

Oxford Hebrew Bible

Sample of Proverbs 9:1-18

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9:1 חֲכָמוֹת בְּנִתָּה בֵּיתָהּ [הַצָּבָה] עֲמוּדֶיהָ שְׁבַעָה: 2 טְבַחָה טְבַחָה
 מִסְכָּה יִיגָה אֶף עֵרְכָה שְׁלֹחָנָה: 3 שְׁלַחָה נְעֻרְתֶּיהָ תִקְרָא עַל-גִּלְפֵי
 מְרָמֵי קְרָת: 4 מִי-פְתֵי יָסָר הִנָּה חֲסֵר-לֵב [אֲמָרָה] לֹ: 5 לָכוּ לְחַמּוּ
 בְּלַחְמֵי אוֹשְׁתּוֹ בְּנִין מִסְכָּתֵי: 6 עֹזְבוּ פְתָאִים וְחִיו וְאֲשֶׁרוּ בְּדַרְךְ
 בִּינָה: 7 יָסָר | לֵץ לָקַח לֹ קָלוֹן וּמוֹכִיחַ לְרָשָׁע מוֹמוֹ: 8 אֶל-תּוֹכַח
 לֵץ פֶּן-יִשְׁנֹאֲךָ הוֹכַח לְחָכְם וַיֵּאדָבְרְךָ: 9 תֵן לְחָכְם וַיִּחַפְּסֵ-עוֹד הוֹדַע
 לְצַדִּיק וַיּוֹסֶף לָקַח: פ 10 תַחֲלֵת חֲכָמָה יִרְאֵת יְהוָה וְדַעַת
 קִדְשִׁים בִּינָה: 11 פִי-בֵי יִרְבּוּ יַמֵּיךָ וַיּוֹסִיפוּ לָךְ שָׁנוֹת חַיִּים:
 12 אִם-חֲכָמָתְךָ חֲכָמָתְךָ לֵךְ וְלִצְתָּ לְבִדְךָ תִשָּׂא: 13 אִשֶׁת פְּסִילוֹת הִמְיָה
 פְּתִיּוֹת וּבִל-יִדְעָה מָה: 14 וַיִּשְׁבָּה לְפֶתַח בֵּיתָהּ עַל-כִּפֹּאֵ מְרָמֵי
 קְרָת: 15 לִקְרָא לְעַבְרֵי-דַרְךְ הַמְיֻשְׁרִים אַרְחוֹתָם: 16 מִי-פְתֵי יָסָר
 הִנָּה וְחֲסֵר-לֵב [וְאֲמָרָה] לֹ: 17 מַיִם-גְּנוּבִים יִמְתְּקוּ וְלֶחֶם סְתָרִים
 יִנְעָם: 18 לֹ-אֵיֶדַע פִּי-רְפָאִים שֵׁם בְּעַמְקֵי שְׂאוֹל קְרָאִיהָ:

9:1 חֲכָבָה M [(ועתידת) T (αὐραμσῶ) S (καὶ ὑπῆρξεῖεν) G (*or והצבה*) חֲכָבָה*]
 (graph ה/ח) || 4 אֲמָרָה S (אֶרָא)] אֲמָרָה M G (εἶπεν) (vocal) || 10 fin] + stich G ||
 11 M בי] בה G (τούτω γὰρ τῷ τρόπῳ; expan) S (σ) (logic) || 12 fin] + 12a-c G ||
 16 אֲמָרָה S (אֶרָא)] וְאֲמָרָה M G (παρακελεύομαι λέγουσα; expan) (vocal) || 18
 fin] + 18a-c G |

Commentary on Proverbs 9

9:1 הַצָּבָה (or והצבה) G (καὶ ὑπήρτισεν) S (ܘܗܘܘܘܬܐ) T (ועתידת)]
הַצָּבָה M (graph ה/ח)

הַצָּבָה (or והצבה): This is one of the very few places where T attests independently to a non-Masoretic reading, since T is neither adjusting to M nor simply transposing S to Western Aramaic. (The lexeme אָקַיַם was available in T’s dialect.) The variant הַצָּבָה “has set up” provides a stronger parallel to “building” a house than does M’s “has hewn,” and the pair “build”–“set up” is preferable to the unsequential “hewn”–“set up.”

στύλους: G omits “her” of עַמּוּדֶיהָ, eliding the possessive pronoun, as often, when the referent is clear.

9:4 אָמַרְהָ Syr (ܘܗܘܘܘܬܐ)] אָמַרְהָ M G (εἶπεν) (vocal)

S implicitly vocalizes the verb as 1 sg., אָמַרְהָ and supplies a conjunction. This is preferable to the third person, as understood in M and G. The switch to the third person is awkward within the first-person discourse (“Whoever is callow, let him come over here! Whoever is senseless, to him she says.”) The first person cohortative yields a smoother sentence and conveys volition or determination: “I will surely say to him.”

