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The הָלַכָּת of the Lectures: Human Embodiment, Rhetoric, and Adolescent Spiritual Formation in Proverbs 1–9

Logan T. Thompson

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THE OF THE LECTURES: HUMAN EMBODIMENT, RHETORIC, AND ADOLESCENT SPIRITUAL FORMATION IN PROVERBS 1–9

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By

Logan T. Thompson

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Introduction

We are embodied creatures. Every person who has ever lived—no matter the time period, geographic location, or cultural setting—has had a body. In fact, according to Dietrich Bonhoeffer, “It is the will of God that there should be human life on earth only in the form of bodily life.” One cannot escape this truth of human existence: we all live, move, and have our being in the world corporeally. We are embodied creatures.

As a constant experience for every individual, the reality of human embodiment frequently fades into one’s subconsciousness and is all but forgotten. Nevertheless, human beings bear witness to their embodiment every day, in both word and deed. Although it often goes unacknowledged, human language reveals the foundational and inescapable reality that our existence is always bodily.

In their seminal work on the pervasiveness of metaphor in everyday human speech and the vital importance of metaphor for cognition, George Lakoff and Mark Johnson argue that “the human conceptual system is metaphorically structured and

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2 Or worse, forsaken. (Neo-)Platonic dualism and “Gnosticism” are two examples of anti-corporeal philosophy. For a passionate rejection of such thinking and a thorough affirmation of humanity’s created embodiment, see N. T. Wright, *Surprised by Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church* (New York: HarperOne, 2008), 3–30; 89–91; and 93–108.
defined.” In other words, people are able to make meaning in their lives only on the basis of *metaphor*, the “essence” of which is “understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another.” Without bodies that inhabit a material world, it would be impossible for human language to make meaning in this way. Cognition takes place by means of language, and language only makes sense when it either refers to or originates from a concrete reality.

Lakoff and Johnson go into great detail about the kinds of metaphors that structure the human conceptual system, and they provide numerous examples along the way. A small sample, however, makes their point clear. First, Lakoff and Johnson introduce the conceptual metaphor *argument is war*, evidenced in Western cultures by phrases like, “Your claims are indefensible,” “He attacked every weak point in my argument,” and “I’ve never won an argument with him.” Another example is the conceptual metaphor *time is money*. English-speakers often hear this metaphor when others say, “You’re wasting my time,” “I don’t have enough time to spare for that,” and “Is that worth your while?” Taken together, the two interrelated “orientational” metaphors *good is up* and *bad is down* provide one final example. Common expressions such as, “Things are looking up,” “We hit a peak last year, but it’s been downhill ever


4 Ibid., 5.

5 Ibid., 4. Emphasis original.

6 Ibid., 8. Emphasis original.
since,” and “He does high-quality work” reveal a spatial metaphor in the language that Westerners use when assessing quality or value.⁷

We may surmise the origins of these conceptual metaphors. Anger causes physiological responses and often surfaces during verbal disagreements, so we speak of it in the same way we would discuss military combat. Like money, human beings possess a limited amount of time; therefore, we speak of time as a commodity to be spent on various activities in which we participate over the course of our lives. Finally, a higher physical state tends to be the superior position—whether an individual has a height advantage over another in some sort of competition, one person has a taller pile of money or goods than someone else, or an army has the high ground in a battle. Thus, we frequently use the conceptual metaphors GOOD IS UP and BAD IS DOWN.

We find, then, in our survey of conceptual metaphor in human language that human embodiment lies constantly beneath the surface of our existence—yet it informs and affects more than we realize.⁸ As philosopher James K. A. Smith notes,

The body carries a kind of acquired, habituated knowledge or know-how that is irreducible and inarticulable, and yet fundamentally orienting for our being-in-the-world. . . . The body is thus that background that can never be fully put in front of us—the 'bodily schema' that is our frame of reference and condition for experience.⁹

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⁷ Ibid., 16. Emphasis original. As Lakoff and Johnson conclude, “There is an overall systematicity among the various spatialization metaphors, which defines coherence among them. Thus, GOOD IS UP gives an UP orientation to general well-being, and this orientation is coherent with special cases like HAPPY IS UP, ALIVE IS UP, [and] CONTROL IS UP” (ibid., 18).

⁸ Including the preceding phrase in this very sentence: “Human embodiment lies constantly beneath the surface of our existence” implements the conceptual metaphors CONSCIOUS IS UP and UNCONSCIOUS IS DOWN (see Lakoff and Johnson, 15).

Without conceptual metaphors that are rooted in our embodied experience, one would find it almost impossible both to comprehend and to communicate abstract ideas like time or complex activities like arguing. At the same time, such language would not exist without the reality of corporeal existence. Therefore, human embodiment and human language are interdependent: Our world makes meaning out of our words; our words make meaning out of our world.

Once we recall the constant reality of human embodiment and recognize that bodily existence is one feature shared with all those who have come before us, we can then read ancient sources in a better light. When we come across corporeal language in ancient writings, we get a glimpse into how ancient peoples understood their own embodiment, how their conceptual metaphors reflected their embodied experience, and how such self-perceptions shaped the way they inhabited the world. The purpose of this guided research paper is to explore the lectures of Proverbs 1–9 in order to better understand the ancient Hebrew concept of the body, particularly the בֵל, and how that somatic self-conception influences the father’s rhetoric as he imparts wisdom to his son.10

This paper’s exploration begins in Chapter 1, which investigates the ancient Israelite conception of the human body evidenced by the Hebrew Bible, paying special attention to the data presented in the book of Proverbs. Chapter 2 narrows the study to the

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which Aubrey Johnson says is “by far the most important organ” in the somatic self-conception of ancient Israel.\footnote{Aubrey R. Johnson, \textit{The Vitality of the Individual in the Thought of Ancient Israel} (Cardiff: University of Wales Press), 77.} Having established this textual and cultural background, Chapter 3 investigates the broader topic of the father’s rhetoric in Proverbs 1–9. This chapter considers the multitude of rhetorical strategies that the father implements in his lectures, highlighting the ways in which corporeal language functions to persuade the lectures’ audience. Finally, Chapter 4 takes the key findings of the preceding exploration and applies them to the modern context of youth ministry in the West, particularly the United States.

With its exegetical and hermeneutical foci in the First Testament’s wisdom literature, this paper assumes the enduring value of what lies in the book of Proverbs. Although the philosophical anthropology of ancient Israel differs from that of the modern West, this paper shows that the בֵּל offers challenging insight into what it means to live in the world as an embodied human being (Chapters 1 and 2). We find in the lectures of Proverbs 1–9 a father who is also a skilled rhetor, one from whom much is to be gleaned by all those in the church today whose task is to guide young people in their journey of faith (Chapters 3 and 4). Ultimately, I hope that this paper will bear witness to what God has always intended for his embodied creatures: the desire to follow him on the path of wisdom with all one’s heart, soul, mind, and strength.
Chapter 1
The Conception of the Human Body in Ancient Israel

The human body is the best picture of the human soul.

—Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*

We are embodied creatures, and our bodies matter. Thus, what human beings believe about their bodies will shape not only individual experience, but communal experience as well. For example, every community must make ethical decisions regarding what people ought to do with their own bodies and to the bodies of others.¹ Is it wrong to injure or kill another person? In what kind of sexual relationships are we to participate? What is the relationship between human beings and the food that we eat? In short, what do we do with our bodies?

Beyond the realm of conscious ethical decisions, human embodiment affects our experience in subtler and more foundational ways. This includes daily embodied practices,² nonverbal communication,³ and verbal communication. The latter is this paper’s topic of interest, particularly how the words that we speak—that is, our rhetoric—influences our understanding of what it means to be human. Since what human beings believe about their bodies often shapes rhetoric in unnoticed but crucial ways, it is

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¹ As Andy Crouch writes, “To insist on the importance of bodies is to challenge the sovereign self, to suggest that our ethical options are limited by something we did not choose” (“Sex without Bodies: The Church’s Response to the LGBT Movement Must Be That Matter Matters,” *Christianity Today*, 57 no. 6 [July–August 2013]: 75).

² E.g., personal hygiene routines, mealtime customs, and sleeping habits.

³ This includes body language (kinesics), distance (proxemics), voice (paralanguage), touch (haptics), and eye contact (oculesics). For an introduction to this broad field, see Judee K. Burgoon, David B. Buller, and W. Gill Woodall, *Nonverbal Communication: The Unspoken Dialogue* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1996).
essential to establish the somatic self-conception of ancient Israel before beginning to explore Proverbs 1–9. Therefore, this chapter provides an investigation of the ancient Israelite conception of the human body as evidenced by the Hebrew Bible.

Caveats for Interpreting Ancient Texts

In order to gain insight into the self-conception of people long ago, interpreters must overcome numerous difficulties. Any attempt to study anthropology through a work of ancient literature like the book of Proverbs requires at least two precautions. First, we must acknowledge that Proverbs is ancient wisdom literature, not anthropology. The chief audience to which the book of Proverbs (or any other book in the Hebrew Bible) was written is not twenty-first century scholars interested in the way that ancient peoples conceptualized themselves. This interpretive distance not only includes the issue of genre, but also extends further into the field of semantics. As Stuart Lasine points out, “[We cannot] assume congruity between the lexical characteristics of a culture and individual psychology.”

Second, we must not allow modern assessments of human personality to creep into our interpretation of any corporeal language we may find in Scripture. Ancient Israelites did not live within the highly individualistic and compartmentalized culture of

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4 Stuart Lasine, *Weighing Hearts: Character, Judgment, and the Ethics of Reading the Bible* (New York: T&T Clark International, 2012), 31. Lasine cites Robert C. Solomon, who writes, “How we talk about ourselves is only a partial indication of how we think about ourselves and how we actually behave. . . . It’s possible for a culture to cultivate a way of talking about themselves and the self that is somewhat at odds with the ways in which they actually conceive of themselves and their relationships to one another” (“One Hundred Years of Ressentiment: Nietzsche’s Genealogy of Morals,” in *Nietzsche, Genealogy, Morality: Essays on Nietzsche’s On the Genealogy of Morals*, ed. Richard Schacht [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994], 114). In short, “The fact that we must use literary and other texts as evidence for ancient self-conceptions and psychology is itself a fundamental methodological problem” (Lasine, 33).
the twenty-first-century West. An important example of this, especially for this chapter’s investigation, is the modern distinction between the head and the heart as the seats of intellect and emotion, respectively. Fox notes that “the modern dichotomy is artificial.”

In his discussion of the prolegomena of Proverbs, William Brown makes a similar point when he says that “to dichotomize intellectual and moral values . . . is farthest from the mind of the ancient sage.”

Although scholars of ancient literature must take into consideration these and other interpretive pitfalls, they need not be deterred from investigating the conception of the human body in ancient Israel. To be sure, there are significant differences between ancient Israelites and modern people, but to perceive the biblical authors and their audiences as “fundamentally alien to us goes against the grain of [the Hebrew Bible’s] rhetoric.” The book of Proverbs is exemplary here: its very nature as the written preservation of wisdom invites its readers “to identify totally with [their biblical ancestors],” especially when it comes to universal characteristics of human experience—namely, human embodiment—that remain constant throughout history. As Timothy Polk argues, we should not falsify our understanding of universal human anthropology “by imagining the cleft between old and new to be everywhere the same in depth and width,


8 Lasine, 54.

9 Ibid.
everywhere a virtual chasm, [or] by ignoring that there are places where in fact the cleft disappears because the structure of certain features of existence then and now is the same.”

In sum, although interpreters must remember certain caveats for interpreting ancient texts, modern people are in many ways similar to and in essential ways identical to those who lived and died long ago. This assurance follows: we can and should expect our own bodily experiences to reflect and to offer accurate insight into the somatic self-conception of ancient Israel expressed throughout the Hebrew Bible. An understanding of how the authors of Scripture understood their own bodies and their being-in-the-world will provide the necessary anthropological background for this paper’s primary aim of investigating the father’s rhetoric in Proverbs 1–9 and the “writing-supported process of shaping young Israelites.”

Anthropological Terms in Ancient Israel

The first step toward an understanding of the somatic self-conception of ancient Israel is to survey the Hebrew Bible in order to ascertain the key anthropological terms that the biblical authors employ. Table 1 below summarizes the work of Hans Wolff, who identifies the four anthropological terms that appear most frequently in biblical Hebrew. Every occurrence of these four terms is likely to be found in the context of a larger passage that may offer insight into the ancient Israelite conception of the body and of


personhood. A comparison of the words’ occurrences in the Hebrew Bible provides statistical evidence for Wolff’s conclusion that בֵל is “the most important word in the vocabulary of Old Testament anthropology.”12 Before turning to the בֵל, however, this section will first examine the use of the other key terms (רָשָׂב, מַחוֹר, and שֶׁפֶנ) in order to identify their unique roles for the individual psyche and ultimately to come to a fuller understanding the somatic self-conception of ancient Israel.

Table 1. Key anthropological terms in the Hebrew Bible

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
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<th>Translation13</th>
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<td>heart</td>
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<td>נֶפֶשׁ</td>
<td>nepeš</td>
<td>soul</td>
<td>753</td>
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<tr>
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<td>rûaḥ</td>
<td>spirit, breath, wind</td>
<td>378</td>
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<tr>
<td>בָבֵל</td>
<td>bēḇ/ēḇāḇ</td>
<td>body, flesh</td>
<td>269</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Data adapted from Wolff, 10–58.


13 All translations from Scripture are my own.

14 This word appears throughout the Hebrew Bible in two forms: בֵּל occurs 598 times; בָבֵל occurs 252 times. As Fabry notes, “There is no discernible semantic difference” between the two forms; they are “totally synonymous and interchangeable” (Fabry, “בֵּל lēḇ; בָבֵל lēḇāḇ,” 407). For the sake of consistency and succinctness, as well as the fact that the biblical authors semantically employ the two forms in the same way, this paper will use בֵל to refer to both forms synecdochally.
The first anthropological term, רָשָׂבּ, is typically translated “flesh” or “body,”
denoting in either case the physical matter of which both humans and animals are made.\(^{15}\) Glenn Whitlock describes רָשָׂבּ as “the nature of man as creature.”\(^{16}\) The term is never applied to God.\(^{17}\) In an anthropological sense, רָשָׂבּ is “probably the most comprehensive, most important, and most frequently used . . . term for the external, fleshly aspect of man’s nature, and when used in this sense it can be translated by the two main meanings . . . depending on the context.”\(^{18}\) It is sometimes a synonym for רֵאְשׁ (“flesh,” Mic. 3:3), distinct from more specific terms like_medium breakpoint_םֶצֶע and רוֹע (“bone” and “skin,” respectively; Job 10:11), as well as כְֶרֶב (“knee”), דָי (“hand”), לֶגֶר (“foot”), נוֹשָׁל (“tongue”), and מָדּ (“mouth”).\(^{20}\) In this synecdochal sense, רָשָׂבּ often includes or is used in conjunction with other terms that refer to specific body parts, such as כְֶרֶב (“knee”), דָי (“hand”), לֶגֶר (“foot”), נוֹשָׁל (“tongue”), and מָדּ (“mouth”).\(^{21}\)


\(^{16}\) Glenn E. Whitlock, “The Structure of Personality in Hebrew Psychology,” *Interpretation* 14, no. 1 (January 1960): 3. See also Wolff, who notes that רָשָׂבּ is “broadly characteristic of both man and beast” (Wolff, 26).

\(^{17}\) Ibid.

\(^{18}\) Bratsiotis, 325.

\(^{19}\) Ibid., 318.

\(^{20}\) Ibid. See also Wolff, 28.

The consistent use of רָשָׂבּ in reference to exterior, corporeal realities places it in clear distinction from more interior or transcendental terms like חֵר, שֶׁפֶנ, and בֵל.22 Bratsiotis points out one passage in Proverbs 1–9 that distinguishes the outer person (רָשָׂבּ) from the inner person (בֵּל).23 In the father’s seventh lecture (Prov. 4:20–27)—the discourse in which somatic language is most prominent—the father implores his son to keep his words of wisdom within his בֵּל (v. 21), because they are “life” (םיִיַּח) and will in turn bring healing to the son’s רָשָׂבּ (v. 22).

But the distinction between the external and internal aspects of personhood in ancient Israel, observed here and elsewhere,24 must not lead us to interpret such anthropological differentiation “as a dualism of soul and body in the Platonic sense.”25 Instead, according to Bratsiotis, the various Hebrew terms that refer to external or internal realities of human embodiment “are to be understood as different aspects of man’s existence as a twofold entity. It is precisely this anthropological wholeness that is decisive for the twofold nature of the human being.”26

In sum, the word רָשָׂבּ consistently indicates human corporeality: the physical body itself, the tangible features of human existence. The רָשָׂבּ is thus connected with the

22 Bratsiotis, 325.
23 Ibid.
24 Eccl. 11:10 also distinguishes רָשָׂבּ from the בֵּל. The word שֶׁפֶנ is contrasted with רָשָׂבּ in Ps. 63:2.
25 Bratsiotis, 326.
26 Ibid.
“creatureliness” of human beings, frequently placing emphasis on humankind’s “absolute dependence on God” due to their “weakness, inadequacy, and transitoriness.” As such, רָשָׂבּ is distinguishable from the other key anthropological terms, which either refer totally to the internal realities of human embodiment or have both a corporeal referent as well as an internal, transcendent function.

רַחֲמָן (rūḥ)

The word רַחֲמָן is unique among the four anthropological terms surveyed in this chapter, since its semantic field is divided into two distinct categories: the impersonal (“wind”) and the anthropological (“breath,” “spirit,” or occasionally “life”). In fact, the category that the biblical authors intend is often ambiguous. Phonetically, the word רַחֲמָן is “perhaps onomatopoetic.” As Aubrey Johnson observes, “Etymologically [רַחֲמָן] is connected with a root which occurs in all but the eastern branch of the Semitic languages, and everywhere points to an initial awareness of air in motion, particularly ‘wind’.” This could help to explain both the word’s lexical range and its exegetical ambiguity, as the sound of rushing air is commonplace as both a meteorological and a physiological

27 Ibid., 328. In this sense, רָשָׂבּ is best translated “flesh,” which, as Whitlock observes, “does not imply moral defect” as it often does in Greek thought, which is why “flesh” (σάρξ) typically has a negative connotation in the NT (Whitlock, 4; contra Wolff, 31).


