



Potential Non-Jewish Authorship

1. King Solomon and Egypt

- Melachim I 9:24, 9:16, 10:26-29
- Melachim I 11:14-25, 14:25

2. Talmud, Sanhedrin 100b

"רבי עקיבא אומר אף הקורא בספרים החיצונים [אין לו חלק לעולם הבא]. תנא: בספרי מינים. רב יוסף אמר בספר בן סירא נמי אסור למיקרי. אמר ליה אביי מאי טעמא? ... אמר רב יוסף מילי מעלייתא דאית ביה דרשינגן להו..."

"Rabbi Akiva said: Also, one who reads external books [does not enter the next world]." We have learned: These are books of heretics. Rav Yosef said: One also may not read the book of Ben Sira. Abbaye said to him: Why?... Rav Yosef said: One may learn its good contents...

3. Rambam, Moreh haNevuchim 3:46

The Torah has told us... that the Egyptians worshipped the constellation of the lamb, which was why they prohibited slaughtering sheep, and they abhorred herders of sheep... And groups of the Sabeans [Yemenites] worshipped demons and thought they took the form of goats... and slaughtering cattle was abhorred by most idolaters, and they raised this species in great numbers, and so you find that people from India will not slaughter cattle even today... And to eradicate these false views, He commanded us to bring only these three species... so that the deed that they considered the ultimate rebellion would be used to draw closer to Gd, and would be used to atone for sins...

4. Rambam, Moreh Nevuchim 3:37

We have already explained in our great composition that cutting the corner of the head and corner of the beard is prohibited because it is the grooming of idolatrous priests. This is also the reason to prohibit *shaatnez*...

5. Code of Hammurabi 131-132

131. If a man bring a charge against one's wife, but she is not surprised with another man, she must take an oath and then may return to her house.

132. If the "finger is pointed" at a man's wife about another man, but she is not caught sleeping with the other man, she shall jump into the river for her husband.

6. Simon N. Kramer, Sumerian Wisdom Text: A Sumerian Variation of the "Job" Motif

First comes a brief introductory exhortation that man should praise and exalt his god and soothe him with lamentations. The poet then introduces the unnamed individual who, upon being smitten with sickness and misfortune, addresses his god with tears and prayers. There follows the sufferer's petition which constitutes the major part of the poem. It begins with a description of the ill treatment accorded him by his fellow men, friend and foe alike; continues with a lament against his bitter fate, including a rhetorical request to his kin and to the professional singers to do likewise; and concludes with a confession of guilt and a direct plea for relief and deliverance. Finally comes the "happy ending," in which the poet informs us that the man's prayer did not go unheeded, and that his god accepted the entreaties and delivered him from his afflictions. All this leads, of course, to a further glorification of his god.

7. Rabbi Joel Wolowelsky, *A Note on the Flood Story in the Language of Man*, Tradition 42:3 (2009)

Is the Gilgamesh epic of any relevance to the Torah student? The point by point concordance between the Gilgamesh Epic and the Biblical Flood story is either deliberate or purely coincidental, and the degree of agreement makes the latter untenable...

On the simplest level, the Torah's account of the Flood is part of its campaign against the pagan culture of the time. Despite the point by point convergence between the two stories, the differences between them are much more paramount and significant, as many have pointed out and need not be repeated here.

Our Opening Question: The simplicity of Mishlei

8. Reward and punishment 3:1-2, 3:9-10, 3:33-34

9. An overblown question? Mishlei 13:23, Kohelet 11:1

10. Isn't the advice obvious? 11:20, 15:1, 21:13

11. Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzatto, *Mesilat Yesharim*, Introduction (tr. Rabbi Yosef Sebag, c/o sefaria.org)

החיבור הזה לא חברתי ללמד לבני האדם את אשר לא ידעו, אלא להזכירם את הידוע להם כבר ומפורסם אצלם פירסום גדול. כי לא תמצא ברוב דברי, אלא דברים שרוב בני האדם יודעים אותם ולא מסתפקים בהם כלל, אלא שכפי רוב פרסומם וכנגד מה שאמתתם גלויה לכל, כך ההעלם מהם מצוי מאד והשכחה רבה. על כן אין התועלת הנלקט מזה הספר יוצא מן הקריאה בו פעם אחת, כי כבר אפשר שלא ימצא הקורא בשכלו חדושים אחר קריאתו שלא היו בו לפני קריאתו, אלא מעט. אבל התועלת יוצא מן החזרה עליו וההתמדה. כי יזכרו לו הדברים האלה הנשכחים מבני האדם בטבע, וישים אל לבו חובתו אשר הוא מתעלם ממנה.

