

## Dr. Knut Heim, Proverbs, Session 14, Proverbs 22-24 and Amenemope Resources from NotebookLM

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

### 1. Abstract of Heim, Proverbs, Session 14, Proverbs 22-24 and Amenemope, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

**Dr. Knut Heim's lecture** analyzes the relationship between Proverbs 22-24 and the Egyptian text, Amenemope. **Heim examines scholarly debate** surrounding the translation of a key word in Proverbs 22:20, exploring the implications of different interpretations. He **focuses on the potential influence** of Amenemope on the structure and content of Proverbs, particularly noting repeated sayings and thematic similarities. **Heim highlights instances** of both internal and external repetition within the text, suggesting deliberate editorial choices. Ultimately, he concludes that Proverbs creatively uses Amenemope as a source, rather than simply copying it.

**2. 11 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Heim, Session 14 – 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  
14.mp3**

### 3. Briefing Document: Heim, Proverbs, Session 14, Proverbs 22-24 and Amenemope

Okay, here's a detailed briefing document summarizing the main themes and important ideas from the provided lecture excerpts:

#### **Briefing Document: Proverbs 22-24 and the Teachings of Amenemope**

##### **Executive Summary:**

This lecture explores the significant parallels between a section of the biblical Book of Proverbs (specifically, Proverbs 22:17 - 24:22, referred to as "Collection 3") and the ancient Egyptian text "The Teachings of Amenemope." Dr. Heim highlights the debate surrounding the translation of a specific word in Proverbs 22:20, traditionally rendered as "30 sayings", and examines the instances of shared themes, with particular focus on the repeated admonition regarding respecting property boundaries. He also argues that the editor of Proverbs creatively adapted material from Amenemope, rather than simply copying it, and that both works use repetition to emphasize key themes, especially the protection of the vulnerable.

##### **Key Themes and Ideas:**

##### **1. The "Wisdom Literature" Problem:**

- Dr. Heim reiterates his skepticism about the term "wisdom literature" as a broad category. He suggests moving towards a description of these texts as "a specific kind of poetic literature that is really interested in intellectual, cognitive integration of theology into human life."

##### **1. Proverbs Collection 3 and Amenemope:**

- The lecture focuses on the strong parallels between Proverbs 22:17-24:22 (Collection 3) and the Egyptian "Teachings of Amenemope."
- Many scholars, including Bruce Waltke, believe the "30 sayings of the wise" in Proverbs are based on the structure of Amenemope, which contains 30 chapters.
- Waltke posits that Proverbs utilizes Amenemope's structural model, particularly its 30 divisions ("look to these 30 chapters"). He suggests that the first 11 sayings in Proverbs (22:17 - 23:11) are most directly influenced by Amenemope.

- Other sayings in this collection relate to Aramaic and Akkadian wisdom traditions (e.g., sayings against dead surety), while others relate to Egyptian traditions, but not directly from Amenemope (e.g., lampooning of drunkenness).

#### 1. The "30 Sayings" Controversy (Proverbs 22:20):

- The lecture analyzes the Hebrew text of Proverbs 22:20, focusing on the word translated as "30."
- The original Hebrew has two possible readings: *ketiv* (what is written) as "shilshom" (meaning "former" or "ancient"), and *qere* (what is read) as "shalishim" (meaning "noble").
- The Septuagint (Greek translation) translates this as "three things."
- Many modern translations, like the New Revised Standard Version, and scholars, such as Bruce Waltke, emend the Hebrew to "sheloshim" to read "30 sayings," influenced by the structure of Amenemope.
- Dr. Heim critiques this, arguing that it's a "creative emendation" based on a comparison with the Egyptian text rather than the original Hebrew, and that the translation isn't accompanied by a footnote explaining its genesis.
- Despite the controversy about the correct translation, Dr. Heim emphasizes that no theological principle is jeopardized.

#### 1. Variant Repetition of the "Ancient Landmark" Proverb:

- Dr. Heim focuses on two versions of a proverb found within Collection 3:
- Proverbs 22:28: "Do not remove the ancient landmark that your ancestors set up."
- Proverbs 23:10: "Do not remove an ancient landmark or encroach on the fields of orphans."
- He argues that the close proximity of these repetitions in Proverbs (only 12 verses apart) is not accidental.
- He highlights that this type of variant repetition of material within a collection is a conscious editorial strategy within the Book of Proverbs.
- He points out other examples of such close repetitions within the collection, e.g., Proverbs 23:3 and 23:6.

