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“Solomon: Wisdom’s Most Famous Aspirant”

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Solomon: Wisdom's most famous aspirant

Wisdom's most established aspirant is also her most (in)famous disappointment. Equipped with a burning ambition to establish himself as a worthy successor on the throne of David and his ability for critical reflection, blessed with God's gift of a wise heart and the world's admiration, Solomon, nonetheless, deceives all hopes when he turns his back on wisdom by following her rival "Lady Folly".

The image of Solomon as a wise king has been widely acknowledged. His role as wisdom's aspirant, however, is usually neglected. The many-voiced image of the great king presented in this story overwhelms the low-key portrait of Solomon as an inexperienced successor on the throne. Yet both concepts are part of Solomon's image as it is portrayed in 1 Kgs 1–11. While the image of the wisest king represents an external view, acknowledging his achievements, the image of a man searching for wisdom is part of Solomon's self-image. Introducing Solomon as a king still seeking wisdom opens an arc of suspense that reaches its climax only at the end of the story when Solomon misses his aim. As the story unfolds, it not only presents Solomon's wisdom and glory but simultaneously reveals an inherent line of uncertainty and open-endedness.

In the following survey I attempt to trace the different portraits of Solomon presented in this story, contrasting the glorious view on the king with the more critical image of an obedient but inexperienced Solomon.

Images of the King

The story in 1 Kgs 1–11 presents Solomon from different points of view. His portrait resembles the view through a kaleidoscope reflecting his estimation in the various perspectives presented in the story. Thus the

narrating voice and various figures all contribute to the images of the king and his wisdom.

Solomon's portrayal rests mostly upon the presentation of the narrating voice. It shows Solomon as a king, able to take care of the organisation of his kingdom, to bring prosperity and peace to his land and people, to carry out the building of the temple and to administer justice. He is also said to possess immense knowledge, including science as well as fine arts and philosophy (5:12-13), in such a way that he is wiser than any other men (5:10-11; 10:23-24) and able to stand up to any examination (10:1). This evaluation culminates in the summarising remarks which state that people from all over the world come to hear Solomon's wisdom (5:14; 10:1; 10:24). Despite a detailed description of Solomon's actions and his achievements the narration does not provide insight into Solomon's thoughts, wishes or doubts but keeps a distant point of view throughout the story.

Solomon is portrayed as a strikingly quiet king. He hardly rises to speak and only offers a few glimpses on his plans, wishes or fears. Even the narrating voice confines itself to a presentation of Solomon's activities but it does not act as an external focalizer allowing insights into his thoughts. Information on the way how Solomon constructs his world is thus quite rare.¹ The only times a considerable amount of Solomon's direct speech is reported is in a dialogue with God (1 Kings 3) and Solomon's prayer (1 Kings 8). Both episodes show Solomon's wish to be an able king providing justice and welfare for his people. A wish for wealth or power, however, is never expressed in Solomon's own thoughts or words. His self perception rather presents him as a humble man, wishing to listen and learn, fully aware that he is reliant on God's caring and mercy. This image is supplemented by the narrating voice's image of an obedient son following the ways and orders of his father (1 Kings 2), which includes observing Yhwh's law, like David did (2:3; 3:3,14). All other aspects of Solomon's private domain, especially his wisdom, are only presented by the narrating voice and other figures. Whether this perception corresponds to Solomon's self perception, is never told.²

¹According to the "possible world theory," the figures of a story construct their own possible worlds. "Their actual world is reflected in their knowledge and beliefs, corrected in their wishes, replaced by a new reality in their dreams and hallucinations." Marie-Laure Ryan, *Possible worlds, artificial intelligence, and narrative theory* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 22.

²This gap opens the possibility to expand the image of Solomon as it happens, for instance, in Eccl 1:16. Here the description of the narrating voice, 1 Kings 5:9-11, is turned into a self-statement by the king.

From Yhwh's point of view, Solomon is presented as David's son who still has to prove himself as a worthy successor. Although a positive attitude towards Solomon is obvious God does not chose Solomon or put him on the throne.³ Furthermore, that the promise he receives is attached to an obligation emphasized by a threat of punishment cannot be overlooked (3:14; 9:3-9; 11:11).

Like Yhwh, David expresses his expectations of Solomon. His last words to his son also address him as a young man who has yet to show his abilities. He begins his speech with the request "be strong and become a man" (והזקת והיית לאיש),⁴ and instructs his son where to start. He further introduces the first hints of Solomon's wisdom, urging him to "act according to his wisdom" (2:6) and calling him a "wise man" (2:9).

