

Introduction to Chapter 28

1. Rashi to 28:1

גם זה טעם אחר לדברו הראשון שאמר "בצדקתי החזקתי", "כי למה אהיה רשע? אם בשביל כסף וזהב, לכל יש מוצא וסוף..."

This is another reason for his preceding statement, "I maintain my righteousness." Why should I be wicked? If it's for silver and gold, everything has an origin and an end...

2. Rashi to 28:12

והחכמה - התורה:

"And wisdom" – The Torah

3. Ibn Ezra to 42:17

ד' יעשה רצונו יענה רשע גם צדיק, גם יש צדיקים גם רשעים שיתן להם כל טוב שיתאו... ולדעת זאת החכמה, למה זה, נשגבה מדעת האדם. והנה הטעם כאשר לא ידעו בני אדם מחשבות ד' וגזירותיו שהם עמוקות, אולי אלה הגזירות שגזר עלי הוא ידע למה גזרם ואינם בעבור שחטאתי לפניו.

Gd performs His will, oppressing wicked and righteous alike. There are also righteous and wicked people to whom Gd gives every benefit they desire... And to know this wisdom, why this happens, is elevated beyond human ken. The message is that just as people do not know Gd's deep thoughts and decrees, perhaps these decrees He ordered against me, He knows why He decreed them and it is not because I sinned before Him.

4. Carol Newsom, The Book of Job: A Contest of Moral Imaginations, page 179

Perhaps the dialogic engagement between the wisdom poem and what precedes, however, is better taken not so much as an attempt to interpret and respond to the particular participants as to the genre of the wisdom dialogue itself... The placement of the wisdom poem suggests that the poem views the wisdom dialogue as a type of futile and misguided quest for wisdom.

But the dialogic relationship between the genres might be more subtle than that. The wisdom dialogue, as a genre, is itself something of an exposé of the limits of the human capacity to know, since it does not end in a single solution or insight into the problem it addresses. Its participants do not finally find wisdom or the place of understanding. In that regard the wisdom poem might be seen as simply drawing a conclusion implicit in the wisdom dialogue as a generic form...

28:1-11 Precious metals and minerals: Available, but terminal

5. Talmud, Chullin 63b (resolving the problem of Vayikra 11:14 vs. Devarim 14:13)

א"ר אבהו: ראה זו איה. ולמה נקרא שמה "ראה"? שרואה ביותר, וכן הוא אומר "נתיב לא ידעו עיט, ולא שזפתו עין איה." תנא: עומדת בבבל ורואה נבלה בארץ ישראל.

Rabbi Avahu said: *Ra'ah* is *Ayah*. Why is it called *Ra'ah*? Because it has extraordinary sight, as in Job 28:7. We have learned: It stands in Babylon and sees a corpse in Israel.

28:12-22 Wisdom: Unavailable, but enduring

6. Metzudat David to 28:13

ולזה אין לדעת ולהעריך מערכה, כי כל חפצים לא ישוו בה הואיל והוא דבר המתקיימת לעד:

Therefore, one cannot know and evaluate its nature, for nothing is its equal, since it endures forever.

7. Rashi to 28:13

ולא תמצא בארץ החיים - במי שמחיה אלא במי שממית עצמו עליה ביגיעה וברעבון:

"In the land of the living" – In one who gives himself life. Only in one who kills himself, with exhaustion and hunger.

8. Talmud, Shabbat 89a

ואמר רבי יהושע בן לוי: בשעה שירד משה מלפני הקב"ה בא שטן ואמר לפניו, "רבש"ע, תורה היכן היא?" אמר לו, "נתתיה לארץ." הלך אצל ארץ, אמר לה, "תורה היכן היא?" אמרה לו, "אלקים הבין דרכה וגו'." הלך אצל ים ואמר לו "אין עמדי", "הלך אצל תהום אמר לו "אין בי", שנאמר, "תהום אמר לא בי היא, וים אמר אין עמדי. אבדון ומות אמרו באזנינו שמענו שמעה." חזר ואמר לפני הקב"ה, "רבונו של עולם, חיפשת בכל הארץ ולא מצאתיה!" אמר לו, "לך אצל בן עמרם."

And Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi said: When Moshe descended from before Gd, Satan came and said, "Master of the Universe, where is the Torah?" He said, "I have given it to the earth." He went to the earth and said, "Where is the Torah?" Gd replied, "Gd knows its path. (Job 28:23)" He went to the sea, which said, "It's not with me," and he went to the depths, which said, "It is not in me," as Job 28:14,22 say, "The depths said: It is not in me. And the sea said: It is not with me. Destruction and death said: We have heard of it with our ears." He went back to Gd and said, "Master of the universe, I have searched the entire land and I have not found her!" Gd said to him: Go to the son of Amram.

9. Metzudat David to 28:14

והוא מדריך הפלגה ומליצה, לומר שאין להשיג עומק החכמה אף אם ישתדל הרבה לחזור אחריה, אם לא יקנה מתחלה יראת ד'... This is exaggeration and a figure of speech, saying that one cannot grasp the depth of wisdom, even if one tries mightily to find it, unless one first acquires reverence for Gd [like Moshe].

28:23-28 Only Gd knows the place of wisdom

10. Rashi to 28:23

נסתכל בה וברא את העולם, באותיותי' כסדרם ומשקלן יצר כל היצורים כאשר כתוב בסוד ספר יצירה
He looked in her and created the universe; with her letters, according to their order and weight, He created all creatures, as recorded in *Sefer Yetzirah*.

11. Rashi to 28:27

ספר אותיותיה כפולו' ופשוטות. ראשונ' ואמצעית ואחרונית היא אמת חותמו של הקב"ה וכן בשאר סדרים ברא כל דבר ודבר באותיות הללו והכל מפורש בסוד ספר יצירה:
He counted her letters, the doubled and straight [final] letters. The first, middle and last are אמת [truth], the sign of Gd. And so, too, with the other orders He created everything with these letters. All is explained in the secret of *Sefer Yetzirah*.

12. Rashi to 28:28

יראת ד' היא חכמה - זו צריכה לזו, ואין חכמה יפה בלא יראה:
"Reverence for Gd is wisdom" – This needs that, and wisdom is not good without reverence.

13. Talmud, Shabbat 31a-b (based on Isaiah 33:6)

אמר רבה בר רב הונא: כל אדם שיש בו תורה ואין בו יראת שמים דומה לגזבר שמסרו לו מפתחות הפנימיות, ומפתחות החיצונות לא מסרו לו. בהי עייל?
Rabbah bar Rav Huna said: One who has Torah, but not reverence for Heaven, is like an agent who has been given the keys to the inner rooms, but not the keys to the outer rooms. How will he enter?

14. Daat Mikra to 28:28

בשבילך האדם, יראת ד' היא חכמה, אבל החכמה שנזכרה למעלה, אותה החכמה, שבה האלקים מנהיג את עולמו, לא גלה אלקים לאדם.
For you, Man, reverence for Gd is wisdom. But the wisdom mentioned above, that wisdom with which Gd runs His world, Gd has not revealed to Man.

15. Carol Newsom, *The Book of Job: A Contest of Moral Imaginations*, pp. 180-181

Wisdom, after all, is not in some place beyond place but in the wind, waters, rain, and thunderstorms, that is, in all the aspects of creation. But it is not "in" them as an object but in their construction and interrelationship, in their presence and limits ("weight," "measure," "limit," "way") with respect to other aspects of the created world. Thus, one realizes that the poem is in no sense saying that humans have no access to wisdom. They will not find it if they look for it as an object (even an intellectual object) but only if they also know it through a comparable mode of being, a way of acting. The disposition of piety and the moral habit of turning from evil are the way in which one will know wisdom and understanding...

The prose tale did not claim to be a story about wisdom and understanding. It was a story that explored a conundrum in religious ideology (can true piety coexist with divine blessing?) and provided a role model for the exercise of disinterested piety. The wisdom poem is claiming, in effect, "Yes, yes, but you are saying more than you know. For what your little didactic tale also does is to provide a brilliant narrative of what it means to know wisdom and to have understanding. They can be embodied, but such embodiment is always done in ignorance of what takes place in the heavens, not by apprehension of the transcendent wisdom of the cosmos."