Biblical Wisdom Literature and Hittite Didactic Texts in the Ancient Near Eastern Literary Context

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Abstract:

Wisdom in the ancient world was knowledge given by the gods to humanity. It was given so that humanity could create civilized order, and maintain its service to the gods. This article discusses textual evidence from Mesopotamia, the Levant and Anatolia, written in Akkadian, Ugaritic and Hittite, showing how the idea of wisdom was circulated in texts with specific forms such as the genre of instructions from father to son. It then suggests the way wisdom ideas and language are interwoven into the biblical text. Two Akkadian texts are presented at the core of the article and their format is then compared to a Hittite text. Through the discussion of these texts their correlation to the Hebrew Bible wisdom literature is suggested thus deepening our understanding of the Hittite text especially.

Keywords:

Wisdom Literature, Bible, Ancient Near East cultures, Hittite, Ritual

1. Introduction

Proverbs 9:10 starts with the words "The Fear of YHWH is the beginning of wisdom" and continues "and knowledge of the Divine is understanding."[1] The phrase "Fear of YHWH" has been understood as reflecting the meaning of "loyalty to the God of the Covenant" while practicing the *Torah* (= the laws), regarded as the revelation of the divine.

The Hebrew Bible repeats time and again that the most important issue for the Israelites is to heed the words of their god YHWH. Ex. 20:22: "YHWH said to Moses: Thus you shall say to the Israelites: You yourselves saw that I spoke (*dibbarti*) to you from the very heavens." And then Moses' next act is (Ex. 24:3-4): "Moses went and repeated to the people all the words (*dibrê*) of YHWH and all the rules; and all the people answered with one voice, saying, 'All the things that YHWH has spoken (*dibber*) we will do!'". Final action: "Moses then wrote down all the commands of YHWH. Early in the morning, he set up an altar at the foot of the mountain, with twelve pillars for the twelve tribes of Israel." And he and the Israelites sacrificed to the god, and he read out loud from the written record (vv. 5-8).

The word of YHWH – the commandments – concerned the worship of the deity. The word of god is regarded as his law and the law is transmitted not just orally (*dbr*), to which the people listen, but also as a written text, followed then by cultic-ritual activity.

One of the basic ideas of the relationship between the deity and the people was obedience, indicated by the words "*šamo'a béqōl-* to heed the voice" of god (Ex 19:5 and passim). This concept belongs within the frame of the family, as the sons are expected to fulfil the word of their fathers. An obedient son is instructed in the Bible: "My son, Listen to (=heed/ *šm'*) the discipline (*mûsar*) of your father, and do not forsake the instruction (*tôrat*) of your mother" (Prov. 1:8 also Prov. 2:1, 3:1, 3:11, 4:1, 4:10, 20, passim).[2] The two words paralleled here are *mûsar* and *tôrah*. Both stand for "instruction," and they bring together wisdom and the fear of god. Thus, wisdom is a theological issue but also strongly connected with mundane legal issues as will be seen in the following.

Two points will be approached: the first concerns texts of the "instruction" genre, identified as "wisdom" literature, and the second, the fact that the texts relate to a familial context. Based on these two points, I will show the connection of these texts with ritual in the Bible and the Hittite texts in the context of the Ancient Near Eastern Literature that preceded the Bible but was also synchronous with it.

2. Wisdom Literature

2.1 One of the questions being discussed in current research touches on the issue of whether there was a wisdom literary tradition to which the Bible is an heir.[3] Twelve papers in a recent volume dedicated to this question and to whether wisdom literature is a genre, suggest conflicting ideas.[4] The view in this article follows the scholars who accept "wisdom literature" as a term for identifying literature and genre, since it reflects distinct world views, and specific language, and I will point out the didactic voice which is marked by persuasive rhetoric.[5] There is no doubt that the above quoted texts of scriptures are didactic as well as rhetorical.

The instructions in the biblical text of the Pentateuch are seen strictly as law. The laws are divine instruction, and are of two types: as a collection of laws dealing with social life in society, and as laws instructing the worship of the divine whom the Israelites obey as a master.[6] The idea of being instructed by God resembles the idea of obedience to parents, which is a central theme in the wisdom texts. In the biblical texts (esp. Proverbs), the call for obedience to parents is repeated as a commandment in the imperative "Listen/heed," such as the instructions of wisdom in Prov. 19:20: "listen/heed (*šmʿ*) advice (*ʿēṣah*) and receive discipline/instruction (*mûsar*), that you may gain wisdom (*teḥkam*) in your future days"; Prov. 5:7 (in the plural): "And now, O sons, listen to me (*šimʿū*), and do not depart from the words of my mouth (*ʿimrē-pī*)."

The laws as rules for building a new society, are embedded in the covenant, in the relationship between divine and mundane. Still it has much to do with wisdom as well.[7] Both encourage certain rules of social behavior. They demand certain behavior or prohibit it.

As David Daube indicated, instruction laws can be intertwined with wisdom as in the fifth commandment: "Honor your father and your mother," which concludes with the reason: "that your days may be long on the earth, which YHWH your god gives you". The command "honor=*kbd,*" followed by reasoning for well-being is thematic to wisdom literature.[8] Thus, while wisdom promotes the place of the father and mother as social authoritative voices, they stand in parallel to YHWH who pronounces his authoritative law. The word "command" (*dbr/miṣwah*), and the word "instructions" (*tôrah*) used in the wisdom literature time and again reflect the Pentateuch law with which Hebrew Bible readers are well acquainted.[9]

2.2 At this stage I will switch the discussion to Ancient Near Eastern wisdom literature, since, as I indicated above, I see the Bible as part of that long tradition. There is no doubt

that the term "wisdom" is widely used in Mesopotamian texts as well. I will only quote here the words of Paul-Alain Beaulieu: "The general tenor of wisdom texts is to teach the art of leading a successful life, in harmony with society and the divine will." [10] On the other hand, we should not forget the fact that at this time the father and mother were the heads of the legal authority of a household, and the royal house was also regarded as a household. Therefore, when a father instructed his son he was as authoritative as a king. The law of the divine world was transferred to the king and through him to his land, which was a common idea in the Ancient Near Eastern world.[11] The genre of wisdom texts of instructions to a son thus go back to ancient Mesopotamia as well as ancient Egypt. There has been much discussion comparing these literatures with the Bible.[12] I will now discuss several Mesopotamian and Hittite texts in relation to the biblical ones, presenting the wisdom literature linked to legal writings.