### 1. The Parallel in Amenemope Regarding Property Boundaries:

- Dr. Heim compares these repeated proverbs in Proverbs with relevant sections from Amenemope (plate 7, line 11 to plate 9, line 8) which states: "Do not move the markers on the borders of fields, nor shift the position of the measuring cord. Do not be greedy for a cubit of land, nor encroach on the boundaries of a widow..."
- Amenemope includes at least three, possibly four, encouragements not to encroach on the property of neighbors.
- There is a thematic connection with protection of widows and orphans in both texts.
- The ancient nature of the landmarks is a theme shared by both.
- Both texts include a theological reason for not encroaching. Proverbs states that "their redeemer is strong" (23:11), while Amenemope indicates one pleases "God with the might of the Lord when one respects the borders of fields."

### 1. Creative Use of Source Material:

- Dr. Heim argues that Proverbs does not simply copy Amenemope, but rather uses the Egyptian material creatively to create a new variation of its own source texts and a new arrangement within the collection.
- The repeated exhortation in Amenemope is mirrored by the deliberate repetition in Proverbs. The editor of the Book of Proverbs included this repetition because the author of Amenemope did so.

### Quotations:

- "In this particular lecture now, I want to focus more specifically on a very prominent, very exciting parallel that I've already mentioned in the previous lecture between the Egyptian text, the teachings of Amenemope, and one of the collections in the biblical book of Proverbs, namely collection number three, which is chapters 22 to 17 to halfway through chapter 24."
- "Most scholars believe that the 30 Sayings of the Wise shows a creative use of Amenemope. The structural model for this collection, do I not write for you 30 sayings, derived from the last chapter of Amenemope, section 27, line 6, quote, look to these 30 chapters, end quote."

- "Interestingly, in the Egyptian text, has at least 11 verses or so, that are similar to, I mean, to the book of Proverbs, which consists of 30 sayings. Three, 30."
- "Now, the reason why I've spent some time on this is just to help us see in this lecture how influential the international dimension of the Book of Proverbs can even be on the way in which our Bibles are translated."
- "Variant repetition within one and the same collection, we have, and I have observed elsewhere in my book. But nonetheless, here the conclusion is inevitable that variant repetition in Proverbs is a conscious, ubiquitous, editorial strategy and does not happen by accident."
- "Clearly the two works, Amenemope and Proverbs, are related. But equally evident is the fact that Proverbs does not simply copy Amenemope."

### **Conclusion:**

The lecture demonstrates a strong intellectual and textual link between Proverbs and Amenemope. The evidence, particularly the repeated proverbs regarding property boundaries, suggests deliberate borrowing and adaptation of material. The lecture also highlights the difficulties in translating ancient texts and the need to be aware of the interpretive choices made by translators, especially when comparing different source materials, and the way that this can influence translation decisions. The repetition of themes and ideas in both texts demonstrates their common concern with ethics, social justice, and the protection of the vulnerable.

### **Implications:**

This analysis underscores the international context of biblical literature and cautions against assuming the Hebrew Bible developed in a vacuum. The creative reuse of source material and the strategic use of repetition add layers of meaning to the book of Proverbs, enhancing its instructional value.

## 4. Study Guide: Heim, Proverbs, Session 14, Proverbs 22-24 and Amenemope

### Proverbs 22-24 and Amenemope Study Guide

#### Quiz

**Instructions:** Answer each question in 2-3 complete sentences.

1. What is the primary focus of Lecture 14?
2. What is the significance of the number 30 in relation to the "Sayings of the Wise" in Proverbs and the teachings of Amenemope?
3. According to Waltke, what is the extent of the material in Proverbs that directly draws from Amenemope?
4. What is the issue regarding the translation of the Hebrew word in Proverbs 22:20, which is often translated as "30"?
5. How did the Septuagint translate the Hebrew word in Proverbs 22:20, and what does that imply about their understanding of the text?
6. What are the two verses in Proverbs that contain variant repetitions regarding the ancient landmark, and why are they significant?
7. What connection is made between Proverbs 23:10 and 23:11?
8. What is the main topic explored in the section of Amenemope cited in the lecture, and what are its key points?
9. How does the concept of "variant repetition" apply to both Proverbs and Amenemope?
10. According to the lecturer, is Proverbs simply copying Amenemope, and what does he conclude about the relationship between the two texts?