9:10 fin] + stich G

G adds 10a (Rahlfs’s numbering) τὸ γὰρ γνῶναι νόμον διανοίας ἐστὶν ἀγαθῆς “For to know the law is (the part of) a good intellect.” The stich is reused in LXX-Prov 13:15β (or possibly comes from there). It has the obelus in SyrH, and Lagarde considers it the

older translation of MT 10b; sim. CSP. Toy calls it a gloss by a “legalistic scribe,” while Seeligmann (1953: 179) considers it a midrashic expansion on the part of the translator, based on Prov 13:15 and identifying wisdom with study of Torah. The distinctively Greek syntax of *διανοίας ἐστὶν ἀγαθῆς* supports an origin in Greek rather than Hebrew.

9:11 בי M] בה G (τούτω γὰρ τῷ τρόπῳ; expan) S (כב) (log)

G’s *τούτω γὰρ τῷ τρόπῳ* = כִּי בֵּה. S כב supports בֵּה independently of G, since S does not follow G’s expansive rendering. (T^L בֵּה = S and is original; T^Z בִּי adjusts to MT.) The change to third person probably occurred in the Hebrew of proto-G. It was a “logical” adjustment consequent on the insertion of vv 7-10, which interrupt Wisdom’s speech and distance the pronoun from the first-person antecedent. (On the compositional history, see PAB 306-309). G’s *τῷ τρόπῳ* treats כִּי בֵּה broadly, understanding בֵּה to refer to the type of behavior expressed in v 10.

G’s fut. pass. *προσθεθήσεται* (“will be added”) treats יוֹסִיפוּ as a passive (or possibly reflects יוֹסִיפוּ). Ehrlich, BHS, and many, would emend to יוֹסִיפוּ. This emendation, like G’s translation, remedies the lack of a subject but does not explain M’s orthography. The author of M 9:11 mechanically combined phrases from earlier chapters, including 3:2, where the verb יוֹסִיפוּ has “my teaching/precepts” in v 1 as its subject. The pass. is an improvement but is not the original.

9:12 fin] + 12a-c G

12a-c. An addition in G, part of which is based on a Hebrew text. It remonstrates against trusting in deceits, by which foreign doctrines and beliefs are probably intended. What one *should* rely on is true wisdom

(3:18), which has been granted to Israel. For the interpretation, see further PAB.

12a^α ὃς ἐρείδεται ἐπὶ ψεύδεσιν, οὕτως ποιμανεῖ ἀνέμους,
 12a^β ὁ δ' αὐτὸς διώξεται ὄρνεα πετόμενα (G^S lacks ^β).
 12b^α ἀπέλιπεν γὰρ ὁδοὺς τοῦ ἑαυτοῦ ἀμπελῶνος,
 12b^β τοὺς δὲ ἄξονας τοῦ ἰδίου γεωργίου πεπλάνηται.
 12c^α διαπορεύεται δὲ δι' ἀνύδρου ἐρήμου
 12c^β καὶ γῆν διατεταγμένην ἐν διψώδεσιν,
 12c^γ συνάγει δὲ χερσὶν ἀκαρπίαν.

12a^α He who supports himself on deceits – he will shepherd the winds.
 12a^β and he will pursue a flying bird.
 12b^α For he has abandoned the roads of his own vineyard,
 12b^β and has strayed <from> the paths of his own field.
 12c^α He traverses a waterless desert
 12c^β and a land assigned to droughts.
 12c^γ and he gathers barrenness with (his) hands.

The Hebrew of 12a-b can be retroverted approximately to the following:

12a^α תּוֹמֵךְ שִׁקְרַי יִרְעֶה רוּחַ
 12a^β וְרוֹדֵף צְפוּרָה מוֹעַפְפֹת¹
 12b^α כִּי עִזַּב דְּרָכַי כְּרָמוֹ
 12b^β וְיִמְאַמְעַגְלִי שְׂדֵהוּ תַעֲהָ

¹ Or עִפְפָה, or תְּעוּפָה, understood as a headless relative clause.

The evidence for a Hebrew vorlage in 12a-b is as follows:

(1) In the Hebrew Proverbs, תָּמַךְ always means “grasp,” “hold” (3:18; 4:4; 5:5, 22; 11:16 [2x]; 28:17; 29:23; 31:19). The meaning that G knows for this verb is, however, “lean on” or “support oneself on,” as in Rabbinic Hebrew.² The rendering “supports himself on deceits” makes sense in and of itself. Nevertheless, an underlying Hebrew that was supposed to mean “he who grasps deceit” fits the imagery better, because it implies an active attempt to get something, which is a type of “pursuit.” (ποιμανεῖ = רעה = “pursue” // רָדַף), whereas “support oneself on” is static.)