3. Texts from the Mesopotamian Tradition

There is a number of known texts in Ancient Near Eastern literature under the category of "wisdom," which introduce "knowledge on life matters" to sons by their fathers. The most ancient text is the Sumerian "Instructions of Šuruppak" going back to the second half of the third millennium BCE. According to Beaulie, these instructions texts were regarded as coming from primeval times, and they thus belong to the origin of civilized order.[13]

Another known text, from the second millennium BCE, is the one titled in scholarship "Instructions of Šūpê-Amēli" (or *šimâ milka*).[14] It starts with the word "hear", in Akkadian *šimâ milka š[a] Šūpê-Amēli* – "Listen to the advice of Šūpê-Amēli." It is clearly correlating with the Hebrew *šm'* in its imperative form and can thus be translated as "heed/obey" or "follow up" and can be understood as an instructing command and not just suggested advice. The fact that the noun that follows the verb is *milka* or "advice"[15] suggests its connection to wisdom literature while in the following lines of the text we have two more tying definitions to wisdom literature: *emqa milka* "wise advice," and *paraṣ ūmē aḫriāti* "the law of days to come." The meaning of the Akkadian word *parṣu-* has to do both with laws, rules and customs, as well as required rites and rituals.[16]

This text of Šūpê-Amēli is placed under the category of the "last words of a father to a son," that is the last "will" or "testament" of the father. The content of this text deals with proper behavior, caring for family and private property, and as Victor

Avigdor Hurowitz says, "The overall drift of the instructions is pragmatic."[17] That is to say: what is important to do in life, so that life will be successful. The instructions are in the second person singular as are other cuneiform instructions texts known to us from Sumerian and Akkadian.[18] Such instruction texts project authoritative power. They are delivered by one side that has a higher status than the other. If the instructions have the power and character of law then they reflect the social status of the two parties, instructor and instructed.

One of the critical difficulties regarding Mesopotamian and in general Ancient Near Eastern Literature is the question of classification: to what genre does a specific text belong? Of course, the need for classification and fixing the genre is ours, modern scholars and readers, but still the ancients seemed to have used specific forms to transmit specific ideas. We can see such classification in their compilation of catalogues (what we also call "collection tablets" or "shelf-list tablets," for example colophons which were collected in Ḫattuša).[19] But when we try to identify exact genre we find that in many cases there is a mixture of literary forms in one and the same text.

3.1 I would like to introduce another Akkadian text, which does not necessarily appear under the simple "wisdom" category, nor under the category of testament from father to son, but has been included under didactic texts by Lambert in his volume on Babylonian Wisdom Literature, and is in some sense not much different from the testament advice "instructions of Šūpê-Amēli," in its approach to pragmatism in life.[20]

The text titled by Lambert "Advice to a Prince" is an interesting text including warnings that are to be "taught" to a (crown-) prince or a new king.[21] The text is written in a format that resembles the Mesopotamian genre of "Omen texts," which are always written in the format of a possibility – doing x will bring about y – which can be translated as a probability: "if…". The text is composed of 60 lines in Akkadian, which Victor Avigdor Hurowitz suggested might reflect the god Ea, whose cuneiform signs mean 60, as he is the central theme of the text. Ea was regarded as the god of wisdom, and he is mentioned in line 2 of the text as "the king of destinies," The practice of a hidden message in numbers is also well attested to in the book of Proverbs, a book of the Wisdom tradition.[22] The main gist of the text of "Advice to a Prince" suggests the things a king should avoid doing because of the risk of infuriating the divine world, as the closing lines read (line 58-9): "the great gods will quit their dwellings in their fury and will not enter their shrines."[23] The gods leaving their temples meant that they withdrew their support of the king and his kingship. Hurowitz takes it even further by suggesting

that the text is a work of divine revelation since it is a direct instruction from Ea (understanding thus the words *šipir* ^{d}*Ea* in line 7 as "message of the god Ea"). As he points out the text is titled "[If] the king did not listen/heed (*lā iqūl*)," which means that the king did not heed the divine message from the god Ea.

Now although this text is not in the strict form of an instructions text, the main contents of its message resemble advice given by a father to his son, for example in the Šūpê-Amēli text. The texts are different in that the "Advice to a Prince" relates only to the king acting unjustly towards the citizens of Sippar, Nippur and Babylon, while the Šūpê-Amēli text advises the son in different life matters, and the son is not a future king.[24] The clearest example is "Advice to a Prince" line 15: "If he takes the silver of the citizens of Babylon and adds it to his own coffers" // Šūpê-Amēli 57-8: "My son, do not plunder from those who grind flour, Impoverish neither young nor old."

Regarding the format of the text (instructions vs. omens), a fascinating point arises when comparing a Hittite translated passage of the Šūpê-Amēli Akkadian text. The translation is mainly accurate but it does not cover the entire text. It still shows that the Hittites had the entire Akkadian text in hand, and were probably using it for the purpose of scholarship.[25] Indeed, these texts belonged to a tradition of texts that were shared by different cultures through the learning of Akkadian and by translating them into neighboring cultures. These works later became part of the literary tradition of the receiving culture. By translating Akkadian texts, the Hittites also adopted some of the other culture's thought, ideas and beliefs.