The most explicit approval of Solomon's wisdom is attributed to other rulers. From all the people admiring Solomon's wisdom (5:14; 10:24), two monarchs and their view are presented in detail, Hiram from Tyrus (5:21) and the Queen of Sheba (10:7). Their words confirm the evaluation of the narrating voice, they recognize Solomon as a wise king. They furthermore take it for granted that Yhwh put Solomon on the throne (5:21; 10:9). From their external point of view, no doubt falls on Solomon's legitimation.

A short glimpse on the people's point of view offers a quite similar evaluation. There is, however, only one episode where the narrating voice presents the peoples' opinion. Hearing Solomon's judgement on the complicated case of one dead and one living child, "all Israel" acknowledges God's wisdom in the king's judgement and fear him (3:28). Their reaction shows that Solomon's desire has been answered and he is able to discern good and evil in order to provide justice. This aim of Solomon's wisdom, namely to bring justice to his people, is mentioned once more in the appraisal of the Queen of Sheba (10:9).

These different aspects of Solomon's wisdom emphasize two aspects of his wisdom: while Solomon's self-image, Yhwh's perspective, and his father David's point of view highlight the inexperienced young man who

³If it is "Yahweh's function as god to authorize the political authority of the king," he does so quite reluctantly in the Solomon story (David Clines, "Psalm 2 and the MLF [Moabite Liberation Front]," in *Interested Parties: The Ideology of Writers and Readers of the Hebrew Bible* [JOTSUP 205; She eld: JSOT Press, 1995], 252).

⁴This expression is used as an encouragement in 1 Sam 4:9.

has yet to prove himself, his people as well as other monarchs acknowledge Solomon as an exceedingly wise king. These estimations are not presented as a development but they coexist describing different expectations. While the admiring view on Solomon's wisdom appreciates what he has already achieved Yhwh, David and Solomon himself emphasize the ongoing process of attaining wisdom.

Wisdom's aspirant

The image of the "young" and inexperienced Solomon is accentuated twice: in the last words of David he is asked to become a man and in the dialogue with God, Solomon presents himself as a נער קטן. Both descriptions of a king not yet ready to rule rise the question of education and guidance quite urgently.

Dominant father – obedient son

The first model on how to become a man and a king is based on the relationship between father and son. David is presented as the father showing Solomon the (right) way, and Solomon fits the role of the obedient son. David's last words oblige Solomon to follow Yhwh's commandments in order to succeed in his reign (2:2) and in order to secure Yhwh's promise to David to establish his throne as an everlasting dynasty (2:3). The advice is handed out on two levels. First, a reminder to follow God's statutes points out the principle that every decision should observe God's rules as written in the "law of Moses" (2:3). The second counsel consists of specific instructions how to deal with three potentially dangerous men (2:5-9). This sequence suggests a logic arguing from the general to the particular. Following this kind of argumentation, David does not order Solomon to exact vengeance; he rather advises him to judge the mentioned men and bring them to their well-deserved fate (2:31-33). Removing evil doers from the community is presented as one of the king's duties in order to keep God's commands. By recognizing this context and acting adequately Solomon should reveal his wisdom.

David proves himself a wise instructor by encouraging Solomon to live up to his father's expectations and to act according to his aptitude. The authoritative instruction leaves no doubt that David's advice is the correct way to act, and thus following his orders is wisdom. Furthermore, this advice is in line with Prov 20:8.26 were the duty of a king includes the distinction between the righteous and the evildoer and consequently

the elimination of the wicked from the community.⁵ Solomon fulfills the expectations and proves himself the ideal son, listening to his father's teaching and keeping his commandments (cf. Prov 1:8; 4:1; 6:20; 13:1; 23:22). When Solomon carries out David's instructions he also adopts his father's line of argumentation and very carefully justifies the executions.

1 Kgs 3:3 emphasizes once more that David is a shining example for Solomon. Loving God and walking in the statutes of David, thus following his ethic way of life⁶, are closely connected, and both statements are evaluated positively. The story blurs the difference between "walking in the statutes of David" and "keeping the commandments of Yhwh" by using them almost synonymously. When David instructs his son to keep God's commands (2:3) Solomon meets this request by following the statutes of his father (3:3).