29 Ibid.; cf. Ps. 18:16[15]; Ezek. 37:9. Also worth noting is the Greek word πνεῦμα, which carries some of the same translational ambiguity (e.g., John 3:8; Heb. 1:7; and Rev. 11:11).


31 Aubrey Johnson, 26–27.
phenomenon. Whether air is heard gusting through the atmosphere or flowing into one’s own lungs, the common experience of human embodiment informs our understanding of the translational options available for the Hebrew term נָרָה. In light of the present chapter’s scope, however, this section will focus only on the anthropological use of נָרָה.

Instances in which נָרָה is best translated “breath” or “spirit” show that the ancient Israelites understood the נָרָה as the “vitalizing spirit of God,” given to both human beings and animals in order to animate them, filling them with life (Gen. 6:17; 7:22). In Gen. 2:7—the locus classicus of anthropology in the Hebrew Bible—God forms man from the “dust of the ground” (נגב) and breathes into his nostrils “the breath of life” (נשמה). As Fabry rightly notes, “Although the word [נָרָה] does not appear here, it is perceived as synonymous, so that it does appear in similar statements elsewhere: Yahweh gives [נָרָה] and [נָשְׁמָה] (Isa 42:5); he forms the human [נָרָה] within (Zech. 12:1).” And, as Elihu says in his rebuke of Job, “The Spirit of God (רוח) has made me, and the breath of the Almighty (נֶפֶשׁ) gives me life” (Job 33:4).

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32 Fabry writes, “The form may be classified as a verbal noun modeled on the infinitive, denoting an action: the ‘blowing’ of the wind or ‘respiration.’ By analogy it came to mean ‘breathing’ as a sign of life and hence ‘spirit’ and ‘life’” (“נָרָה rûaḥ,” 368).

33 By “anthropological” I do not mean to limit the personal applications of the term to human beings alone. Meteorological phenomena are often understood as the נָרָה of God throughout the Hebrew Bible (e.g., 1 Kgs. 18:45–46; Pss. 29; 104:3; Nah. 1:3).

34 Fabry, “נָרָה rûaḥ,” 388.


36 Fabry, “נָרָה rûaḥ,” 386.
Unlike the רָשָׂבּ, the שֶׁפֶנ, and the בֵל, the Hebrew Bible makes clear that the חוּר is a gift from God. In Gen. 6:3, Yahweh says, “My spirit [רוּחַ] will not abide in man forever, for he is flesh [כּם].” In Eccl. 12:7, Qoheleth states, “The dust returns to the earth as it once was, and the spirit [רוּחַ] returns to God, who gave it” (cf. Gen. 3:19; Ps. 104:29–30; Job 34:14–15). Thus, it is the union of רָשָׂבּ and חוּר that creates life—a body without the God-breathed spirit cannot be considered a living being.

Beyond the purpose of simply living, God gives his חוּר to individuals throughout the Hebrew Bible in order to carry out other, more specific tasks. Numbers 27:18 suggests that Joshua is capable of leading Israel into the Promised Land because the Spirit was within him (ךִשְׁרָה חוּר ווֹבּ). Israel’s judges—namely Othniel, Gideon, and Samson—were all led by God’s חוּר in their leadership of the people. The רוּחַ of God “rushed upon” King Saul in 1 Sam. 10:10 (וְלַחוּר ווּלָעַו ויִהלֱֹא), but because of Saul’s disobedience, God’s חוּר came upon David instead (16:13), having “departed from Saul” (וְלַחוּר ווּלָעַו יִהיָו חַלְצִיתַּו). Another example comes in Ezek. 2:2, where God’s חוּר “entered into” Ezekiel (וְלַחוּר ווּלָעַו אֹבָתַּו) in order for him to carry out his prophetic task. Later in the book, God promises through Ezekiel that the same חוּר would be placed within the people of Israel (וְלַחוּר ווּלָעַו יִיחְנוֹר אֵשׁ פּוֹרָקְבּ; 36:27).

Full descriptions of the terms שֶׁפֶנ and בֵל are offered below, but it may prove helpful in this section to highlight the key differences between חוּר and the other two interior anthropological terms. As a vivifying force חוּר can refer to one’s life in general

37 Whitlock, 7.

38 God’s Spirit was “upon” Othniel (וְלַחוּר ווּלָעַו יִיחְנוֹר; Judg. 3:10), “clothed” Gideon (וְלַחוּר ווּלָעַו חַלְצִיתַּו; Judges 6:34), and “began to stir” (וְלַחוּר ווּלָעַו לֶחָתַּו; Judges 13:25) and later “rushed upon” (וְלַחוּר ווּלָעַו חַלְצִיתַּו ויָלָע; 14:6) Samson.
(in this sense רוח is most often applied to God; the main application of נשכן is to human beings), but רוח rarely refers to a living being in a “concrete sense” like נשכן. In places where the two terms are found in parallel (e.g., Isa. 26:9), the best translation for both is “soul.” Fabry highlights the key difference between the רוח and the נשכן when he writes, “Whereas the word [nishchen] can denote the whole person, [ruah] is always said to be within [berek] someone.”

In this way, the רוח is more like the בֵּל—something that resides within a person, never implemented as a synecdoche. Like the בֵּל, which is seen (תָּא שְׁמוֹ; Jer. 20:12), known (עֵד; 1 Kgs. 8:39; cf. Ps. 33:15; Prov. 15:11), searched (רָאוּ; Jer. 17:10; cf. Ps. 139:23), tested (רָצִיב; Jer. 11:20), and weighed (רְכֵב; Prov. 21:2; 24:12) by God, the רוח also comes under God’s scrutiny (Prov. 16:2; Ezek. 11:5). The distinction between the רוח and the בֵּל in ancient Israel is best illustrated by their use in the context of wisdom. The בֵּל is frequently understood as the seat or storehouse of wisdom (Ex. 31:6; 1 Kgs. 3:12; Job 9:4; Prov. 2:10; 14:33; 16:21); the רוח is never described in this way. The רוח is that which is given to and “instilled” in a person by God; the בֵּל, however, is the source from which a person’s own will, desires, thoughts, and emotions emanate (see Prov. 16:1–2).

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39 Fabry, “ruah rûaḥ,” 375.
40 Ibid.
41 Ibid. Cf. Whitlock, 9. See Isa. 19:3, 14; 26:9; 63:11; Ezek. 11:19; 36:26–27; Hos. 5:4; Hab. 2:19; Zech. 12:1; Ps. 51:10.
42 Fabry, 376–77.
43 Ibid., 377.
44 Ibid.
The traditional translation of the term שֶׁפֶנ is “soul,” but this translation can be misleading.\textsuperscript{45} As mentioned above, שֶׁפֶנ often denotes the whole person; therefore, as Wolff argues, “Man does not have [שֶׁפֶנ] . . . he lives as [שֶׁפֶנ].”\textsuperscript{46} Or, as Fox puts it, “The [שֶׁפֶנ] is not a detachable, ‘spiritual’ soul, but . . . the living person in his or her entirety or an integral part thereof.”\textsuperscript{47} Although the שֶׁפֶנ is for the most part to be understood transcendentally, the term’s conception as “the vital principle of life itself”\textsuperscript{48} originates corporeally.

The term שֶׁפֶנ (as well as its verbal form) often appears in the context of physical human needs: hunger (Prov. 10:3; 13:25), thirst (Prov. 25:25), and—less commonly—respiration (see 2 Sam. 16:14). Because of its association with these particular physiological functions, the body part to which שֶׁפֶנ first referred is likely the throat (see 1 Sam. 28:7; Jer. 2:24; and 4:10), which “stands without terminological distinction for both the windpipe and the esophagus.”\textsuperscript{49} Nevertheless, the meaning of שֶׁפֶנ in the Hebrew Bible

\textsuperscript{45} Horst Seebass notes, “The more vaguely and naively this word is used, the more correct and appropriate the translation becomes . . . To use the translation “soul” in every instance . . . does not do justice to the textual evidence (“שֶׁפֶנ, nepeš,” in Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament, vol. 9, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David E. Green [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998], 508).

\textsuperscript{46} Wolff, 10; cf. 21. See also Seebass, 511–12.

\textsuperscript{47} Fox, Proverbs 1–9, 232.

\textsuperscript{48} Whitlock, 8. Cf. Seebass, who states that the “defining characteristic” of שֶׁפֶנ is “impassioned, abounding, vital energy” (509).

\textsuperscript{49} Wolff, 13. See Num. 11:6 and Isa. 58:11.
is expanded from the purely corporeal sense. As Seebass summarizes, “The topos clearly centers on the throat, but it applies to the whole person.”

A synthetic understanding of the שֶׁפֶנ coheres well with one of the five anthropological principles that Wilkinson derives from the Hebrew Bible: “the principle of organic unity.” This means that despite the various anthropological terms in ancient Israel, the biblical authors and their immediate audiences understood the parts of the human body as a unified whole, though without “any central controlling or co-ordinating system.” Seebass points out this integrated somatic self-perception in his section on another possible translation of שֶׁפֶנ: “desire.” This meaning is derived from the term’s corporeal referent, the throat, which is readily associated with human appetite for food and drink (e.g., Deut. 23:24; Prov. 16:26; 27:7; Isa. 29:8; Hos. 9:4).

Citing Westermann, Seebass writes, “The meaning ‘desire, appetite’ is not secondary . . . but denotes something inherently human and does not view desire [ἐπιθυμία] in a negative light . . . The synthetic view of life always thinks of desire as involving the whole person.”

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50 Seebass, 504. Seebass disagrees with Wolff’s secondary understanding of the שֶׁפֶנ as the external neck (505; cf. Wolff, 14–15). In places where translating שֶׁפֶנ as “neck” is a valid option (1 Sam. 28:9; Ps. 105:18), “the imagery suggests strangulation,” taking away one’s vitality by cutting off respiration (Seebass, 505). Clearly, “neck” and “throat” are related, but the context confirms Seebass’s position that the interior functions of the windpipe and esophagus are salient; thus, “throat” is the better translation.

51 Wilkinson, 196.

52 Ibid.

53 Seebass, 505.

This emphasis on the entirety of that which makes one a human being is also what distinguishes the שֶׁפֶנ from the בֵל. The two terms appear together in the second line of the shema: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your בֵל and with all your שֶׁפֶנ and with all your might” (Deut. 6:5). The בֵל—the source of one’s thoughts, emotions, decisions, and more—comes first as it is the foundation or the core of one’s being. The שֶׁפֶנ “elevates the intensity of involvement” so that once someone has resolved to love God in her בֵל, the rest of her being might follow suit.

Another important anthropological aspect of the term שֶׁפֶנ is its emphasis on the individual person. Though שֶׁפֶנ can sometimes denote life or vitality in general, it most frequently indicates “life instantiated in individuals.” Pronominal suffixes are attached to שֶׁפֶנ throughout the Hebrew Bible (e.g., Prov. 8:35–36; וֹשְׁפַנ), indicating that every living person possesses vitality or life—or, better, each individual is a שֶׁפֶנ. The law of lex talionis concerning injury to a pregnant woman in Exod. 21:22–25 illuminates this point: “If there is harm, you shall give שֶׁפֶנ in exchange for שֶׁפֶנ, eye in exchange for eye, hand in exchange for hand, foot in exchange for foot” (vv. 23–24).

In sum, the word שֶׁפֶנ is best understood as “utterly antithetical to the power of death . . . [the individual’s] vital energy, which cannot exist without a relationship to

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55 This translation removes the morphemes in order to highlight the key terms. The full verse in Hebrew is: תֵא הָוהְי, תֵא הָוהְי. 56 Seebass, 511. Cf. Deut. 4:29; 10:12; 11:13; 26:16; 30:2, 6, 10; Josh. 22:5; 23:14; 1 Kgs. 2:4; 8:48; and 2 Kgs. 23:5. 57 Ibid., 512; cf. Whitlock, 9. 58 Seebass, 513.
The word has both similarities to and important differences from the three other anthropological terms surveyed in this chapter. Like רָשָׂבּ, the שֶׁפֶנ most often denotes the totality of an individual, though the רָשָׂבּ is limited to the physical nature. Like נוֹר, the שֶׁפֶנ is a transcendent aspect of one’s being-in-the-world. And, like the בֵּל, the שֶׁפֶנ is crucial when it comes to choosing one’s course in life—an all or nothing decision for the ancient Israelite—determined in and driven by the בֵּל, carried out with holistic vitality by the שֶׁפֶנ.

לְחֵץ/לָכָה (lēḥ/lēḇāḥ)

We come finally, then, to the בֵּל—the most frequently occurring and most important anthropological term in the Hebrew Bible—typically translated into English as “heart.” The word appears in every book of the Hebrew Bible except Micah and Habakkuk.60 Table 2 below summarizes the distribution of the word לְחֵץ in the eight books in which it appears most frequently, accounting for 529 of its 853 total occurrences.

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<th>Book</th>
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<td>Ecclesiastes</td>
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Source: Data adapted from Fabry, “לְחֵץ; בֵּל/לָכָה,” 401.

59 Seebass, 517.

60 Fabry, “לְחֵץ; בֵּל/לָכָה,” 401.
The ubiquity of the term in the Hebrew Bible reveals its importance in ancient Israel, but the modern English translation “heart” has the potential lead interpreters astray.61 Christine Mitchell observes that “the heart is where [today’s English-speakers] feel emotions . . . it is the organ that drives our circulatory system . . . it [is located in the] chest.”62 But the בֵּל was not understood as “the blood-pumping organ” in ancient Israel, nor did Hebrew-speaking people conceive of it as residing in the left upper quadrant of the torso.63 Instead, the typical Hebrew individual would have considered the בֵּל to be “a vaguely-known or even confused jumble of organs” located near the stomach.64

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62 Mitchell, 5.

63 Robert North, “Brain and Nerve in the Biblical Outlook.” Biblica 74, no. 4 (1993): 592; cf. Robert D. Branson, “Science, the Bible, and Human Anatomy,” Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith 68, no. 4 (December 2016): 230. As Fabry observes, “It is generally assumed that the primary meaning of בֵּל is the organ we call the heart, but this cannot be proved. The anatomical reference of בֵּל is quite vague in all the Semitic languages” (“בֵּל lēḇ; בָבֵל lēḇāḇ,” 411).

64 North, “Brain and Nerve,” 596–7. See also North, “Did Ancient Israelites Have a Heart?” Bible Review 11 (June 1995): 33. One should note, however, that anatomical references to the בֵּל solely as a physical organ are uncommon (Fabry, “בֵּל lēḇ; בָבֵל lēḇāḇ,” 411). See 2 Sam. 18:14; 2 Kgs. 9:24; Ps. 37:15; and 45:5.
The Etruscan statue (second-century BCE) depicted in Figure 1 illustrates this somatic self-conception, prevalent among ancient peoples who “[shared] a common heritage: medical knowledge from Egypt transmitted by the Greeks.”\(^65\) Egyptian influence is evidenced by the fact that the Hebrew term בֵל shares the same nominal root as its Egyptian counterpart, ḫb.\(^66\) The Egyptian word is also most often translated “heart,” and was understood to function similarly to the בֵל in Israel:

[For ancient Egyptians] the heart is the focus of the individual—body, spirit, soul, and will—the center of the entire personality and its relationship with God. But the heart as the vital center (the \(ka\) being at work in each person’s heart) is not

\(^{65}\) Ibid.

\(^{66}\) Fabry, “בֵל \(lēḇ\); בָבֵל \(lēḇāḇ\),” 401.
identical to the individual; it can forsake its owner, enter into dialogue with him, but also forsake him.\textsuperscript{67}

In a similar way, the בֵּל carried out multiple functions in the somatic self-conception of ancient Israel, and the presumed location of the בֵּל in the human body will become more apparent by investigating the way its functions are described. The role of the בֵּל in the ancient Israelite somatic self-conception consisted of four dimensions: the anatomical (described above), the emotional, the intellectual, and the volitional.\textsuperscript{68} Daniel Goodwin provides a broad summary of how the בֵּל functioned in all of these spheres in ancient Israel:

[The בֵּל] stands for the central part in general, the inside, and so for the interior man as manifesting himself in all his various activities, in his desires, affections, emotions, passions, purposes, his thoughts, perceptions, imaginations, his wisdom, knowledge, skill, his beliefs and reasonings [sic], his memory and his consciousness . . . . It designates the central basis for the functions of the whole inner man.\textsuperscript{69}

Much like Western notions of the heart, one of the primary roles of the בֵּל was to function as the seat of the emotions.\textsuperscript{70} The genre of lament in the Hebrew Bible illuminates the emotional dimension of the בֵּל. As Fabry notes, “People lament because they feel afflicted to the very core of their being,” which to the ancient Israelite was the בֵּל.\textsuperscript{71} For example, the psalmist’s בֵּל “throbs” (רָחָס) in his lament to God in Ps. 38:10. In

\textsuperscript{67} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{68} Ibid., 412.


\textsuperscript{70} Ibid.; cf. Fabry, “בֵּל lēḇ: בֵּל lēḇāḇ;” 414; and Yoder, “Objects,” 75.

\textsuperscript{71} Fabry, “בֵּל lēḇ: בֵּל lēḇāḇ,” 413.
Jer. 4:19, the prophet says, “My גֶּבְלָה pounds wildly within me,” as he considers the coming desolation of Jerusalem. The suffering one in Psalm 22 is “poured out like water,” his “bones are out of joint,” and his גֶּבְלָה “is like wax, melting away within [his] belly” (v. 14).72

The גֶּבְלָה plays a role in more positive emotions as well. In Exod. 4:14, God says that Aaron “will be glad in his גֶּבְלָה” when he sees Moses. Food and drink bring pleasure to the גֶּבְלָה in various places throughout the Hebrew Bible (Judg. 19:6, 9; Ruth 3:7; 1 Sam. 25:36; 1 Kgs. 21:7). In the book of Proverbs, a son who acquires wisdom makes his father’s גֶּבְלָה glad: “Be wise, my son, and gladden my גֶּבְלָה, that I may answer the one who reproaches me” (27:11). Additionally, God’s acts in Israel’s history are reasons to rejoice in one’s גֶּבְלָה. His salvation causes Hannah’s גֶּבְלָה to exult in 1 Sam. 2:1; his word is “the delight” of Jeremiah’s גֶּבְלָה in Jer. 15:16; two well-known psalms (Ps. 19:8 and 119:111) speak of how God’s law rejoices the גֶּבְלָה; and in Zech. 10:7 the return from exile promises to bring joy to every גֶּבְלָה among the people of Israel.73

The reader should note well that, once again, we find in these texts a visceral connection to ancient Israel because of our common corporeal experience. Modern English-speakers describe physiological reactions to intense emotion—whether grief or gladness, despair or delight—in ways similar to the biblical authors. For example, when describing a first date, we might say something like, “My heart skipped a beat when I saw

72 The term translated “belly” is the word הֶעֵמ, which most often refers to the internal organs of the abdominal cavity (“womb” in Gen. 25:24 and Ps. 71:6; “entrails” in 2 Sam. 20:10; “stomach” in Ezek. 7:19). This verse in Psalm 22 coheres well with the position of scholars today that the גֶּבְלָה was located lower and more centrally in the torso than the modern understanding of the heart.