ותראה, אם תתבונן בהוה ברוב העולם, כי רוב אנשי השכל המהיר והפקחים החריפים ישימו רוב התבוננם והסתכלותם בדקות החכמות ועומק העיונים... אך מעטים יהיו מן המין הזה אשר יקבעו עיון ולמוד על עניני שלמות העבודה, על האהבה, על היראה, על הדבקות, ועל כל שאר חלקי החסידות. ולא מפני שאין דברים אלה עקרים אצלם, כי אם תשאל להם, כל אחד יאמר שזהו העיקר הגדול. ושלא ידומה חכם, שיהיה חכם באמת, שלא יתבררו אצלו כל הדברים האלה. אך מה שלא ירבו לעיין עליו הוא מפני רוב פרסום הדברים ופשיטותם אצלם שלא יראה להם צורך להוציא בעיונם זמן רב. ולא ישאר לימוד הדברים האלה וקריאת הספרים מזה המין כי אם אצל אותם שאין שכלם כל-כך דק וקרוב להיות גס, שאלה תראה אותם שוקדים על כל זה ולא יזונו ממנו, עד שלפי המנהג הנוהג בעולם כשתראה אחד מתחסד לא תוכל לימנע מלחשוך אותו לגס השכל.

ואולם תולדות המנהג הזה רעות מאד לחכמים ולבלתי חכמים, כי גורם שמאלה ומאלה יחסר החסידות האמיתי ויהיה יקר מאד למצוא אותו בעולם. כי יחסר מן החכמים למיעוט עיונם בו, ויחסר מן הבלתי חכמים למיעוט השגתם אותו, עד שידמו רוב בני האדם שהחסידות תלוי באמירת מזמורים הרבה ווידויים ארוכים מאד, צומות קשים, וטבילות קרה ושלג, כולם דברים אשר אין השכל נח בהם ואין הדעת שוקטה.

I have composed this work not to teach people what they do not know but to remind them of what they already know and which is very familiar to them. For you will find in most of my words only things which most people already know and do not have any doubt about. But according to their familiarity and to the extent that their truth is evident to all, so too is their neglect very prevalent and forgetfulness of them very great. Therefore, the benefit to be gleaned from this book is not from a single reading, for it is possible that the reader will learn little that he did not already know. Rather the benefit derived [from this book] comes from review and diligent study. For [then] he will be reminded of these things which, by nature, people tend to forget and he will put to heart his duties which he hides from.

If you reflect on the current state of affairs in most of the world, you will see most people of quick intelligence and sharp mentality devote most of their thought and interest in the subtleties of wisdom and the depths of analysis... But few are those which devote thought and study to the matter of perfection of [divine] service: on love, fear, clinging, and the other branches of piety. This is not because they do not consider these things as fundamental. For if you ask them, each one will answer you that this is of utmost importance and that it is unimaginable for one to be considered truly wise if he has not fully comprehended these matters. Rather their lack of devoting more attention to it stems from its being so familiar and so evident to them that they see no need for spending much time on it. [Consequently] this study and the reading of books of this sort is left to people of not so keen, almost dull intelligence. These types of people you will find diligent in all this, not budging from it, until the situation has reached the point that if one sees a person engaging in piety, he cannot help but suspecting him of belonging to those of dull intelligence.

The consequences of this situation are very evil both for those who possess wisdom and those who do not. For it causes both types to lack true piety thereby making it exceedingly rare to be found anywhere in the world.

It is absent from the wise due to their insufficient reflection on it, and likewise to the non-wise due to their insufficient grasp of it. The situation has reached the point where most people imagine piety consists of reciting many psalms, very long confessions, difficult fasts, and immersions in ice [water] and snow - all are things incompatible with intellect and which reason cannot find peace.