#### Quiz Answer Key

1. The lecture primarily focuses on the relationship between Proverbs 22-24, specifically the "30 Sayings of the Wise," and the Egyptian text, the teachings of Amenemope. It examines the parallels and influences between these two texts.
2. The number 30 symbolizes a complete and perfect teaching in both the Egyptian context of Amenemope and the collection of sayings in Proverbs. It's believed

that the structural model of the "30 Sayings of the Wise" is derived from the 30 chapters in the teachings of Amenemope.

3. According to Waltke, the material in Proverbs that directly draws from Amenemope extends only to the first 11 sayings, specifically Proverbs 22:17 to 23:11. He notes that the rest of the "30 sayings" draw from other wisdom literature traditions.
4. The Hebrew word in Proverbs 22:20, traditionally translated as "30", has two different readings (ketiv and qere), which produce different meanings: "ancient sayings" or "noble sayings". This ambiguity and its translation as "30" based on comparison with Amenemope is a point of contention.
5. The Septuagint translated the word in Proverbs 22:20 as "three things," suggesting they were also unsure of the meaning of the Hebrew. It implies they did not read it as a reference to the number of sayings or chapters.
6. The two verses in Proverbs that contain variant repetitions regarding the ancient landmark are Proverbs 22:28 and Proverbs 23:10. Their close proximity within the same collection and the slight variations highlight the conscious editorial strategy of the book and its connections to Amenemope.
7. Proverbs 23:10 and 23:11 are connected by a causal particle (for/because), which means 23:11 is presented as a motivation for following the prohibition of 23:10. It gives a theological reason for protecting the vulnerable: God will take care of them.
8. The main topic in the cited section of Amenemope is the importance of respecting property boundaries and not taking land from the vulnerable. It emphasizes the wrongness of moving land markers and encroaching on borders.
9. "Variant repetition" applies to both Proverbs and Amenemope. In Proverbs, a saying is repeated with slight variations, which is also seen in Amenemope. Proverbs's editor's choice to follow this structure is believed to be inspired by Amenemope's own variant repetitions.
10. Proverbs is not simply copying Amenemope, but creatively adapts and transforms its Egyptian source material. The parallels between the two should not be overdrawn, as Proverbs is not a derivative text, and Proverbs includes other wisdom literature traditions as well.

## Essay Questions

1. Analyze the significance of the different possible translations of the Hebrew word in Proverbs 22:20 and discuss how this ambiguity influences the interpretation of the "Sayings of the Wise" collection.
2. Compare and contrast the treatment of the theme of respecting property boundaries in Proverbs and Amenemope, highlighting the similarities and differences in their approach and underlying motivations.
3. Discuss the concept of "variant repetition" as presented in the lecture, and explore its significance as an editorial strategy in the book of Proverbs and the instruction of Amenemope.
4. Evaluate the argument presented in the lecture regarding the connection between the literary structure of Proverbs and Amenemope, including the use of the number 30, and the implications for understanding the origins and authorship of Proverbs.
5. Assess the lecture's argument that Proverbs creatively adapts source material from Amenemope, and discuss how this approach impacts the theological message and cultural context of Proverbs.



## Glossary of Key Terms

- **Amenemope:** An ancient Egyptian instruction text containing wisdom teachings and considered to be a possible source for some sections of the biblical Book of Proverbs.
- **Ketiv:** The written form of a word in the Hebrew Bible.
- **Qere:** A suggested alternative reading for a word in the Hebrew Bible, often differing from the written form (ketiv).
- **Septuagint:** The Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible.
- **Shilshom:** A possible pronunciation for the Hebrew word in Proverbs 22:20, suggesting "former" or "ancient."
- **Shalishim:** Another possible pronunciation for the Hebrew word in Proverbs 22:20, possibly meaning "noble" or "excellent" things.
- **Sholoshim:** A possible pronunciation for the Hebrew word in Proverbs 22:20, referring to the number "30" and often used based on the comparison to the 30 sections of the teaching of Amenemope.
- **Variant Repetition:** A literary technique where a concept or saying is repeated with slight variations, often employed in wisdom literature to emphasize the importance of the message.
- **Wisdom Literature:** A genre of literature that focuses on practical advice for living well, often drawing on observations about human behavior and the natural world.

