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Wisdom's Existence before Creation

8: 22-31

A proverb is a short and memorable saying designed to be our blueprint for living in the world that ADONAI has created. It is important to note that proverbs are not promises; they are generally true principles, all other things being equal.

To justify the high claims which Lady Wisdom has asserted on her behalf, Solomon advances a still loftier claim. Lady Wisdom declares that she was created by ADONAI before the universe came into being because He ordained for her part of His creative work which changed chaos into order. Wisdom is therefore, the first act of God's creation, the firstborn, so to speak. She was there before anything else was created, and so witnessed the creation process herself. Indeed, the implication is that not only was she present, but that she also participated in the creation of the world. Her reference to herself as a craftsman (8:30) indicates that she assisted, in some way, in the task. The result of her participation is that she had an intimate, joyful relationship with both ADONAI and with the human race.

A typical ancient Near Eastern autobiography begins with a self-introduction like what we have seen in **8:12-21** (see **Bk - Those Who Seek Me Will Find Me**). After the introduction comes a narration concerning accomplishments (see the commentary on **Deuteronomy Ah - Treaty of the Great King**), and this is what we have here in **8:22-31**, a narration of the accomplishments of **Lady Wisdom**. The entire section describes the interrelationship between **Lady Wisdom** and **creation**. The implication informs us that in order to navigate life with its problems and pitfalls, then **Lady Wisdom** is the one to get to know. Who would know better how to act in the world than **the One** who helped to **create** it!

But before further exploring the relationship between **ADONAI** and **Lady Wisdom**, we need to ask, who is **she** anyway? **One of the earliest clues we have for how Lady Wisdom was understood comes from the intertestamental books of Sirach and the Wisdom of Solomon. Sirach, also known as Ecclesiasticus,**

is a book from the second century BC, and it begins alluding to **Proverbs 8:22-31**, by saying, “**Wisdom was created before all other things, and prudent understanding from eternity . . . it is He [God] who created her [Wisdom]; He saw her and took her measure, He poured her out upon all His works (Sirach 1:4 and 9).**

Then Sirach 24 really reflects and expands on **Proverbs 8:22-31**. Indeed, it is largely modeled on that chapter. Here too we have a personification of **Lady Wisdom**. But rather than making a public address, she speaks to the angels. She describes how **God guided her to take up residence in Isra’el among the nations of the earth. Among other differences Lady Wisdom sees between herself and those nations is how she identifies herself with Torah, saying, “All this [Wisdom] is the book of the covenant of the Most High God, the mitzvot that Moshe commands us as an inheritance for the congregations of Jacob (Sirach 24:23).** Therefore, those who study Torah are those who grasp **God’s Wisdom**. **This tradition is also found in the intertestamental Wisdom books as well, the Wisdom of Solomon, for example.**

As Tremper Longman III relates in his commentary on *Proverbs*, the B’rit Chadashah describes **Yeshua Messiah** as **the One** in whom many of the themes in the TaNaKh find their ultimate expression (**Luke 24:25-27** and **44-48**). **Yeshua** is described as **wise** from the time of **His youth (Luke 2:39-53)** through **His earthly ministry (Mark 6:2)**. **Messiah** recognized **Himself** as **wise** and condemned those who rejected **His wisdom**. In **Luke 11:31**, **He** tells a crowd of people: **The queen of Sheba will stand up against this generation on judgment day and condemn it, for she came from a distant land to hear the wisdom of Solomon. Now someone greater than Solomon is here - but you refuse to listen to him.** Although the Gospels demonstrate that **Yeshua** was **wise**; indeed, **wiser** than **Solomon**, Rabbi Sha’ul asserts that **He** is not simply **wise**, but is the very incarnation of **God’s wisdom**. Twice he identifies **Messiah** as **the wisdom of ADONAI**. In **First Corinthians 1:30** he says: **God made Messiah to be wisdom itself (NLT)**; then, in **Colossians 2:3**, he proclaims that **in Messiah lie all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (NLT)**. With this as background, it isn’t surprising that the B’rit Chadashah associates **Yeshua Messiah** with **Lady Wisdom**, especially as **she** is presented in **Proverbs 8:22-31**.

In **Matthew 11**, **Yeshua** addresses opponents who argued that **John the Baptist** was ascetic in **his** lifestyle, while **the Lord** was too celebratory. Notice **His** final

claim in reply: **For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, "He has a demon." The Son of Man came eating and drinking and they say, "Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners." But Wisdom is proved right by her actions (Matthew 11:18-19 NIV).** When He said: **Wisdom is proved right by her actions**, Yeshua claimed that His behavior represented that of **Lady Wisdom herself!**

The association of **Yeshua** and **Wisdom** may be found elsewhere in the B'rit Chadashah as well. We recognize the great preface to **the Gospel of John** that reminds us of the language of **Proverbs 8:22-21** (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ Af - The Memra of God**). **The Word of God** (the Logos, the Memra, or the Davar), who is **Yeshua Messiah Himself, was in the beginning with God. He created everything that was (John 1:1-3 NLT).** Indeed, **the world was made through Him (John 1:10 NLT).**