Solomon defines himself through his father several times in the story.⁷ Especially in the relationship between God and Solomon, it is always David who comes first, and Solomon is mentioned in his wake. Even in Solomon's own words, this order is observed. His reign is God's *חסד* for David (3:6).⁸ Like Solomon's reign, his way before Yhwh is a mediated one. Solomon is portrayed as a son struggling to follow his father and to live up to his shining example. The differences between Solomon and David are emphasized several times. David received an unrestricted promise (2 Sam 7:12-15), but his descendent did not. In order to secure David's dynasty, they constantly have to prove themselves worthy to follow David (8:25; 9:4-9).

Despite the effort to show David as the exemplary father and Solomon as the ideal son, this presentation is not without a touch of doubt. The slightly mismatched combination of fatherly advice (2:3-9) as well as the expression "walking in the statutes of David"⁹, offer a starting point for a critical *relecture*. The challenging questions whether David's

⁵Cf. Stefan Wälchli, *Der weise König Salomo. Eine Studie zu den Erzählungen von der Weisheit Salomos in ihrem alttestamentlichen und altorientalischen Kontext* (BWANT 141; Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1999), 178–179.

⁶Jutta Hausmann, *Studien zum Menschenbild der älteren Weisheit (Spr. 10ff)*. FAT 7 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1995), 122.

⁷Cf. also Solomon's self-introduction to Hiram (5:17-19).

⁸By putting the reference to 2 Sam 7:12 into Solomon's own words, the narrating voice presents Solomon's subordination as filial obedience.

⁹Other texts use the expression "walking in somebody's statutes" to refer to self-made laws and criticize such a behavior (cf. 2 Kings 17:19; Mi 6:16).

advice is a wise counsel or whether the daring combination of God's law with his own ambitions for his dynasty is nothing more than a self-made law, namely "David's statutes," are not expressed explicitly. The discrepancy between such questionable advice and an unquestioned compliance raise first doubts on Solomon's wisdom. Furthermore, despite Solomon's awareness that Israel might not be able to meet the expectations and fail (8:31ff), his own possible failure does not come into focus. It remains a blind spot troubling the readers.

A hearing heart

The core of Solomon's wisdom is presented as a oneiric dialogue with Yhwh (3:5-14).¹⁰ The dreamlike quality of this encounter is emphasized when God invites him to name his great dream. In his reply Solomon presents himself as a "small lad" (נער קטן), in-experienced in leading a people (vv. 7-8). He therefore asks for a "hearing heart" (לב שמע) in order to judge his people and to discern between good and evil (v. 9). With this wish, he asks to become an aspirant of wisdom per excellence. Several times Wisdom literature highlights the heart as the centre of knowledge, and the place to remember the Torah; it points out how desirable a wise heart is (cf. e.g. Prov 22:17; 23:12; 29:8; 23:15; Eccl 9:1), and encourages its audience: "stretch out your heart to discernment" (Prov 2:2). The ability to hear and listen is also shown as an appropriate wise behaviour (e.g. Prov 8:33; 15:31; 22:17). It is not only the pupil or inexperienced who should listen but in particular the wise man (Prov 1:5; 12:15). Additionally, the value of a wise reprover is emphasized (Prov 25:12).

Salomon wants a hearing heart not as self purpose but to fulfil his duty as king, judge, and military leader.¹¹ Reading this wish with reference to Eccl 10:16, a warning about a boy (נער) in the role of a king, we see Solomon portrayed as a cautious and self-critical young man. Furthermore, he is ambitious and wants to become Wisdom's disciple. This speech already shows Solomon as a wise man. Although he is already king

¹⁰Dreams are an approved way of God addressing people (cf. 1 Sam 28:6), however, they are prone to raise doubts (cf. Deut 13:1-6; Jer 23:25-32).

¹¹The wisdom Solomon is asking for fits into a tradition of wisdom proclaiming that a just administration may produce a life-sustaining environment for all. See Walter Brueggemann, *Solomon: Israel's Icon of Human Achievement* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2005), 113.

and his kingdom is well established (1 Kings 2:46), he presents himself as someone eager to learn and thus provides insight into his own inadequacy but also his knowledge on how to overcome it. This image of a humble and cautious man is continued in Solomon's prayer. Here he again shows his awareness of possible shortcomings and his anticipatory attempt to solve the problem.

The narrating voice tells us that God approves of this wish (3:10). When God answers (v. 11) he first repeats Solomon's request with a small variation: "you asked ...for understanding to hear judgment" (הבין לשמע) (משפט),¹² thereby further emphasizing the aspect of hearing.¹³ What he grants Solomon is even more than he had asked for (v. 12-13). The process Solomon envisioned – becoming wise, learning to judge and lead his people – however, is not mentioned again; instead God promises him a wise and discerning heart.