The difference between the text of the Šūpê-Amēli and the "Advice to a Prince" may be its social context. The Prince is instructed in issues that relate to acting justly in a political context as a ruler or as the king, so in that respect we may say that the didactic format is not from a father but concerns the way the world is conducted by the gods, since the text of the "Advice to a Prince" is strongly related to the divine world, heeding the god's "message," the gods desires, and their worship. An incorrect action on behalf of the prince will be punished by the gods. Mentioned by name in the text are the gods Ea, Anum, Enlil, Marduk, Era and Nabû. In lines 30-31 of Lambert's edition the gods are described in their judging capacity thus: "Anum, Enlil and Ea, who sit in heaven and earth (will) in their assembly (*puḫrīšunu*), establish their exemption of corvé."[26] This text is strongly connected with decisions and rules made by the gods in their legal function of judging the ruler. This text is thus not just advice to the prince in mundane actions, but is a theological act especially as at the end it mentions harm to the kingship in the following words: "Nabû, scribe of Esagil, who organizes the whole of heaven and

earth, who directs everything, who ordains kingship, will declare the treaties of his land void, and will decree hostility" (line 53-4). I would like to highlight that what is called "void" are the treaties, the framework of civilized order, as in the biblical text once God judges that his people has deviated from his law, the covenant between God and the people becomes void; it has been transgressed and the result is national devastation.[27] The actions of the king are thus judged by the divine world and not just by the society in which he acts, even though his wrong-doings are against his people (esp. Sippar, Nippur, Babylon – the privileged sacred cities of Babylonia). As Hurowitz says in his discussion of the "Advice to a Prince," this text is a product of a wise scribe, who fits the form of the text to the requested message.

The text "Advice to a Prince," then, is a political-legal didactic one, in a form of a divine instruction, while the text of Šūpê-Amēli is an instruction text of the type of a testament from father to son. Going back to the biblical examples we can see that the biblical texts combine the instructions for obedience to God with the obedience to the father and mother, while the context of the text is instructions relating to mundane social issues as well as the service of the divine (the law code of Ex. 19-24). Ex. 19-24 include combined texts of instructions with the law code that its format is influenced by the Mesopotamian laws.[28]

I will not delve further into the discussion of the relations between the two Mesopotamian texts but rather will take an additional step forward and speak of a text of the Old Hittite Period, titled by scholars "The Testament of Ḫattušili I," which is on the one hand a "will/testament" but on the other includes instructions to the council of the king together with instructions to the designated crown-prince in regard to his installation (CTH 6).[29] This testament-text was also a historical text, that belonged to a special context in times of political havoc. It stands in contrast to the two previously-mentioned Mesopotamian texts that are not clearly dated and were copied for centuries.[30] The Hittite text goes back to the later part of the 17th century BCE. Although there might be a gap in time between the texts (Mesopotamian and Hittite), to my understanding the Hittite one was also influenced by Mesopotamian tradition. While Ḫattušili I explains why he was appointing his grandson as his heir, deposing previous nominees (his son and the son of his sister) he explains the reason for their deposing in their acting contrary to his commands and against the citizens of Ḫattuša, which could have caused strife by the gods. For example, regarding the young Labarna he says:[31]

§5 (i/ii.26–29) It will come about that in regard to those who are citizens of

> Ḫattuša he will thus draw near to [take away] the cattle and sheep of whoever (owns any). [I ...ed my] external enemies [... and] I held [my land(?)] in peace(?). It shall not come about that he hereafter establishes [...]

And about his daughter who plotted against him, he says that she stole from the citizens of Ḫattuša, she took their animals, their workers and their fields (§14-§16). Ḫattuša was the center, the sacred city of Ḫatti, and the people of Ḫattuša were supposed to be the most loyal to the king, and thus the most protected by the royal court. Hence, this text tells firstly of historical events as they happened in the royal family of Ḫattuša during the reign of its first kings. However, the judgement by Ḫattušili I of the actions taken by those involved in this situation is based on legal concepts and customs in the same way as the text "Advice to a Prince" tells us that the rulers are not to harm their citizens. On the other hand, the Hittite text as a whole includes instructions to both the council of the king and to the chosen young king himself, pronounced in a very didactic way that resembles the Šūpê-Amēli format. Ḫattušili I's words to Muršili are thus:

> §19-20 (iii 26–32) Up until now no one [in my family] has heeded my command. [But you, my son], Muršili, you must heed it. Keep [(your) father's words]. If you keep your father's word, you [must eat (only) bread] and drink (only) water. When the prime of young adult-hood is [within] you, then eat two or three times a day, and treat yourself. [But when] old age is within you, drink your fill, setting aside [(your) father's] word. […..] But if you don't keep the king's word, you won't live [much longer(?)], but will perish.[32]

> §21a (iii 46–51) You (my subjects) must keep my words, those of Labarna, the Great King. [As long as] you keep [them], Ḫattuša will stand tall, and you will set your land [at peace]. You shall eat bread and drink water. But if you don't keep them, your land will fall under foreign control.
> Be very careful about the business [of the gods].[33] Their sacrificial loaves, their libations, their [stews(?)], and their meal must (always) be kept available for them.

> §21b (iii–iv 51–54) You (Muršili) must [not] postpone (them), nor fall behind (in your deliveries). If you were to [postpone (them)], it would be evil, (as indeed was) the former (condition). So be [it]![34]

The instructions are very clear and are delivered in the language resembling that of the genre of "instruction-texts" (*išḫiul-*) that creates the relationship between the king and other functionaries of professional groups within the Hittite kingdom.[35]

Here we come back to the issue of the worship of the gods. This is a central point both in the "Advice to a Prince" and in the Hittite text. The divine world expects the service of the king in order to maintain his kingship. Here comes the theological aspect of the text and the reasoning for the success of the king. While the text of Ḫattušili I is a mixture of a "historical" example of wrong doing with instructions to the appointee as heir and his council, the Advice to a Prince" is a warning.

