies* 13 (1966): 12.

Wisdom makes a closer association between the wicked and the rich by describing the former as those who oppress the economically and socially powerless, such as the poor, widows, and old people, in 2:10-11:

- 10 Let us oppress the righteous poor man;
let us not spare the widow
nor have any regard for the hairs, gray with long years, of the old man.
- 11 But let our strength be the standard of what righteousness is,
for what is weak is proved to be useless.⁷⁰⁰

In these verses, the wicked exhort each other to oppress the righteous poor man (πένητα δίκαιον). As Outi Lehtipuu suggests, the wicked here attempt to gratify their desire for wealth “by unrighteous means,” namely as oppressing the powerless.⁷⁰¹ Given that the poor man appears as a victim of oppression, the wicked are likely to have the power to control others and exercise unjust authority.⁷⁰² In verse 11, Wisdom implies that the wicked’s oppression of the poor man arises from their distorted view of righteousness as strength (ισχύς) rather than as morality.

Wisdom also provides another connection between the wicked and the rich by describing the wicked as those who boast about their wealth in 5:7-8:

⁷⁰⁰ With regard to the English translation of Wisdom, I follow Michael A. Knibb, “Wisdom of Solomon,” in *A New English Translation of the Septuagint: And the Other Greek Translations Traditionally Included under That Title*, ed. Albert Pietersma and Benjamin G. Wright (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 697–714.

⁷⁰¹ Outi Lehtipuu, “The Rich, the Poor, and the Promise of an Eschatological Reward in the Gospel of Luke,” in *Other Worlds and Their Relation to This World: Early Jewish and Ancient Christian Traditions*, ed. Tobias Nicklas et al., Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism 143 (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 241.

⁷⁰² In 2:10, the author of Wisdom denotes the oppression of the wicked as more than financial exploitation by adding the widow (χήρας) and the old man (πολιός, literally “gray hair of head; cf. Lev 19:32) to the list of victims. As Kolarcik points out, the triad groups of the poor, widows, and old people are “designate[d] [as] the weak and the helpless in society” in the Hebrew Bible. Kolarcik, *The Book of Wisdom*, 5:462. According to him, “the sojourner and the orphan” frequently appear with the triad groups. For example, Deuteronomy 14:29 (“the Levites, because they have no allotment or inheritance with you, as well as *the resident aliens, the orphans, and the widows* in your towns, may come and eat their fill so that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work that you undertake”), Exodus 23:6 (“You shall not pervert the justice due to your *poor* in their lawsuits”), and Leviticus 19:32 (“You shall rise before *the aged*, and defer to *the old*; and you shall fear your God: I am the LORD”).

- 7 We were entangled in the thorns of lawlessness and destruction
and journeyed through trackless wastes,
but the way of the Lord we did not know.
- 8 What has our arrogance profited us?
And what good has our boasted wealth brought us?

In verse 7, the wicked confess their foolishness, saying that they did not know the true way of and righteousness but walked in the way of lawlessness and destruction. For Wisdom, the wicked's ignorance of righteousness is evaluated as their arrogance (*ὑπερηφανία*) in verse 8 for not following the way of the Lord and for not trusting in the Lord.⁷⁰³ By pointedly illustrating the futility of the wicked's arrogance, Wisdom investigates the origin of their hubris (*ἀλαζονείας*, "arrogant, pretentious overestimation of self") as wealth (*πλοῦτος*).⁷⁰⁴ This description of the arrogant and wicked people recalls the rich who, in texts like Proverbs and Sirach, are characterized in part by intellectual and moral hubris.

The New Testament

The identification of the rich as possessors of wealth and a moral type is likely discernable in the New Testament as well. As in the Septuagint and other Greek texts, the word *πλούσιος* basically refers to the rich who possess abundant wealth in NT (e.g., Matt 27:57; Mark 12:41; Luke 12:16, etc.).⁷⁰⁵ The rich are also described as those who are closely associated with social and political

⁷⁰³ The word *ὑπερηφανία* also appears as one of things the fear of the Lord hates in LXX Proverbs 8:13: "The fear of the Lord hates injustice, also pride and arrogance (*ὑπερηφανίαν*) and the ways of the wicked; yes, it is I who hate the perverse ways of evil people." It is noteworthy that the translator of LXX Proverbs connects the arrogance to the ways of the wicked, which is similar to the way the author of Wisdom constructs the description of the wicked.

⁷⁰⁴ Muraoka, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 24.

⁷⁰⁵ As H. Merklein observes, *πλούσιος* occurs 28 times, "most frequently in the Synoptics (16 occurrences)," especially in Luke (11 occurrences), and the Epistles (8 occurrences), especially in James (5 occurrences). H. Merklein, "*πλοῦτος, ου, ό/τό* plutos Wealth, Abundance," in *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Horst Robert Balz and Gerhard Schneider (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 115.

leaders (e.g., Luke 1:51-53; Rev 6:15). Yet, the rich are still identified as moral agents who have moral capacity but fail to act for the good and thus are criticized for their immorality.