73 These examples (and many others) of the emotional dimension of the word גֶּבְלָה in ancient Israel are collected in Fabry, “גֶּבְלָה lēḇ; גֶּבְלָה lēḇāb,” 413–19.
Reflecting upon the hearing of bad news, we might say, “My heart dropped into my stomach.” Two interesting phrases that associate our emotion even more caudally are: “I have butterflies in my stomach” (often said before some sort of public performance or speaking engagement), and “That takes guts” (used to describe any act that requires courage). None of these common idioms are anatomically correct for the modern understanding of the word “heart” and its function as an organ in the circulatory system. Yet, our continued association of physiological responses with emotional experience remains consistent with the ancient usage and understanding of the word בֵל.

Emotion was not the only dimension of personhood for which the בֵל was responsible. Whereas modern society holds that intellect and cognition are associated with the head and brain, ancient Israelites understood thinking to take place in the בֵל as well. Aubrey Johnson writes, “Even if they knew nothing of the nervous system as such, they were well aware of its presence and operation . . . and as a result we find [בֵל] taking the place of the brain in their thinking.”

The noetic function of the בֵל consists of many activities. Cognition, one’s capacity to take in and process knowledge gained through the senses, takes place in the בֵל (see Deut. 29:4; Prov. 22:17; Eccl. 7:21; and Ezek. 3:10). This also includes the actions of thought and inner reflection (1 Sam. 27:1; Gen. 17:17). As Fabry notes, “Cognition

74 “That warms my heart” and “Bless her heart” are two other examples we might add.
75 North, “Brain and Nerve,” 595.
76 Aubrey Johnson, 77. Cf. Wolff, 46; Fabry, “בֵל lêḇ; בֵּבֵל lêḇāḇ,” 419; and Mitchell, 5.
77 Branson, 230.
in the בֵּל is always understood as a compact whole, in that it denotes the total noetic ability of an individual.”

Memory—an intellectual function that will become especially important in Chapters 2 and 3—was also carried out by the בֵּל. Synthetic and synonymous parallelisms in the book of Isaiah connect the בֵּל to the verb רכז. Isaiah 65:17 says, “For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; the former things will not be remembered הָנְרַכָזִּת, nor will they ascend to the בֵּל.” Remembrance is often associated with the motivation to act in a certain way, a feature that appears frequently in Israel’s wisdom literature. Such is the case in the well-known passage from Ecclesiastes 7, where remembering one’s mortality shapes the way to live one’s life: “Better to go to the house of morning than to go to the house of feasting; for this is the end of all humanity, the living will lay it to his בֵּל (v. 2). Recalling God’s mighty acts inspires adherence to the torah in Deut. 4:9–14. Verse 9 begins, “Only guard yourself, and protect your שֶׁפֶנ diligently, lest you forget what your eyes have seen, lest they depart from your בֵּל all the days of your life.” Here, it is the בֵּל that stores the memories God’s people have of his mighty acts before them, memories which ought to encourage their devotion to the torah.

Finally, and most importantly, the ancient Israelite conception of the בֵּל includes a volitional dimension. Since decision-making inevitably involves both thinking and feeling, it is somewhat difficult to distinguish this function from the noetic and emotional

80 Ibid.
functions of the בֵל. Nevertheless, as Fabry observes, “The [בֵל] functions as the driving force behind the [volitional] endeavors of the individual; it engages in performative conceiving and planning; it is the seat of courage and enterprise.”

Thus, the prophet Jeremiah famously has in his בֵל “a burning fire, shut up in [his] bones” (20:9; cf. 23:29) which drives him to carry out his prophetic task and deliver a message of Israel’s impending desolation. At the end of Psalm 19, the psalmist pens a simple yet powerful expression of his plan to live a life dedicated to God: “Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my בֵל be pleasing in your sight, O LORD, my rock and my redeemer” (v. 14). These passages highlight the role of the בֵל to not only carry out thinking and feeling, but to go further and account for both thoughts and emotions in order to resolve and propel the individual toward a certain telos, a particular way of life.

It is no surprise, then, that when God promises to do mighty acts among his people, it is the בֵל that he seeks to change. In Ezek. 11:14–25, a prophetic text that instills hope for the exiles in Babylon, God promises to “take away the בֵל of stone” from their bodies and “give them a בֵל of flesh (רָשָׂבּ),” so that they would “walk in [God’s] statutes, keep [his] rules and obey them” (vv. 19–20).

81 As Fabry notes, “The line between the rational function of the [בֵל] and the activity of the will is blurred, because it is impossible pragmatically to distinguish between theory and praxis” (ibid., 423).

82 Ibid.

83 Fabry calls this statement “a comprehensive expression for all [the psalmist’s] intentions and plans” (ibid., 424).

84 Interestingly, v. 19 contains three of the four anthropological terms surveyed in this chapter: “I will give them one בֵל, and a new הֵר I will place within them. I will take away the בֵל of stone from their יָשֹׁב and give them a בֵל of יָשֹׁב.” In English, it seems best to translate the two instances of יָשֹׁב differently, the first as “body” and the second as “flesh.” Unlike a בֵל of stone, a בֵל of flesh is capable of life and flourishing in God’s commands. God states the result of this change at the end of v. 20: “They will be my people, and I will be their God.” Cf. Jer. 32:39–41.
In sum, we have established that the בֵל carries out multiple functions in the somatic self-conception of ancient Israel, serving as the very core of an individual’s personhood. Its role is multi-dimensional, encompassing not only one’s emotions, but also one’s thoughts and will. Although the so-called “head” and “heart” of the West have compartmentalized human intellect, affect, and volition, it is clear that these anthropological properties are intimately intertwined in the בֵל of Israel.

Conclusion

This chapter has covered much anthropological ground, and still more has been left unsaid concerning the entirety of the ancient Israelite somatic self-conception. Nevertheless, one must first seek to understand the way in which ancient Hebrew-speakers viewed their own bodies and its constituent parts in order to interpret the biblical text as accurately as possible. All four anthropological terms surveyed in this chapter will play a role in this paper’s main topic of exploration; however, the central role of the בֵל for the individual’s embodied experience is clear. Thus, in the next chapter, the scope of investigation narrows to the father’s ten lectures in the prolegomena of the book of Proverbs, applying the anthropological background described in this chapter to its survey and assessment the father’s use of corporeal language in his discourses.
Chapter 2

The בֵּל in Proverbs 1–9

Batter my heart, three-person’d God, for you
As yet but knock, breathe, shine, and seek to mend;
That I may rise and stand, o’erthrow me, and bend
Your force to break, blow, burn, and make me new.

—John Donne

Throughout all of human history, one factor has consistently shaped the foundation of various cultures’ didactic methods: what it means to be human. As James K. A. Smith notes, “Behind every pedagogy is a philosophical anthropology.”[1] In the previous chapter, we outlined the anthropology of ancient Israel by defining the four anthropological terms that appear most frequently in the Hebrew Bible: רָשָׂבּ, חוּר, שֶפֶנ, and בֵּל. By far, the most important of these terms in the ancient Israelite somatic self-conception is בֵּל; thus, the remainder of this paper will focus its investigation upon this word.

The present chapter narrows the scope of biblical study to the first nine chapters of the book of Proverbs, specifically to the ten lectures found therein, spoken by a father to his adolescent son.² A detailed survey of the father’s use of the term בֵּל in Proverbs 1–9 is an important part of this paper’s study for two reasons. First, it will offer insight into

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¹ Smith clarifies his axiom by saying, “In more pedestrian terms, behind every constellation of educational practices is a set of assumptions about the natures of human persons—about the kinds of creatures we are” (Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation, Cultural Liturgies, vol. 1 [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009], 27–28).

² See n. 10 of this paper’s introduction (p. 4). For my own lineation and translation of the ten lectures, see the Appendix (pp. 88–102).
the father’s philosophical anthropology. Second, it will lay the necessary groundwork for Chapter 3, which offers a pedagogical analysis of the father’s rhetoric.

Other Anthropological Terms in the Father’s Lectures

Somatic language permeates the father’s lectures in Proverbs 1–9. Including the four key words outlined above, there are over seventy occurrences of anthropological terms in the 154 verses which we may attribute to the father’s lips.\(^3\) Even in ancient times, human embodiment had a profound effect on the way that human beings spoke to one another. These occurrences demonstrate the importance of human embodiment to the persuasion (i.e., the rhetoric) of the father’s speeches.

Although we have acknowledged the precedence of the בֵל in the Hebrew Bible, a brief comparison of בֵל to the other key anthropological terms found in the father’s lectures nevertheless remains an appropriate place to begin. As one would expect, the word בֵל appears most often, a total of sixteen times in the ten discourses. The second-most frequent term, שֶׁפֶנ, has only eight occurrences by comparison. The word רָשָׂבּ appears only twice, and the term חָור is entirely absent from the father’s lectures. The distribution of these three words is depicted in Table 3 below.

Coming to understand the father’s use of this term will help to determine whether his somatic self-conception is consistent with what we find in the rest of the Hebrew Bible, as well as to further distinguish his conception of the word בֵל from that of the

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\(^3\) The additional somatic terms, in order of their first appearance in the lectures and listed here in their lexical form, are: שׁאֹר (“head”; 1:9; 4:9); וּוֹרְגָּרַגּ (“neck”; 1:9; 3:3, 22; 6:21); ב (“blood”; 1:11, 18); ק (“foot/feet”; 1:15, 26; 3:26; 4:26, 27; 5:5; 6:28); ק (“ears”; 2:2; 4:20; 5:1, 13); מ (“mouth”; 2:6; 4:5, 24; 5:7; 7:24); מ (“eye/eyes”; 3:4, 7; 4:25; 5:21; 7:2); מ (“body”; 3:8; 5:11); ב (“bones”; 3:8); מ (“hand”; 3:27; 7:20); מ (“lips”; 5:2, 3; 7:21); ק (“palate”; 5:3); מ (“breasts”; 5:19); מ (“bosom”; 5:20); מ (“tongue”; 6:24); מ (“eyelashes”; 6:25); מ (“fingers”; 7:3); and מ (“liver” [of an animal]; 7:23).
second-most important anthropological term in the lectures. Six of the eight occurrences of שֶׁפֶנ in the ten lectures are undoubtedly instances of the term’s most common meaning: one’s individual vitality. In Lecture #1 the father warns his son of the inherent dangers of participating in violent gangs, summarizing in 1:18–19, “[These sinners] lie in wait for their own blood; they ambush their own lives (םָתֹשְׁפַנ)! Such are the ways of all profiteers of violence; it snatches away the life (שֶׁפֶנ) of its possessors.” That is, those who act violently end up hurting themselves in the long run, having their own vitality snatched away from them as a result of taking life from others.

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<td>16</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Notes: The term יָבִיב does not appear in any of the lectures. The form בָבֵל occurs only in Lecture #7 (4:21) and Lecture #9 (6:25).*

We find a similar (albeit more positive) exhortation that implements the term שֶׁפֶנ in the introductory lines of Lecture #4. The father says in 3:21–22, “My son, do not let [these] out of your sight—keep sound wisdom and discretion; they will be life to your שֶׁפֶנ and grace about your neck.” Fox translates שֶׁפֶנ as “throat,” noting that “the parallel in v 22b, with its reference to the ‘neck’ and the promise of attractiveness . . . activates the
Even though Fox is right to point out the clear corporeal referent of שֶׁפֶנ in these lines, the more important meaning of individual vitality is most salient; wisdom and discretion are key virtues not only for the son’s throat, but for all of his human existence.

The father’s final lessons, Lectures #9 and #10, contain three uses of שֶׁפֶנ which once again indicate individual vitality. Both of these lectures deliver warnings to the adolescent, this time against any involvement with the strange woman—the adulteress, another man’s wife. In Lecture #9 the father says, “For a harlot can be had for a loaf of bread, but the wife of another man hunts down a precious שֶׁפֶנ” (6:26); and later, “He who commits adultery . . . destroys his own שֶׁפֶנ” (v. 32). In Lecture #10 the father provides a vivid image of the consequences that will come upon the young man who “goes after” (7:22) the strange woman: “Like a bird darting into a snare, he does not know [it will cost him] his שֶׁפֶנ” (v. 23). The consequences of adultery, the father counsels his son, are dire indeed: the price of sexual sin is nothing less than one’s שֶׁפֶנ, one’s vitality, one’s very life.

The two remaining occurrences of שֶׁפֶנ in the father’s ten lectures are found in Lecture #2 and Lecture #9. The former instance is in parallel with the word בֵל: “For wisdom will come into your בֵל, and knowledge will be sweet to your שֶׁפֶנ” (2:10). The distinction we have noted between the two key anthropological terms in this verse does

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5 The strange woman (הַמְשֶׁרֶדְתָּ הָשִּׁיא) is one of the main characters in the prolegomena of Proverbs. She is “strange” in the sense that she is “other,” outside the boundaries of appropriate sexual interaction for the father’s son. As Carol A. Newsom writes, “Her otherness serves to identify the boundary and what must be expressed or excluded” (“Woman and the Discourse of Patriarchal Wisdom: A Study of Proverbs 1–9,” in *Gender and Difference in Ancient Israel*, ed. Peggy L. Day [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989]: 148). For a full description of this literary figure, see Fox, *Proverbs 1–9*, 252–62.
not change the meaning of שֶׁפֶן in this instance. Wisdom and knowledge are both crucial to one’s being-in-the-world, and the parallel terms בֵל and שֶׁפֶן here indicate the foundational members of the human body whose reception of these virtues will determine both the quality and longevity of one’s life.

The latter occurrence of שֶׁפֶן appears in 6:30 where the father describes a thief stealing bread in order to compare the consequences of that sin with the act of adultery. The father states, “No one will despise a thief when he steals to fill his שֶׁפֶן when he is hungry.” In this instance we find another common use of the term, one that is more closely related to its corporeal referent (the throat or the esophagus), indicating the thief’s appetite. Therefore, these two less common meanings of שֶׁפֶן found in the father’s lectures remain within the semantic field established for the term in Chapter 1.

A brief survey of the other anthropological terms in Proverbs 1–9 leads us to three conclusions. First, this survey highlights the sheer volume of somatic language in the father’s ten lectures and provides further evidence for the integral relationship between human embodiment and rhetoric. Second, this survey of the father’s use of anthropological terms begins to align his somatic self-conception with that found in the rest of the Hebrew Bible. Finally, this survey helps us to distinguish the father’s use of these other terms, particularly שֶׁפֶן, from his use of the word בֵל: the former as one’s vitality, the latter as the seat of the emotion, intellect, memory, and volition.

The Language of the בֵל in the Father’s Lectures

The primary aim of this chapter is to survey the sixteen occurrences of בֵל in the father’s lectures without making any substantial observations regarding its rhetorical use
(i.e., how the father seeks to persuade his adolescent son), since an analysis of the father’s rhetoric is reserved for Chapter 3. In short, this section seeks to answer the question, “According to the father, what does the בֵּל do?” And the best place to begin forming an answer to this question is with the verbs associated with the בֵּל in Proverbs 1–9. This data is summarized in Table 4 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lecture</th>
<th>Verse</th>
<th>Root</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
<th>Context</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#2</td>
<td>2:2</td>
<td>הנד</td>
<td>turn</td>
<td>“turning your בֵּל to understanding”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2:10</td>
<td>הבא</td>
<td>come into</td>
<td>“wisdom will come into your בֵּל”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#3</td>
<td>3:1</td>
<td>ครบ</td>
<td>keep</td>
<td>“let your בֵּל keep my commandments”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3:3</td>
<td>כתב</td>
<td>write</td>
<td>“write [my teaching] on the tablet of your בֵּל!”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3:5</td>
<td>(tbl)кт</td>
<td>trust</td>
<td>“trust in the LORD with all of your בֵּל”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#5</td>
<td>4:4</td>
<td>תֹּמֶד</td>
<td>hold</td>
<td>“let your בֵּל hold my words”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#7</td>
<td>4:21</td>
<td>שומר</td>
<td>guard</td>
<td>“guard [my words] in your בֵּל”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4:23</td>
<td>תנצר</td>
<td>guard</td>
<td>“above all else, guard your בֵּל”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#8</td>
<td>5:12</td>
<td>תניאץ</td>
<td>despise</td>
<td>“correction my בֵּל despised!”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#9</td>
<td>6:21</td>
<td>קפיש</td>
<td>bind</td>
<td>“bind [the teaching] on your בֵּל continually”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6:25</td>
<td>תֵּפֶד</td>
<td>desire</td>
<td>“do not desire her beauty in your בֵּל”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6:32</td>
<td>תֵּסֶר</td>
<td>lacking</td>
<td>“he who commits adultery is lacking בֵּל”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#10</td>
<td>7:3</td>
<td>כתב</td>
<td>write</td>
<td>“write [my commandments] on the tablet of your בֵּל!”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7:7</td>
<td>תֵּסֶר</td>
<td>lacking</td>
<td>“a young man lacking בֵּל”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7:10</td>
<td>[to be] תנזר</td>
<td>wily</td>
<td>“the woman meets him . . . wily of בֵּל”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7:25</td>
<td>שָׁמָה</td>
<td>turn aside</td>
<td>“do not let your בֵּל turn aside to her ways”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Four triconsonantal roots are repeated, meaning that there are twelve unique verbal stems found in the immediate context of the term בֵּל in the father’s lectures. All sixteen verbs in the verses listed above occur in the Qal.

We have much to glean from a survey of the verbal roots that the father applies to the בֵּל. From the data in Table 4 we may deduce two distinct functions carried out by the בֵּל in the father’s lectures. First, the בֵּל functions in the lectures as the organ of volition, as the seat of the son’s will and decision-making. Second, the בֵּל functions as the organ of memory, as the part of the son responsible for the reception and preservation of the
father’s wisdom. The remainder of this chapter will show how each occurrence of בֵל falls into these two categories in order to establish the father’s philosophical anthropology of the בֵל, to determine whether his conception of the בֵל is consistent with that found in the rest of Scripture (detailed in Chapter 1), and finally to provide the necessary anthropological foundation for the analysis of the father’s rhetoric which we will conduct in Chapter 3.