In the instructions to the assembly of council, the demand is that they instruct the prince in wisdom. CTH 6:

> §10 (ii 53–57) [No] one shall say: "In secret the king [does] what he pleases (saying): 'I can justify it, whether it (really) is, or whether it is not.'" [Such] slander shall *never* be established as true. Rather, you [who yourselves] now acknowledge my advice(=word) and my instruction(=wisdom), constantly instruct my son in wisdom. [36]

The last words of the king-father Ḫattušili I are as follows (in Goedegebuure's translation):

> §22 (iii 55-63) [The Gre]at [King] Labarna then turned to Muršili, his (adopted) son: "I have given you my words. Let them read this tablet in your presence every month, so that you will print* my words and my wisdom(=instruction) in your heart. You shall reign in justice over my [servant]s and nobles"
> **šišša-* "impress"

Amir Gilan, in his study of this text, discussed its position within Hittite literature. He placed it under the title "Die Anfänge der Tradition didaktisch-politischer Literature in Ḫattuša" (the beginning of the didactic-political literary tradition in Ḫattuša). He then goes on to reject its definition as a legal text but rather defines it as a "collection of quotes from Ḫattušili I." To conclude, he asserts that the text of the Testament of Ḫattušili I (with its parallel passage in KBo 3.27) was recorded for didactic-political purposes and included excerpts of real speeches by the king, which gained importance

since they conveyed the political wisdom of Ḫattušili to his successors.[37]

The wise words of the king – his instructions – are a written text to be read out loud to the other party, as with the word of God in the biblical text. These words are wisdom for those who want to understand the way the world works. For the Israelites these instructions are the collections of laws in the book of Ex. 20-23 // Deuteronomy 5, read out loud and written down (by the scribe Moses). However, in order that this instructive wisdom, understood as received from the god(s), should not be forgotten, there is a ritual which must be performed to the gods. This ritual is there as a symbol, a reminder of the relationship between master and servant, instructor and instructed. The biblical text does the same through the combination of genres, instruction texts together with a command to heed and obey, therefore the authority is double: the divine and the father.[38]

Speaking of the authority of the family, this becomes very clear in the context of the demand to obey the father and the mother.[39] The authority of the Hittite king is manifested through ritual activity, performed in order to gain the support of the gods for the family. Two aspects of royal authority are manifested in the Hittite texts: one is the power of the king's proclamations; the other is his performance before the gods in their temples.

4. The Hittite King and the Performance to the Gods

The major instruction that Ḫattušili I gave Muršili is:

> §21a Be very careful[40] about the business [of the gods]. Their sacrificial loaves, their libations, their [stews(?)], and their meal must (always) be kept available for them.
>
> §21b (iii–iv 51–54) You (Muršili) must [not] postpone (them), nor fall behind (in your deliveries). If you were to [postpone (them)], it would be evil, (as indeed was) the former (condition). So be [it]!

Intriguing to point out is the fact that this last passage of the Testament of Ḫattušili I is replicated in the Instructions-text to Temple personnel (CTH 264) in language such as: 'Be afraid in a matter of the gods!' or 'Do not postpone the rituals and festivals of the gods.' The apodictic and casuistic format of the laws as instructed here are similar to the

išḫiul- texts, in that they always approach the subordinate in a direct command "you" (sg./pl.).

> (CTH 264 §14: 55-63) Furthermore: You who are kitchen attendants of all the gods: cupbearer, table-man, cook, baker, beer brewer, be very much afraid (*naḫḫanteš ešten*) regarding the will of the god for your own sake. Maintain great reverence (regarding) the thick bread and the libation vessel of the gods.
>
> (§9: 57-60) You who are Temple-Men, if you do not celebrate the festivals on the time of (each) festival, and the spr[ing] festival you celebrate in the fall, (or) the fall festival you celebrate in the spring (you will be punished).
>
> (§9: 74-76) Act only (according) to the will of the gods, so that you will eat bread and drink water (and) make a house for yourselves.[41]

The presenting of food to the gods and the timely celebration of the festivals will both ensure the well-being of the king and the temple personnel, including the offering of thick bread and libation vessel, and indicating well-being in the phrase "eat bread and drink water." The final words of Ḫattušili I are: "So be [it]!" (h. [*a-pa-a-*]*at-pát e-eš-du*) – these are the words that royal servants recite when taking the oath of loyalty to the king (an *išḫiul*-text).[42] These words, in a way, show the context whence such instructions came. Muršili has to observe the word of his father – his lord/king – as an obedient subject. He thus seems to have taken an oath. Indeed, the context of this text is highly political but it also combines Hittite understanding of the way the royal house should function. In this regard Gilan might very well be right in suggesting that this didactic political text was composed as a teaching text. Gilan maintains that the text presents the political wisdom of the king from whom young Muršili should learn. And it can be said that historically Muršili I was a successful king (until he was murdered).[43] There are other texts related to Ḫattušili I illustrating his political wisdom. Gilan points also to later texts such as the "Edict of Telipinu", indicating that it has many similarities to Ḫattušili I's text, and therefore it shows that these texts had a clear didactic political context.[44]

What Gilan's study shows is that the Hittites applied a kind of "wisdom"-didactic literature to royalty through using their own traditional texts. These texts were kept and copied up to the time of the later Hittite kingdom, and therefore there

are several copies of some of the texts and most of the copies show a late ductus.[45]

5. Between Ritual and Law

The last decade has seen the publication of several studies of a legal nature by scholars of Law, discussing the differences between Law, Norms and Ritual in society. One of the most detailed and comprehensive among them treating rituals as a means of social control (next to Laws and Norms) is the essay by Geoffrey P. Miller, titled "The legal Function of Ritual."[46] His theoretical approach firstly identified the place of rituals as a means of social control, "similar to, although distinct from, the domains of Law and norms" (p. 1187), and grouped them into several categories out of which I will refer only to two. The first is how rituals shape identity, and the second, how legitimacy is gained by rituals. As for the first, it is the performance of these rituals that captures the entire attention of the participants as they become totally immersed physically, emotionally, and intellectually in the acts, especially if they are repeated throughout their lives. As the memory of the ritual remains, it indicates the position and status of the participants within the hierarchy of the group and within society, and is thus capable of changing the identity and the perception of an individual's status and relationship with others in a social context. These actions result in the participants conforming to new roles in the social group, roles which can easily be identified as those individuals' legitimate and authoritative status within the community. The ritual thus controls social status via the identity imposed on individuals through it.