The wish for a listening heart in order to discern good and evil puts the desire for wisdom in a nutshell: one wishes for a critical awareness combined with the ability to understand and to evaluate all things perceived. In Gen 3:5–6 the desire "to know good and evil" is fulfilled only after a breach of commandment leading to severe consequences and making it quite obvious that the search for this ultimate point of view has just begun. Solomon's wish recognizes the knowledge gained in Gen 3 and (only) asks for the ability to cope with the difficult task. Once again, "knowing good and evil" is presented as a challenge but not as a possession.¹⁴

The explicit reference that Solomon recognized this encounter as a dream (1 Kgs 3:15) emphasizes that the whole dialogue mirrors Solomon's wish-world. Whether his desire is granted is yet to be seen.¹⁵ Following the dream's promise, a double image of Solomon unfolds. On the one hand, he now becomes the exemplary wise king whose fame spreads throughout the whole world; on the other hand, Solomon still struggles to meet wisdom's challenge.

¹²The phrase "to hear judgment/justice" occurs only here. Similar Ps 119:7 בלמדרי בלמדרי צדקך משפטי צדקך "to learn your righteous judgments" Ps 119:106 to keep (שמר) your righteous judgments; Prov 2:8 to guard (נצר) the paths of judgement.

¹³It is not "doing judgement" (עשה), but to hear, to learn and to keep justice.

¹⁴Hugh Pyper reads the allusion to Gen 3 as a challenge to the appropriateness of desiring wisdom ("Judging the Wisdom of Solomon: The Two-Way Effect of Intertextuality," JSOT 59 (1993): 31).

¹⁵Cf. *Ibid.*, 30.

The wise king

The portrait of the great king is presented as a consequence of Solomon's wisdom. Not only does he prove himself a wise judge, worthy ruler, and builder of the temple, he also accumulates enormous wealth and fame.

The wish God grants Solomon in his dream constitutes a crucial element in the development and the legitimation of Solomon's reign. The story in 1 Kgs 1–11 never mentions that God has chosen Solomon or put him on the throne. It is always Solomon or somebody else (Hiram, Queen of Sheba) interpreting Solomon's reign as divine choice. The encounter with God in his dream, however, comes close to a divine selection. When God approves of Solomon's answer and grants him wisdom, it is at least a confirmation that God supports Solomon's attempt to follow David, and it is a divine gift that makes Solomon a great king. The dream sequence further offers a rare insight into Solomon's knowledge. He recognizes the dream and acknowledges it as God's word (3:15). As in Jacob's dream (Gen 28), the contour of Solomon's future is revealed. In the following events Solomon's reign is presented as "a time of unparalleled peace and prosperity,"¹⁶ like a "Golden Age ... as cultural dream work, as wish-fulfillment."¹⁷

The gift of wisdom is also a source of wealth. The story makes an effort to show that wealth comes to Solomon almost by itself. Other kings bring their tributes and presents (5:1; 10:10,25) and also Solomon's own ships bring in gold and silver (10:22). The narrating voice presents the accumulating wealth with admiration, but it does not show Solomon's attitude. The lack of any insight into his thoughts makes him appear almost indifferent to wealth.¹⁸

¹⁶Pauline Viviano, "Glory Lost," in *The Age of Solomon: Scholarship at the Turn of the Millennium* (ed. Lowell K. Handy; Studies in the History and Culture of the Ancient Near East 11; Leiden: Brill, 1997), 344.

¹⁷David Jobling, "The Value of Solomon's Age for the Biblical Reader," in Handy, *Age of Solomon*, 472.

¹⁸Kim Ian Parker understands the accumulating wealth as a sign of self-aggrandizement ("Solomon as Philosopher King? The Nexus of Law and Wisdom in 1 Kings 1–11," *JSOT* 53 [1992]: 85).

The wise Solomon is able to become the ideal king who provides justice, righteousness, and stability as expected (cf. Prov 16:10, 12; 20:28; 29:4).¹⁹ A few summaries further emphasize that Solomon's reign lead to prosperity and happiness for Israel and Judah (4:20; 5:5; 8:65-66). "For at least one brief moment in Israel's history, the entire nation is united under its ideal king."²⁰ Wisdom's proclamation: "Through me kings reign and rulers decree just laws; through me princes rule, great men and all the righteous judges" (Prov 8:15-16), appears to have come true.