We can see this in **Colossians 1:15-17** where **Yeshua** is described in language that is reminiscent of **Proverbs 8:22-31**. **Messiah is the visible image of the invisible God. He existed before anything was created and He is the firstborn of all creation, for through Him God created everything in the heavenly realms and on earth. He made the things we can see and the things we can't see - such as thrones, kingdoms, rulers, and authorities in the unseen world. Everything was created through Him and for Him. He existed before anything else, and He holds all creation together.** While this is not a quotation from **Proverbs**, it's hard to imagine someone well versed in the TaNaKh like Rabbi Sha'ul not recognizing that **Yeshua** isn't the personification of **God's Wisdom** in these verses. Paul declares: **He is the firstborn of all creation; Wisdom is the firstborn in Proverbs 8; and Yeshua is the firstborn in Colossians.** Rabbi Sha'ul is inviting a comparison. **Wisdom** is the agency of divine creation in **Proverbs**, and **Messiah** in **Colossians**. In **Proverbs**, **Wisdom** declares: **By Me kings reign, and rulers make just laws. Rulers lead with My help, and nobles make righteous judgments (8:15-16).** And in **Colossians 1:16**, **Messiah** made **thrones, kingdoms, rulers, and authorities. The message is clear: Wisdom is the personification of Yeshua Himself; when Proverbs talks about Wisdom, she is talking about godly Wisdom, Yeshua's Wisdom.**

But we must be cautious. It is possible to overread these connections by not taking account of the genre of **Proverbs 8:22-31**. One clear example of misapplying the passage comes from an early theologian named Arius (260-336 AD), commonly

recognized as heretical by the orthodox church. Arius and his followers noticed the connection between **Yeshua** and **Wisdom** and then applied all the characteristics of **Wisdom** to **Yeshua**. They pressed the language that **Wisdom** was *created* as **the first of creation**. Then they reasoned that since **Yeshua** was *created*, **Yeshua** was not **God**. But **Wisdom** is *not* a preincarnate form of **the Second Person of the Trinity**, and **Yeshua** is *not* a **created** being

In response, we simply point out that **Proverbs** is not a prophecy of **Yeshua** or any kind of literal description of **Him**. We must remember that the text is actually poetry and is using metaphor to make important points about the nature of **God's Wisdom**. Indeed, even in the setting of the TaNaKh where **Wisdom** stands for **the Wisdom of ADONAI**, we would be wrong to press the language of **creation** literally as if at some point **God** were not **wise** and only later became **wise** just in time to **create** the world.¹⁹³



Wisdom was here first (8:22-26): ADONAI created (Hebrew: *qanah*, meaning *to make, by extension, to procure, especially by purchase, and by implication, to own*) **me from the beginning, before He created anything else** (see [Aw - ADONAI's Wisdom Founded the Earth](#)) (8:22 NLT). In this autobiographical section, **Lady Wisdom** underlines the idea that **she** was **created at the very beginning**, before **God's** other acts of **creation** in **Genesis**, saying: **I was formed in ages past, at the very beginning, before the earth began (8:23 NLT)**. **Wisdom** is not depicted here as an actual heavenly being co-existing with **God**, but rather a personification of **Himself**. **She** recalls a time **when there were no watery depths, I was born, when there were no springs bubbling up their waters (8:24 NLT)**. Since the **Genesis** account mentions the deep and

waters in its second verse, **Wisdom's** claim is a legitimate one. There was also the division of **the waters** above and **the waters** below on day two. **Before the mountains were formed, before the hills, I was born; before He made the earth or its fields or the dust of the earth (8:25-26 NLT)**. All these are what happened on the third day. Throughout this text, **Lady Wisdom's** humility should be noted. **Her** claims are unique, but not arrogant: **She** plainly recognizes the difference between **her** and **her Creator** – a crucial recognition. Twice she speaks of **her** own origin: **I was born (8:24-25)**. This clear phrase helps us interpret **her** claim: **ADONAI created me (8:22)**. Therefore, as important as **she** is to the divine plan, **she** is part of **the creation**, not the co-creator.

Wisdom during the creation process (8:27-31): The setting in **Genesis** is again days two and three. **She** says: **I was there when He set the heavens in place, when He marked out the horizon on the oceans (8:27 NIV)**. **I was there when He established the clouds above, when he established the springs deep in the earth. I was there when He set the limits of the seas, so they would not spread beyond their boundaries. And when He marked off the foundations of the earth (8:28-29 NLT)**. **Wisdom** was not only present at **creation**; **she** was also a participant in **creation**. **I was His skilled craftsman by His side, I was filled with delight day after day, rejoicing in His whole world**. If we catch **her** meaning, **she** was a cheerleader as the repetitions of **rejoicing** and **delighting** imply. **Master craftsman** is the usual translation of the pivotal word to describe **Wisdom's** role and relationship to **her Creator**. But, a slight change in the Hebrew vowels produces a sense of *a young and dependent child*, a meaning which fits better with all the playfulness seen here. Like a gleeful little child, **Wisdom** is so excited by the majesty and power of the **creation** that **she** laughs about **it daily** with **the Creator**. **And having my delight in the sons of men (8:30-31)**. **Her** joy reaches its apex in **the creation** of the human family on the sixth day. Remember that **she** had **called out to the sons of men in 8:4**. No wonder **she** cared about **them**; **she** had watched **their** mother and father come into being from the hand of **God**.¹⁹⁴