*The Volitional Function of the בֵל*

As we observed in Chapter 1, the most important function of the בֵל in ancient Israel was as the seat of volition. In other words, the בֵל is the member of the body which determines one’s course in life by establishing the chief object of human desire and subsequently propelling every aspect of the individual toward that end. Today, we might imagine the בֵל much like we conceptualize the heart—as a combination of the individual’s moral compass and the engine which drives the individual in whatever direction he or she has chosen. As Smith puts it, “The heart is part compass and part internal guidance system. . . . Operating under the hood of our consciousness, so to speak—our default autopilot—the longings of the heart both point us . . . and propel us.”

Eight of the sixteen occurrences of בֵל in the father’s lectures fall into the volitional category. Two of these are positive commands (i.e., “Do this!” or “If you do this,

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7 Ibid., 12.
then...); the other six are negative (i.e., “Do not do this!”). In all eight, however, the father implores his son to set his בֵל to the true north of God and to follow the path of wisdom all the days of his life.

The first occurrence of בֵל comes in Lecture #2, where the father says, “My son, if you receive my words and treasure up my commandments within you, inclining your ear to wisdom, turning your בֵל to understanding (הֶטַּתּוֹךָ אֵלָה לְחַבוֹתָה) . . . then you will understand the fear of the L ORD, and the knowledge of God you will find” (2:1–2, 5). The verb הֶטַּתּ often receives the gloss “to stretch out,” but the best sense here is “inclining,” “bending,” or, as I have translated it, “turning.” As Fox puts it, to “incline” or to “turn” the בֵל “means to desire and choose something, not only to pay attention.”8 This is the first of two positive volitional commands that the father makes in the ten lectures.

The verb הֶטַּתּ appears twice in Num. 22:23 where Balaam’s donkey, having seen the angel of the L ORD, “turned away (טֵ֤תַו Qal) from the road” out of fear. Later in the same verse, הֶטַּתּ comes in the Hiphil when Balaam strikes the donkey in order “to turn her (לָתְתָה) back onto the road.”9 This literal sense of הֶטַּתּ led naturally to its implementation in places where the biblical authors use the common metaphor LIFE IS A PATHWAY. Thus, הֶטַּתּ is used figuratively in 1 Kgs. 2:28 to describe Joab’s loyalty to Adonijah and not to Absalom.10 Finally, 1 Sam. 8:3 says that Samuel’s sons “did not walk in his ways, but turned aside (וּטִּיַּו) after profit; they took bribes and turned (וּטַּיַּו) from justice.”

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8 Fox, Proverbs 1–9, 109.

9 Cf. 2 Sam. 2:19 where Asahel pursues Abner: “He turned (לָתְתָה) neither to the right hand nor to the left from following after Abner.”

Elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible, the same metaphor that the verb נָטַה creates is applied to the language of the בֵל. In Jdg. 9:3 it is the בֵל of the leaders in Shechem that “turned to follow after Abimelech” (וַיְגַלֶּבֶּ יַעֲקֹבֶר תָּבֹא), having been persuaded by the nepotistic argument of his mother’s kin. When Solomon builds high places for foreign gods in 1 Kings 11, God grows angry with him “because his בֵל turned from the LORD (רֵיִם נָטַה לָבוֹא מִשְׁמֶר אֲדֹנָא), the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice” (v. 9; cf. vv. 2, 4). Earlier in Israel’s history, Joshua had implored the people not to make such a mistake. In Josh. 24:19–20, he says, “You are not able to serve the LORD, for he is a holy God. . . . If you forsake the LORD and serve foreign gods, then he will turn away and cause you harm and consume you, after having done you good.” The people respond to Joshua, “No, only the LORD will we serve” (v. 21). With their commitment to serving God alone, Joshua entreats the people, “Now, put away the foreign gods which are in your midst, and turn (וּטִּיה) your בֵל to the LORD, the God of Israel” (v. 23). These passages (and others; see Isa. 44:20; Job 36:18; Ps. 119:36) highlight the relationship between the term בֵל and the verb נָטַה. These two words combine semantically to create the underlying metaphor for the volitional function of the בֵל (LIFE IS A PATHWAY), seen throughout the Hebrew Bible and particularly in the father’s ten lectures. Like a compass, the בֵּל shows the magnetic north, the strongest telos, toward which one is called; the בֵל is also the location where the decision to turn toward or away from that direction (נָטַה) takes place.

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The second positive volitional command comes in Lecture #3, in what is probably the most well-known passage in the entire book of Proverbs: “Trust in the LORD with all of your 
(כַּבִּל אֶל ה' וְהָיָה), and do not lean on your own understanding! In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will straighten out your paths” (3:5–6). The volitional verb in v. 5 is 
, most often translated “to trust.”

Fox observes that 
and all of its derivatives “imply a feeling of security and confidence in the fulfillment of expectations,” especially when the author faces imminent danger. Thus, the psalmist writes, “The LORD is a refuge to the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble. Those who know your name trust in you (וּחְטְבִיְוךְ יֵעְדוֹי רָע), for you have not forsaken those who seek you, O LORD” (9:9–10; cf. 31:7, 15; 55:24; 84:13; Prov. 28:26).

The conceptual metaphor LIFE IS A PATHWAY—first mentioned in Lecture #3 in 3:6, following the verb 
—once again helps us to understand the way that the father implements this volitional verb. The 
must not only turn away from evil; it must subsequently turn toward God as its object, as the ultimate “destination” of the young man’s growth in wisdom, leaning not on his own understanding to guide his decisions and to protect his life along the way. With the verb 
, the father reminds his son that wisdom “is not inevitably tantamount to piety and righteousness,” but that the path in which he ought to place the trust of his 
is blazed by, journeyed with, and bound for God alone.

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12 *BDB*, 105.


14 Ibid. As Tremper Longman puts it, “If you know (in the sense of ‘recognize’ or ‘acknowledge’) God in your paths, then you will certainly be on the right ones” (*Proverbs*, Baker Commentary on the Old Testament [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006], 133).
The third volitional verb found in the context of the בֵַל does not appear until Lecture #8, but at this point volitional verbs begin to dominate the father’s lectures. All six of these occurrences carry a negative connotation; that is, they are either imperatives against a certain action (“Do not do this!”) or they describe an exploit that the son would one day regret. The father’s statement in 5:8–12 falls into the latter category: “Keep your way far from [the strange woman] . . . lest strangers take their fill of your strength . . . and you groan at the end of your life . . . ‘How I hated discipline, and correction my בֵַל despised (תַחַכוֹתְו)!’” The father’s use of the verb בֵַל in v. 12 gives his son an example of what happens when one does not turn (תַחַכוֹת) his בֵַל to the way of wisdom, and once more we find the verb’s conceptual saliency in the pathway metaphor. For the בֵַל to despise discipline is to propel the individual along dangerous paths.

The fourth volitional verb, דמח, is to be understood in a similar way. Again referring to the strange woman, the father commands his son in Lecture #9, “Do not desire (דֹמְחַתּ־לאַ) her beauty in your בֵַל; do not let her ensnare you with her eyelashes!” (6:25). The same verb appears in Exod. 20:17 in the tenth commandment of the Decalogue, most often translated “You shall not covet” (cf. Deut. 5:21).15 Either way, our interpretation of the father’s use of דמח remains the same, as this verb also fits well within the pathway metaphor. Within the father’s philosophical anthropology, desire is a function of the בֵַל, and whatever object the בֵַל desires will produce the strongest magnetic force on one’s moral compass, pulling the individual in its direction.16 Thus, for the son

15 Waltke, 353.

16 As Smith notes, “There is a resonance between the telos to which we are oriented and the longings and desires that pull us in that direction—like the magnetic power of the pole working on the existential needle of [the בֵַל]” (You Are What You Love, 12–13).
to desire the strange woman’s beauty is to turn aside from the path of wisdom and to
direct the longings of his בֵּל toward an end that will result only in his destruction (Prov. 6:32).

We break here from surveying the volitional verbs in the order of their appearance
in the lectures so that we might address the fifth verb, רָצַנ, which shares a close similarity
to רַמֵּז. The typical gloss of רַמֵּז is “to guard” or “to keep,” and the word frequently carries
a positive connotation, especially in the book of Proverbs (e.g., 20:28; 22:12). The
father’s use of רָצַנ follows the same pattern and is most often implemented in order to
describe the mnemonic function of the בֵּל. The exception is in the father’s final lecture in 7:10, which reads, “Behold, the [strange] woman meets him—the dress of a harlot, wily
of בֵּל (תַרְעֹנֶה בֵּל).” Literally, the father says that the woman’s בֵּל is “guarded,” but the
word’s connotation here is negative, and its function is volitional. Her בֵּל is described in
this way because it hides her true intentions. Thus, as I have translated it, her בֵּל is wily;
she is deceitful in her dealings with the adolescent who passes by her house in the
father’s final lecture. As Fox notes, “The Strange Woman keeps her designs to herself;
she is always dissembling and crafty.” In other words, her בֵּל is turned toward evil ends,
and she keeps these wicked desires hidden from those around her; therefore, the father
finds it necessary to warn his son of her schemes.

On two occasions the father applies רַסָח to the בֵּל, the sixth volitional
triconsonantal root in the lectures. In both instances רַסָח appears as an adjective in
construct with בֵּל. I have translated רַסָח as “lacking,” and both occurrences in the lectures
describe a young man without בֵּל. The first occurrence is in 6:32, where the father says,

17 Fox, 244; cf. Longman, 189.
“He who commits adultery is lacking בֵל (בֵל־רַסֲח).” In the next lecture (Lecture #10), the father depicts a scene in which he peers out his window to see “a young man lacking בֵל (נֶאֶר בֵל־רַסֲח)” (7:7). Neither of the father’s statements in these two lectures are meant to be taken in a literal sense, at least not anatomically. That is, the father does not intend his audience to think that these young men make poor decisions because they are missing a vital organ. As Fox notes, “Everyone has a [בֵל], even evildoers and fools.” Indeed, as we have already observed in 7:10, this includes the strange woman! Therefore, what these young men lack is not the בֵל itself, but rather the kind of בֵל that the father implores his son to foster in his life throughout the ten lectures. According to the father, those who spurn the path of wisdom—like the young men he uses as an example—are “devoid of sense . . . [lacking] the faculty for grasping and holding wisdom” in order to orient their desires toward God’s good ends and to direct the course of their lives toward him. Thus, בֵל is a metonymy. As we might say today, the young men the father describes simply “have no heart.”

The seventh and final volitional verb in the father’s ten lectures is הָטָשׂ, and it requires little comment. In the concluding lines of Lecture #10, the father says to his son, “Do not let your בֵל turn aside to her ways (אֱלִיוֹנִי שֵׂפָה אֲדֹנִי לֹא תָּטַשׁ וְלֹא תָּהַלֹּל לֶאֵרָה; do not wander onto her paths” (7:25). Thus, the verb הָטָשׂ is used synonymously here with the first volitional verb, הָטָנ. This forms a clean inclusio around the ten lectures, and once again it assigns to the בֵל a volitional function as one of its key roles in the embodied reality of human existence.

18 Fox, Proverbs 1–9, 109. See Prov. 5:12 and 6:18.
That the adolescent son would remember the wisdom his father offers to him is of utmost importance in the ten lectures. Glenn Pemberton argues that three of the lectures ought to be classified together as “calls to remember and obey” because remembrance of the father’s teaching is so crucial. In the opening lines of Lecture #3, the father states outright, “My son, do not forget (חָכְשִׁתּ־לאַ) my teaching” (3:1). Similarly, in Lecture #5, he says, “Acquire wisdom; acquire discernment! Do not forget (חַכְּשִׁתּ־לאַ); do not turn from the words of my mouth!” (4:5). Thus, as a fundamental objective of the lectures, the father emphasizes the mnemonic function of the בֵל; this is evidenced by the verbs found in the immediate context of בֵל throughout the lectures.

Unlike the volitional verbs, the mnemonic verbs are more synonymous, varying only in their intensity. The key mnemonic metaphors are THE בֵל IS A CONTAINER and THE FATHER’S WORDS ARE OBJECTS. The father employs these two metaphors in order to encourage his son to allow the teaching to reside permanently within his בֵל. Since in the lectures each of the mnemonic verbs surrounding בֵל lies within this conceptual framework, we will investigate them in their two degrees of intensity, rather than in the order of their appearance in the lectures.

The first set of verbs establishes the process of wisdom coming into the בֵל in order to reside there. In Lecture #2, the father says, “My son, if you receive my words and treasure up my commandments within you . . . [then] wisdom will come into your בֵל (אוֹבָת־יִכּ הָמְכָחֹךְ בֶלֶב)” (2:1, 10). Once the wisdom teaching has entered into (אוֹב) the בֵל, the

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father states that it must be held (ךמת), kept (רצנ), and guarded (רמשׁ) there. In the first verse of Lecture #3, the father says, “My son, do not forget my teaching, but let your לב keep my commandments (יַתְוָצִמוּרֹצִּיךֶָבִּל)” (3:1). Fox argues that the conceptual metaphor THE לב IS A CONTAINER is taken one step further with the verb רצנ. He says, “The word is used of protection, maintenance (Deut 33:9), nurture (Deut 32:10), and cultivation (Isa 27:3), rather than just vessel-like containment.”\textsuperscript{20} Thus, the לב not only holds wisdom as a simple container; rather—more like a greenhouse or an incubator—the לב both retains wisdom and increases wisdom’s capacity to define the entire life of an individual. The verb תמה bears a similar connotation. Quoting his own father in Lecture #5, the father says, “Let your לב hold my words (יַרָבְדּ־ךְָמְתִיךֶָבִּל), guard (רֹמְשׁ) my commandments and live” (4:4).

Finally, in Lecture #7 the father implements the verb רמשׁ along with רצנ, establishing further the mnemonic role of the לב. In 4:21, the father says, “Do not let [my words] out of your sight; guard them within your לב (םֵרְמָשׁךְוֹתְבּךֶָבַב).” A few lines later, the father implores his son not only to guard his teaching within the לב, but also to guard the לב itself. He says in 4:23, “Above all else, guard your לב (מֵרְמִש־לָכִּמרצנ), for it is the wellspring of your life.” As Waltke notes, “The [wellspring] metaphor implies . . . not only that life has its fountains in the לב, ‘but also that the direction which it takes is determined by the [לב].’”\textsuperscript{21} As the לב is the core of one’s being, the son must protect his לב if he is to remain on the path of wisdom.

\textsuperscript{20} Fox, Proverbs 1–9, 142.

\textsuperscript{21} Waltke, 298 (citing Delitzsch).
The mnemonic function of the בֵַל is intensified with the verb רָשׁק in Lecture #9 and the verb חָב, which first appears in Lecture #3 and then again in Lecture #10. Wisdom held in the בֵַל, though it may be well-guarded, still has the potential to be forgotten, to fall out of or to be removed from the son’s בֵַל. Thus, in order to emphasize the permanent residence that wisdom ought to hold in the בֵַל, father tells his son in Lecture #9, “My son, keep the commandment of your father, and do not forsake the teaching of your mother. Bind them on your בֵַל continually (םֵרְשָׁקךְָבִּל־לַעַדָי), tie them around your neck” (6:20–21). In Lecture #3, he says, “Steadfast love and faithfulness—let them not forsake you! Bind them around your neck; write them on the tablet of your בֵַל (םֵבְתָכּּךֶָבִּלÞ)” (3:3). Similarly, in his final lecture, the father exhorts the adolescent, “My son, keep my words, and my commandments treasure up within you. . . . Bind them around your fingers; write them on the tablet of your בֵַל (םֵבְתָכּּךֶָבִּלÞ)” (7:1, 3).

Considering the mnemonic function of the בֵַל, the verbs רָשׁק and חָב (along with several other key phrases in the passages above) bring to mind the shema of Deuteronomy 6.22 Verses 6–9 read, “These words which I command you today shall be on your בֵַל. Impress them upon your children; talk of them when you dwell in your house and when you walk on the way, when you lie down and when you get up. Bind them as a sign upon your hand (םָתְּרַשְׁקְּתוֹאְלךְָדָי־לַע); let them be as frontlets between your eyes. Write them on the doorposts of your house (םָתְּבַתְכוּּםתַָזוּז־לַעךֶָתיֵב) and on your gates.” Additionally, the verb חָב in Prov. 3:3 and 7:3 reminds one of the language of Jeremiah 31.23 There, God promises through the prophet, “I will put my law within them; I will

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22 Longman, 177.
23 Waltke, 369.
write it on their לְבֵּל (לְבֵּל). I will be their God, and they will be my people” (v. 33; cf. 17:1). These two verbs, placed in semantic relationship with the term לְבֵּל, work together to describe further its mnemonic function and to emphasize the importance of wisdom’s permanence within the לְבֵּל of the son. As Fox paraphrases the הָנֶּבֲתְּכֶא line of 3:3 and 7:3, “Hold [the teaching] permanently in your memory; make [it] an indelible part of your character.”

Table 5. Volitional and mnemonic verbs applied to the לְבֵּל in the father’s lectures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Volitional Verbs</th>
<th>Mnemonic Verbs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Root</td>
<td>Gloss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>נָתַנְתָּה</td>
<td>turn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>בְּשַׁח</td>
<td>trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>הַשָּׁנִית</td>
<td>despise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>הָדָר</td>
<td>lack</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>נְדַר</td>
<td>to be wily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>שָׁנַה</td>
<td>turn aside</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Conclusion

This chapter’s aim was to survey the corporeal language in the father’s ten lectures, touching on the הָנֶּבֲתְּכֶא and focusing on the לְבֵּל, in order to establish his somatic self-conception or philosophical anthropology. This survey has shown that the father’s understanding of human existence is consistent with what we found in the rest of the Hebrew Bible in Chapter 1. Concerning this chapter’s investigation of the לְבֵּל, the twelve verbs that the father implements in conjunction with this term establish two primary

24 Fox, Proverbs 1–9, 145.

25 Technically speaking, there are only eleven triconsonantal roots associated with the לְבֵּל in the ten lectures; however, because the volitional and mnemonic uses of רָכַּב are distinct from one another, we may say that the father uses the same root in two unique ways.
functions for the organ in his somatic self-conception: the volitional and the mnemonic. In other words, the father presents in his lectures that the בֵּל carries out two specific roles in one’s life. First, the בֵּל functions volitionally as both moral compass and moral engine, pointing and propelling an individual in a certain direction toward a certain end or telos. Second, the בֵּל functions mnemonically as the storehouse of teaching—or, better, as the incubator of wisdom. These verbs are summarized according to their two functions within the father’s lectures in Table 5 above.