12. Rabbi Mosheh Lichtenstein, *Fear of G-d: The Beginning of Wisdom and the End of Tanakh Study*, fn 11

Let us now return to *Tanakh* and utilize these metaphors and analogies as a guide to assist us in determining our approach to *Tanakh*. The first conclusion to be drawn is that there must be age differentiation. The child should receive a version of the Torah that appeals to his imagination and understanding, even at the expense of depth and sophistication; it will, therefore, be a more vivid and less introspective approach that may often be two dimensional and schematic with the emphasis upon action rather than reflection. In addition, it will prefer amplification over ambiguity

and literal comprehension over textual analysis. Thus, Rashi who is a quintessential “amplifier” will consistently portray the “heroes” in a more positive light than the *psukim* (verses) themselves, thereby making the good guys better, while the villains are usually cast in a more negative light that will always make the bad guys seem worse. It is a didactic world of black and white that does its best to eliminate gray from its universe and, therefore, most appropriate for the child’s needs.

¹¹An enlightening example from *Tanakh* itself is the interplay between Mishlei and Iyov. Both address the issue of divine justice, but in markedly different perspectives. Mishlei presents a conventional, almost facile, morality that portrays a world in which the righteous are always rewarded and the wicked never prosper. The outlook of the companions that sefer Iyov so unflinchingly attacks is the very world that Mishlei champions. The juxtaposition of the two is almost an act of self-reflection on the part of *Tanakh*, with Iyov serving to call into question the conclusions of its companion sefer. One of the more plausible suggestions to explain the discrepancy is that Mishlei is addressed to the young child while Iyov reflects the world of the adult. The voice of the narrator in Mishlei is the didactic parental voice while Iyov presents the raging debate of the embittered adult conversing with his peers. Each message is age-appropriate for the needs of its participants.

13. Prof. Avigdor Hurvitz, *Mikra l'Yisrael: Mishlei* pg. 25

מסקירה זו יוצא שכל אחד משבעת הקבצים על כל רכיביהם השונים מוצאים את "בית היוצר" שלהם במסגרת החברתית של בית הספר, ובמיוחד בבית ספר לבני אצולה העתידים ליטול חלק בהנהגת החברה. כל קובץ פונה לצורך אינטלקטואלי שונה ומייצג שיטה דידקטית משלו, וכולם יחד יכולים לשמש כספר לימוד שלם...

What emerges from this survey is that each of the seven units, with all of their different components, finds its “workshop” in the communal environment of the school, and especially a school for children of privilege who will take part in leading the community. Each unit focusses on a different intellectual need and presents a unique didactic approach; all together, they can serve as a complete textbook...

14. John Ruffle, *The Teaching of Amenemope and Its Connection with the Book of Proverbs* pg. 33

The Turin writing board (no. 6237) preserves the bulk of chapters 24-26 and, with only one exception, follows exactly the same line division as the B.M. text. It is interesting that, as well as preserving these divisions, there are marginal signs reading Day 4, Day 8, Day 10, Day 12 and Day 18, irregularly spaced but possibly indicating set portions for a pupil's study.

15. Rabbi Eliyahu Kramer (The Vilna Gaon), GRA to Mishlei 1:4

לתת. אחר שיהא לומד וידע וגם יקיים, אז יהיה יכול גם ללמד לאחרים...

“To give” – When he learns and knows and also fulfills, then he will also be able to teach others...

16. Rabbi Menachem Meiri to Mishlei 21:13 (c/o mgketer.org)

כמאמר החכם למלך: זכור כי לא ירוחם מחר מי שלא ירחם היום. ויכלול זה כל מי שעושה עצמו כאכזר לבלתי העתר להבירו במה שהוא צריך לו, כפי אשר תשיג ידו (ע"פ ויקרא יד:כב). (ואף בדרך נסתר תפרשהו על מניעת לימודו מהראויים לו.) וגם הוא לא יענה, כי לא תשלם חכמתו בזולת זה. או תפרש "דל" על הילד המסכן, ואם ישקיעוהו עם אחיו הגדול ממנו, לא יוכל עוד להשיבו.

As the Sage said to the King: remember that one who does not display mercy today will not be treated with mercy tomorrow. And this includes anyone who makes himself like a cruel person, not to listen to another’s needs “as he is able to afford” (Vayikra 14:22). (Also, on a hidden level, you could explain it regarding refraining from teaching those who are worthy.) And he also will not be answered, for his wisdom will not become complete without this. Or you could explain “indigent” as describing a weak child; if you set him with his older brother, you will not be able to get him back.

