



RESEARCH ARTICLE

LISTENING HEART (*LEV SHEMOA*) OF SOLOMON AND WISDOM OF PROVERBS

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ABSTRACT

Christians are by no means reluctant to consider Solomon as the first wisest man in history. And the book of Proverbs, the majority of which have been presumed to be his work, is considered to be the most wisdom in the Bible and humanity literature. Solomon obtained wisdom by offering a thousand burnt offerings at the high place of Gibeon, and lost it by obtaining losing a thousand wives to Jerusalem. In the Old Testament, the listening heart he received from God is expressed as wisdom. This paper attempts religious and theological analysis of the listening heart that Solomon sought and then lost.

INTRODUCTION

Solomon is very often referred to as "King of Reason and Wealth" or "King of Wisdom." The riches of the time of Solomon as King of Lee are expressed as follows: "All King Solomon's goblets were gold, and all the household articles in the Palace of the Forest of Lebanon were pure gold. Nothing was made of silver, because silver was considered of little value in Solomon's days" (1Kings 10:21). Solomon, as the King of Wisdom, makes wonderful judgments on the basis of wisdom from God (1Kings 3:16-28). He also imported wisdom literature from neighboring countries through frequent international exchanges with foreign countries and began a wisdom literary tradition in Israel. Thus he became known as the most wise King of the Bible. King Solomon developed international activities based on David's established kingship and powerful national power. The wisdom literature of the countries of the ancient Near East around Israel was pushed into Israel by the door of internationalization held in Solomon times (Day, "Foreign Semitic Influence, 1995). At that time, Solomon wrote many wisdom literary works and left his reputation as the founder of the wisdom literature of Israel (1Kings 4:29-34, 10:1-13). In this sense, the wisdom literature, especially the Proverbs, carry the most international character of the Old Testament. The book of Proverbs is a book about the witness of life in the Old Testament. This book, together with the book of Job and Ecclesiastes, forms a unique genre of Old Testament wisdom literature. Other books of the Old Testament, except for wisdom literature, have their starting point in their confession of faith in God. Wisdom literature, on the other hand, begins by trying to find answers to human reason and experience, that is, the problems that life brings.

This paper analyzes the peculiar record of Solomon's wisdom in the Old Testament and compares it with the traditional beliefs of the Old Testament. And I want to read and interpret Solomon's proverbs in a message that tells the modern society and the churches, not the story of "then, the man Solomon".

Gain: a thousand burnt offerings

The first book of kings begins with the scene of King David's death, who left behind pre-eminent accomplishments in the history of Israel, and a fierce battle of the sons surrounding the next throne. The final victor in this contest was Solomon. The account of Solomon is recorded in 1 Kings 2-11. With the help of the prophet Nathan and his mother Bathsheba, Solomon came up to the throne in David's oath, and removed the fourth son of David, Adonijah, and other enemies (1Kings 1-2). When his father, David, laid the foundations of the nation through wars, his son Solomon made his country more prosperous by establishing friendly relations with neighboring countries through diplomatic means. Solomon, who became the third king of the unified kingdom of Israel after David, was loved by God from the time he was born (2Sam 12:24-25) and he loved the Lord and followed God's laws as his father did (2King 3:3). In 1 Kings 3, one of the most impressive and beautiful stories of Solomon's record comes up. Solomon, who loves YHWH, visits the great high place in Gibeon to offer sacrifices to the LORD. Deuteronomistic Historians are very negative about high places. Because it was a mixed religion to eat some of Israel's pure YHWH faith. But before the temple was built, Solomon offered "a thousand burnt offerings" in the place where he had to visit the high places and sacrifice to God. It is not known exactly whether the thousand burnt offerings were to offer a thousand sacrifices at once, or whether one sacrifice was made

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every thousand times, or whether many sacrifices were made every several times. Perhaps the number a thousand (Hebrew *elep*) here refers to plenty, which may symbolize the heart of Solomon. Deuteronomy 10:16 focuses more on Solomon's devoted heart in the prayer given to God in Gibeon after the sacrifice than on the offering of a thousand burnt offerings. God who received the thousand burnt offerings wanted to do something to Solomon: "Ask for whatever you want me to give you" (1 Kings 3:5). At that time, Solomon first thank God for the grace he has given (1 Kings 3:6-7) and then he asked for the "listening heart" (*lev shemoa*) so that he can judge the people he should rule as a king (1 Kings 3:9). A king of a nation, a leader of a community is most wise when it is time to hear the heart and words of the people, and members of the community. There is wisdom already in Solomon's supplication itself, which has asked for a wise heart. Many of the leaders promise to listen to their circumstances and words on behalf of the people, but there is a problem in closing their ears once they have reached their desired positions. God was pleased with Solomon, when he was standing on the side of the people and listening to their words. That's what the Lord liked: "The Lord was pleased that Solomon had asked for this" (1 Kings 3:10).