The second category, that of "legitimacy," is the need for ritual as a form of social control: "To establish its legitimacy, it must demonstrate that the demands it makes on the individual are appropriate in terms of broader social benefits" (p. 1201). There are two main aspects in the process of legitimization: one is the performance of rituals that on the one hand places them in a specific social context, and the other "the fact that it follows an apparently precise script, replicated each time the ritual occurs" (p. 1202). The fact that these rituals have a long tradition gives them the power of norms and laws.

As Miller concludes, while the laws and norms "control undesirable self-interested behavior by prohibiting it and providing 'state' sanctions to prevent, detect, and correct violations," rituals "control social behavior by assigning social roles and influencing the ritual subject, as well as others in the society, to accept the roles so assigned as a natural and appropriate part of the subject's identity" (p. 1226).

6. Hittite Kings and Ritual as Represented by Law

The Hittite royal obligation to maintain the cult of the gods involved mostly the king and queen, the princes, and temple personnel, by on the one hand supporting the cult economically and on the other hand by performing rituals in person. The maintenance of religious activity in the country, including building temples and donating artifacts, was one of the main duties of kingship. The king and queen as well as the princes traveled the country at specific times of the year in order to celebrate the gods in their own shrines and temples. The king and queen introduced new customs and manners of worship, including the worship of new deities via royal edicts. In this regard Hittite worship of the divine world was a dictated state religion.[47] Religious practices were prescribed in detail on tablets and were transferred from generation to generation through copying, as we have learnt from the royal archives found in the capital Ḫattuša. The prescribed texts instructed the royals and cult professionals on how and when to conduct the festivals. The celebration of the festivals was a sign of the obedience of the royals, and a manifestation that the king had done his utmost to retrieve knowledge of the cultic tradition. The following prayer of Muwatalli II demonstrates the Hittites' understanding of divine law and its revelation to the king; thus says Muwatalli II in his prayer regarding the re-establishing of the cult of Kummanni:

> (CTH 382 obv. 18-28) And whatever I My Majesty discover now in the written records (=written wooden tablets), I will carry out. [But whatever] rites [of the gods] I do not manage to fulfill [that] you know, O Storm-god My lord. When I consult a venerable Old Man (*šal-li-in* ^{LÚ}ŠU.GI), as they remember, [each?] rite and report it, thus I shall carry it out. […] While I am resettling the land, and until it recovers (?), I shall indeed perform the law of the gods (*ŠA* DINGIR *šaklain***)** which I am rediscovering, and it shall be henceforth carried out.[48]

The place of these activities in the power of kingship is manifested in history, as Ḫattušili I's words declare:

> You (my subjects) must keep my words, those of Labarna, the Great King. [As long as] you keep [them], Ḫattuša will stand tall, and you will set your land [at peace]. […] If you were to [postpone (them)], it would be evil, (as indeed was) the former (condition).

The very connection between obeying the command of a wise king and fulfilling the cultic demands of the divine world, stands at the core of royal success in controlling the land and making it strong. This is based on historical precedence according to the Hittite text.[49] The Mesopotamian text "Advice to a Prince" seems to suggest the same idea in a royal context. Although the text is concerned only with the issue of the holy cities of Sippar, Nippur and Babylon, it serves as an example for the way in which a king should act, and although a precedent to such a situation is not mentioned, it seems something like that had already happened.

Turning for a moment to the biblical texts: an important part of the theological concept of the obligation to celebrate the festival of the Passover, as well as other legal behavior is related to the fact that YHWH the God of the Israelites delivered them from slavery in Egypt. To commemorate and to remember these important relations between the people and their God, festivals are fixed and are to be taught to following generations (Ex. 12:27, 42; 13:9; 20:2; 22:20 passim). Deut. 4: 5-6 reads as follows (ESVS):

> See, I have taught you statutes and rules, as the YHWH my God commanded me, that you should do them within the land that you are entering to take possession of. Keep them and fulfil them, for that will be your wisdom (*ḥokmatkem*) and your understanding (*bînatkem*) in the sight of the peoples, who, when they hear (*šam'ū*) all these statutes, will say, 'Surely this great nation is a wise (*ḥakam*) and understanding (*nabōn*) people.'[50]

All the afore-mentioned texts are part of "wisdom literature" in the sense that they are aimed at instructing and teaching how to lead a successful life and maintain well-being. The idea of writing for preservation included not only textual forms but also the prescribing of the rituals specific to these cultures. It is imperative to remember that this literature was circulating in the Ancient Near East between the different cultures through textual translations and orally, but that each culture adapted this literature to its own beliefs.[51]

7. Conclusion

The intention of this paper is to show how "wisdom literature," a topos or genre that was of an important scale in the Ancient Near East, circulated among scholars of various cultures. This literature seems to have originated in Mesopotamia and was transferred to

other parts of the ANE where it was adopted into local cultures with innovations that were introduced by local people such as in Ḫattuša, where the wisdom contents were mixed with historical events, and later became traditional texts for the next Hittite kings to learn from. The topics of the texts aimed at giving political knowledge and wisdom together with theological insights to the young crown-princes. With this large collection of traditional texts, the Hittites maintained their cult by teaching the royals how to perform their duties before the gods. In the same way we can find biblical texts actively teaching the law of YHWH as the wisdom of life so that worshipers could celebrate festivals and rituals which will bring peace and prosperity to their land. The divine world in all these cultures was the center of concern, and wisdom was to be applied by the rulers to find the correct way of serving the gods.