As this paper turns to an investigation of the father’s rhetoric in Chapter 3, we may make two more observations regarding somatic language throughout the lectures. First, whenever the verbs appear in the lectures without a direct reference to the בֵּל, it may indicate that the בֵּל is still in view. For example, in the opening lines of Lecture #4, the father says, “My son, do not let [these] out of your sight—keep sound wisdom and discretion (רֹצְנָה הָיִתֹּת הָבָל יָשֵׁתָהוֹן) (3:21). Even though the father does not mention the בֵּל specifically here, his use of רצנ to encourage the son’s retention of wisdom is a clear linguistic pattern for the mnemonic function of the בֵּל throughout the lectures.

Second, other verbs that describe similar functions regarding the son’s response to the father’s teachings may also be carried out by the בֵּל, even if the organ is not explicitly mentioned. A primary example of this phenomenon in the lectures is the word נֹפְצ. The father says in Lecture #2, “My son, if you . . . treasure up my commandments within you (יַתִּזְמוּ נֹפְצִי) . . . then you will understand the fear of the LORD, and the knowledge of God you will find” (2:1, 5), and the same exhortation occurs in Lecture #10 in 7:1. Although the father does not apply this verb to the בֵּל, as the storehouse of wisdom, we may assume that the בֵּל is still in view.
Above all, what this chapter has shown is that somatic language permeates the father’s lectures. As we will observe in Chapter 3, the way that the father speaks of human embodiment is foundational for how he attempts to persuade his son to follow the path of wisdom, as well as how the son might receive his father’s lessons.
Chapter 3
The Father’s Rhetoric in Proverbs 1–9

If you want to build a ship, don’t drum up people to collect wood and don’t assign them tasks and work, but rather teach them to long for the endless immensity of the sea.

—Antoine de Saint-Exupéry

“How shall the young secure their hearts and guard their lives from sin?” asked Isaac Watts in his well-known 1719 hymn. Watts’s question encapsulates the pedagogical task for older generations throughout human history: the impartation of wisdom. This is the father’s task in the lectures of Proverbs 1–9, and it remains the task of every sage among God’s people today. Both the cultural background of ancient Israel’s somatic self-conception (Chapter 1) and the philosophical anthropology of the father’s lectures (Chapter 2) highlight the vital importance of the בֵל in ancient Israelite society and in the Hebrew Bible, and together they establish the necessary exegetical foundation for this chapter’s investigation: the father’s rhetoric in Proverbs 1–9.

The rhetoric of the father’s lectures functions at two levels, depending on the literary proximity of the audience. We may first examine the father’s rhetoric within the narrative setting of Proverbs 1–9; that is, we may ask how the father attempts to persuade his son with his speeches. At a second level we may examine how the rhetoric of the

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1 The Psalms and Hymns of Isaac Watts, Christian Classics Ethereal Library, https://www.ccel.org/ccel/watts/psalmshymns.Ps.267.html, accessed November 9, 2018. Watts derives his lyrics from Psalm 119. The first three stanzas are as follows: “How shall the young secure their hearts / And guard their lives from sin? / Thy word the choicest rules imparts / To keep the conscience clean. // When once it enters to the mind, / It spreads such light abroad, / The meanest souls instruction find, / And raise their thoughts to God. // ’Tis like the sun, a heav’nly light, / That guides us all the day; / And through the dangers of the night, / A lamp to lead our way.”
lectures, taken as a whole in their written form—collected and ordered by some editor long ago—persuades the lectures’ readers. This chapter’s examination will focus on the first level of literary proximity, but the second level is never entirely detached or out of sight.

Although we may distinguish the two intended audiences from one another, the prolegomena invite all of the lectures’ readers to hear the father’s words as a son. The prolegomena’s introduction states this outright, inviting both simple-minded youth (םִיאָתְפִל and רַעַנְל; 1:4) and those who are already wise (םָכָח; 1:5) to study the proverbial wisdom preserved in the book.2 As Carol Newsom writes, “All readers of this text, whatever their actual identities, are called upon to take up the subject position of son in relation to an authoritative father. Through its imitation of a familiar scene of interpellation the text continually reinterpellates its readers.”3 With this important caveat in mind, we may press on with our examination of the father’s rhetoric in Proverbs 1–9, assured that his attempts to persuade his son to choose wisdom are equally valid for any others who might one day receive his lectures, too.


3 Newsom, 143–44. Newsom borrows the concept of “interpellation” from Marxist theoretician Louis Althusser. The term and its cognates describe the process by which a speaker or writer “hails” a hearer or reader, calling her to take on the role of a certain subject and, if she accepts the invitation, confirming that the message is intended for her. See Althusser, Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays, trans. Ben Brewster (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971), 174–75.
Rhetorical Methods in the Father’s Lectures

Rhetoric abounds in the prolegomena of the book of Proverbs.⁴ According to Dale Patrick and Allen Michael Scult, whether spoken or written, rhetoric is “an inherent function of language use” and is most broadly defined as “the means by which a text establishes and manages its relationship to its audience in order to achieve a particular effect.”⁵ Classical Aristotelian rhetoric comprises three artistic proofs by which any author or speaker may attempt to persuade his or her audience: logos, pathos, and ethos. Logos refers to the language of the speaker in its most basic sense; it is “the logical argument of the discourse.”⁶ Pathos is the speaker’s appeal to passion or emotion in order to persuade (e.g., hope or fear).⁷ Finally, ethos concerns the rhetor’s standing before an audience; it is “the credibility or authority that the speaker assumes he or she has . . . or must develop in order to be persuasive.”⁸

Logos, pathos, and ethos are “sufficiently specific to illuminate almost any warrant for one’s teaching,”⁹ and these artistic proofs provide three broad categories by which we may survey the father’s rhetorical methods in the lectures of Proverbs 1–9. Based upon previous chapters’ conclusions regarding Israel’s somatic self-conception and the importance of the בֵל, the next section will investigate the father’s implementation

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⁴ As Newsom notes, “These chapters are virtually all talk” (ibid., 142).
⁶ Pemberton, 66.
⁷ Ibid.
⁸ Ibid.
of corporeal language to persuade his son to choose the path of wisdom. In the final section of this chapter, we will explore the rhetoric of Lecture #10—the capstone of the father’s discourses—which makes the final and strongest appeal to the adolescent son.

The Logos of the Lectures

The *logos* or logical coherence of the lectures is evidenced by the vocabulary and syntax that the father uses throughout his discourses. Each of the lectures follows the same basic structure, beginning with an *exordium*, which is composed of three parts: an address to the son (or “sons”; only in Lecture #5, 4:1), an exhortation to pay attention to the father’s words and to remember his lesson, and a motivation for doing so. Following the exordium is the body of the lecture, a particular *lesson* which the father seeks to pass on to his son. Finally, the father ends each lecture with a *conclusion* that summarizes the lesson and once again encourages the son to remember the teaching he has just heard and to apply it in his own life.

As mentioned briefly in Chapter 2, Pemberton classifies the ten identically-structured lectures into three logical categories, based upon the verbs that the father expresses in the initial appeal of each lecture: “Calls to Attention” (Lectures #1, #2, #5, and #6); “Calls to Remember and Obey” (Lectures #3, #4, and #7); and “Warnings Against the Alien/Strange Woman” (Lectures #8, #9, and #10). Arguments

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10 Fox, *Proverbs 1–9*, 45.
11 Ibid.
12 Ibid. Cf. Pemberton, 63–64.
13 Ibid., 63.
permeate not only the exordia, but also the bodies and conclusions of the lectures. The similar arguments by which Pemberton classifies the ten lectures bolster the *logos* of the father’s speeches, creating a cognitive-linguistic map by which the son may come to understand and be persuaded by the wisdom that the father offers.14

*The Pathos of the Lectures*

As Yoder observes, those who read Proverbs 1–9 “encounter a text laden with language of emotion.”15 In a way that runs counter to modern sensibilities, the father seeks to engage his son’s emotions rather than to stifle them, viewing them “as vital forms of perception and judgment, advocating certain patterns of emotion . . . as characteristic of [a] mature, flourishing human [life].”16 Thus, throughout his lectures, the father makes emotional appeals which contribute to the *pathos* of his message. Each appeal is either positive or negative, and the key conceptual metaphor *LIFE IS A PATHWAY* best illuminates the *pathos* of the lectures.

Positively, the father seeks to instill *hope* in his son by promising riches, blessings, and honor at the end of wisdom’s path. For example, in Lecture #2 the father promises that if the son “receives his words” then he will “understand the fear of the LORD” and “find the knowledge of God,” likening this reward to “silver” and “hidden treasure” (see 2:1–5). Similarly, in Lecture #4, the son is promised a secure journey that results in “life (*םיִיַּח*) for his *שֶׁפֶנ*” (3:22). The father says in the lecture’s exordium: “My

14 See Pemberton, 72, 74, 76, and 79.
15 Yoder, “Objects,” 73.
16 Ibid., 75.
son, do not let [these] out of your sight—keep sound wisdom and discretion . . . . Then you will walk securely on your way, and your foot will not stumble. . . . Do not fear sudden disaster or the ruin of the wicked when it comes, for the LORD will be your confidence; he will guard your foot from being caught” (vv. 21–26; cf. Lecture #7). These and other promises throughout the father’s discourses are intended to make the son feel hope as he considers taking the path of wisdom.

Negatively, the father attempts to elicit fear in his son by warning him of the destruction to be met at the end of other paths and the life-threatening dangers that lurk along the way. In Lecture #1 the father warns his son that the gang of sinners who may invite him to accompany them on their life’s journey are on the path to their own demise. In 1:18–19 he says, “[These sinners] lie in wait for their own blood; they ambush their own lives (םָתֹשְׁפַנְל)! Such are the ways of all profiteers of violence; it snatches away the life of its possessors.” Similar threats of disaster and death appear throughout the lectures. In Lecture #2, the father says that “the wicked will be cut off from the land” (and subsequently cut off from life; 2:22), and in Lecture #6, he again warns of the dangers of companionship with the wicked (4:15–17).

The most prominent figure of fear in the lectures, however, is the strange woman. The father makes this clear even before his final three lectures, which take up warning against her as their theme. The dangers of the pathway to her house are first mentioned in Lecture #2, where the father says, “Surely her house sinks down to death, her paths to the spirits of the dead; no one who goes into her returns, or attains the paths of life” (2:18–19). In Lecture #7, he warns his son of the trap set by the strange woman’s deceptive words: “For honey drips from the strange woman’s lips, smoother than oil is her palate;
but her end is bitter like wormwood, sharp like a two-edged sword. Her feet go down to
death, her steps proceed toward Sheol” (5:3–5). As mentioned in Chapter 2, the father
plainly states in Lecture #9 that any interaction with the strange woman is
life-threatening: it “destroys [one’s] own שֶׁפֶנ” (6:32). The pathos of the father’s lectures
reaches its climax in Lecture #10, which we will explore in detail below.

In sum, by appealing to the emotions of hope and fear, the father strengthens the
pathos of his lectures. Fully aware of the vital role that emotion plays in human life, the
father seeks to direct his son’s affect toward God, the beginning and end of wisdom’s
path.

The Ethos of the Lectures

Finally, we come to the most important rhetorical element of the father’s lectures:
ethos. Without ethos—that is, without credibility or authority—the father will never
accomplish the goal of persuading his audience(s), no matter how strong his appeals to
logos and pathos may be. Due to his parental relationship to the son, the father assumes a
certain degree of authority, even before the first lecture is spoken. Nevertheless, the
father must remind his son of this authority at every turn and continue to further his
credibility through rhetorical appeals to ethos throughout the lectures.

Though it is often overlooked, the most obvious ethos-strengthening feature of the
lectures is their poetic form. Patrick and Scult write, “In cases where authority is
exercised . . . the effective employment of the appropriate form gives the utterance its

17 Similarly, as Crenshaw notes, Proverbs 1–9 in its written form “comprises instruction literature,
which by its very nature makes authoritative claims” (12).
binding force.”

And as Pemberton notes, “[The] use of stylistically rich poetry . . . asserts power, credibility, and social standing.” Poetic devices—parallelism, repetition, inclusio, and phonetic assonance and consonance—display the father’s rhetorical skill and expertise. In other words, the poetic form of the lectures is in no way incidental to its message. Rather, the father’s poetry communicates that his words are worth listening to.

In addition to the poetic form of the lectures, the father’s repeated vocative address in the first line of each lecture’s exordium (יִנְבּ “my son”; plural only in Lecture #5) and the frequent use of imperatives also establish his authoritative position over his

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18 Patrick and Scult, 15.


20 Parallelism, the defining characteristic of Hebrew poetry, is present in virtually every bicolon. Adele Berlin defines the “linguistic phenomenon” that is parallelism as “a correspondence of one thing with another [that] promotes the perception of a relationship between the elements of which [it] is composed.” She continues, “The nature of the correspondence varies, but in general it involves repetition or the substitution of things which are equivalent [or in opposition] on one or more linguistic levels” (The Dynamics of Biblical Parallelism [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008], 2). Berlin’s treatment of parallelism within the father’s lectures includes 3:1; 4:1; and 6:20 (see pp. 56–57, 60, 82). Other examples include the repeated use of the verb בזע in 2:13, 17 and the correspondence between 2ms and 3fs verbs in 6:25.

21 In particular, the repeated verbs and phrases in the exordia of the lectures (e.g., כָּרָה/כָּרָבִּמ in 3:3 and 7:3). See Yoder, “Forming,” 175–76.

22 Each lecture is bookended by an exordium and a conclusion that bear a similar message, but we may also observe a macro-level inclusio created by the first and final lectures. Both focus on the rhetoric of the opposition (the violent gang in Lecture #1, the strange woman in Lecture #10), and a linguistic clue is provided by the verb בא in 1:11 and 7:12.

23 E.g., שלוח in 5:15. See Berlin, 107; 103–26.

24 As Anne W. Stewart rightly observes, “The poetry of Proverbs makes an important contribution to the way in which the book seeks to shape character. Indeed, through its poetic form, Proverbs appeals to the whole human person, attending to his emotions, motivations, desires, and imagination, not simply his rational capacities. In so doing, the book indicates that character formation is more than an intellectual project and, consequently, demands more than appeal to logical reasoning” (Poetic Ethics in Proverbs: Wisdom Literature and the Shaping of the Moral Self [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015], 3–4).
audience, increasing the *ethos* of his message. Both of these linguistic features appear in the father’s very first utterance: “Hear, my son (עַמְשׁיִנְבּ), the discipline of your father, and reject not (שֹׁטִּתּ־לאְו) the teaching of your mother” (1:8). Imperatives continue to appear throughout the lectures, most noticeably in the “Calls to Remember and Obey.” Lecture #3 (3:1–12) contains fourteen imperative verbs; Lecture #7 (4:20–27) contains twelve. Repetition of both vocative address and imperatival command serves not only to encourage the son to remember the teaching, but more importantly to sustain the father’s *ethos* throughout the ten discourses by establishing his authority as a parental figure. As Yoder (following Newsom) asserts, “Repetition . . . serves principally as a means to ‘interpelate’ readers, that is, to call on them again and again to take up a particular subject position, specifically that of a silent, receptive son in relation to an authoritative father.”

In order to prove his credibility to his audience, the father calls upon other authority figures. In 1:8 and 6:20, the father alludes to the credibility of the son’s mother and the valuable teaching she offers to him. At least three times in the lectures, the father quotes “what appear to be preexisting, self-contained two-line proverbs” and places them within the context of his own lectures (1:17; 2:21–22; 6:10–11). This rhetorical move

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25 Lectures #3, #4, #7 (Pemberton, 63).

26 As Yoder notes, “Despite fairly widespread and longstanding distaste for repetition, [it] is a helpful device, particularly in suasive speech. [It is] an effective means to clarify, emphasize, and recapitulate; moreover, its connection with memory makes it of particular didactic value” (“Forming,” 174).

27 Ibid., 175. Cf. Newsom, 143–44.

proves to the son that his father possesses both the wisdom and rhetorical skill necessary
to understand, interpret, and then implement these sayings appropriately (see 1:6).  

The father also reminisces about his own adolescence, saying in Lecture #5,  
“When I was a son with my father, tender, the only one in my mother’s presence, he  
taught me and said to me, ‘Let your hand hold my words; guard my commandments and  
live. Acquire wisdom! Acquire discernment! Do not forget! Do not turn from the words  
of my mouth!’” (4:3–6). Here, the father aligns himself with his son and says, in effect, “I  
onece sat where you are now sitting. Before I was your father, I was first a son. Listen to  
my words as I listened to the words of your grandfather.” This is a rhetorical appeal to  
ethos, intended to show the father’s credibility to his son and persuade him of his father’s  
message. 

The strongest example of the father’s ethos, however, comes in Lecture #3. The father anchors his authority neither in himself nor in the sages of earlier times, but in the  
God from whom all wisdom comes. The lecture begins, “My son, do not forget my  
teaching (תורה), but let your hand keep my commandments (ミutow)” (3:1). The parallel  
terms “teaching” and “commandments” are significant. As Newsom comments, “Various  
paired terms refer to the father’s instruction throughout the [lectures]. But this particular  
pair has resonances of God’s torah and mitwot to Israel and so subtly positions the father

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29 In other words, “The father . . . models for readers ‘right’ uses of the sayings,” (ibid., 171).

