

Dr. Knut Heim, Proverbs, Session 7, Metaphors and Personified Wisdom, Part 2 Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide Quiz, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Heim, Proverbs, Session 7, Metaphors and Personified Wisdom, Part 2, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. Knut Heim's **Lecture 7, Part 2**, focuses on metaphorical language and the personification of wisdom in the Book of Proverbs. Heim **critiques traditional metaphor theory**, arguing for a more nuanced understanding that emphasizes the essential role of metaphor in cognition and communication. He then **analyzes specific passages** in Proverbs, exploring the personification of wisdom as a sister, friend, and even a divine figure involved in creation. Heim's interpretation highlights the **complex interplay of literary devices** and the **theological implications** of the personified wisdom figure, emphasizing the richness and ambiguity of the biblical text. Finally, he examines the **symbolism** of Wisdom's house and banquet, suggesting a layered meaning beyond literal interpretations.

2. 16 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Heim, Session 7 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (Old Testament → Psalms & Wisdom → Proverbs).



**Heim_Prov_Session
07.mp3**

3. Briefing Document: Heim, Proverbs, Session 7, Metaphors and Personified Wisdom, Part 2

Okay, here is a detailed briefing document summarizing the key themes and ideas from the provided lecture transcript by Dr. Knut Heim on Proverbs, specifically focusing on personified wisdom and metaphor theory:

Briefing Document: Dr. Knut Heim on Proverbs - Personified Wisdom and Metaphor Theory

Main Themes:

1. Modern Metaphor Theory and its Importance:

- Dr. Heim emphasizes a paradigm shift in metaphor theory, moving away from the idea that metaphors are solely artistic devices created by talented individuals.
- He cites the *Cambridge Handbook of Metaphor and Thought* as a key resource, highlighting the "ubiquity of metaphor in both everyday language and specialized language" and in abstract thought and emotions.
- Metaphors arise from the "interaction of brains, bodies, languages, and culture" (Gibbs). They are both ordinary and spectacular, creative and rooted in common experience.
- Metaphors reshape imagination and create new understandings, but they can also be extensions of enduring patterns of thought.

1. Critique of the "Lens" Metaphor of Metaphor:

- Dr. Heim critiques the common "lens" metaphor (proposed by G.B. Caird), stating that it's "terrifyingly misleading." Caird suggested that the metaphor is a lens through which to see an object we would have otherwise not noticed, and we ignore the lens.
- He argues that this reduces the metaphor's role to merely clarifying a pre-existing reality, when metaphor is "absolutely essential to both the meaning of what is being expressed and the thinking that is done through the employ of the metaphor."
- He introduces the term "metaphoricity," highlighting the intrinsic value of metaphoric expressions.

- He argues that unlike lenses, metaphors are used not to show something previously unnoticed but to better understand what is already known.
- Additionally, lenses (when they alter vision) distort rather than offer understanding

1. **Metaphor as a "Train of Thought":**

- Dr. Heim uses the meta-metaphor of a "train of thought" to explain how metaphors function. Metaphors invite us on "a journey of the imagination."
- He emphasizes that the metaphor itself is the vehicle and that the commonplaces of the metaphor are landmarks along the road that help us to journey.
- The object of contemplation is the destination of thought travel.
- He stresses that we can take a return journey (go back and forth between what the metaphor shows and our starting point of understanding)
- He acknowledges that the chosen metaphor can take us only so far before we need to switch to other metaphorical "vehicles" (similes, metonymy, synecdoche, etc.) to continue our understanding. Metaphor itself is a common good and is a mode of public transport that we engage in together
- Staying with a metaphor even beyond familiar landmarks is crucial to discover genuine new insights.

1. **Personified Wisdom in Proverbs: General Points**

- Dr. Heim argues that personified wisdom should not be treated as a mere literary device, but should be taken seriously for how the metaphor is actually functioning.
- Personified wisdom is not always portrayed the same way in Proverbs. In chapters 1, 8, and 9, wisdom is portrayed as an exalted lady, while in chapter 7 wisdom is spoken of as a "sister," creating an intimate relationship.
- He notes that Proverbs 1-7, particularly the father's teaching and binding teaching to oneself, feed into the perception of personified wisdom in Proverbs 8.
- He notes that there is tension between earlier and later personifications of wisdom. An earlier presentation of wisdom might be re-read in light of later passages. E.g., Proverbs 1 seems to suggest there is no second chance after

judgement, but later Proverbs (8) still seem to offer opportunity. The presentation of a lack of second chances should be read with rhetorical effect.