The image of Solomon as an exceedingly wise man is pointed out by the narrating voice presenting Solomon's elds of knowledge as something he speaks about (1 Kgs 5:12-13). The narrative portrays Solomon not only as a wise king but also as teacher of wisdom to whom others come to listen (5:14; 10:24). During her visit, the Queen of Sheba further confirms this image of Solomon, who constantly emits wise speech (10:8). Although Solomon is presented as a fountain of wisdom, this image does not correspond to the pedagogically oriented image of a wisdom teacher in sapiential literature. The image of Solomon is more the sapiential sovereign impressing and entertaining his audience. "By the end of ch. 10 Solomon's inflated 'wisdom' is no longer judicial, proverbial or economic. It is simply the indeterminate element of Solomon's 'character' that makes him desirable, attracting gift-bearing admirers like a magnet."²¹

Solomon matches the image of a wise king more than any other biblical sovereign. Fitted with wisdom by the Deity, he gains a national and international reputation, builds the temple and cities, establishes an efficient administration, helps everybody to prosperity, and establishes peace in his kingdom.

Wisdom challenged

Three times Solomon's wisdom is put to test. It starts with a seemingly unsolvable law case, continues with an intellectual royal inspection and ends with alluring suggestions. All three incidents are presented by women thus alluding to a prototypical challenging aspect from the beginning.

¹⁹Cf. Stuart Lasine, "The Ups and Downs of Monarchical Justice: Solomon and Jehoram in an Intertextual World", *JSOT* 59 (1993): 51.

²⁰Parker, "Philosopher King", 82.

²¹Lasine, "Ups and Downs," 44 n. 7.

A law case (3:16-28)

The first test of Solomon's wisdom is presented by two women applying to Solomon as judge. The challenge Solomon has to meet is to decide between two contradictory statements with no further evidence or witnesses. However, not only is the welfare of a child at stake, but this case also challenges the fundamental value of motherly love, and it shows the limits of any ability to make decisions.²²

By reaching a verdict, Solomon proves that he is able to convince his audience and to reestablish order to a chaotic situation. "Managed by wisdom, the proper distinctions are made and socially acceptable relationships symbolically established."²³ Although the women's contradictory statements are never unraveled and the circumstances leading to the death of one child are not solved, the readers are able to see Solomon's verdict as a solution of the case. The way Solomon reaches his verdict might appear brutal and inept at first sight, but it triggers the necessary responses from the women and the audience. The people are willing to applaud the strategy because Solomon cleverly uses commonsense psychology that is based on the assumption of an "inherent stability of human nature." Whether Solomon's solution gets at the truth of the situation is never learned. Yet the audience wants to believe in the "compassionate self-sacrifice of a genuine mother."²⁴ With the desire for stable categories restored and the anxiety of not being able to decide between truth and falsehood stilled, the people are willing to admit that "the wisdom of God was in his midst" (1 Kgs 3:28). In this way they confirm that Solomon is a wise king whose source of righteousness is God (Prov 21:1).

A state visit (10:1-10:13)

After Solomon was able to successfully prove his wisdom on a national level, the next challenge has an international context.²⁵ The Queen of Sheba is introduced by the narrating voice as a wealthy monarch, a wise

²²Ibid., 38.

²³Claudia Camp, *Wise, strange and holy. The strange woman and the making of the Bible*. JSOTSupp 320 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 168.

²⁴Pyper, *Wisdom of Solomon*, 26.

²⁵Cf. Andreas Kunz-Lübcke, *Salomo. Von der Weisheit eines Frauenliebhabers* (Biblische Gestalten 8; Leipzig: Evangelisch Verlagsanstalt, 2004), 247.

and strange woman, and a critic, who has come to test Solomon's wisdom. However, the challenge the queen stands for, the testing of Solomon's wisdom with riddles, is not depicted. Once more the narrating voice only presents a summary stating that Solomon had answers for all her questions (10:2) and thus proved himself as a wise man (Prov 1:6). The queen praises Solomon and expresses all the admiration that is expected from a foreign monarch on a state visit. Hence she confirms that Solomon is among the greatest of kings. Placed at the end of Solomon's successful reign, this story turns out to be the culmination of Solomon's fame and the reversal point in one. The approval of the wise, powerful, and wealthy Queen of Sheba strongly supports Solomon's reputation as a monarch. However, that the most elaborate description of a state visit presents a queen adds a dimension of strangeness and unpredictability to this story. Although the image of the alluring strange woman is not explored in this story, it is alluded to and foreshadows a turning point.²⁶

The strange women (11:1-8)

The last and final challenge is set in Solomon's family, the private sphere of his harem. Unlike the previous events, it is not unfolded as an episode but only summarized by the narrating voice focusing on the outcome. When Solomon fails, he is no longer granted any sympathy. Corresponding to his former glorious image, his condemnation is exuberant.