30 Newsom, 151.
in association with divine authority.”

In the conclusion of the lecture, the father says, “Do not refuse the discipline of the LORD, my son, and do not grow weary of his reproof; for the LORD reproves the one whom he loves, like a father delights in a son” (vv. 11–12). If the son did not pick up on the word pair with which the father opened Lecture #3, the point is made clear in the lesson’s conclusion: just as the father’s wisdom comes from God, so too does his authority to impart it to his son.32

The final way that the father contributes to his ethos is foundational to his message, though its rhetorical significance may not be immediately apparent. From the first lecture to the last, the father presents the world “as a place of competing and conflicting discourses.”33 In Lecture #1 the father devotes four verses to quoting the invitation of the violent gang (1:11–14), and in Lecture #10 he allows the strange woman seven verses for her seductive speech (7:14–20). At first glance, one may wonder why the father would make such a rhetorical move and provide any suasive space for his opponents in the lectures. But a closer look reveals that the words of the gang leader and the strange woman do not in fact belong to these figures. Rather, they are what Pemberton calls “hyperbolic fictive speeches.”34 As Newsom concludes, “Because [their discourse] is presented by the father, their alleged speech is really completely controlled

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32 As Newsom says, “It is not enough to ground the authority structure of Proverbs 1–9 in the patriarchal father. The authority of the transcendent Father of fathers is needed” (Newsom, 150).

33 Ibid., 146.

34 Pemberton, 71.
by the father.”\footnote{Newsom, 144; cf. 153. Emphasis mine.} Not only are the invitations of the father’s opponents crafted by the father himself, they are also placed within the lectures in such a way that the father is able to comment on and reinterpret them, shedding light on their deceptive nature. Thus, whether or not his audience realizes it, the rhetorical feature of controlled counter-speeches contributes to the father’s \textit{ethos} by undermining the authority of his opponents.

**Corporeal Rhetoric in the Father’s Lectures**

Having surveyed the broad contours of how rhetoric functions in the father’s discourses, we may now investigate the ways in which the father implements somatic language in order to build up the \textit{logos}, \textit{pathos}, and \textit{ethos} of his message.

*The Somatic Logos of the Lectures*

In the previous chapter we observed the sheer volume of anthropological terms in the father’s discourses (over 70 occurrences in 154 verses). In light of this, we may say that the \textit{logos} of the lectures is inherently embodied. The father’s exhortations and warnings to his son only make sense within a physically-indwelled world. For example, the metaphor \textit{LIFE IS A PATHWAY} makes sense only to those who have had the embodied experience of traveling along a path.

In addition to this inherent \textit{logos}, however, there exists a more specific somatic logic that describes the process of gaining wisdom—that is, the embodied way by which wisdom enters into one’s \textit{בֵּל}. In Lecture #2, the father says that wisdom will “come into”
his son's ear to wisdom (הָרַשְׁפִּיָּהּ לֶחֶשׁ הָאֹהֶל; 2:10) and turns his ear to understanding (כַּחַל הַקְּפָרֶת; 2:2). Throughout the lectures, a similar process is described. The somatic entryway for wisdom is the ear (ןֶזֹא; see 4:20; 5:1, 13).

The father also uses somatic language to define personhood, observed most clearly in Lecture #7 (4:20–27). Eight different anthropological terms appear in this short discourse (ןֶזֹא; נִיַע; בֵּל; רָשָׂב; הַפָּשָׁ; פַּעְפַע; לֶגֶר). Commenting on the various body parts in ancient Israel, Fox says,

In the Bible (and elsewhere in world literature), a triad of body zones (heart + eyes; mouth + ears; hands + feet) implies the totality of personality . . . . The eye is the point of entry to the will, whose organ is the [לֶגֶר]; the hands and feet put the will into action, and the mouth gives expression to thought and will, and this utterance is received by the ears.36

Although Fox fails to observe the overlapping roles among the members of these three “body zones,” he is right to note the various ways that the parts of the body interact with one another. In sum, the somatic logos of the lectures is derived from the reality of human embodiment. The common embodied experiences shared by both the father and the son help to foster understanding between the two and to create logical coherence within each lecture.

The Somatic Pathos of the Lectures

The father establishes the somatic pathos of his lectures on the basis of the same emotions mentioned above: hope and fear. In fact, in many of the previously-examined instances, he uses anthropological language extensively in order to encourage an

36 Fox, Proverbs 1–9, 220.
emotional response from his son (see 1:18–19; 3:22; and 6:32). A few more specific examples will make the somatic *pathos* of the lectures clear.

The father uses somatic language to instill hope in his son in Lecture #3 by promising that the fear of the LORD and the reception of wisdom will bring healing to his body and refreshment his bones (*תועיָה יִהוּדָה לְשׁוֹאָה לְשׁוֹאָה לְשׁוֹאָה*; cf. 3:8; cf. 4:22). In the bicola that follow, the father offers his son the hope of full storehouses and bursting wine vats—a poetic description of abundance for his body’s needs—if he chooses to honor God.37 In Lecture #9, the father describes daily embodied activities that increase the *pathos* of his message. He says in 6:20–22, “My son, keep the commandment of your father, and do not forsake the teaching of your mother . . . . When you walk, they will lead you; when you sleep, they will watch over you; when you awake, they will speak to you.” In this way, the father promises his son protection (i.e., the hope of security for his body and in his life’s pursuits) if he keeps his parents’ commandments.

The fear of bodily suffering and death is a common appeal to *pathos* within the lectures. We have noted the father’s direct statement in 6:32—to commit adultery is to destroy one’s *שֶפֶן*, one’s vitality and life. The same sentiment is offered in the preceding lecture (Lecture #7), where the father says, “Keep your way far from [the strange woman]; do not go near the door of her house, lest you lose your vigor (*ךָדוֹה*) to others . . . . lest strangers take their fill of your strength . . . and you groan at the end of your life when your body and flesh (*ךְָרָשְׁבּךָךָרֵאָשׁוּךָ* are wasted away, and you say, ‘How I hated discipline, and correction my *בֵל* despised!’” (5:8–12). The multiplicity of anthropological terms in Lecture #7 also contributes to the negative *pathos* of the father’s message. As

37 Cf. the promise of long life in 4:10.
Newsom observes, the inherent message of the discourse is that if the son elects not to incline his ear to his father’s words (4:20), not to store his father’s sayings within his בֵּל (v. 21), to allow his gaze to wander off the path of wisdom (v. 25), or to let his foot swerve toward evil (v. 27), “any of these [body parts] has the power to work his ruin.”

The examples surveyed in this section illustrate the affective importance of embodied language in the father’s lectures. By appealing to corporeal realities and the son’s physical concerns, the father elevates the pathos of his message and strengthens its rhetorical effect.

_The Somatic Ethos of the Lectures_

There are only a few explicit instances of somatic language in the lectures that contribute to the father’s ethos. In Lecture #6, the father says, “Hear, my son, and take my words, that the years of your life will be many” (4:10). Ethos is established in this verse because the years of the father’s embodied life—significantly more than his son’s—testify to the truth of his claim. Additionally, the father’s observations of others whose lives suffered loss contribute to his credibility. This is inherent in Lecture #8 (see 5:8–14), and, as we will see below, is also the assumed ethos in the father’s final lecture (see 7:7).

The primary feature in the lectures for establishing somatic ethos, however, is the fact that the father and son share in the reality of human embodiment. Their common corporeal experience or being-in-the-world gives authority and credibility to the father as a rhetor and undergirds the entirety of his message. In other words, the feature of the

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38 Newsom, 152.
lectures which best establishes the father’s ethos is more foundational than the words they comprise; the somatic rhetoric of the lectures is consequential of the father’s embodiment.

The father speaks with authority about the body’s role in life because he has a body. He knows what it is like to live each day in רָשָׂבּ, animated by God-given חֹר, to possess the vitality of שֶׁפֶנ, and to be guided and propelled in his life’s journey by his בֵל. This connection extends beyond the father’s and son’s individual embodiment, for within the narrative setting of Proverbs 1–9, the adolescent son’s embodied life journey has been nurtured by, protected by, and (literally) traveled alongside his father and his mother. The father of the lectures has carried out the shema of Deuteronomy with his son. He has loved God with all his embodied existence (6:4); the commandments of God are on his בֵל (v. 5); and he has impressed them upon his son—sitting at home, walking along the way, every day and night (v. 6). Thus, the father’s strongest appeal to ethos in the lectures is that he walks wisdom’s path himself.

A Rhetorical Analysis of Lecture #10

We have heretofore neglected extensive comment on the father’s tenth and final discourse, which comprises the entirety of Proverbs 7. The father saves his longest lecture for last, and he implements all of the rhetorical methods described above in powerful ways in the final appeal to his son in Proverbs 1–9. The heart of the lecture’s poetry is a “strong narrative realization” of the prolegomena’s key metaphor (LIFE IS A PATHWAY) in which a young man has a costly encounter with the strange woman.39

The exordium of Lecture #10 adheres to the logical coherence (i.e., *logos*) that is by now familiar to both the son and to the reader. It begins in v. 1 with the vocative phrase, “My son,” strengthening the father’s *ethos* and calling his audience to pay attention to the message that follows. The son is then told to keep (נָשַׁף) the words of the father and to treasure up the father’s commandments (נֹפְצִיתּ) within himself. As previous chapters have shown, these verbs invoke the mnemonic function of the בֵל. In v. 3, the father makes his point clear: “Bind [my commandments] around your fingers; write them on the tablet of your בֵל!” (cf. 3:3).

The father introduces the topic of Lecture #10 in vv. 4–5, which bring the exordium to a close: “Say to wisdom, ‘You are my sister,’ and as a close relative call out to discernment, to guard yourself from the strange woman, from the adulteress with her smooth words.”40 As Fox notes, “[Verse 4] tells us to relate to wisdom as to a person, but it does not picture her as one.”41 Together with v. 5, then, the logic of the father’s exhortation is this: by considering and treating wisdom as his beloved companion, the son will be able to withstand the strange woman’s seductive rhetoric.42

Besides its length, what sets Lecture #10 apart from the other lectures is its unique rhetorical device: a narrative poem which calls upon the son’s imagination to take part in

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40 These lines hint that the lecture is all about rhetoric, particularly the deceptive rhetoric of the strange woman. See Gale A. Yee, “‘I Have Perfumed My Bed with Myrrh’: The Foreign Woman (ʾiššā zārā) in Proverbs 1–9,” *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 13, no. 43 (March 1989): 62.

41 Fox, *Proverbs 1–9*, 240. This observation is true when the ten lectures are viewed in isolation (as in this paper), but the personification of wisdom—the primary rhetorical feature of the interludes in the prolegomena—is a salient feature for readers of the prolegomena as a unified whole. For a thorough description of Lady Wisdom in Proverbs 1–9, see ibid., 352–59.

42 Note, too, that purpose clause in the first line of v. 5 (“to guard yourself from the strange woman”) “exactly reproduces” 2:16 with only a slight alteration: “to guard you” instead of “to save you” (Alter, 71).
the process of gaining wisdom.\textsuperscript{43} In v. 6, the father begins the body of his lecture, “For at the window of my house, through the lattice I have peered down.”\textsuperscript{44} With this opening line, the audience is invited to observe the upcoming scene alongside the father, experiencing the narrative poem through the imagination in an all-but-embodied way. As Fox writes, “The effect of this mediation is a heightened vividness. The [audience] is introduced into the scene and sees it with eyes of imagination.”\textsuperscript{45}

Smith (drawing on the work of French philosophers Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Pierre Bordieu) writes of the foundational role that human embodiment and the imagination play in rhetoric and the formation of character:

Our action emerges from how we imagine the world. . . . We live into the stories we’ve absorbed; we become characters in the drama that has captivated us. Thus, much of our action is acting out a kind of script that has unconsciously captured our imaginations. . . . Stories are means of ‘emotional prefocusing’ that shape our tacit ‘take’ on the world. And they do so because narrative operates on an affective register—what Merleau-Ponty calls ‘anterpredicative’ know-how, a knowing without thinking that is processed by the body, as it were. It’s a take on the world that resides in our bones, as if the imagination is ‘closer’ to our gut.\textsuperscript{46}

Smith’s understanding of the imagination—a gut-level means of experiencing narrative and perceiving the world that is both cognitive and affective—is akin to the ancient

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\textsuperscript{43} Ib\textsuperscript{d}, 64.
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\textsuperscript{44} Some interpreters assert that the speaker of the lectures changes from father to mother in Lecture #10, since “the woman at the window” is a common motif elsewhere in Scripture (Judg. 5:28; 2 Sam. 6:16; 2 Kgs. 9:30–33). See Athalya Brenner, “Proverbs 1–9: An F Voice?” in \textit{On Gendering Texts: Female and Male Voices in the Hebrew Bible}, by Athalya Brenner and Fokkelien van Dijk-Hemmes (Leiden: Brill, 1993), 113–30. As Fox notes, however, although “mothers care no less than fathers about their sons’ sexual behavior” and although a maternal voice in the “androcentric book of Proverbs” would be a welcome discovery, “there is no way the [audience] could be expected to recognize a sudden and unmarked switch to an unprecedented [female voice] in Prov 7 or anywhere else in [the prolegomena]” (Fox, \textit{Proverbs 1–9}, 258; cf. Ernest C. Lucas, \textit{Proverbs}, The Two Horizons Old Testament Commentary [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015], 75–76).
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\textsuperscript{45} Fox, \textit{Proverbs 1–9}, 252.
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\textsuperscript{46} Smith, \textit{Imagining the Kingdom}, 32; 38.
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Israelite somatic self-conception outlined above, and it describes well the role of the בֵּל in the father’s discourses. Concerning Lecture #10, Stewart offers valuable insight when she writes, “The poem allows the student to enter deeply into precisely the nefarious desire that the father warns against.”47 By inviting his son to observe and to participate in the scene of Lecture #10 through the imagination, the father allows him to learn the wisdom of the discourse heuristically—to discover it for himself—so that whenever similar temptations come his way, he will be better prepared to reject them and remain on wisdom’s path.

Before the action of this powerful imagined scenario unfolds, the two main characters are introduced and described at length in vv. 7–12. The father peers down from his window to see “a young man lacking בֵּל, passing by on the street near her corner, the road to her house he takes, in the twilight, in the evening of the day, in the deep darkness of night” (vv. 7–9). With this description, the son—a רַעַנ himself—takes on the role of the young person in the story through his imagination; however, from its outset, this is not the kind of young man that the son ought to aspire to be. He is described as lacking בֵּל, which the son knows from previous lectures is the vital organ of both memory and volition. Thus, the story’s end is foreshadowed from the beginning: without בֵּל, this רַעַנ has neither the capacity nor the means to survive an encounter with the strange woman. And unfortunately, he is on the road to her house in “the twilight, in the evening of the day, in the deep darkness of night,” ending the young man’s introduction with an ominous bicolon and setting the stage for his looming demise (v. 9).

47 Stewart, 160.
With the interjection הֵנִּה, the father quickly shifts his attention to the strange woman in vv. 10–12, describing her outward appearance, her habits, and—having the omniscience of a narrator—her character: “Behold, the woman meets him—the dress of a harlot, wily of בֵל. She is loud and rebellious; her feet never settle down at home, now in the street, now in the square—at every corner she lies in wait.” As we noted in Chapter 2, the poetic line of v. 10 which references the strange woman’s בֵל carries corporeal significance. Fox notes, “The only item of clothing that seems to have marked a prostitute was a heavy veil [ףיִעָצ, Gen. 38:14]. The Strange Woman might be wearing one in an attempt to hide her identity.” Following Fox’s interpretation, the parallelism within the second line of v. 10 becomes clearer: like the veil that hides her face, this woman’s בֵל is “guarded,” too—she is wily, and whatever words might come from her mouth are not to be trusted. Just like the violent gang of Lecture #1, the strange woman “lies in wait” to take advantage of others (cf. 1:11), giving her a “predatory quality that is made explicit in verses 22–23.”

The story’s action begins in v. 13, where the strange woman seizes the young man and kisses him (הָקְשָׁנְו וֹבּ הָקֶזַּחְו). Following her impudent sexual advance, she begins her own discourse, which is filled with somatic rhetoric, in an attempt to lure her prey into her house and into her bed. Her speech begins and ends with appeals to logos, reasons why the naïve youth should agree to follow through with her plans for the evening. In v. 14, she says, “I have sacrificed peace offerings for myself; today I have paid my vows.” As Fox notes, the strange woman “may be implying that she is not

48 Fox, Proverbs 1–9, 243.

49 Newsom, 156.
menstruating and is thus sexually available.”50 And if the young man fears begin caught by the strange woman’s husband, she reassures him in vv. 19–20 that he is not at home—he is “on a journey, far away,” having left with “a bag of money,” not expected to return any time soon.51

The strange woman’s primary rhetorical appeal, however, is made in vv. 16–18:

“Coverings I have spread upon my couch—colored fabrics, fine linen from Egypt! I have perfumed my bed—myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon! Come, let us take our fill of love till morning! Let us delight ourselves with love!” Combined with the strange woman’s words and her provocative garb, these lines form an attempt to seduce the adolescent through an embodied *pathos* which engages all five senses. Before she even speaks, she tempts his senses of sight, touch, and taste: her veiled appearance has enticed him, she has seized him, and the taste of her lips is on his tongue. Once she speaks, her voice and her propositions tantalize his sense of hearing. In v. 16 she continues her embodied assault, tempting his senses of sight and touch once again by suggesting that they lie together on exquisite, brightly colored fabrics from a faraway land. His sense of smell is engaged in v. 17: the strange woman has perfumed her bed with fragrant spices, “evocative of the sweet delights, emotional and physical, of love.”52 Finally, in v. 18 the strange woman employs a common metaphor for lovemaking (םיִדֹד) that engages the young man’s sense

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50 He continues, “We may wonder why this would matter to either party, since they are involved in a sin incomparably worse than violation of ritual purity. But people may be punctilious in ritual and taboo while shabby in ethics” (Fox, *Proverbs 1–9*, 246).

51 Ibid., 248; cf. Alter, 71.

52 Fox, *Proverbs 1–9*, 247. Fox also notes here that these three spices (myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon) are “among the fragrances of the ‘garden’ that is a metaphor for the girl’s body” in Song of Sol. 4:14; cf. 1:13; 3:6; 4:6, 11, 15–16; 5:5, 13.
of taste—that of drinking and getting drunk on love (see Prov. 5:19; Song of Sol. 4:10; 5:1).

With such an imaginative onslaught of the senses, it is not difficult for even modern readers to get lost in the strange woman’s rhetoric and forget who is really in control: the father. The strange woman’s words in Lecture #10 remain his words; his ability to guide his audience through alternative rhetoric is not lost. In v. 21, the father’s voice returns to the poem: “She turns him aside with her abundant persuasion; with her lips she hunts him down.” In this way, the father sheds light on the strange woman’s deceptive words. As Brown observes, “The strange woman’s bedroom, despite its sensorial ambience of color and fragrance (7:16–17), is exposed as fifty shades of darkness suffused with the stench of death. Her home, it turns out, is the façade of Sheol.”