A fragment of text found in Ḫattuša includes proverbs that could be a translation of an Akkadian text (that has not been preserved). The few lines that have been preserved in Hittite read as follows:

> Now, you (pl.) be quiet and listen! Watch out with wisdom (*ḫaddanaza*-) these matters which are placed in front of mankind. Hold them as *išḫiul* (law) and know them with your heart. Investigate them by the assembly (=court), and look them up on the wooden tablets (=records).[52]

Rituals enabled the king to manifest royal power by decreeing worship and the laws of the divine. Simultaneously, performing rituals and celebrating festivals maintained the memory of the greatness of the gods and their support to the king and his land. Writing down and recording the laws and the historical events when they originated and when they were applied gave them the status of wisdom for generations.[53]

Notes

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1 What "Divine" means in this context is questionable. JPS translation gives "Holy One"

referring to YHWH, while the noun is clearly a plural form. Still as can be seen from Ps. 2:5: "*yir'at* YHWY paralleled with knowledge of the god." Thus Divine *qedošim=elohim*. Psalms 111:10 also says the same: "Beginning of wisdom is the fear of YHWH." Both texts place the "Fear of YHWH" as the basis of wisdom = "*ḥôkmah.*"

[2] The Hebrew word *mûsar* means both instruct and disciple; here it stands in parallel to *tôrah*. It is strongly imperative in Deut. 4:36 correlating the speech of YHWH from Heaven to the Israelites as instructing them (the verb infinitive is *leyaserka* from the same root *ysr* as the noun *mûsar*). The revelation in Deuteronomy is directly connected with the concept of instructing the Israelites, for which compare Deut. 8:5 "Know then in your heart that, as a man disciplines (*ysr*) his son, the LORD your God disciplines you (*méyaserka*)." (ESVS); Hurowitz in his commentary on the Book of Proverbs places this root under the category of "teaching" that comes through discipline forcefully; see *Proverbs: Introduction and Commentary* (2 vols. *Mikra Leyisrael* series ed. Shmuel Ahituv; Tel Aviv: Am Oved and Magnes Press, 2012), 40-41[Hebrew]. The definition of the disobedient son in Deut. 21:18 is *ben sôrer*.

[3] For a recent overview of wisdom literature in the Bible and in the ANE see Tremper Longman III, *The Fear of the Lord is Wisdom* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017), 147-162.

[4] Mark R. Sneed, ed., *Was there a Wisdom Tradition? New Prospects in Israelite Wisdom Studies* (AIIL 23; Atlanta: SBL press, 2015).

[5] For specific articles in the above-mentioned volume see: Katharine J. Dell, "Deciding the Boundaries of Wisdom: Applying the Concept of Family Resemblance," in: *Was there a Wisdom Tradition? New Prospects in Israelite Wisdom Studies* (Mark R. Sneed, ed.; AIIL 23; Atlanta: SBL press, 2015), 145-160. As well as Douglas Miller, "Wisdom in the Canon: Discerning the Early Intuition," ibid, pp. 87-114; Tova Forti, "*Gattung* and *Sitz im Leben*: Methodological Vagueness in Defining Wisdom Psalms," ibid, pp. 205-220.

[6] Lev. 25:55 "To me the people of Israel are servants, indeed my servants whom I delivered from the land of Egypt. I am YHWH your God."

[7] For other example of wisdom literary forms in the Bible apart from the books identified traditionally as wisdom literature, such as the Pentateuch and especially the law see for example Daube's assessment that "Deuteronomy stands between legislation and a wisdom book" in David Daube, *Law &Wisdom in the Bible: David Daube's Gifford Lectures* (vol. 2, Calum Carmichael ed., Conshohocken, PA: Templeton Press: 2010), 27.

[8] David Daube, *Law &Wisdom in the Bible: David Daube's Gifford Lectures*, 5ff.

[9] Tremper Longman III, *The Fear of the Lord is Wisdom*, p. 171.

[10] Paul-Alain Beaulieu, "The Social and Intellectual Setting of Babylonian Wisdom Literature," in: *Wisdom Literature in Mesopotamia and Israel* (R. J. Clifford ed.; Atlanta: SBL Press, 2007), 3-19. For definitions relating to Mesopotamian wisdom literature see the discussion of Yoram Cohen, *Wisdom from the Late Bronze Age* (Andrew R. George ed.; WAW 29; Atlanta: SBL press, 2013), 7-19.

[11] Strongly suggested in the Framework of the Laws of Hammurabi see Victor Avigdor Hurowitz, *Inu Anum Ṣīrum: Literary Structures in the Non-Judicial Sections of Codex Hammurabi* (Occasional Publications of the Samuel Noah Kramer Fund, 15; Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, 1994). The biblical king in contrast is expected to receive the law from the priesthood according to Deut. 17:18-

20; a law which has some of the characteristics of wisdom language "to fear YHWH" and reasoning "so he lives long."

12 For the relations between the Hebrew Bible and ancient Egyptian literature see Nili Shupak, *Where Can Wisdom be Found?: the Sage's Language in the Bible and in ancient Egyptian Literature* (OBO 130; Freiburg/Schweiz: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1993).

13 Paul-Alain Beaulieu, "The Social and Intellectual Setting of Babylonian Wisdom Literature," p. 5.

14 For a recent study of this text see Yoram Cohen, *Wisdom from the Late Bronze Age* (WAW29; Atlanta: SBL Press, 2013) 81-128. The Composition goes back to the Old Babylonian period, and appears as part of other known instruction texts. See also V. A. Hurowitz, "The Wisdom of Šūpē-Amēlī – A Deathbed Debate between a Father and Son," in: *Wisdom Literature in Mesopotamia and Israel* (R. J. Clifford ed.; Atlanta: SBL Press, 2007), 37-51.