1. **Personified Wisdom in Proverbs 7: "Sister" as a Metaphor**

- In Proverbs 7, wisdom is addressed as "sister," which is a term of endearment and intimacy.
- This contrasts with the "loose woman" and "adulteress" also mentioned in the chapter.
- While "sister" can have erotic connotations (like in the Song of Songs), it doesn't necessarily imply erotic attraction in Proverbs 7. It may simply mean family or blood relationship.
- The romantic overtone is subtle, in the background, and the point of comparison here is the nature of the relationship rather than the presentation of wisdom as a character

1. **Personified Wisdom in Proverbs 8: Extended Personification**

- Chapter 8 contains the most extensive personification of wisdom in the book, and the first person speaker, "wisdom," is an important part of the chapter's message
- Wisdom's self-praise parallels Mesopotamian hymns where deities praise themselves.
- Wisdom's speech balances Proverbs 1 and Proverbs 8. The similarities between them are not accidental
- Wisdom is presented as a universal figure who cares about all people, not just men or Israelites, and her speech is addressed to the sons of Adam – humanity.
- She is located prominently in the city, at the crossroads and gates, indicating a public and universally available message.
- Wisdom's value is emphasized, and she is said to be worth more than the most costly treasures.
- Wisdom is linked to virtues and to the spirit of God (Job 12-13; Isaiah 11-2), possessing counsel, competence, and power. She bestows these gifts upon those who rule, and may be seen as analogous to the Holy Spirit (New Testament). She is the sole distributor of the gifts of the Spirit.

- Heim notes that the figure of wisdom, finding wisdom and discretion for herself, shows that wisdom also models the behavior that she expects of others – she is a “believing seeker after virtue”
- Wisdom is not just an instrument of God's will but a collaborator. Her self-portrayal suggests she does not consider herself merely an instrument but a co-worker with God.
- The passage emphasizes her role in the creation of the world: from origin (v. 22-26) to her presence during creation (v. 27-31).
- He points out that the verb *kana* (translated various ways in the text) should not be limited to one definition. It is polyvalent, implying concepts like “acquired,” “begotten,” and “created.” Thus, the passage is deliberately ambiguous.
- The depiction of Wisdom arriving in childbirth (using the word *qul*) is a metaphor where God is treated as a female deity, but this doesn’t suggest any literal transformation of God into female nor does it suggest a spouse.
- The creation account moves from a depiction of cosmic creation to a focus on humanity’s place in it, with a focus on the inhabited world.
- The word *oman* (translated “master worker”) is a hapax legomenon. While it could mean master worker or artisan, it could also mean a nurturer, child, or faithfully (according to various translations), and there are good reasons for considering these alternatives
- Dr. Heim suggests the delight mentioned in verse 30 may be both God delighting in wisdom and wisdom delighting in God. He notes the purposeful ambiguity of the verses.
- The portrayal of Wisdom delighting in God may be a cultic act, influenced by the role of Egyptian goddesses Ma'at and Hathor.
- The reference to "sons of man" (humanity) frames wisdom's self-praise, emphasizing that her message is for all of humanity.
- The conclusion of Chapter 8 shifts from the general message of invitation to a return to her own home to host those who accept. This shift is not from one audience to another, but from active recruitment to hospitable reception. Wisdom now addresses humans in a more intimate way, as "children," and identifies herself as a mother figure, though this is not literal. This metaphor emphasizes her sincerity and care towards humanity.

1. **Personified Wisdom in Proverbs 9: House and Banquet**

- Chapter 9 presents wisdom as building her house and preparing a banquet, which represents the entirety of her teaching, including Proverbs 1-9 and the collections of Proverbs to follow. The house itself has mythological undertones, similar to the Assyro-Babylonian Apsu and the abode of Enki, the Lord of Wisdom. However, the mythological background is a means of adding mystique to wisdom's portrayal, not as a suggestion that she is literally from another pantheon.
- The house, built with seven pillars (a symbolic number representing perfection), is a grand structure.
- The lavish feast contrasts with the meager offerings of "lady folly."
- Wisdom's messengers (the servant girls), can be interpreted as representing those in society, especially younger women of good character, who promote and support wisdom's teaching.