Climax: Temple Building

Solomon's greatest achievement is the building of temple and palace. The temple construction, which was a desire for the heart of his father David, was fulfilled at the time of Solomon. 1 Kings 5 and 6 contain the preparation and execution of Solomon to build the temple. After signing a treaty with Hiram king of Tyre, who had a friendly relationship with his father for the sake of architecture (Chapter 5), he built a temple after seven years of construction. The built Jerusalem temple was 35 meters long, 10 meters wide and 15 meters high. Its structure was divided into three parts: the Vestibule, the Nave, and the Holy of Holies, and preserved the ark in the Holy of Holies. The structure of this temple followed the religious traditions of Canaan, following the architectural style of the Syrian Temple during the Late Bronze Age (Lee, A History of Israelite Monarchy, 2015, 207). After the completion of the temple construction, Solomon's speech and prayer dedicated to the temple reveal a truly meaningful message: "But will God really dwell on earth? The heavens, even the highest heaven, cannot contain you. How much less this temple I have built!" (1 Kings 8:27) Though it is true that Solomon made the house of God his residence (v.13), the building of the man himself is no place to hold the Holy Creator God. Man is a living being bound in time and space, so he needs a place where God is present, but God, the Creator, is the one who can not dare to dwell even in the heavens and highest heaven. How can a building made by a man become a house for the God? God is still in heaven. But in the temple He meets us and listen to our prayers (1 Kings 8:30). From the beginning, the temple was not built to boast its majesty. It is a house that was built to pray for people to come to God in front of him. It does not matter that the church is small in size or not gorgeous. When the voices that God will hear are no longer heard, the church is bound to become shabby. If the church is filled with all kinds of misconceptions, miserable demands and harsh voices of humanity and no more prayer for God to hear, it is only a building(!) that can not be called in the name of the Lord.

Loss: a thousand women

Solomon was the most wise, but he was also the one who

committed the most stupid things at the same time. After building the temple, Solomon built the palace for thirteen years, with the trees imported from Lebanon. In addition, to strengthen national defense, he also built store cities and the towns for his chariots and for his horses (1 Kings 9:19; 10:26). The chariots town was presumed to have been in Megiddo, a strategic center of Israel. But behind this great architectural work, shining in the history of the Old Testament, dark shadows also lie. His policies in tax and defense matters were one-sided to the tribe of Judah. He even sold the northern Gubul region to Hiram king of Tyre in order to cover the depleted state treasuries of various construction projects (1 Kings 9:10-11). He imposed heavy taxes on construction projects and abused the people as a subsidy system. Later, the reign of Solomon excluded the other ten tribes of Israel from the kingdom of Solomon, except for the tribe of Judah to which he belonged (The tribe of Simeon was first absorbed into the tribe of Judah and lost its independence). Solomon also lived as lavishly as any king of any country in the ancient Near East, and brought religious tribulations as a result of internationally arranged marriages with the royal families of various nations (1 Kings 1:1-3). Solomon's political marriage was the starting point of his foreign policy (Malamat, "Organs of State," 1965, 34-65). He had a friendly relationship with Egypt and married many women of the foreign countries, starting with Pharaoh's daughter as wife. In the stories of the fall of the ancient times heroes, a woman (or women) frequently appears behind it. The Bible is no exception. There was a Philistine woman named Delilah behind the fall of Samson, and Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah the Hittite, in the time of the fall of King David. But it was the fault of Samson and David before it was their fault. The same is true of Solomon. There was only each one woman who was behind the fall of Samson and David, but in the story of Solomon there are a thousand women whom we can not write their names in the record besides the Egyptian woman who was his first wife. Could Solomon, the King of Wisdom, remember the names of all those women? It probably would not have been possible. Was the marriage with them happy? It would have been also impossible. Furthermore, behind Solomon's downfall, there was more deadly hazard than these women. It was the idols worshiped by the women of the Gentiles. Early on, God commanded not to intermarry with the Gentiles because of the risk that the idols they believed could destroy the pure faith of Israel, rather than the Gentiles themselves (1 Kings 11:1-8). Solomon was no exception. All kinds of idols for example, Ashtoreth, Molech, Chemosh take their place in Jerusalem. Deuteronomistic historians treat idolatry as the greatest religious crime. Loving and serving only one God is the most important indicator of life. In the story of Solomon Deuteronomistic historians use the word "mind" very often (1 Kings 2:4; 3:6,9; 4:29; 8:17, 18(x2), 23, 38, 39 (x2), 48, 58, 61, 66; 9:3,4; 10:2,24; 11:2,3,9,37). It is the same in Chronicles (2 Chr 6:14, 38; 7:10; 7:16; 9:23). Solomon, the King of Wisdom, gave his heart to idols and served them. The heart that Solomon delivered was to be returned to God. Even King Solomon, the King of Wisdom, "turned his heart, and left the Lord, the God of Israel." Eventually God was "angry" with Solomon (1 Kings 11: 9). Solomon is famous for wealth and wisdom, but he must be foretold by the betrayal of God and the fall of idolatry.