15 As can be seen in the CAD M:66ff. the noun has a number of meanings according to contexts but the major ones are: "advice, instruction, order, decision (of a deity)." See above the quote from Prov. 19:20 starting with the same two words *šm'* and *'ēṣah*.

16 For *parṣu* see CAD P:195ff. See Hurowitz, "The Wisdom of Šūpē-Amēlī" p. 46 with comparison note to Gen. 49:1, though the testament of Jacob is a different kind of text.

17 V. A. Hurowitz, "The Wisdom of *Šūpē-Amēlī,*" p. 42.

18 Yoram Cohen, *Wisdom from the Late Bronze Age,* ibid; Hurowitz, "The Wisdom of *Šūpē-Amēlī,*" pp. 41-43.

19 For the Hittite material see Paola Dardano, *Die hethitischen Tontafelkataloge aus Ḫattuša (CTH 276-282)* (StBoT 47; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2006); and also Willemijn Waal, *Hittite Diplomatics: Studies in Ancient Document Format and Record Management* (StBoT 57; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2015). Regarding the material of Mesopotamian writing see Yoram Cohen, *Wisdom from the Late Bronze Age,* pp. 60-61 indicating that wisdom compositions "were thematically grouped. […] (in) a generic organization of the material."

20 Wilfried G. Lambert, *Babylonian Wisdom Literature* (Winona lake: Eisenbraunse, 1996), 110-115. Quotations from the text will be from this translation.

21 The text is known from two manuscripts, one from Ninveh (Neo-Assyrian) and one from Nippur (Neo-Babylonian). The first version published by Lambert and the new version published by S. W. Cole, *NIPPUR IV* (Oriental Institute the University of Chicago, 1996), 268-274 (Text no. 128).

22 Hurowitz has treated in detail this text showing its special relations with the god Ea, as well as the fact that the text is more than a collection of instructive prohibitions to a king. In his words "the text intentionally portrays itself as a divine message to the king from the god Ea." Victor Avigdor Hurowitz, "Advice to a Prince: A Message from Ea," *State Archives of Assyria*

Bulletin 12,1 (1998), 39-53. See also V. A. Hurowitz, *Proverbs: Introduction and Commentary* (2 vols. *Mikra Leyisrael* series ed. Shmuel Ahituv; Tel Aviv: Am Oved and Magnes Press, 2012), 8-9 [Hebrew].

23 Wilfried G. Lambert, *Babylonian Wisdom Literature,* p. 115.

24 The Šūpê-Amēli text maybe considered as a collection of established proverbs, warnings and admonitions on different issues in life. For example: (line 27) "you shall not put your eye on the wife of (another) man" which is parallel to Ex. 20:17//Deut. 5:21, a direct part of the

decalogue.

[25] Yoram Cohen, *Wisdom from the Late Bronze Age*, pp. 118-124. To understand the way cuneiform arrived in Ḫattuša and how it was used and that it was a world of the elite see Mark Weeden, "Adapting to New Contexts: Cuneiform in Anatolia," *The Oxford Handbook of Cuneiform Culture* (Karen Radner and Elinor Robson eds.; Oxford, 2011), 597-617.

[26] Hurowitz, "Advice to Ea," p. 47.

[27] The worst of all was during the flood (Gen. 6-7) at the end of which god swore never to do it again and "hanged" a bow in heaven as a sign never to repeat it. This bow is the sign of the "treaty/covenant" of civilization's order Gen. 9:13-17.

[28] For a short introduction to the format see John H. Walton, *Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament* (2nd ed.; Grand Rapids: Backer Academic, 2018), 270. For a detailed comparison see David P. Wright, "Method in the Study of Textual Sources Dependence: The Covenant Code," in: *Subtle Citation, Allusion, and Translation in the Hebrew Bible* (Ziony Zevit ed.; Sheffield-Bristol: Equinox, 2017),159-181.

[29] For the CTH 6 text edition and translations see the latest publication that includes reference to previous publications: Amir Gilan, *Formen und Inhalte althethitischer historischer Literatur* (Texte der Hethiter 29; Heidelberg: Winter Verlag, 2015), 65-103; for this paper I will use the English translations by Gary Beckman, "Bilingual Edict of Ḫattušili I," *Context Of Scriptire* 2, (2000) 79-81; and Petra Goedegebuure, "The Bilingual Edict of Ḫattušili I," in *The Ancient Near East: Historical Sources in Translation* (Mark W. Chavalas ed.; Malden: Blackwell Publication, 2006), 222-228.

[30] Lambert, for example, tried to establish a period for the composition of "Advice to a Prince" as between 1000-700BCE.

[31] The following quotations are from Gary Beckman, "Bilingual Edict of Ḫattušili I," with a somewhat different translation suggested by Petra Goedegebuure, "The Bilingual Edict of Ḫattušili I."

[32] Petra Goedegebuure's translation: "§19 (iii 26-32) [Until] now nobody [in my family] has accepted my will. [But now you,] Muršili, are [m]y [son], so it is you who must accept it. Observe [the wor]ds [of (your) father]. As long as you observe the words of (your) father, then you will [e]at [bread] and drink water. When young adulthood is in your [heart], eat twice, thrice a day, and take care of yourself. But [when] old age is in your heart, then drink until satisfaction. Then you may discard (your) [father]'s word."

[33] Literary translation: Hittite – [DINGIR.MEŠ-*aš u*]*d-da-a-ni na-aḫ-ḫa-an-te-eš e-eš-tén* "be afraid about the matter [of the gods]." For the verb *naḫ(ḫ)-* meaning "Become afraid; fear; fearful, scared, have fear of" see J. Puhvel, *Hittite Etymological Dictionary* vol. 7 (De Gruyter, 2007), 3ff.