1. **Interpretation Principles:**

- Dr. Heim cautions against demetaphorizing the metaphors. The language should be sustained, rather than broken down to match referential real world scenarios. The metaphor should be understood as a whole and with consideration of the way it functions.
- He argues that interpreting the details (like the seven pillars) as strictly representational or literal undermines the overall purpose of the metaphor. However, he also emphasizes that the specificity of such details, within the context of a book rich with figurative language, invites us to engage in imaginative interpretation.
- He argues that all the details of the extended metaphor do not need to find a specific referent in a real-world event.
- He notes the significance of considering all types of parallelism when interpreting poetic structure – not just synonymous parallelism
- He encourages reading with imagination, which entails paying close attention to the detail, and being aware of the aesthetic beauty of the poetry
- He argues that a careful study of the details and their wider context will lead us to greater understanding.

Key Quotes:

- “metaphor arises from the interaction of brains, bodies, languages, and culture”
- “metaphor is creative, novel, culturally sensitive, and allows us to transcend the mundane while also being rooted in pervasive patterns of bodily experience common to all people”
- “metaphoric expression is absolutely essential to both the meaning of what is being expressed and the thinking that is done through the employ of the metaphor”
- “Metaphors may be likened to a train of thought reviving an apparently dead metaphor. It's not dead at all. It's actually been useful all along. They invite the mind traveler to come on board and take a journey of the imagination.”
- “It is one thing to be an instrument in a creator's hands. It is quite another to be the one who arises and or does the work.”
- “These two verses are full of purposeful, deliberate ambiguity.”
- “Reading with imagination does not mean reading fancifully, but reading with attention both to the detail and the minutiae of the passage and also with a perspective on the whole chapter and the wider context of Proverbs 1 to 9.”

Conclusion:

Dr. Heim's lecture provides a detailed exploration of personified wisdom in Proverbs through the lens of modern metaphor theory. He argues for a more nuanced understanding of metaphor, emphasizing its creative power and its intrinsic value in shaping understanding. His analysis highlights the complex and multifaceted nature of personified wisdom, moving beyond simple literary devices to show how the text engages with complex cultural, historical, and theological ideas. He stresses the importance of interpreting metaphors on their own terms, and not necessarily translating them into allegories or simple referents in the real world. He also encourages imaginative readings of scripture that will help in discerning its meaning.

4. Study Guide: Heim, Proverbs, Session 7, Metaphors and Personified Wisdom, Part 7

Proverbs: Metaphors and Personified Wisdom Study Guide

Quiz

Instructions: Answer each question in 2-3 sentences.

1. How does modern metaphor theory, as presented in *The Cambridge Handbook of Metaphor and Thought*, differ from traditional views of metaphor?
2. Explain G.B. Caird's "lens" meta-metaphor for metaphor and why the lecturer argues it is misleading.
3. According to the lecturer, what is "metaphoricity," and why is it important for understanding metaphorical language?
4. How does the lecturer use the "train of thought" meta-metaphor to explain the process of metaphoric communication?
5. In Proverbs 7:4-5, how is wisdom personified, and what does this personification suggest about the nature of wisdom?
6. What are the three aspects that play vital roles for interpreting the personification of wisdom in Proverbs 8?
7. What are the differences and similarities between how wisdom is presented in Proverbs 1:22-33 and Proverbs 8:1-5?
8. How does the lecturer interpret Proverbs 8:22 and the Hebrew word *kana* in relation to the origins of wisdom?
9. What are the different interpretations of the Hebrew word *oman* in Proverbs 8:30, and what is the lecturer's perspective on these interpretations?
10. What is the significance of wisdom's invitation and feast in Proverbs 9:1-6, and how does this relate to the previous chapters?

Answer Key

1. Modern metaphor theory emphasizes the ubiquity of metaphor in everyday language and abstract thought, and it argues that metaphors are not simply artistic devices created by special individuals. Instead, they arise from the

interaction of brains, bodies, languages, and culture. Traditional views focused more on novel metaphorical language created by talented individuals.