Leaving: Faith in Wisdom

Most of the book of Proverbs (Prov 1-22:16) is introduced as

"Proverbs of Solomon the King of Israel, the son of David." Proverbs have the form of conveying the wisdom of life, but it is said that the way man can live a truly wise life is to fear the Lord (Prov 1:7; 9:10). The fear of the LORD with all his heart here is in agreement with the most important teaching of Deuteronomy. Deuteronomy 6: 4-5, often called the Shema, is not only a representative word of Deuteronomy, but also a summary of the faith of the Old Testament Israel. Let's look at what is often known as the *Shema*: Hear, O Israel. The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart (*lev*) and with all your soul (*nepesh*) and with all your strength(*meod*)(Deut 6:4-5). Awe is used to make sense of the distance between the Creator and the creature, while love means intimacy to eliminate the sense of distance. However, these two opposing concepts, the need to fear God and the demand to love, are combined in Deuteronomy (Zimmerli, Grundgriss, 1985). There is one important point in this *Shema's* Word. It is an 'order' to love one God. In our minds, love can not be commanded because it is the dimension of emotion. But the word of the *shema* commands, 'Love God with all your heart and soul and strength.' The love of the Old Testament is not simply a dimension of emotion. This is because it is a dynamic concept in which love is established when accompanied by a behavioral dimension. Then, how can we follow the command to love God specifically? Obeying (*shama*/listening) God's words is loving God(Deut 28:1-2, 15). Love to God is not proved by emotion and words. So, in Deuteronomy, most of the words 'love God' and 'keep God's Words' come together (Deut 7:9; 11:1).

Conclusion

In the ancient Near East, the wisdom movement, which was theology of human rational activity, entered Israel and underwent a theological process.(Park, "Wisdom Movement", 147) Proverbs, the most international book in the Old Testament, link human wisdom to God's awe. Solomon's wisdom, which is known to have written most of the Proverbs,

began with the Word of God and the hearts of the people to hear. Then what was Solomon's heart that the women caused to turn in 1 Kings 11? It was a 'listening mind' obtained through a thousand sacrifices. However, he lost his heart because of the thousand women and idols. Solomon received a that heart from a thousand sacrifices, but lost his heart because of a thousand women and idols. In the eastern proverb, the people 's heart was called the heavenly heart. Solomon was the leader who sought to measure the circumstances of the people and to listen to their circumstances, the wisest man who moved the heart of God, the great king who made the kingdom of God wealthy by his wisdom. But when his heart leaved God, the heart of God had to leave him and the hearts of the people leaved him also. In the Old Testament, Proverbs representing wisdom literature is a book that reminds us of the listening heart that God has given to Solomon. If it was the words of God and the people that King Solomon had to listen to as king, is not it the unchanging voice of God that we must listen to today, and the voice of the social underprivileged who are still ignored around us? It is the "listening heart" that we must recover, the mind that fears God, remembering the words "whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me"(Matthew 25:40).

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