(2) τοὺς δὲ ἄξονας is an etymologizing translation of מַעֲגָלִי (or מַעֲגָלוֹת), understood as “axles,” hence, *pars pro toto*, “wagon”; cf. 2:9, 18. An original Greek composition would have used a more usual word for paths.

(3) The middle πεπλάνηται + accus. is unnatural Greek. This verb in mid./pass. can govern the accus. of place and mean “wander about *in*” (LSJ 1411a), but that would not make sense here, since the man in question has *left* his proper territory. G 12b^β looks like a mechanical rendering of וּמַעֲגָלִי שָׂדֵהוּ תַעֲהָה. Hebrew, however, requires the preposition מִן when תַעֲהָה means “wander from.” Thus, while the awkwardness in the Greek points to a Hebrew Vorlage, we must posit that the latter resulted by haplography from וּמַמַעֲגָלוֹת or וּמַמַעֲגָלִי.

² The standard rendering in G-Prov is by a form of ἐπείδειν, which basic-ally means “support” (3:18; 4:4; 5:5; 11:16^δ); 29:23; 31:19). σφίγγεται “be tied up,” used in 5:22, is based on the context, which describes being caught in ropes. In 11:16^α, ἐγείρει should be emended to ἐπείδει. S מַעֲגָלִי supports the latter, because S follows G in this verse.

It is difficult to reconstruct a Heb Vorlage for 12c, esp. for stich ⁷. The description of the desert is influenced by G-Jer 2:6b; note especially ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ ἐν γῆ ἀπείρῳ καὶ ἀβάτῳ, ἐν γῆ ἀνύδρῳ καὶ ἀκάρπῳ in that verse. Prov 9:12c is probably an inner-Greek expansion of v 12b. Its purpose is to teach that the deceitful man has chosen a barren, fruitless land in place of his rightful field and vineyard, that is to say, his Jewish religious culture.

9:16 ⲡⲓⲛⲁⲛⲓⲛⲓ S (ⲓⲃⲣⲁ)] ⲡⲓⲛⲁⲛⲓⲛⲓ M G (παρακελεύομαι λέγουσα; expan) (vocal)

As in 9:4, S's first person cohortative fits the first-person context better than the third person. G παρακελεύομαι λέγουσα is expansive.

9:18 fin] + 18a-d G

G adds four verses, found also in S:

- | | |
|-----|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 18a | ἀλλὰ ἀποπήδησον, μὴ ἐγχρονίσης ἐν τῷ τόπῳ
μηδὲ ἐπιστήσης τὸ σὸν ὄμμα πρὸς αὐτήν. |
| 18b | οὕτως γὰρ διαβήση ὕδωρ ἀλλότριον
καὶ ὑπερβήση ποταμὸν ἀλλότριον. |
| 18c | ἀπὸ δὲ ὕδατος ἀλλοτρίου ἀπόσχου
καὶ ἀπὸ πηγῆς ἀλλοτρίας μὴ πίης, |
| 18d | ἵνα πολὺν ζήσης χρόνον,
προστεθῆ δέ σοι ἔτη ζωῆς. |
| 18a | But get away; tarry not in the place,
nor direct your eye toward her. |
| 18b | For thus you may pass through strange water
and cross over a strange river. |

- 18c From strange water keep away,
and from a strange spring drink not,
18d so that you may live a long time,
and years of life be added to you.

A Greek origin is likely for this addition, since it is aimed at a diaspora audience. It admonishes Jews to avoid intimate contact with the surrounding foreign culture (see PAB). Evidence for a Greek origin is that 9:18d is based on 9:11b in the Gk. Since the addition interprets the foolish woman in a way not found elsewhere in G-Prov, it was probably inserted at a later stage than the original translation. S shows clear dependence on G here and does not witness to a Hebrew text. In 18a, **יצל** imitates one of the senses of ἀποπήδησον. S reformulates v 18d under the influence of G v 11.

Other abbreviations and brief bibliographical references:

CSP: Johann Cook, *The Septuagint of Proverbs: Jewish or Hellenistic Proverbs?* (VTSup 69) Leiden: Brill, 2000.

PAB: Michael V. Fox, *Proverbs* (Anchor Bible 18A). New York: Doubleday, 2000. (References are ad loc. to the Commentary and Textual Notes.)

Seeligmann 1953: I. L. Seeligmann, "Voraussetzungen der Midrasch-exegese." *VTSup* 1 (1953) 150-81.

Toy: C. H. Toy, *The Book of Proverbs* (ICC). Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1899 (repr. 1959).