[34] Petra Goedegebuure translation: "§21 (iii 46-57) You must be reverent in the matter [of the gods]. Let their thick bread, their libation-vessels, and their [ste]w (and) groats stand ready. [Neither] postpone nor fall behind! If you were to [post]pone, evil would result, as in the past. Let it be just so!".

[35] For these texts as representing the administration of the Hittite Kingdom see Jared L. Miller, *Royal Hittite Instructions and Related Administrative Texts* (Mauro Giorgieri ed.; WAW 31; Atlanta: SBL Press, 2013). For the relations between these texts and the biblical covenant see Ada Taggar-Cohen, "Biblical *covenant* and Hittite *išḫiul* reexamined," *Vetus Testamentum* 61 (2011), 461-488.

[36] The Hittite: (line 56) [*šumeš=m*]*a kinuna uddar=mit ḫattad=mit=a* (57) [*kueš ša*]*kteni nu* DUMU-*laman ḫattaḫḫiškiten* (the noun *ḫattatar- ḫattant-* means "intelligence, counsel, wisdom"; Sum. GALGA-tar). On the Hittite word *ḫattatar-* in relation to wisdom see Gary Beckman, "Proverbs and Proverbial Allusions in Hittite," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 45 (1986), 28ff. His conclusion is that the Hittite word cannot be paralleled to the meaning of the word "wisdom" nor the Hebrew *ḥôkmah* because its best meaning according to him is "cunning" and "is usually the possession of a deity or a human of high rank." However, in a text of collection of proverbs from Ḫattuša (that Beckman himself quotes) we read the connection between the *ḫattatar-* "wisdom," and the *išḫiul-* "legal obedience." KBo 12.128 6'-14': "Now, you (pl.) be quiet and listen! Watch out with wisdom (*ḫaddanaza-*) these matters which are placed in front of mankind. Hold them as *išḫiul* (law) and know them with your heart. Investigate them by the assembly (=court), and look them up on the wooden tablets (=records)." Compare this translation with Yoram Cohen, *Wisdom from the Late Bronze Age,* pp. 202-203.

[37] Amir Gilan, *Formen und Inhalte althethitischer historischer Literatur,* p. 103.

[38] Testaments in the Bible go from Abraham to Isaac from Jacob to his sons, Moses to the people of Israel, Samuel to the people of Israel etc.

[39] The idea that Father and Mother are legal authority in Hittite society, is supported by the fact that the queen's instructions have power similar to that of the king. Hittite queens declare edicts and are party to treaties and as can be seen in the edict of the installation of the son of Šuppiluliuma I (Telipinu the Priest) as king in Kizzuwatna, the queen Ḫanti, the mother, is party to the legal document. (KBo 19.25 starts: "[Thus say his Majes]ty, Šuppiluliu[ma Great King and Ḫan]ti Great Queen and Arnuan[a crown prince]"). On the legal understanding of the Hittite royal family, as a household performing in rituals see my forthcoming article "The Uniqueness of the Priestess Titled NIN.DINGIR in Hittite Texts in Light of Hittite Royal Ideology."

[40] See above footnote 33 for the Hittite verb *naḫ(ḫ)-* "be afraid."

[41] Ada Taggar-Cohen, *Hittite Priesthood,* §9 pp. 53-54, 76-77 §14 pp. 60, 80-81.

[42] For example, the text "The first oath of the soldiers" (KBo 6.34+ i, 40, ii, 4 passim.), was translated into English by B. J. Collins in *Context of Scripture* 1 (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 165-167.

[43] Trevor Bryce, *Kingdom of the Hittites* (Oxford: 2005), 96-110.

[44] Amir Gilan, *Formen und Inhalte althethitischer historischer*, p. 334.

[45] On this see the latest description including indication relating to scribal schooling in Shai Gordin, *Hittite Scribal Circles: Scholarly Tradition and Writing Habits* (StBoT 59; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2015), 1-16.

[46] Geoffrey P. Miller, "The legal Function of Ritual," *Chicago-Kent Law Review* 80 (2005), 1181-1233.

[47] B. J. Collins, *The Hittite and Their World* (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2007), 157ff. Specifically on royals in the priesthood see Ada Taggar-Cohen, *Hittite Priesthood* (THeth 26; Heidelberg: Winter Verlag, 2006), 369ff.

[48] The translation follows Itamar Singer, *Hittite Prayers* (Harry A. Hoffner ed.; WAW11; Atlanta: SBL Press, 2002), 83.

[49] As indicated by Gilan, *Formen und Inhalte althethitischer historischer,* pp. 335ff., this understanding of royal success is also apparent in the text of "the proclamation of Telipinu"

which at its start describes in a fixed stylistic pattern the historical events of his predecessors, who by fulfilling the divine will succeeded, or by doing the opposite fail.

[50] Moshe Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomic School* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972). In this seminal book Weinfeld has offered an important view on the origin of the book in the circles of the scribes who dealt with the study and teaching and compilation of the written material of the royal archive and maybe more. They were the wise men who collected the "wisdom literature." Indeed, this can be seen in the phraseology of the book of Deuteronomy (as just quoted above).

[51] For more on the translation and the work of scribes in the Ancient Near East see Ada Taggar-Cohen, "Subtle Citation, Allusion, and Translation: Evidence in Hittite Texts and Some Biblical implications," in: *Subtle Citation, Allusion, and Translation in the Hebrew Bible* (Ziony Zevit ed.; Sheffield-Bristol: Equinox, 2017), 54-72.

[52] KBo 12.128 6'-14'. See Yoram Cohen, *Wisdom from the Late Bronze Age*, pp. 201-203.

[53] Deut. 31:11 (ESVS) "when all Israel comes to appear before the LORD your God at the place that he will choose, you shall read this law before all Israel in their hearing." 31:12 "that they may hear and learn to fear the LORD your God, and be careful to do all the words of this law," 31:13 "and that their children, who have not known it, may hear and learn to fear the LORD your God."