Along with revealing the rich's obsessive desire for wealth in didactic wisdom texts, 1 Enoch, and Wisdom, the New Testament likewise describe them as those who display greed for money and arrogance. As Malina observes, the rich's "own covetousness, or greed, or that of their ancestors" causes them to become rich.⁷⁰⁶ For example, in Luke 12:16-21, a rich person shows his strong desire for wealth by saying, "I will store all my grain and my goods" (v. 18), even though he already possessed his own land (v. 16). As François Bovon points out, the rich landowner shows his moral incapacity by "hoarding" rather than "making donations to others."⁷⁰⁷ In Luke 18:18-30, a young man is also described as rich but greedy because he rejects Jesus's suggestion of selling his wealth and giving it to the poor.⁷⁰⁸ This negative description is not merely related to his desire for wealth but also to his choice of "serv[ing] Greed rather than God," as Malina notes.⁷⁰⁹ Instead, the critique of the rich for their greed is focused more on their wrong desire and trust in the uncertainty of wealth. After the dialogue with the rich young man, Jesus reminds us that it is hard for the rich young man to enter the kingdom of God (Matt 19:23; Mark 10:23; Luke 18:15), which is like Sirach's irony of a rich and righteous person. Jesus's

⁷⁰⁶ Bruce J. Malina, "Wealth and Poverty in the New Testament and Its World," *Interpretation* 41 (1987): 357.

⁷⁰⁷ François Bovon, *Luke 2: A Commentary on the Gospel of Luke 9:51-19:27*, ed. Helmut Koester, trans. Donald S. Deer, *Hermeneia: A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2013), 200.

⁷⁰⁸ While the young man is said to have many possessions in Matthew (19:22) and Mark (10:22), he is also introduced as a ruler (ἄρχων) in Luke (18:18). According to Bovon, the young man played a role as a ruler who was "a member of the Sanhedrin or one of the leaders of the Pharisaic movement." *Ibid.*, 566.

⁷⁰⁹ Malina, "Wealth and Poverty," 355.

critical point is focused on their pursuit of the value of this world—wealth rather than that of the divine kingdom.

In the New Testament, the rich are also described as those who oppress the poor. As in other texts, the rich do not succeed in showing generosity to others, especially the poor, but use their wealth to oppress economically and socially marginalized people. For example, as Walter Brueggemann notes, James 2:1-7 shows how the rich’s oppression of the poor, through “favoritism and social distinctions,” happened within the Christian community.⁷¹⁰ James clearly accuses the rich of oppressing others in 2:6-7:

- 6 But you have dishonored the poor.
 Is it not the rich who oppress you?
 Is it not they who drag you into court?
 7 Is it not they who blaspheme the excellent name that was invoked over you?

In these verses, the three indictments—oppressing, litigating, and blaspheming that remind us of the rich’s immoral characteristics in Proverbs and Sirach—are charged to the rich in relation to the exercise of their social power.⁷¹¹ Given that these three behaviors of the rich have a purpose of increasing their own advantage through exploitation of others, the rich are criticized for their unjust use of wealth and power.

Finally, the divine judgment on the rich that we saw in the Epistle of Enoch becomes clearer in the New Testament. Several texts deal with the divine judgment on the rich. In them,

⁷¹⁰ Walter Brueggemann, *Money and Possessions*, Interpretation: Resources for the Use of Scripture in the Church (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2016), 252.

⁷¹¹ As Alicia J. Batten observes, the verb καταδυναστεύω (“to oppress,” v. 6) is used in the Septuagint “to describe the oppression of the poor by the rich” (e.g., Amos 4:1: “Hear this word, you cows of Bashan who are on Mount Samaria, who oppress [καταδυναστεύουσαι] the poor, who crush the needy, who say to their husbands, ‘Bring something to drink!’”). Alicia J. Batten, “The Degraded Poor and the Greedy Rich: Exploring the Language of Poverty and Wealth in James,” in *The Social Sciences and Biblical Translation*, ed. Dietmar Neufeld, Symposium Series 41 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2008), 74.

the authors elaborate how the rich face miserable consequences due to their greed and injustice. For example, in James 5:1-6, the author warns that miseries will befall the rich. Yet, the divine judgment of the rich is extensively related to the results of losing their wealth, experiencing poverty, and suffering for their sins in Hades. In Luke 16:19-31, the author provides another description of the divine judgment with regard to the reversed economic and social status of the rich and the poor. While poor Lazarus was carried by the angels to the bosom of Abraham where he was comforted, a rich man was in agony in Hades. Thus, though a rich man enjoyed wealth and social privileges in this world, after his death he no longer reaps benefits but rather is humiliated in Hades. This divine judgment on the rich in the New Testament again reinforces the conclusion that the rich are not identical to those who possess wealth as a material reward for righteousness and virtues in wisdom's act-consequence nexus.

The descriptions of the rich in 1 Enoch, Wisdom, and the New Testament thus display how the rich in wisdom's instructions have become, and may continue to function as, a moral type rather than a simple indicator of those who possess wealth. It is noteworthy that in those texts of the Second Temple period, moral agency of the rich is sometimes denied and instead impaired by demonic spirits. To be sure, much more study of the rich in light of the moral type of wisdom's instructions is needed not only on the Second Temple texts briefly described above, but also into related wisdom texts, such as Job and Ecclesiastes, and other biblical traditions including Psalms.

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