## 5. FAQs on Heim, Proverbs, Session 14, Proverbs 22-24 and Amenemope, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

**What is the main focus of the lecture, and what relationship is explored?** The lecture primarily focuses on the relationship between the biblical book of Proverbs (specifically chapters 22-24, referred to as "Collection 3") and the ancient Egyptian text, "The Instruction of Amenemope." It explores how the Proverbs collection may have drawn inspiration and material from Amenemope. The lecture also addresses the broader issues of wisdom literature and how the influence of international texts can impact our understanding of biblical translation.

- **What is significant about the "30 Sayings of the Wise" in Proverbs 22:17-23:11, and how does it relate to Amenemope?** Many scholars believe that the section in Proverbs 22:17-23:11, often referred to as the "30 Sayings of the Wise," shows a creative adaptation of the structure of Amenemope. The Egyptian text is structured around 30 chapters, and some scholars believe that the phrase "30 sayings" in Proverbs 22:20 is also a nod to that structure. However, the Hebrew word translated as "30" is debated, and may mean "ancient sayings" or "noble sayings." The material dependence on Amenemope is primarily seen in the first 11 sayings of the Proverbs collection.
- **How does the lecture address the translation of the word in Proverbs 22:20, which is often rendered as "30 sayings"?** The lecture highlights that the Hebrew word often translated as "30" in Proverbs 22:20 has an unusual punctuation. The written form (ketiv) suggests it should be pronounced "shilshom," meaning "former" or "ancient things." An alternative reading (qere) suggests "shalishim," meaning "noble sayings." The Greek Septuagint translation used "threis" which means "three." The lecture notes that the translation of "30 sayings" in many modern versions is based on comparison with Amenemope and is a kind of creative emendation and a scholarly conjecture, rather than a straightforward reflection of the Hebrew original.

- **What are the similarities and differences between the material in Proverbs and Amenemope?** There are clear thematic similarities between the two texts, especially in the first 11 sayings of the "30 Sayings of the Wise" in Proverbs. These include the structure with 30 units and specific content overlaps, for example, the instruction about not moving boundary markers. However, the Proverbs text does not simply copy Amenemope. It creatively adapts the material and introduces other themes not found in the Egyptian text, particularly in later sayings. Proverbs also repeats similar material within close proximity and context, as does Amenemope.
- **How does the lecture analyze the repetition of "Do not remove the ancient landmark" in Proverbs?** The lecture focuses on the repetition of the saying "Do not remove the ancient landmark" in Proverbs 22:28 and 23:10. This repetition within a short span of verses is not considered accidental but rather a deliberate editorial strategy, mirroring the repetition of similar advice found in Amenemope. The lecture argues that the repetition is a way to emphasize the importance of respecting property rights, a theme both texts share. It highlights the way that Proverbs engages its source text creatively and highlights the conscious use of repetition by the author/editor of Proverbs.
- **What is the context of the "ancient landmark" instruction in both Proverbs and Amenemope, and what are the theological motivations?** In both Proverbs and Amenemope, the instruction about not removing ancient landmarks is related to respecting property boundaries and protecting the vulnerable (widows and orphans). Proverbs connects it to the divine "Redeemer" who will protect them, while Amenemope connects this to pleasing God. In both texts, there is an emphasis on the moral and religious importance of respecting property rights. The idea of a "trodden furrow" worn down by time adds a sense of continuity and tradition to these borders.
- **What is the significance of variant repetition in the Book of Proverbs?** Variant repetition, the restating of similar ideas in slightly different ways, is a conscious and pervasive editorial strategy in the Book of Proverbs, not just an accident. The repetition between Proverbs 22:28 and 23:10 and the several repetitions of similar advice in Amenemope show how the Proverbs editor deliberately repeated and re-emphasized key themes. This strategy highlights the importance of respecting property and protecting the vulnerable, and was modeled from their source text.

- **What are the main takeaways regarding the relationship between Proverbs and Amenemope and what does this say about our Bibles?** The main takeaway is that Proverbs and Amenemope are clearly related, with Proverbs drawing inspiration and material from the Egyptian text. However, Proverbs doesn't just copy Amenemope. It creatively adapts and modifies its source, showing its own unique character and the editorial strategy of repetition. The lecture also shows the international intellectual milieu of biblical literature, and how it is necessary for translators and readers to be aware that their Bibles are the result of a complex history of interpretation, textual emendation, and editorial choices.