The last challenge Solomon has to meet is a prototypical situation of every wisdom aspirant. He is confronted with alluring foreign women (Cf. Prov 5:1-6). The size of the royal harem (1 Kings 11:1) not only emphasize Solomon's prosperity but also points out the overpowering threat of foreign women, who could turn his heart.²⁷ It is stated twice that Solomon loved (אהב) these women (v. 1, 2)²⁸ The prohibition to marry

²⁶Cf. Susanne Gillmayr-Bucher, "She came to test him with hard questions.' Foreign women and their view on Israel," *BibInt* 15,2 (2007): 139–141.

²⁷Cf. Stuart Lasine, "The king of desire: Indeterminacy, audience, and the Solomon narrative", *Semeia* 71 (1995): 94.

²⁸The verb אהב is used five times to describe a relationship in the Solomon story. Solomon loved Yhwh (3:3), Hiram had loved David (5:15); the queen of Sheeba states that Yhwh loves Israel forever (10:9); and in 11:1-2 it is twice noticed that Solomon loved many foreign women. Solomon's emotional affection to these women is expressed in the expression רבק ... לאהבה. The combination of the verbs רבק and אהב usually refers to a relationship between humans and God (Deut 11:22; 30:20; Josh 22:5)

foreign women is still cited as a warning. The readers are reminded that such women are dangerous because they threaten to turn a man's heart to their deities.²⁹

As long as Solomon loved Yhwh, he was on the safe side. He, however, failed in the end (v. 14).³⁰ Although he had been aware of the danger that his people might turn away from Yhwh (cf. 8:57-58), he seems not to have been aware of his own risk.

Remembering Solomon

Solomon's portrait represents all the stages of someone searching for wisdom: he resembles the inexperienced man, the son listening to his father, the sovereign who brings justice and prosperity to his people, and the unrivaled wise king. All these aspects are present simultaneously and mutually dependent. However, Solomon's portrait also includes the fool, unable to resist women. The story's construction of Solomon's worldview offers a glimpse into the man behind the glorious image that others construct of him. It shows a man who could not live up to the expectations of the great king others take him for.

The seemingly stable image of a wise king is contrasted by the more dynamic image of an aspirant who still might fail. The dialogue between these two images is a constant reminder that wisdom cannot be possessed permanently, but has to be strived for continuously. If wisdom is defined as "sustained critical reflection on lived experience in order to discern the hidden shape of reality,"³¹ the image of Solomon as wisdom's aspirant could be read as such a critical perspective. In this way, the double-voiced image of Solomon emphasizes the value of wisdom. It shows an exemplary case of what could be achieved, but it also accentuates the pitfalls and blind spots. Solomon is a wise king but he still remains wisdom's aspirant. The double perspective permits one to hold onto an ideal image, but

²⁹The image of the strange and alien woman in Prov 7 explicitly states that she turns/bends the heart of a young, naive man (v. 21) and he follows her like an ox for slaughter (v. 22).

³⁰The fall of the great king is also remembered in Neh 13:26; Ben Sira 47:18-19. Cf. Lasine, "King of Desire", 104.

³¹Brueggemann, *Solomon*, 105.

simultaneously it enables a critical observation of kings in office and it also encourages a critical view on the memory of great kings, advising caution regarding too homogeneous an image. It does not diminish their greatness or achievements but neither does it conceal their faults.

Unlike David Solomon does not become a (biblical) role model for a king: he failed and destabilized the great kingdom. Still, this does not prevent him to be remembered as an exemplary wise king, leaving the temple and his wisdom as his legacy.³² In this way, the image of Solomon is able to outlive the political existence of the kingdom. He already has lost his realm, but his legendary wisdom was able to live on in the kingless social configuration of the postexilic period.³³ The image of the fallible man searching for wisdom adds a critical but also confident vantage point: it encourages to look behind seemingly well-established images, and it still holds on to the optimistic opinion that it is possible to gain wisdom and with it justice, prosperity and peace.

³²When sapiential literature picked up Solomon as its patron, it obviously was not a problem to build on this image and to add the only image of a wise man that Solomon is still lacking, namely as a teacher of wisdom.

³³Camp, *Strange*, 185.