17. Rabbi Eliyahu Kramer (The Vilna Gaon), GRA to Mishlei 21:13

פשוטו כמשמעו ועניינו כי היצר טוב נקרא איש מסכן וחכם, וכאשר אוטם אזניו משמוע קול זעקתו ובל יסור מעוונותיו, אח"כ גם הוא יקרא ולא יענה, כמ"ש... (ח:א, א:כד, א:כח).

The simple meaning is as it sounds, and it means that the *yetzer tov* is called “a poor sage.” When one seals his ear from hearing his cry, and one does not leave his sins, then he will also cry and not be answered, as written in (8:1, 1:24, 1:28).

18. Malbim to Mishlei 21:13

יש הבדל בין ה"דל" ובין ה"רש" שהדל נתדלדל מנכסיו, וע"פ הרוב יהיה זה ע"י עשק וחמס, והוא זועק אל השופטים להציל עשוק מיד עושקיו, והשופט שאוטם אזנו ואינו מושיע לו להיות לאל ידו, יהיה ענשו שיעשק גם הוא ויקרא ולא יענה, בין בדיני שמים מדה כנגד מדה, בין בדיני ארץ שכמו שהוא לא עשה משפט ידוכא בשער ואין מציל:

There is a difference between a *dal* and a *rash*, for a *dal* has been separated from his assets. Generally this happens via cheating and violent theft. And he cries to the judges to save the victim from those who victimize him. The judge who seals his ear and does not save him, when he has the ability to do so, his punishment will be that he will also be victimized and he will cry out and not be answered – whether from Heaven, measure for measure, or in human law, just as he did not practice justice, he will be crushed at the gate and none will save him.

19. Carol Newsom, *The Book of Job: A Contest of Moral Imaginations*, pp. 118-125

Yet if such statements were intended as universal, exceptionless claims, only a deluded fool could believe them, and whatever the friends may be, they are not fools... What is at stake between Job and the friends is making evident the nature of the world, which each attempts to communicate through vivid evocations...

The persuasive power of an iconic narrative does not derive from a simple empiricism. Although it cannot be wholly disconfirmed by experience and remain plausible, the story remains surprisingly resilient in the face of a mixture of conforming and nonconforming experience...

Consider popular business literature in which the story is told, over and over, of the individual who turns a creative idea into a flourishing business. This is the iconic narrative of entrepreneurial capitalism. Everyone knows that the large majority of new businesses fail, yet the story does not lose its power... That story is seen as expressing the nature and essence of an entrepreneurial society with all the static cleared away...

An anecdote about the success of the wicked cannot explain the reality of this world of values, which is experienced as such every day. Such things may happen, but they are perceived as anomalies, lacking explanatory power. But the story of the wicked overtaken by calamity, like the story of the restoration of the good person, rings true because it is consonant with the foundational values of the society.

20. Prof. Avigdor Hurvitz, *Mikra l'Yisrael: Mishlei* pg. 54

מטבע הדברים, ספרות החכמה העיונית היא ביקורתית באופייה, ומוקד הביקורת הוא ספרות החכמה הדידקטית ותורתיה. הווי אומר, ספרי איוב וקהלת בוחנים ומבקרים את החכמה המוצגת בספר משלי...

ספר משלי מציג את העולם הרצוי ומורה את הדרך להשגת עולם זה. לעומת זאת, ספרי איוב וקהלת המציגים את העולם המצוי מתייאשים ממנו או משלימים איתו בדלית ברירה. מביקורת החכמה המושמעת בספרות החכמה העיונית משתמע שחכמת הספרות הדידקטית היא אידיאליסטית במידה רבה ומתבססת, לא מעט, על תקווה ואמונה.

By nature, analytic wisdom literature is of a critical character, and the target of its criticism is didactic wisdom literature and its teachings. Meaning, the books of Iyov and Kohelet examine and criticize the wisdom presented in the book of Mishlei...

The book of Mishlei presents the desired world and teaches the way to achieve that world. On the other hand, the books of Iyov and Kohelet present the existing world, which people despair of or make peace with for lack of another option. From the criticism of wisdom taught in the analytic wisdom literature, it emerges that didactic wisdom literature is very idealistic and is based, not a little, on hope and faith.