Unfortunately, it is too late for the young man outside the window of the father’s story. Like an ox going to slaughter (v. 22) or like a bird darting into a snare (v. 23), the רַעַנ takes the seductress’s bait. He steps into her house, lured in by her adulterous rhetoric, and pays with his שֶׁפֶנ—his very life (v. 27; cf. 23).

Stewart is right when she says that Lecture #10 is “a veritable apprenticeship in desire.” The father knows that he will now always be present as his son journeys along life’s pathway. Therefore, drawing on the foundation of human embodiment and the


54 As Newsom summarizes the father’s closing in Lecture #10, “The father’s concluding words in verses 24–27 expose the monstrous, mythic dimension of the strange woman. She is not just a woman who has seduced a simple-minded young man. She is a predator who has slain multitudes. Indeed, her vagina is the gate of Sheol. Her womb, death itself” (Newsom, 156).

55 Stewart, 158.
power of the imagination, the father creates a trial run of temptation through which to guide his audience. The father’s rhetoric allows both the son and the lecture’s readers to experience strong temptation without the risk of falling into it. The shift back to the father’s words at the end of Lecture #10 “implicitly [positions] the student as one who has successfully resisted the strange woman’s claims . . . one who has perhaps dallied with the strange woman, yet in the end has chosen wisely.” In other words, having heard alternative rhetoric and survived its seduction, every son who hears the father’s final lecture is now ready to embark on his own—his בֵּל filled with wisdom and set firmly upon wisdom’s path (v. 25).

Conclusion

Having covered so much anthropological, exegetical, and rhetorical ground in the paper thus far, a brief summary of its findings is in order. In Chapter 1, we surveyed the Hebrew Bible in order to discover the somatic self-conception of ancient Israel. That study revealed the prominence of four key anthropological terms which together create the holistic Hebrew understanding of personhood: רָשָׂבּ, חוּר, שֶׁפֶנ, and בֵּל. Of these four terms, בֵּל appears most often, and further investigation confirmed that the בֵּל is the most important part of the body in the Hebrew Bible and thus in ancient Israel.

In Chapter 2, we narrowed the scope of exploration to the prolegomena of Proverbs (chapters 1–9), more specifically to the ten lectures found therein, given by a father to his adolescent son. Our study of these discourses showed how somatic language permeates them—often to such an extent as to go unnoticed by the reader—and just as in

56 Ibid., 161.
the rest of Scripture, the בֵּל is shown in Proverbs 1–9 to carry out a foundational role in charting the course of one’s life. Of utmost concern for the father in his lectures are two primary functions of the בֵּל: the volitional and the mnemonic.

The father’s somatic self-conception, particularly of the בֵּל and its role in human existence, shapes the way he seeks to impart wisdom to his son. Therefore, in the present chapter, we have conducted an exploration of the father’s rhetoric—that is, how he strengthens the logos, pathos, and ethos of his message in order to persuade those who hear it. Appeals to each of the three classical rhetorical proofs abound in the lectures, and more examples could be cited than are presented above. Our focus, however, has been on the somatic rhetoric within the lectures, or the role of corporeal realities in the process of persuasion. What we have found is that human embodiment is foundational to human language and thus to the father’s rhetoric—illuminated best in the father’s tenth and final lecture.
Chapter 4

Rhetoric, Human Embodiment, and Adolescent Spiritual Formation Today

The Christian says, “Creatures are not born with desires unless satisfaction for those desires exists . . . .” If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world.

—C. S. Lewis, Mere Christianity

Sages, both ancient and modern, bear a pedagogical responsibility. That is, they are charged with the task of imparting wisdom to younger generations in order that the youth might lead a flourishing life. Numerous variables (such as socioeconomic status and cultural setting) cause each new generation to exhibit different strengths and weaknesses in their journey to adulthood; therefore, the wise of every age are met with ever-shifting challenges in their labor of guarding and directing the young people of their day. The twenty-first-century West is no exception, and those in the church who are called to impart God’s wisdom to the next generation of believers must not neglect their pedagogical duty.

Two very different audiences are simultaneously able to read the father’s lectures in Proverbs 1–9 in order to glean wisdom from it. The first audience, of course, is anyone seeking the wisdom espoused in the lectures themselves—whether that person is an adolescent male like the son of the lectures or any other individual interpellated by the lectures as such. Though less obvious, the second audience who is invited to gain wisdom from the lectures is any sage at any point in history, for just as much wisdom for the pedagogical task is offered by the example set by the father throughout the collection of discourses. The present chapter seeks to describe how the lectures function for the latter
audience and concludes the paper by applying the preceding chapters’ anthropological, exegetical, and rhetorical findings to the context of modern-day youth ministry in the West, particularly the United States.

Youth Ministry in Today’s Culture

The advent of the internet, social media, and the smartphone drastically changed the cultural landscape of the West, particularly for young people. By 2012 the majority of Americans—many of them teenagers—owned smartphones,¹ and a shift that began with the millennial generation (those born between 1980 and 1994) was complete, marking a new generation: iGen, more commonly called Generation Z.² Like all young people throughout history, today’s teenagers continue to desire participation in a genuine community; they are “passionate about finding their place in society.”³ The difference in our modern context, however, is that the venue for community-finding is no longer physical but digital. The “cool” place is no longer the mall but social media outlets like Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat.⁴

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² Twenge coins the name “iGen,” but this term does not appear to have caught on, despite her misgivings about “Generation Z” and other names that have been suggested for the generation of young people today (Twenge, 7–8). We should also note here the observation of David Kinnaman: “Our modern idea of generations is overrated and may even distort our vision of how the church is designed to function. . . . Everybody in the church at a particular time make up a ‘generation,’ a generation that is working together in their time to participate in God’s work” (*You Lost Me: Why Young Christians Are Leaving the Church . . . And Rethinking Faith* [Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2011], 202–03).


⁴ Boyd calls these communities “networked publics” (Boyd, 5).
A digital world creates both challenges and opportunities for the church, particularly as it seeks to minister to its young people. Yet, research suggests that many congregations fail to provide the kind of genuine community that young people desire. In his assessment of millennials’ participation in the church, Kinnaman finds that while “teenagers are some of the most religiously active Americans . . . American twentysomethings are the least religiously active.” In 2011, nearly 60 percent of those with a Christian background had “dropped out of attending church, after going regularly.” Those surveyed in Kinnaman’s research say that they decided to stop participating in church life because the church is either “overprotective,” “shallow,” “anti-science,” “repressive” (particularly in its vision of sexuality), “exclusive” (i.e., has little to no desire to find common ground with others), or “doubtless” (i.e., the church is not a place where members are allowed to express doubts). By 2016, a full third of young adults (ages 18–24) had no religious affiliation at all.

Due to this trend of declining church membership and participation among younger Millennials that continues with Generation Z, many in the current generation of parents and youth ministers in the church are afraid for its future. As Smith writes, they are “terrified that their children—the proverbial next generation—will leave the church and leave the faith. And they’ve convinced themselves that the primary reason because

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5 Kinnaman, 22.
6 Ibid., 23.
7 Ibid., 92–93.
8 Twenge, 121.
they are bored,” whether or not this is actually what lies behind the data.\(^9\) Adult Christians have responded by shifting youth ministry’s focus to the entertainment of young people rather than to the formation of their character as committed disciples of Jesus Christ. This approach to youth ministry has resulted in two “disastrous decisions.”\(^10\)

First, as Smith observes,

> We have stratified the one body of Christ into generational segments, moving children and young people out of the ecclesial center of worship into effectively ‘parachurch’ spaces, even if they’re still officially in the church building. . . . This segmentation of the body of Christ into generational castes eliminates one of the most powerful modes of habit-formation: imitation.\(^11\)

Second, we have “turned youth ministry into an almost entirely expressivist affair, surmising that what will keep young people in the church is a series of opportunities for them to sincerely exhibit their faith.”\(^12\) As the church has come to find out, entertainment in isolation from the rest of the church body does not lead to more committed faith among young people, especially after they graduate from the culturally-conditioned spaces we try to create for them.\(^13\) In short, when it comes to many modern approaches to youth ministry, we have neglected the pedagogy to be found in Scripture—lived out and taught by centuries of sages among God’s people—leaning on our own understanding of

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\(^9\) Smith continues, “It’s as if these adults overheard the nineties grunge band Nirvana shrieking, ‘Here we are now: entertain us!’ but completely misunderstood the point” (*You Are What You Love*, 144).

\(^10\) Ibid.

\(^11\) Ibid., 144–45.

\(^12\) Ibid.

\(^13\) Smith’s conclusion warrants another lengthy quotation here: “While we might have many young people who are eager participants in all the entertaining events we stage for them, such participation is not actually forming their hearts and aiming their desires toward God and his kingdom as long as the default liturgies of such events are built on consumerist rituals and the rites of self-concern” (ibid., 146).
a “discontinuously different culture” instead of on the wisdom that “empowers us to live faithfully” within it.14

Yet, the pedagogical wisdom of God’s Word has not been entirely lost, and today’s teenagers still long to participate in something that is bigger than they are. Modern young people, like all young people before them, desire a place within a community that “has a kind of ancient stability and endurance about it that testifies to God’s faithfulness.”15 Our youth are eagerly waiting for us to guide them in the formation of their character.16 Thankfully, there are practices that parents, youth ministers, and others among the church’s older demographic can carry out in order to model genuine faith in Christ and to provide young people with an opportunity to participate in the same. The remainder of this chapter will offer three pedagogical suggestions to this end—three ways by which youth leaders in the church today might approach youth ministry with the wisdom exhibited by the father of Proverbs 1–9.

Ancient Principles of Adolescent Spiritual Formation in the Context of Youth Ministry Today

By its very nature, wisdom is essential truth. Real wisdom is absolute, valuable across time and space to both individual human beings and their communities. Therefore, we ought to apply to our modern context the wisdom we have surveyed in the book of Proverbs. Like the father and son of Proverbs 1–9, we who live today are embodied

14 Kinnaman, 210; 212.

15 Smith, *You Are What You Love*, 150; cf. a countertrend observed by Kinnaman, that “young Christ-followers who are passionate, committed, and bursting to engage with the world for the sake of the gospel” do exist in the church today (Kinnaman, 27).

16 Smith, *You Are What You Love*, 150.
creatures; like the father, we of older generations remain called to bear the responsibility of imparting wisdom to the next generation. The pedagogical wisdom found in the father’s discourses must continue to inform and shape our ministries to the young people in our churches and our communities. What follows are three suggestions for youth ministry praxis drawn from the pedagogy of the father in his lectures. We may summarize them in this way: In order to foster the spiritual formation of adolescents, our youth ministries must: (1) take place as part of the larger community that is the church; (2) take a heuristic approach; and (3) recognize the foundational roles played human desire and human embodiment in determining one’s course in life, as well as how these two key aspects of what it means to be human might shape our rhetoric today.

Youth Ministry in Christian Community

First, a pedagogy for parents and youth leaders in the church today must take place in and emphasize the vital importance of Christian community. The modern West is highly individualistic, and despite the promise of social media to bring people closer to one another, many of us experience much of our online lives “alone together.” As Kinnaman observes about young people today, “To generalize, they are extraordinarily relational and, at the same, remarkably self-centered. . . . They want to be mentored and they want to make it on their own. They want to do everything with friends and they want to accomplish great things under their own steam.” A healthy Christian pedagogy which

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17 This is Sherry Turkle’s phrase, serving also as the title of her book: Alone Together: Why We Expect More from Technology and Less of Each Other (New York: Basic Books, 2011).

18 Kinnaman, 29.
focuses on one’s place within the larger body of Christ will address the cultural tension that Kinnaman describes, felt especially among young people who desire community without the loss of individuality.\(^{19}\)

Although it may not be clear at first glance, Proverbs 1–9 places heavy emphasis on the communal nature of wisdom. Even before the first lecture begins, the prolegomena suggest that those who choose wisdom’s path will become one of the sages, called “the wise” (םיִמָכֲח) in 1:6.\(^{20}\) The significance of the son’s immediate family is on display when the father mentions the importance not only of his lectures, but of the mother’s teaching as well (1:8; 6:20; cf. 4:3). Additionally, the first nine chapters’ focus on the son’s dilemma of choosing either wisdom or folly as a companion in life highlights the fact that “wisdom, as expressed in Proverbs, is relational.”\(^{21}\) Spiritual formation and growth in wisdom can only take place within the context of Christian community.\(^{22}\) As Darryl Tippens asserts, “God always intended the pilgrim heart to travel in company. Without partners for the journey, we are ever in peril.”\(^{23}\)


\(^{20}\) One is reminded of the Psalter’s introductory poem (Psalm 1, often classified as a “wisdom psalm”), in which the opening beatitude and the lines that follow praise the individual who forsakes the company of the “wicked,” “sinners,” and “scoffers” (v. 1) in order to be counted among the “congregation of the righteous” (v. 5). See C. L. Seow, “An Exquisitely Poetic Introduction to the Psalter,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 132, no. 2 (2013): 278–82; 287–88.

\(^{21}\) Dave Bland, *Proverbs and the Formation of Character* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2015), 3. This motif is most prevalent in the interludes’ depictions of Lady Wisdom and Woman Folly, but within the father’s lectures see especially Lecture #5 (4:6–9).

\(^{22}\) Ibid., 4.

Despite what older generations may think about teenagers’ use of their smartphones and social media, most young people “are not compelled by gadgetry as such—they are compelled by friendship. The gadgets are interesting to them primarily as a means to a social end.” Apparently, the path of wisdom that parents and youth leaders have to offer—that of a life together with God and God’s people—meets our teenagers’ inherent desire to experience genuine friendship and community. In this endeavor, it is crucial for the church to recognize that “most youth ministry is not accomplished by youth ministers.” At best, our youth ministers serve a supplemental role in the lives of our young people. We must recognize the vital role that families, congregations, and mentor relationships play in the lives of teenagers and, wherever necessary, alter our youth ministry practices in order to foster spiritual growth in more holistic ways. This is Smith’s first suggestion for creating formative youth ministries in the church today. He says that we must “enfold [our young people] in a congregation that is committed to historic Christian worship and multigenerational gathering.”

The pedagogical wisdom of Proverbs 1–9 tells us that spiritual formation requires a nurturing community. It also shows us that this process begins in the home. As Dean observes, “Parents matter most when it comes to the religious formation of their children.” The father and mother together exemplify the kind of open, honest

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24 Boyd, 18.

25 Kenda Creasy Dean, _Almost Christian: What the Faith of Our Teenagers is Telling the American Church_ (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 11.

26 Supplemental, yes, but undoubtedly worthwhile.

27 Smith, _You Are What You Love_, 152.

28 Dean, 18. Research is nearly unanimous on this assertion (ibid., 112 n. 5).
parent-child relationship that will lead to growth in wisdom. As Western Christians look to instill stronger faith in their teenagers, the church must expand the role of youth ministry to include “investing in the faith of . . . parents and congregations.”

*A Heuristic Approach to Youth Ministry*

Second, successful adolescent spiritual formation today must take a heuristic approach. In other words, if our young people are going to learn to desire the path of wisdom and the way of Jesus, they must discover it for themselves. This does not mean that teenagers must blaze their own path toward God; rather, it means that we must never force our young people to take wisdom’s path. As the father envisions himself in the lectures of Proverbs 1–9, our role as youth leaders is like that of a trail guide—as those who, like the “solid people” in C. S. Lewis’s *The Great Divorce*, have traveled up the mountain but have gone back down in order to show the way and to walk alongside other, less “solid” individuals whose journey has just begun.

The pathway metaphor of the father’s lectures is once again crucial for shaping our ministry praxis here. The world, as depicted by the father of Proverbs 1–9 is “a place of conflicting discourses,” a place of many diverse paths which one may choose to take in life. Yet, as Newsom observes, “A path does not, in fact, exclude movement in any direction. It only makes its own direction the easiest, most natural, most logical way of proceeding.” Thus, even though the path of wisdom is clearly marked, the son is always

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29 Ibid., 24.

30 Newsom, 147.

31 Ibid.
free to go whichever way he pleases and to follow whichever voice he may hear calling out to him—whether the gang leader’s, the strange woman’s, or (it is hoped) his father’s. As he continues to choose the latter throughout the lectures, the son follows his father as his guide, as one who has been on the path of wisdom before. Yet, the son is traveling wisdom’s path for the first time; therefore, it is as if the son is discovering wisdom for himself.

In our increasingly globalized world, many parents and youth leaders believe that we must completely censor competing rhetoric in our young people’s lives—in their schools, in our homes, and online—if they are to choose the path in life that we and God would have them take. Complete suppression, however, is a grave mistake. As Boyd observes in light of her research:

When we assume that youth will just absorb all things digital through exposure, we absolve ourselves of our responsibility to help teenagers develop necessary skills. Too often, we focus on limiting youth from accessing inaccurate or problematic information. This is a laudable goal, but alone it does teens a fundamental disservice. . . . In a networked world, in which fewer intermediaries control the flow of information and more information is flowing, the ability to critically question information or media narratives is increasingly important. Censorship of inaccurate or problematic content does not provide youth the skills they will one day need to evaluate information independently.\(^\text{32}\)

Boyd’s contemporary conclusion is ancient wisdom. As we saw in Chapter 3, the father displays no hesitancy in allowing his son to hear competing voices which call him to take another path. The father is completely honest with his son about the temptation he will face in life, because he knows that he will not always be by his son’s side when

\(^\text{32}\) Boyd, 181.
temptation comes his way.\textsuperscript{33} Those who are called to lead young people in their path toward spiritual growth must not shy away from making them aware of competing rhetoric and alternative ways of life; if we fail to do so, we can be sure that those rival voices will find their way into our young people’s lives, whether from a peer at school or, maybe more likely, from the networked public that they carry around in their pockets. As Kinnaman warns, “Like a Geiger counter under a mushroom cloud, the next generation is reacting to the radioactive intensity of social, technological, and religious changes. And for the most part, we are sending them into the world unprepared to withstand the fallout.”\textsuperscript{34}

Despite our fears about presenting other potential paths that our young people could take in life, this exposure has actually been shown to lead to spiritual growth and character formation.\textsuperscript{35} We fail to serve as trail guides to our teenagers when we censor them from hearing other voices and seeing alternative paths in life. Our attempt to protect them from the world in the end leaves them defenseless against alternative rhetoric. If we hope to lead our teenagers to choose a life with God as active members of the body of Christ, we cannot force them to take wisdom’s path. Instead, we must simply walk beside them, honestly pointing out other paths and making them aware of the traps that may be set to ensnare them along the way. In so doing, we teach our young people how to avoid

\textsuperscript{33} As Bland writes, “Even though the sages taught students to develop reasoning skills, to plan for the future, and to think critically, there were times when youth had to make immediate decisions in the heat of temptation and moral dilemma” (29).