2. Caird describes metaphor as a lens through which we look at an object, concentrating on the object and ignoring the lens. The lecturer argues this is misleading because it suggests that the metaphor is simply a tool when in fact the metaphoric expression itself is necessary for the cognitive process and shapes understanding.
3. Metaphoricity refers to the intrinsic and indispensable value of metaphoric expressions in their own right. The lecturer suggests that we should focus on the metaphor itself to fully appreciate its contribution to communication.
4. The "train of thought" meta-metaphor depicts metaphors as vehicles for a journey of the imagination with associated commonplaces that serve as landmarks. It suggests that we travel to understand an object, but we must disembark when the vehicle no longer advances our understanding.
5. Wisdom is personified as a sister and an intimate friend, which implies a close, familial relationship and emphasizes wisdom's role as a source of protection and guidance, particularly against the allure of the "loose woman." The personification also hints that wisdom can represent the father's teachings.
6. The three aspects vital for interpreting the personification of wisdom in Proverbs 8 are that (1) the personification is not different in kind from previous chapters, (2) wisdom is personified throughout the chapter, not only in certain verses, and (3) the reasons for the rich reception history of verses 22-31 need to be taken seriously.
7. In Proverbs 1, wisdom seems to assume that those she addresses have irrevocably rejected her and therefore face judgment, whereas, in Proverbs 8, she presents an opportunity for those same people to still choose her. Both passages have similar settings, addresses, and conclusions.
8. The lecturer interprets *kana* as having multiple meanings, including "acquired," "created," and "begotten," suggesting wisdom's origins are deliberately ambiguous and multi-layered, yet consistent with monolatrous Israelite faith. She argues that the language should be read in a way that considers both the metaphorical nature of the text, and also the possible latent meanings.
9. The Hebrew word *oman* can mean "master worker," "craftsman," or "nursling." The lecturer posits that, considering the context of personified wisdom, *oman*

means the wisdom figure is a collaborator or partner in creation, not merely an instrument. This interpretation aligns better with the overall portrayal of wisdom in Proverbs 8.

10. Wisdom's invitation and feast represent a lifetime of learning where one can learn to dwell within wisdom's house (the introductory material of Proverbs) and partake of her teachings (the proverbs themselves),. The feast is an analogy for wisdom, and it also emphasizes her generosity and the practical significance of engaging with her teachings.

Essay Questions

Instructions: Please answer these questions in essay format.

1. Discuss the impact of modern metaphor theory on the interpretation of biblical texts, using the lecturer's critique of G.B. Caird's lens metaphor as a key example.
2. Analyze the different ways in which wisdom is personified in Proverbs 7, 8, and 9, paying particular attention to the roles and relationships that these personifications establish.
3. Explore the multi-faceted interpretations of the Hebrew word *kana* in Proverbs 8:22, and discuss the theological implications of these various readings, referencing the instructor's analysis of this text.
4. Evaluate the significance of the architectural and banquet imagery in Proverbs 9:1-6, and how this imagery develops the overall theme of personified wisdom in Proverbs 1-9.
5. Critically assess the lecturer's approach to interpreting the personified wisdom in Proverbs as presented throughout the lecture, and how his approach differs from traditional interpretations.

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Metaphor:** A figure of speech in which a word or phrase is applied to an object or action to which it is not literally applicable, in order to suggest a resemblance.

- **Personification:** The attribution of a personal nature or human characteristics to something nonhuman, or the representation of an abstract quality in human form.
- **Meta-metaphor:** A metaphor about a metaphor, used to explain the nature or function of metaphor itself.
- **Metaphoricity:** The intrinsic and indispensable value of metaphoric expressions in their own right.
- **Paradigm Shift:** A fundamental change in approach or underlying assumptions.
- **Ornament Theory of Metaphor:** The view that metaphors are merely decorative or ornamental additions to language, rather than essential to meaning or understanding.
- **Chiasm:** A literary device in which words or concepts are presented in one order, and then repeated in a reverse order (e.g., A, B, C, B', A').
- **Hapax Legomenon:** A word that appears only once in a given text or corpus.
- **Epicene Noun:** A noun that has only one grammatical gender but can refer to both male and female entities.
- **Monolatrous:** The worship of one god without denying the existence of other gods.
- **Synecdoche:** A figure of speech in which a part is used to represent the whole, or vice versa.
- **Hypostasis:** The underlying reality or substance; especially in theology, the person of the Trinity (i.e. the Son) or an underlying principle.
- **Demythologized:** The process of removing mythological elements from a narrative or concept, often to rationalize or modernize it.
- **Exegesis:** Critical interpretation of a text, especially of scripture.
- **Eisegesis:** The interpretation of a text (as of the Bible) by reading into it one's own ideas.
- **Demiurge:** In Platonic philosophy, a being that creates, and orders, the material universe.