\textsuperscript{34} Kinnaman, 28.

these alternatives, and we allow them to discover and to choose wisdom’s path for themselves.

*The Role of Desire and Human Embodiment in Youth Ministry*

In its exploration of the father’s lectures in Proverbs 1–9, this paper has highlighted the vital role of the בֵּל, which brings together many elements of personality that are fragmented in modern psychology—namely, the intellect, the emotions, the imagination, the memory, and the will. Since at least the Enlightenment, however, these key features of personhood have been divided and attributed to either the “head” or the “heart,” with little to no interaction between them. This has led many in the West to become so “fixated on the cognitive” that they eschew the emotions entirely and conceive of themselves and others as not much more than “bobble heads [with] mammoth heads that dwarf an almost nonexistent body.” As Darryl Tippens writes, this “divorce of head and heart is coming to an end”; however, our youth ministries still suffer from its effects.

If we only have a brain—that is, if cognition is all that matters—then adolescent spiritual formation ought to take place any time we disseminate the right information. Therefore, many youth leaders who adhere to this model will focus their ministries on teaching information about the Word of God, whether through Sunday school classes, Bible studies, or other cognition-focused activities. Yet, the retention of information is only one facet of gaining wisdom and forming character. As Smith notes, “Such an

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36 Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 43.

37 Tippens, 200.
intellectualist model of the human person . . . assumes that learning (and hence discipleship) is primarily a matter of depositing ideas and beliefs into mind-containers.”

Knowledge of God is without a doubt one important aspect of a Christian pedagogy. The father of the lectures exemplifies this by his extended discussions of the mnemonic role that the son’s בֵּל ought to play in his life. But human beings are not defined by our thoughts, how much we know, or even what we believe. Ultimately, we are defined by our desires—by what we love. The father in Proverbs 1–9 knows this foundational truth about human existence, as well as the truth that “a holistic model of Christian education [and character formation] needs to involve a pedagogy of desire.”

What we have observed in the lectures succeeds precisely in this endeavor and provides a framework by which we might also shape our youth ministries today. Speaking of the heart much in the same way that we have described the בֵּל in Israel, Smith says, “The way to the heart is through the body, and the way into the body is through story.” The father’s rhetoric—permeated by somatic language and metaphors that rely upon a common embodied experience (especially the final lecture with its powerful engagement of the imagination)—seeks to form not only the son’s intellect, but his emotions, will, and desires as well. If our efforts to set our young people on the path

38 Smith, You Are What You Love, 3. He then asks with a hint of sarcasm, “If ‘you are what you think,’ then filling your thinking organ with Bible verses should translate into Christian character, right? If ‘you are what you think,’ then changing what you think should change who you are, right? Right?” (ibid., 5).

39 Ibid., 9.

40 Ibid., 12. Emphasis original.

41 Smith, Imagining the Kingdom, 14.
of wisdom are to succeed today, we must also take a holistic, embodied approach when it comes to our rhetoric by seeking to plant our message in places that are “deeper” in an individual’s psyche than simply in the head. The story of Jesus is not only to be known in our heads; rather, it is meant to reside in our hearts and seep into our bones.\textsuperscript{42} Speaking of Christianity as “a way for peasants,” Stanley Hauerwas writes,

Peasants may not be ‘intellectuals,’ but they have knowledge habituated in their bodies that must be passed on from one generation to another, . . . Such a Christianity is not a set of beliefs or doctrines in order to be a Christian, but rather Christianity is to have one’s body shaped, one’s habits determined, in such a manner that the worship of God is unavoidable.\textsuperscript{43}

We cannot assume that the dissemination of information about God will persuade young people to choose a life of faith. We must strive to make our rhetoric holistic, involving not only the brain through logical appeals in our Sunday morning classes \textit{(logos)}, but also appealing to the heart and one’s desires \textit{(pathos)}, as well as to our own credibility as followers of Christ who embody the way of wisdom in our own lives \textit{(ethos)}. By the power of the Spirit, we too must capture our young people’s imaginations with the gospel narrative in such a way that their bodies are shaped and their lives are lived into that story—through both sound teaching and the time-tested practices of embodied spiritual disciplines.\textsuperscript{44} Only then will we have truly equipped our teenagers to

\textsuperscript{42} Ibid., 14–15.


\textsuperscript{44} Note also here, as Smith suggests, that “formative youth ministry will invite young people into a wider repertoire of Christian disciplines as rhythms of the Spirit. . . . A holistic Christian learning environment doesn’t just fill the intellect; it fuels the imagination” \textit{(You Are What You Love}, 155). For a concise introduction to the role of embodied spiritual disciplines in the Christian faith, see Tippens, 29–35.
take hold of their own faith and to follow the way of Jesus as the embodied, desiring people that God created them to be.

Conclusion

As cultures shift around the world across both generations and millennia, the older generation among God’s people will face new challenges—but also new opportunities—in their task of fostering the spiritual formation of adolescents. This paper’s exploration of the somatic self-conception and the vital role of the בֵּל of ancient Israel, the rhetoric of the father’s lectures in Proverbs 1–9, and the characteristics of younger generations in the modern West highlights the enduring value of wisdom for youth ministry today. As we seek to help our young people grow in their relationship with both God and the networked communities in which they live each day, we must seek, above all, to walk alongside them as their guides. Like the father of the lectures, we must not only focus on “informing young minds;” more importantly, we must focus on directing our teenagers’ desires and habituating their bodies toward their true end—Jesus Christ—as we show them what it means to live in and live out the gospel story.

Reflecting on the shema of Deuteronomy 6, Dean writes,

Parents are not called to make their children godly; teenagers are created in God’s image, no matter what we do to them, and no matter what they do to disguise it. The law called upon Jewish parents to show their children godliness—to teach them, talk to them, embody for them their own delight in the Lord, 24/7. Everything they needed for their children’s faith formation, God has already given them. In the end, awakening faith does not depend on how hard we press young people to love God, but on how much we show them that we do... Jesus does

45 Smith, You Are What You Love, 64.

46 Ibid. As Smith later writes, “Indeed, the telos for Christians is Christ: Jesus Christ is the very embodiment of what we’re made for, of the end to which we are called” (ibid., 90).
not ask parents or congregations to be theological experts. He asks us to follow him, to remember him, to love him—and to let it show.47

May we who are called to the task of leading our young people to faith in God do so by showing them how to love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength as we walk alongside them on the path of wisdom.

47 Dean, 120; 122.
APPENDIX

Translation and Lineation of the Father’s Ten Lectures in Proverbs 1–9

Lecture #1 (Prov. 1:8–19)

8 Hear, my son, the discipline of your father, and reject not the teaching of your mother,

9 for they are a crown of grace upon your head, and pendants for your neck.

10 My son, if sinners entice you, do not give in!

11 If they say, “Come with us! Let us lie in wait for blood; let us ambush the innocent for no reason!

12 Let us swallow the living like Sheol; the innocent will be like those going down to the pit!

13 We will find all precious riches; we will fill our houses with plunder!

14 Throw in your lot among us; [our] purse will be one for us all!”—

15 my son, do not walk in the way with them; keep back your foot from their path;
16 for their feet run to evil,
and they make haste to shed blood.

17 For “How useless to spread a net
in the sight of any bird!”

18 But [these sinners] lie in wait for their own blood;
they ambush their own lives!

19 Such are the ways of all profiteers of violence;
it snatches away the life of its possessors.

Lecture #2 (Prov. 2:1–22)

1 My son, if you receive my words
and treasure up my commandments within you,

2 inclining your ear to wisdom,
turning your heart to understanding—

3 indeed, if for discernment you call out,
[if] for understanding you lift up your voice,

4 if you seek after it like silver,
and search for it like hidden treasure,

5 then you will understand the fear of the LORD,
and the knowledge of God you will find.

6 For the LORD gives wisdom,
from his mouth—knowledge and understanding!
7 He stores up success for the upright, a shield for those who walk with integrity.

8 keeping watch over the paths of justice and guarding the way of his faithful ones.

9 Then you will understand righteousness, justice, and equity—every good path!

10 For wisdom will come into your heart, and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul;

11 discretion will guard you; understanding will watch over you

to deliver you from the way of evil—
from men who speak of perverse things,

who have forsaken the paths of integrity to walk in the ways of darkness,

who delight in doing evil and rejoice in the perversity of evil,

whose paths are twisted and are crooked in their ways;

16 [and] to deliver you from the strange woman— from the adulteress with her slippery words,

Reading with the qere.

Reading with the qere.

See p. 27 n. 5.
who has forsaken the companion of her youth
and forgotten the covenant of her God.

Surely her house sinks down to death,
her paths to the spirits of the dead;

no one who goes in to her returns,
or attains the paths of life.

So you will walk in the way of the good,
and keep to the paths of the righteous.

For the upright will dwell in the land,
and those of complete integrity will remain in it,

but the wicked will be cut off from the land,
and the deceitful will be uprooted from it.

Lecture #3 (Prov. 3:1–12)

1 My son, do not forget my teaching,
but let your heart keep my commandments,

For length of days and years of life,
and peace will they add to you.

Steadfast love and faithfulness—let them not forsake you!
Bind them around your neck;
write them on the tablet of your heart!

Find favor and high regard
in the eyes of God and man.
5 Trust in the LORD with all of your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding!

6 In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will straighten out your paths.

7 Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and turn away from evil!

8 Healing will it be to your body, and refreshment to your bones.

9 Honor the LORD with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your produce;

10 then your storehouses will be filled with plenty, with wine your vats will burst through!

11 Do not refuse the discipline of the LORD, my son, and do not grow weary of his reproof;

12 for the LORD reproves the one whom he loves, like a father delights in a son.

Lecture #4 (Prov. 3:21–35)

21 My son, do not let [these] out of your sight—keep sound wisdom and discretion;

22 they will be life to your soul and grace about your neck.

23 Then you will walk securely on your way, and your foot will not stumble.
24 If you lie down, you will not be afraid; when you lie down, your sleep will be sound. 

25 Do not fear sudden disaster or the ruin of the wicked when it comes, 

26 for the LORD will be your confidence; he will guard your foot from being caught. 

27 Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when the power to do it is in your hand. 

28 Do not say to your neighbor, “Go and come back, and tomorrow I will give it,” when it is with you [already]! 

29 Do not plot evil against your neighbor, the one who lives trustingly beside you. 

30 Do not contend with a man for no reason, when he has done you no wrong. 

31 Do not envy a man of violence; do not choose any of his ways. 

32 For the crooked person is an abomination to the LORD, but the upright are his close company. 

33 The curse of the LORD is on the house of the wicked, but the dwelling place of the righteous will he bless.

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4 Reading with the qere. 
5 Reading with the qere. 
6 Reading with the qere. 
7 Note connection to 1:11.
34 He mocks the mockers, but to the humble he gives grace.

35 The wise will inherit honor, while fools are lifting up shame.

Lecture #5 (Prov. 4:1–9)

1 Hear, O sons, the discipline of your father; pay attention to come to know discernment,

2 for good teaching do I give to you, do not forsake my instruction!

3 When I was a son with my father, tender, the only one in my mother’s presence,

4 he taught me and said to me, “Let your heart hold my words, guard my commandments and live.

5 Acquire wisdom! Acquire discernment! Do not forget! Do not turn from the words of my mouth!

6 Do not forsake [wisdom], and she will guard you; love her, and she will watch over you.

7 The beginning of wisdom: acquire wisdom! If you acquire anything, acquire discernment.

8 Reading with the qere.
8 Lift her up, and she will exalt you; she will honor you if only you embrace her.

9 She will set upon your head a crown of grace; a wreath of beauty she will bestow upon you.”

*Lecture #6 (Prov. 4:10–19)*

10 Hear, my son, and take my words, that the years of your life will be many.

11 The way of wisdom I have taught you; I have led you in the paths of uprightness.

12 When you walk, your step will not be hindered; when you run, you will not stumble.

13 Hold fast to discipline; do not let go! Keep it close, for it is your life!

14 On the path of the wicked do not set foot, and do not walk in the way of the evil.

15 Leave it alone; do not pass on it! Turn away from it and pass on by.

16 For they cannot sleep unless they have done evil; their sleep is robbed unless they have tripped up someone.

17 For they eat the bread of wickedness, and the wine of violence they drink.

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9 Reading with the *qere*.
18 But the path of the righteous is like the light of dawn, shining brighter and brighter until full day.

19 The way of the wicked is like pitch-black darkness; they do not know over what they are tripped up.

Lecture #7 (Prov. 4:20–27)

20 My son, to my words pay attention; to my sayings turn your ear!

21 Do not let them out of your sight; guard them within your heart.

22 For life they are to those who find them; to all their flesh they are healing.

23 Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of your life.

24 Put away from you a crooked mouth, and twisted lips put far from you.

25 Let your eyes look right in front of you; fix your gaze straight ahead.

26 Clear the path of your feet, and all your ways will be secure.

27 Do not swerve to the right or to the left; turn your foot away from evil.
Lecture #8 (Prov. 5:1–23)

1 My son, to my wisdom pay attention; to my understanding incline your ear,

2 to guard discretion and knowledge; let your lips watch over [them].

3 For honey drips from the strange woman’s lips, smoother than oil is her palate;

4 but her end is bitter like wormwood, sharp like a two-edged sword.

5 Her feet go down to death, her steps proceed toward Sheol;

6 The path of life she does not clear; her paths wander aimlessly—she has no idea.

7 And now, O sons, listen to me, and do not turn aside from the words of my mouth!

8 Keep your way far from her; do not go near the door of her house,

9 lest you lose your vigor to others, and your years to one who is cruel,

10 lest strangers take their fill of your strength, and your labors [go] to the house of a foreigner,

11 and you groan at the end of your life, when your body and flesh are wasted away,

10 Comment here on the character/identity of the Strange Woman in Prov 1–9.

11 For “two-edged” as a translation of תיִּפּ, see BDB, 805.
and you say, “How I hated discipline, and correction my heart despised!

I did not listen to the voice of my teachers, and to my instructors I did not incline my ear.

All of a sudden, I found myself in all kinds evil, in the midst of an assembly and a congregation.”

Drink water from your own well, running water out of your own cistern.

Should your springs be scattered about in the street, streams of water in the city square?

Let them be yours alone, not for strangers with you.

Let your fountain be blessed; rejoice in the wife of your youth— a lovely deer, a graceful doe!

Let her breasts satisfy you at all times, with her love may you ever be intoxicated!

Why, my son, should you be intoxicated by a strange woman, and embrace the bosom of a strange woman?

For before the eyes of the LORD are a man’s ways; all his paths he carefully clears.

The wicked’s own iniquities ensnare him, in the cords of his sin he is held fast.

He will die for lack of discipline; by an abundance of foolishness will he be led astray.
Lecture #9 (Prov. 6:20–35)

20 My son, keep the commandment of your father, and do not forsake the teaching of your mother;

21 bind them on your heart continually, tie them around your neck.

22 When you walk, they will lead you; when you sleep, they will watch over you; when you awake, they will speak to you.

23 For the commandment is a lamp, the teaching a light; and the reproofs of discipline are the way of life, to guard you from the evil woman, from the smooth tongue of the adulteress.

24 Do not desire her beauty in your heart; do not let her ensnare you with her eyelashes!

25 For a harlot can be had for a loaf of bread, but the wife of another man hunts down a precious life.

26 Can a man take up fire in his lap, and his clothes not be burned?

27 Or if a man walks on burning coals, will his feet not be scorched?

28 So is he who goes in to his neighbor’s wife—no one who touches her will be found innocent.

29 No one will despise a thief when he steals to fill his appetite when he is hungry,
31 But if he is found out, he will repay sevenfold, all the wealth of his house he will give.

32 He who commits adultery is lacking heart; he who does it destroys his own soul.

33 Wounds and shame will he find; his disgrace will not be wiped away.

34 For jealousy is the fury of a man; he will have no compassion on the day of vengeance;

35 he will not accept any compensation; he will not give in, even if you pile on gifts.

Lecture #10 (Prov. 7:1–27)
1 My son, keep my words, and my commandments treasure up within you.

2 Keep my commandments and live, my teaching as the apple of your eye.

3 Bind them around your fingers; write them on the tablet of your heart!

4 Say to wisdom, “You are my sister,” and as a close relative call out to discernment,

5 to guard yourself from the strange woman, from the adulteress with her smooth words.

6 For at the window of my house, through the lattice I have peered down,
7 and I have seen among the simple,
I have perceived among the youth,
a young man lacking heart,

8 passing by on the street near her corner,
the road to her house he takes,

9 in the twilight, in the evening of the day,
in the deep darkness of night,

10 Behold, the woman meets him—
the dress of a harlot, wily of heart.

11 She is loud and rebellious;
her feet never settle down at home,

12 now in the street, now in the square—
at every corner she lies in wait.

13 She seizes him and kisses him,
and bold-faced she says to him,

14 “I have sacrificed peace offerings for myself;
today I have paid my vows.

15 Therefore, I have come out to meet you,
to seek you eagerly, and I have found you!

16 Coverings I have spread upon my couch—
colored fabrics, fine linen from Egypt!

17 I have perfumed my bed—
myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon!

18 Come, let us drink our fill of love till morning!
Let us delight ourselves with love!
19 For my husband is not home;
he has gone on a journey, far away.

20 A bag of money he took in his hand;
at full moon he will come home.”

21 She turns him aside with her abundant persuasion;
with her lips she hunts him down.

22 He goes after her all of a sudden,
like an ox to the slaughter he goes,
like a stag bounding to bonds,\(^\text{12}\)
until an arrow pierces his liver
like a bird darting into a snare,
he does not know [it will cost him] his life.

24 And now, O sons, listen to me;
pay attention to the words of my mouth!

25 Do not let your heart turn aside to her ways;
do not wander onto her paths,
for many victims has she laid low,
countless are all her slain.

27 Her house is the way to Sheol,
going down to the chambers of death.

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\(^{12}\) This is Fox’s translation based upon his emendation of the MT. See Fox, *Proverbs 1–9*, 238–39.
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