5. FAQs on Heim, Proverbs, Session 6, Metaphors and Personified Wisdom, Part 1, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

FAQ: Personified Wisdom in Proverbs

1. **What is the main focus of modern metaphor theory as it relates to the study of wisdom in Proverbs?** Modern metaphor theory emphasizes the ubiquity of metaphor in everyday language and thought, moving away from the idea that metaphors are merely ornamental figures created by special individuals. It focuses on how metaphors are used by real people in natural contexts and acknowledges their essential contribution to human cognition, communication, and culture. Metaphor arises from the interaction of brains, bodies, languages, and culture, shaping imagination and creating new modes of understanding. It is both ordinary and spectacular, rooted in bodily experiences while allowing us to transcend the mundane. This contrasts with older views of metaphor that saw them primarily as tools for artistic expression.
2. **How does the "train of thought" meta-metaphor help us understand how metaphors work?** The "train of thought" meta-metaphor presents metaphors as journeys of the imagination. We "embark" on a metaphoric expression, following its associated commonplaces ("landmarks") to expand our understanding of the concept it conveys. The destination is the object of our contemplation, and the metaphor is the vehicle. Like a train journey, a metaphor has a predetermined trajectory, and staying on board too long can take us further from our goal. We need to be willing to disembark and switch to other metaphorical vehicles (similes, metonymy, etc.) to achieve a fuller understanding. This highlights the active and dynamic nature of engaging with metaphors.
3. **In Proverbs 7, what is the significance of Wisdom being called a "sister" and "intimate friend"?** In Proverbs 7, Wisdom being called a "sister" is a term of endearment emphasizing intimacy and affection without necessarily connoting erotic attraction, similar to its use in the Song of Songs and Egyptian love songs. It is presented as a counterpoint to the illegitimate erotic relationship described in the rest of the chapter, where sexual relations are dangerous. The term "intimate friend" further softens any erotic implication. The purpose is to show a deep relational connection with Wisdom that is healthy, familial, and supportive rather than illicit and destructive.

4. **What makes Proverbs 8 a unique and significant chapter in the personification of Wisdom?** Proverbs 8 is the longest and most elaborate personification of wisdom in the book. Wisdom is presented as a universal figure, inviting everyone, both male and female, young and old, to listen to her, marking a shift from earlier sections that focus on a male audience. She claims pre-existence, stating she was "acquired," "created," or "begotten" by God before the rest of creation. Her self-praise highlights her intrinsic value, her ability to grant rulers power and wisdom, and her participation in the creation, while also focusing on her delight in the world, especially humanity. The chapter has a seven part structure with an introduction, a main lesson and a conclusion, each of which is significant.
5. **How does Proverbs 8 present Wisdom's role in relation to creation?** Proverbs 8 portrays Wisdom as being deeply involved in creation. She is described as being with God, either as a "master worker," or as being "looked after" or as "a child being raised," during the creative act. There is a deliberate ambiguity in the language used to describe the nature of this relationship, allowing for various interpretations. The chapter includes the metaphoric use of childbirth to describe her origins. She delights in the cosmic order and humanity, highlighting her benevolent character and concern for humanity's well-being, and her desire for humanity's delight in her.
6. **What does it mean that Wisdom is a "universal gift" in Proverbs 8, and how does this compare to other ancient views of wisdom?** In Proverbs 8, Wisdom is portrayed as a universal gift to all humanity, not an exclusive attribute of the Israelites. This is in contrast to some other texts, such as Baruch and Ben Sirah, which present wisdom as an exclusively Israelite phenomenon. Wisdom is seen as the source of virtues and divine attributes, granting these to kings and rulers, but also offered to everyone who seeks her. This universality underscores that Wisdom's benefits are available to all, regardless of background or status. She distributes the gifts of the Spirit to anyone who loves her.

7. **In Proverbs 9, how is Wisdom depicted in comparison to Folly?** In Proverbs 9, Wisdom is depicted as a gracious host who has built a magnificent house with seven pillars, prepared a lavish banquet, and sends out servants (young women of reputable character) to invite people to her feast. This is contrasted with Folly, who offers paltry refreshments (water and food). Wisdom represents a life of learning, fulfillment, and connection with society's best values. Folly represents the dangers of ignorance, self-indulgence, and a life devoid of purpose. The chapter serves as a bridge, connecting the opening chapters (1-9) with the collections of proverbs that follow.
8. **What does the metaphor of "watching at the doors" of Wisdom mean in Proverbs 8 & 9, and how should it be interpreted?** The metaphor of "watching daily at my gates, waiting by my doors" represents a commitment to seeking and engaging with wisdom continuously. It is not meant to suggest physical waiting, but rather a constant devotion to learning and following her. The context in chapter 9 then expands this waiting into the expectation of being invited to a lavish banquet in Wisdom's house, signifying a deeper relationship and the enjoyment of her teachings. It is also important that the metaphor remain a metaphor rather than being dissolved into a literal representation of actual suitors or a physical waiting. This metaphor continues from the end of Proverbs 8 to the beginning of Proverbs 9.